Rise of the Dark Angel

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Summary

Dark!Harry; when Sirius dies in the battle in the DOM, Harry decides to drop the act of being the naive Golden Boy. What happens to the Light when their Saviour is now on the Dark side?

Notes

A/N: this is a retelling...I deleted it by accident and had a little trouble reposting...so here it is again...
Disclaimer: Harry Potter and all its affiliates belong to JK Rowling, Bloomsbury/Scholastic and Warner Bros. Studios. No copyright or trademark infringement is intended and no money is being made from this.

My Disclaimer: If I owned Harry Potter; Ginny would've died in the CoS, Harry would've broken free of Dumbledore's manipulations and Molly's overbearing, Sirius wouldn't have died, Hermione never would've dated Ron, Harry would've ditched Ron in fourth year and most importantly, there'd be lots and lots of Harry/Draco slash
Aftermath of the DOM

He knew it was a trap the moment he got the vision, but he didn't care; if there was the slightest possibility that his godfather was here, then he wasn't going to take any chances. His godfather was one of the final links to his parents and the short time they had spent together, he had come to love him the same way a son loved his parent and he knew that he couldn't lose him. As he looked out across his friends, he saw that a Death Eater was holding each of them.

Looking into their faces, he could see the fear in each of their eyes, but something else as well: Neville's eyes held determination along with his fear, Luna's held a slight indifference/amusement as if she was her own world, Ginny along with Ron and Hermione looked angry with him. A part of him, the part that he kept buried, scoffed at it. He refused to allow it to affect him, as he had told them repeatedly that he would rather have come by himself but they were too stubborn to leave him alone. A whoosh behind him had him turning around and he came face to face with Lucius Malfoy.

"How does it feel Potter," the man's silky, ice-cold voice drawled. "To know you've led your friends into a trap?"

Harry didn't answer; he just kept staring at him, his eyes holding boredom and amusement if you looked closely. He cast a quick look around before bringing his eyes back to Lucius, his hand tightening around the orb in his palm.

"It's utterly foolish of you to think that you mere school children can go against us," Lucius spoke. He was slightly annoyed that he wasn't drawing a reaction from the dark haired teen. Nonetheless, his Lord appointed him a task and he needed to complete it. "Now, hand over the orb."

"Don't do it Harry," Neville's voice rang out clearly, filled with the same determination that Harry had seen in his eyes. "Don't give in to that bastard." a grunt was followed and Harry knew that the Death Eater had tightened his hold on Neville.

Harry raised his hand, holding it out to Lucius, the orb glowing brightly between them. Lucius had a smirk of triumph on his face as he reached out to take it. Lucius looked at Harry and was surprised to see a tiny smirk on his face, eyes lighting up mischievously as the orb slipped from his fingers at the last second, falling to the ground before shattering. A small mist wafted up before it disappeared.

"You insolent brat," Lucius snarled as he drew his wand. "You will pay for that."

The cold look in Harry's eyes unnerved him slightly, but didn't let that stop him. He raised his hand, but could do no more as a voice behind him spoke up.

"Get the hell away from my godson."

Lucius turned around only to come face to face with Sirius Black before he was thrown backwards from the spell sent at him. Harry ducked out of the way and watched as the other Order members came in, freeing the rest of his friends. He turned back when he felt a hand on his arm. "You ok Harry?"

"I'm fine Siri," he looked up at his godfather. "Are you ok?"

"I'm fine pup," Sirius smiled slightly. "Now let's work on getting you and the others out of here."

"Don't even think about it," Harry's tone of voice left no room for arguments. "I'm staying with you; I'd rather be here fighting than be back at the school worrying about whether or not you'll make it
Sirius looked into his godson's eyes and knew that he wouldn't leave, so he nodded and pulled him into a quick hug. "Stay close to me."

"Got it," Harry nodded.

The two turned back to the others and joined the fight. Spells flew across the rooms as each side tried to take out the other. Not ten minutes in, a loud cry went out; Harry had just cast a Disarming and Stunning spell at a Death Eater when he heard the familiar cry. Looking up, he saw Hermione on the ground, McNair standing a few feet from her. He saw Tonks cast a spell at McNair, throwing him away from Hermione before rushing to her. He and Sirius made their way over to them and got there just in time to hear Tonks.

"I managed to stop the blow flow and close the wound," she said. "But she'll need to either go to St. Mungo's or see Madam Pomfrey."

"How are you feeling Hermione?" Ron asked as he knelt next to her. He held in a gasp as he looked at her; she had a cut running diagonal across her chest, starting from her right shoulder down to the left side.

"Sore," Hermione groaned. "It hurts a lot."

"We got to move guys," Harry said as he cast a Shielding Charm against the hex that was sent their way.

"Harry and I will cover you," Sirius said. "Tonks, you and Ron get Hermione to safety." He turned to his godson. "Let's go." The two once again engaged themselves in the battle, leading the Death Eaters away from the others. While Tonks and Ron were taking care of Hermione, Remus and the others were busy fighting off the rest of the Death Eaters. Sirius blocked a curse that was directed at Harry from Lucius and continued fighting.

"Sirius move!" Harry's voice sounded just before he was yanked down, missing a Cutting curse that came from one of the Death Eaters.


"Bellatrix LeStrange," Sirius yelled as he turned to the owner of voice. "You're mine dear cousin."

"Bring it on Black," Bellatrix yelled back. The two engaged in such an intense duel that watching it stunned even some of the Death Eaters.

Seeing the two cousins go at it seemed to bring a renewed strength to each side and the fighting increased. What happened next would change the outcome of the war in ways no one would've ever expected.

Sirius was still fighting against Bellatrix and was currently winning. He had so many taunts that he wanted to say to the crazed witch, but he knew that he had to keep a clear mind as his godson and one of his closest friends where fighting for their lives. He couldn't afford to be cocky and arrogant and lose his edge.

He fired a Cutting spell at Bellatrix and was about to fire another, when he saw a Death Eater aiming a wand at his godson's back. Harry's safety more important than his own, Sirius did the one thing he never should've done in a battle: he turned his back on his opponent. Sirius cast a Banishing hex at the Death Eater and watched as he flew through the air, hitting the wall with a thud. Harry had
turned around when the Death Eater had yelled out and looked over at his godfather in gratitude; the look soon turned to horror however, when he saw Bellatrix with her wand pointed at Sirius’ back.

"SIRIUS LOOK OUT!" Harry shouted as he tried to make his way to him.

Harry’s shout had alerted others, including Sirius and he turned only to see a familiar green light heading towards him. Unbeknownst to him he was only feet away from the Veil, so when he tried to duck the curse he stumbled instead and could do nothing as he felt his body fly backwards straight to the veil. Just before the curse hit him, his eyes sought out Harry and he saw the terror etched onto his face. His last action before the light hit him was to push every loving thought of Harry he had into his eyes and the regret that he would leave him behind. The love, acceptance and grief in Harry’s eyes and his name on his lips was the last he saw and heard before his body was engulfed in a green light, falling backwards into the veil.

"NO!" Harry shouted as he raced forward.

He tried to go towards the veil but felt hands grabbing him and holding him back. "NO! LET ME GO!"

"He’s gone Harry," a grief-filled voice, which he recognized to be Remus Lupin, spoke. "He’s gone."

Harry struggled in his hold, his grief compelling him to go after his godfather even though his heart knew what Remus was saying was true; Sirius was gone, not only had he been hit by the Avada Kedavra Curse, but he had fallen into the Veil as well.

"I killed Sirius Black," Bellatrix’s maniacal laughter rang out in the room as she moved through one of the doorways, clutching her left arm, the one that was hit by Sirius' Cutting Hex.

Harry struggled out of Remus’ arms and ran after her. He chased Bellatrix through the circular hall with the revolving doors, down the main corridor and up the clattering lifts. Harry’s lift reached the Atrium of the Ministry of Magic only moments after Bellatrix emerged from hers. He saw her running towards the row of floos and boiling rage filed him: she would escape! Raising his wand, he sent a Bone Crushing Hex at her hip and watched thrilled as she fell to the floor, screaming in pain.

"Aww," despite the fact that she was in pain, she shifted enough to look at Harry and taunted him.

"Is poor Potter going to avenge his godfather?" She let out a crazed chuckle as she looked at him.

Harry felt rage rise up and course through his entire body; his gaze filled with hatred as he looked down at the witch. He raised his hand as a curse came to his mind; it was the only one that he knew of that could inflict as much damage and pain onto her.

He poured all his pain and anger into the spell. "Crucio."

Bellatrix's screams echoed throughout the Atrium.

"Hurt's doesn't it?" Harry asked coldly. "Crucio."

She screamed again as she felt the power of the curse over her; to her, it was close to those, or maybe even worse than those that came from the Dark Lord.

As he watched her writhe on the floor, the part of himself that he kept buried thrived on the pain he was giving her. He released the spell, and felt a dark satisfaction go through him as her body kept twitching.
Moments later, he became aware of a presence in the room with them; glancing up from Bella, he looked around but saw nothing. He turned his attention back to Bellatrix when he heard a voice.

"Such hatred, such anger," the voice whispered. "Does Dumbledore know his precious Golden Boy harbours such alluring emotions inside of him?"

Harry's head jerked up and he turned around, his eyes scanning the area around him but seeing nothing. Bellatrix used his distraction to try to crawl to one of the open Floos. Hearing her, Harry turned back around and raised his wand arm once again. A curse came to his mind, but he hesitated to use it.

'Why are you hesitating? She deserves it doesn't she? After all, she took your godfather from you. Just say the words and you will have your revenge.'

The voice in his head was pure temptation and Harry found himself slowly giving in to it.

'That's it Harry, say the words; take her life, just like she took your godfather's life. Do it.'

He opened his mouth, the curse on the tip of his tongue when he felt the presence once more, this time it was coming from behind him. Keeping his hand steady, he turned swiftly and was slightly shocked to see the Dark Lord himself standing there.

"Voldemort," Harry said his voice calm and casual. "I should've known it was you. What brings you here anyways? I never thought you'd lower yourself to come here when you could have your Death Eaters do your bidding."

Listening to him talk, you would not believe whom he was talking to. Grown men have wet themselves in fear just being in Voldemort's presence and Harry's tone of voice was as if he was talking about the weather or something else pleasant rather than the Dark Lord.

"If you want something done," Voldemort replied, "do it yourself."

"For someone so against muggles," Harry spoke, slight amusement in his voice, "you seem fond of quoting something from them."

"Why you impertinent brat," Voldemort hissed. His snakelike features pulled together in a scowl, giving him a slightly more menacing look. "I'm going to enjoy killing you."

"You've been trying since I was a baby," Harry drawled. "And I'm still here."

"Not for long," Voldemort sneered before sending a curse at Harry. Voldemort was infuriated. To think, a child had defeated him and had continued to thwart his attempts at getting rid of the brat repeatedly.

Harry ducked the curse before firing one of his own. The two enemies traded curses after curses at each other, each one closely missing the opponent. About ten minutes into the fight, both Harry and Voldemort felt the presence of another wizard. Two of their wayward spells had collided, the force sending them back. When they looked up, they saw Albus Dumbledore standing there.

"You should not be here Tom," Dumbledore spoke as he walked over to them.

"Don't call me by that filthy muggle name," Voldemort hissed; not many knew of his true heritage, and he had gone through great lengths to rid himself of his father's filthy name.

"It is your name Tom," Dumbledore said. "No matter how much you wish it wasn't."
As Voldemort seethed, Dumbledore just stared at him; he didn't even bother giving Harry a glance as he focused on Voldemort. In essence, he was effectively ignoring Harry.

"You're a meddling old fool Dumbledore," Voldemort said. "And that will be your downfall."

Dumbledore said nothing as he raised his wand; he fired a curse at Voldemort, thus engaging him into a battle. Harry, for his part, stood still as he looked at the two; he couldn't help the fury that welled up inside of him as he stared at Dumbledore. He couldn't believe that the man had once again chosen to ignore him.

'He thinks he's so bloody amazing.' Dark thoughts found their way into Harry's mind as he looked on at the two. The entire year Dumbledore had been ignoring him and here he was doing it again. Not even a glance or anything from his headmaster.

Voldemort, sensing the thoughts from Harry, smirked as he felt how dark they were. When Dumbledore used water to vanish the snake of fire that he had created, he chanced a glance at Harry. Seeing it, Dumbledore turned the water drops into crystal and sent them towards Voldemort. Rather than allowing his body to be pierced, Voldemort took on the shape of mist before vanishing before their eyes.

Dumbledore sighed before whispering, "I'm getting tired of your games Tom." Feeling's Harry's gaze on him, he mentally sighed. 'Damnit all, I forgot about him; however I need to work what happened here in my favor.'

Placing a look of slight disappointment and defeat on his face and in his voice, Dumbledore turned his attentions to the teen. "Harry, my boy; tonight should never have happened."

Harry could only stare at him and stare at him some more. 'Is that all you have to say? "Tonight shouldn't have happened"; if you hadn't avoided me in the first place, it wouldn't have. But he didn't say that out loud.

"You're right, it shouldn't have." His voice was hard with a slightly cold tone to it, which caused Dumbledore's eyes to widen slightly.

Before either one could say anything else, a strange wind blew through the room, lifting dust off the floor. The dust blew towards Harry and both he and Dumbledore raised an eyebrow at it suspiciously when the dust rose off the ground and seemed to wrap around Harry like a blanket. His body convulsed for a few moments before he fell to the ground. His body twitched and pained moans could be heard from him. Dumbledore watched on, and if you looked closely into his eyes, you would see slight satisfaction at what he was seeing. After a few more convulsions, Harry's body became still.

Dumbledore took a step towards him, intent of seeing if the boy was ok but before he could get any closer, Harry rolled over on his side to face him.

"You're a fool old man," Harry's voice was cold and silky with a slight hissing tone to it and Dumbledore knew that it wasn't Harry that was speaking, but rather Voldemort. "And you're going to lose."

"I think not Tom," Dumbledore replied softly. "It is you that shall lose."

"There are things in play that you have no knowledge of," Voldemort hissed, a smirk adorning Harry's face giving him a sadistic look. "Things that shall be the cause of your downfall."

"Leave Harry at once Tom," Dumbledore's voice still held the soft tone to it, almost like a father
reprimanding his naughty child.

"You were foolish to think that this boy could beat me," Voldemort spoke.

Dumbledore ignored him and leaned closer to Harry's body; by this time, the others had made their way into the Atrium and stood watching the scene in horrified fascination.

"Harry," Dumbledore whispered. "It is not how alike you are that matters, but how different you are."

Harry's body convulsed again before he looked up at Dumbledore. His eyes moved to the others behind him and his gaze ran over them. Neville was looking at him, fear and hope in his eyes, with his wand clutched tight in his hands, he had blood running down his chin from a wound on his forehead, but other than that, he looked unhurt. Ginny was holding her left arm to her chest and seemed to be leaning against her brother. Her eyes held pain, fear and anger. Hermione was in Tonks' arms, her head resting on her shoulder and her eyes held slight disappointment along with pain and fear. Luna was standing besides Neville and for the first time since he met her, Harry didn't see the ever present dazed look in her eyes, he saw that they were clear and they held slight determination in them. Ron however was staring at him with more anger and hatred than pain.

Harry's eyes drifted to Dumbledore and saw the slight satisfaction that the man had beneath the sadness. His eyes narrowed slightly before they cleared. "You're weak," Harry said, his voice was clear of Voldemort's. "And you will fall; your reign is coming to an end and your own actions will cause your downfall; you seek the same as that which you are trying to destroy and it will never happen."

An image flashed across Harry's mind, which caused a small smile to appear on his face. "True loyalty is not something you know and I pity you. You have no idea of the power of true friends or unconditional love and worship."

Another image flashed and this image brought a surprise gasp from Harry; the emotion that came with it was strong and it was enough to cause Voldemort to leave; his body jerked as the mist escaped his body before forming the solid form of Voldemort a few feet away.

Voldemort sneered at Dumbledore before shifting his gaze to Harry's unconscious form on the floor. An unreadable look passed through his eyes as he looked on for a few moments before looking back at Dumbledore. "Your end is coming old man."

"Dear God," a voice behind them whispered.

Voldemort turned and smirked when he saw the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, standing there with a few of his subordinates. He sneered once more before he quickly turned around, Disapparating with Bellatrix in his arms.

Fudge stared at the spot for a few seconds before looking over at Dumbledore who had moved to Harry. "He's back, he's really back."

"Yes he is," Dumbledore spoke. "Now do you believe enough to do something about it?"

"Dumbledore," Fudge started; his voice tight with anger and defeat.

"Not now Cornelius," Dumbledore cut him off. "These students need to return to Hogwarts."

"Yes, of course," Fudge nodded. "We will speak soon."
Harry groaned as he shifted on the couch. He moaned again as his eyes blinked rapidly before slowly opening; he saw Remus, Tonks, Nurse Pomfrey and Dumbledore standing around the office.

"How are you feeling Harry dear?" Poppy asked.

"Like I was hit by a bludger," Harry groaned.

Poppy smiled slightly; Harry had been in her care from since his first year and she had developed a soft spot for him over the years as she had seen him more than she had seen any other student.

"Here you go dearie," Poppy held out a potion in her hand. "It's a Pepper Up Potion."

"Thanks," Harry said as he took the potion before emptying it in one gulp. "That felt good."

"How are you feeling Harry?" Remus asked as he came to kneel next to the couch.

Harry turned to look at him and he saw the grief in his eyes; suddenly, everything came rushing back and his eyes filled with tears as he looked at Remus. "Sirius... he's gone isn't he?"

"Yes," Remus whispered as tears filled his eyes. The grief in Harry's eyes was too much so Remus pulled him into a hug. "I'm so sorry cub."

"Remus," Albus spoke up. "Could I talk to Harry alone?"

The wolf inside of him growled in protest; he had just lost Sirius, who was his brother in all but blood, and a pack member and Albus wanted to separate him from his cub. Remus was slightly angry at the man because he knew that they had arrived too late to the DOM and Albus even later. A part of him blamed Albus for everything that happened tonight and because of that, Moony didn't want to have
his cub out of his eyesight, and so, Remus' arms tightened around Harry.

Seeing it, Albus smiled softly to placate the grieving wolf. "Nothing will happen Remus," he said. "I just need a moment alone; he'll be fine."

"Fine," Remus all but growled. "But if anything happens to him…"

"Nothing will," Albus said. Inside he was seething; *I need to talk to the boy while he's still in this state and the darn wolf isn't make things easy.'

"Harry," Remus turned back to his honorary godson. "I'll be at Grimmauld Place if you need me."

"Ok," Harry said softly as he nodded.

"We're going to get through this cub," Remus whispered as he pulled him into another hug before getting up and going over to the Floo. Calling out his destination, both he and Tonks stepped through the Floo.

Adopting a disappointed look, Albus turned to Harry; he noticed that he was staring at the wall, a distant and faraway look on his face and in his eyes. Sighing heavily, he walked over and sat in his chair.

"Harry." When he just continued staring at the wall, Albus' eyes narrowed slightly and he called again, this time, a slight commanding tone to his voice. "Harry."

It got the desired results as Harry turned his head to look at him. Seeing the despair in his eyes, Albus felt triumph go through him. *This is just what I need to keep him intact; he will play into my hand nicely and everything will go according to plan.'

Deciding to re-iterate his words from the DOM, he spoke, "Harry tonight should not have happened. Sirius' death could've been prevented, had you only listened. You didn't and you placed not only yourself, but your friends as well, in danger." *That should give the right amount of guilt; make him more pliable to me and my plans.'

Harry wasn't really paying much attention to Dumbledore; his mind was stuck on what happened at the DOM earlier. He forced all thoughts of Sirius from his mind, knowing that if he didn't then he would break down. Instead, he focused on what he had found; the orb with his initials, as well as Voldemort's, on it, and the interest that Lucius Malfoy expressed in it; it also didn't escape his attention where he had found the orb either. He somehow knew that whatever it was Dumbledore would know about it. Lifting his gaze, he stared at him.

"Why was there an orb with my initials on it in the DOM?" he asked. "And why was Lucius Malfoy, Voldemort's pet Death Eater, so interested in getting it?"

"Harry," Dumbledore started; he would've thought the teen would be overwhelmed with grief and guilt, not this questioning.

"Well," Harry stated, cutting him off. "Since it was found in the Hall of Prophecies and it has both my and Voldemort's initials, I can only assume it's a prophecy about the two of us."

"Yes you are," Dumbledore spoke, a slight frown on his face; he wasn't sure where Harry was going with his questioning but he didn't like it. This wasn't how he expected things to go; he needed Harry to be overwhelmed and willing to do whatever he said without question.
"What does it say?" Harry asked. "I know you know, so don't bother saying you don't."

"I don't think—"

"You don't think?" Harry stood up. "It's not about what you think, Headmaster; it concerns me and for some reason Voldemort was desperate to have it, so I'd like to know just what the prophecy said."

Dumbledore was quiet as he stared at Harry; he was contemplating on not only if he should tell, but on Harry's stance as well. The brat was never this assertive before; you would think that losing his wretched godfather would make him more humble. But maybe I can use this; if he knows the prophecy and he understands the danger he is in, it will make him even more willing to do as I say….yes, I can definitely use this.' "Alright Harry, I'll tell you; the prophecy goes like this:

"The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches ... Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies ... And the Dark Lord will mark him as equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not ... And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives...."

Harry was quiet as he allowed the words to sink in. 'So I have a power that Voldemort doesn't know about and one of us will have to kill the other because we can't both be alive. Hang on, how exactly does Dumbledore know what the prophecy says?'

"Harry?" Dumbledore's voice drew him from his thoughts.

"How do you know what the prophecy said?" Harry asked. "And how long have you known about it?"

"I know because I was there when the original prophecy was given," Dumbledore answered. "And I have known for about sixteen years."

Harry stared at Dumbledore in rising fury. "That's why Voldemort is after me, isn't it? It's because of some bloody prophecy. First year I asked you why he was so interested in me and you refused to answer. You knew all along and you didn't say anything. Don't you think I had the right to know?"

A wind picked around the two as Harry's magic leaked out of control; he was breathing heavily and his emerald green eyes were intense with power.

"Sirius could still be here if you had just told me the truth from the start!" Harry yelled incensed.

"My not telling you, is not what caused Sirius' death," Dumbledore spoke, his voice carrying a hint of reprimand.

Around his office, the portraits of past Headmasters/mistresses were staring at the scene; most in fear of the power and the others in disbelief that a student would speak that way to a teacher….the headmaster no less.

Only one portrait was actually watching the scene in amusement; Phineas Black smirked as he watched the teen become increasingly angry with Dumbledore. He was angry with the man for the way he had treated his descendant; even though he considered Sirius a blood traitor, he was still a Black and like the Malfoys, family was everything. Despite the bad blood between the two, he had been disgusted with Dumbledore and had hoped to see someone knock him off his pedestal; it made it even more amusing to see that it was the godson of the man he had sentenced to death.
"Are you bloody kidding me?" Harry roared as his magic reacted and destroyed trinkets around the office. "I told you about the visions and you knew the reason behind them and yet you didn't explain anything; you knew Voldemort was after the prophecy and instead of warning me, you kept the bloody secret to yourself."

"Harry," Dumbledore sighed, he was becoming irritated by the teen. "That is why I had you take occlumency lessons; it was to help keep Voldemort out of your mind."

"Did you really think that having the man who hates me because of what my father did to him give me lessons on mind control would work?" Harry asked as he took deep breaths to try to calm himself down. "In my first year I asked why Voldemort was after me, you refused to tell me. Second year came, I had another encounter with the young Tom Riddle, and yet you still refused to tell me why the man was fixated on me. Now it's my fifth year, and since I know now why Voldemort is after me, I just have one question; what was the reason for not telling me the truth?"

'I wanted you to have a normal childhood," Albus said. 'Well, a childhood that kept you weak and easy to manipulate.'

As soon as these words were spoken, Harry lost what little control he had over his magic. Lashing out, his magic completely desecrated Dumbledore's office; the windows broke, portraits lit on fire, every trinket in his office (including a very important one) was destroyed, and his desk cracked down the middle.

Suddenly the heavy oak door flew open and potions master Severus Snape strode into the office. "Potter!" he yelled out when he saw Harry standing there amidst a tempest of raw magic. He felt the magic brushing against him and he knew he had to calm the teen down. "Harry! Stop it. Calm down at once."

Hearing his first name from Snape's mouth was enough to actually shock Harry into calming down. He took deep breaths and reeled his magic in. Without looking at Snape, Harry turned to the door. When he got there, he stopped without turning around.

"I would appreciate it Headmaster," he said, a slight sneer on headmaster, "if I was left alone this summer; I need to be by myself to deal with Sirius' death." Without waiting for a response, he walked out the door, slamming it behind him.

"Well, well, well I suppose Potter's finished redecorating your office, Headmaster? What inspired his newest temper tantrum?" Snape asked, still staring at the trashed office in amazement.

"I'll tell you what happened," an amused voice spoke up. Snape turned to look and noticed that it was Phineas Black, one of the few portraits that weren't damaged by Harry's magic. When he saw that he had the professor's attention, he laughed as he continued. "Potter finally saw what I've known all along and he's finally done something about it."

"Explain yourself," Snape growled.

"No," Phineas sneered. "I don't believe I will; if you want to know what truly happened, ask either one of them, though I believe you'll have more luck with the younger than with the older."

"Headmaster?" Severus turned to the man, half expecting him not to answer.

"Just a little misunderstanding," Albus waved his hand, his blue eyes twinkling. "The boy will be fine."
'Somehow I seriously doubt that.' Severus thought to himself. He frowned before turning, robes billowing about him, and leaving the office. Dumbledore leaning back in his chair, fingers laced together under his chin as his thoughts drifted off.

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Harry was seething as he made his from Dumbledore's office; he couldn't believe what he had just been told. He didn't pay any attention to the students that he passed and was oblivious to the looks he was receiving as most of the students moved far out of his way when they saw the expression on his face. By the time he got to Gryffindor Tower, he had calmed down considerably. As he walked through the common room to head the boys' dormitories, the other Gryffindors sensed his dark mood, so they refrain from approaching him. He ignored Seamus and Dean when they called out to him and proceeded to pack his stuff in his trunk. He knew that he couldn't leave as yet since school wasn't officially over for two more days, but he was determined to keep to himself and avoid everyone else; and he did. The next two days found him spending his time at the lake with Hedwig. He noticed that Ron was a little cautious around and he had sometimes caught the red-head glaring at him when he thought he wasn't looking, but he didn't let it bother him. In all honesty, it only served to amuse him.

~...~

The day before they were to leave, Neville had found him sitting on a rock looking out at the lake.

"Hi Harry," he said when he was standing directly behind him. "Hi Hedwig."

"Hi Nev," Harry answered, while Hedwig let out a hoot. "What's up?"

"Just wanted to see how you were doing," Neville shrugged as he came to stand next to Harry's seat. Ever since their escapades at the DOM a few days ago, the entire school, while they weren't sure of the specific details, knew that Harry had lost his godfather. If anyone was confused or curious about why Ron and Hermione weren't with him, they put it down to him needing time alone to deal with his godfather's passing.

"Haven't broken down yet if that's what you mean," Harry answered; if it was anyone else, he would've snapped at them for asking that question, but he knew Neville was truly genuine and was more often than not a better friend than Ron was.

"Didn't think so," Neville nodded.

"It's not time for me to break down yet Nev," Harry said. "I don't want to be here when it happens."

"I understand completely," Neville said. "Everybody's always trying to be in your business and I know that if you did do it here, then you would get no peace."

Harry wasn't surprised that Neville had understood exactly why he chose not to think over his Sirius' death right away; Hermione would've told him that it wasn't healthy for him to keep it in and Ron probably would have been too uncomfortable.

"There's a change coming Nev," Harry turned to look him in his eyes. "A change that no one will be prepared for." He wasn't really sure why he gave Neville that vague warning, only that his instinct had told him to, and he wondered if Neville would understand.

Neville looked at Harry and he sensed the truth in his words and saw the change in his eyes; it was a little unnerving because Hedwig was looking at him with the same determined eyes that felt like she was searching his soul. After a few seconds, she gave a subtle nod, seemingly pleased with what she
saw and Neville felt honored.

"No matter what, Harry," Neville's eyes were filled with determination and his voice was full of conviction. "I will stand by your side and your side only." Neville himself had no idea where the words came from or what they were referring to, but he meant them all the same.

"As will I," a voice behind them spoke. The two boys turned to see Luna standing there; her eyes were clear and very serious and her voice didn't hold the childlike tone, instead it held a determined one.

"Luna," Harry nodded and Hedwig turned to her.

"Hello Harry," Luna smiled at him before reaching out to pet Hedwig. "Hi Beautiful."

"How are you?" Harry asked the blonde.

"I'm ok Harry," Luna turned reassuring eyes on him.

"Good," Harry. The three stayed out there in silence for awhile before Luna and Neville left Harry by himself once more. Harry reached up and ruffled Hedwig's feathers slightly. "I'm glad that it's those two I know I can count on." Hedwig hooted in reply. The two were quiet after that.

~...~

The next day, Harry woke up to the sun shining on his face. Grabbing his glasses, he hurried to the bathroom. When he was finished, he came back to the dorm wearing only his towel. He headed to his trunk and pulled out a pair of light blue jeans, a green tank top with a long-sleeved unbuttoned shirt over it and Nike shoes. As he changed into them, he absently noticed that Ron's bunk was empty. Finished dressing, he closed up his trunk and walked out the dorm. Once again, he ignored everyone else and left the common room swiftly.

Levitating his trunk behind him, Harry made his way through the corridors until he came to the entrance to the castle. He walked down the main staircase and strode across the entrance hall, other students bustling around him on their way to the carriages. As he stepped outside, he passed Dumbledore standing on the top step outside the great oak front doors with Professor McGonagall and he felt his anger from three days ago return. Keeping his head straight, he ignored the Headmaster and his Head of House and tried to calm himself down. Harry followed the rest of the students. When he neared the carriages, he saw that most of them had already left. He walked over to one of the final ones and he paused in front of the Thestral standing in front of it. Reaching out a hand, he stroked the winged animal from its head to its nose, sighing softly as he did so.

"Only those that have witnessed death can see you," he whispered. "I hate the fact that I had to lose so many loved ones just to see the beauty that you are."

The Thestral whinnied softly as it rubbed its head against Harry. He smiled ruefully before stepping back and walking up to the carriage door; opening it, he saw three Gryffindor third years. He ignored them and took a seat next to the door. After a few minutes, the carriage jolted as it moved. The ride was filled with the quiet talking of the students. They ignored Harry, which suited him just fine as his mind was filled with thoughts of what happened at the DOM and in Dumbledore's office. He barely noticed when the carriage came to a stop, and paid little attention as he moved through the students and made his way onto the train. He was walking through the corridor looking for a compartment when he heard Ron's voice. The door was closed, so he cast a spell to allow him to hear what was being said.
"I'm not doing this anymore 'Mione," Ron said. "I mean, for Merlin's sake, you almost died!"

"I know Ron," Hermione's voice sounded tired and resigned. "Every year it's the same; I can't keep wondering if this is the year I'm going to die because of something he does. And he doesn't even listen to me half the time."

"I'm glad he saved my life in the Chamber of Secrets," Ginny spoke up. "But I never thought I'd be risking my life like this; if this is what it means to be the wife of the Boy-Who-Lived, I'm not sure I want that anymore."

"Don't worry," Ron's voice was soft as he spoke. "We won't have to put up with it anymore; I refuse to lose my girlfriend and my sister because he was too stubborn to listen."

Not wanting to hear anymore, Harry cancelled the spell and walked off. He found an empty compartment at the back of the train and shoved his trunk inside, closing and locking the door behind him.

'So that's what they think? I should've known. I bet they were never my friends to begin with.'

He sat down on the bench and his hands clenched into fists as his head dropped to his chest. He was angry at what he heard and hurt because he had foolishly allowed himself to believe that they had genuinely cared about him. 'Ginny only cares for the Boy-Who-Lived and I'm guess the other two traitors does as well. But no more, I'm done with them.'

For the rest of the train ride, Harry went over everything that had happened between the supposed Golden Trio from the day they met until now. Looking at everything from an outside view had put things in perspective for him and by time the train pulled up at the King's Cross Station, he was silently seething.

Not wanting to run into his former friends, he quickly made his way off the train and headed through the barrier. He spotted Remus along with Tonks, Shacklebolt and Moody; not wanting to deal with them, but knowing he'd have to; he headed to them and to his uncle. When he got close, he saw his face was slightly purple with rage and he knew he was building up to an explosion; Harry knew it was because the others were talking to him, and he was getting even more pissed off than he was. He noticed that Remus saw him coming, but said nothing to the others about it. When he was right behind them, Tonks noticed him.

"Wotcher Harry," She smiled at him.

Ignoring her greeting, he said. "What's going on?"

"Just giving a little advice to your uncle," Moody said before he turned back to Vernon. "I hope you understand what we talked about."

"Whatever," Vernon snarled; he was beyond angry that they had come and talk to him, but he wasn't going to make a scene. He glanced at Harry and scowled; 'It's all the freak's fault; just wait until we get home, then I can punish him for it.'

Harry looked at his uncle and could practically read the thoughts that ran through his mind and it made his anger level rise. He knew that this was most likely Dumbledore's doing and it just added on to the list of things that made Harry hate the man. He knew that their helpful 'advice' would do the exact opposite and knew that he would pay for it when he got to the house; though he had no intention of letting anything like that happen.

Harry turned to the others. "Is that all?"
"Yes," Shacklebolt nodded.

"Good," he nodded. "Can we go now?"

"Sure you can," Tonks placed a hand on his shoulder. "Just keep your chin up Harry and it'll be the end of summer before you know it."

"Yeah," he answered absently; he didn't really want to be in their presence any more than necessary. He was still angry with Dumbledore and now he was angry with them for what they did today.

"We should go," Remus said suddenly as if he sensed the mood that Harry was in.

"Right," Moody nodded.

"See you Harry," Remus looked directly into his eyes and Harry saw something in them; something that he was having a light bit of trouble understanding. When he did, a shocked looked passed through his eyes quickly before he shielded it; that seemed to be what Remus was looking for because he nodded and turned to leave along with the others.

When they were gone, Harry turned to his uncle. His eyes narrowed as he saw the anger and rage in Vernon's eyes. Letting his own rage and anger seep into his eyes, he dared him to say anything.

Vernon, who truly was about to say something stopped when he saw the look in his nephew's eyes.

"I am not in the mood for any of your drivel today," Harry hissed to his uncle. "Keep your mouth shut and get in the car."

"Boy," Vernon warned; he was not about to be commanded by the twerp and especially in public.

Harry took a step closer to his uncle; the rage and anger in his eyes intensified making them glow slightly with the power and menace; Harry smirked when he saw his Uncle's eyes widen in fear. Without saying anything he entered the back of the car and slammed the door behind him.

Vernon stood still for a few minutes, fear rolling off him before he moved to the car. Without saying anything, he started the car and pulled out. Throughout the drive, Vernon would periodically look back at his nephew but he refrained from saying anything; the way Harry's emerald eyes darkened, scared him into staying quiet. By the time he pulled up to the house, his hands were slightly shaking as Harry's eyes had gotten even darker. The moment the car was turned off he hurried out and escaped into the house leaving Harry still sitting in the car.

"Vernon?" Petunia Dursley looked at her husband with worried eyes. "What's wrong?"

Before he could answer, Harry walked in with Hedwig on his shoulder.

"What did I tell you about that animal?" Petunia hissed to him, moving forward with her hand raised.

"Pet," Vernon said, remembering the look in Harry's eyes at the station and in the car.

"Not now Vernon," Petunia said. "The freak knows better than to walk in here with that…that animal out for all to see."

She was steps away from him when Harry looked directly into her eyes; she stopped suddenly, paralyzed by the look in her nephew's eyes.
"I wouldn't do that if I were you Aunt Petunia," Harry spoke softly but the coldness in his voice, combined with the dark look in his eyes, sent a sense of foreboding through Petunia's body.

Suddenly fearing her nephew, Petunia took a few steps backwards until she stood next to Vernon; seeing it, Harry smirked which caused a shiver of dread to travel through their bodies.

"Good," Harry spoke. "Now, it's time for the ground rules; I am done being the good little boy for you people. As of this moment, I will no longer be your willing slave and I shall do what I want without any interruptions from either of you. The Harry Potter that has been living here for the past five years is no more and you can thank the "freaks" for it as they decided to take away the one person that meant the most to me. If any of you decided to treat me like you have since I turned eleven, I promise you that you will not like what I will do. Now, I'm going to go to my room and I will appreciate it if you left me alone until I say otherwise. Is that understood?"

Too terrified to say anything, all Vernon and Petunia could do was nod.

"Good," Harry said before making his way up the stairs and to his room.

When he was gone, Vernon and Petunia let out a shaky breath. Her eyes wide and fearful, Petunia turned to her husband. "He's back isn't he?"

"Yes Pet," Vernon whispered. "He's back; God help us he's back."

For the first time in years, Petunia and Vernon were terrified of their nephew.
Chapter Summary

Harry goes over his life, with startling realizations, and he decides to reach out to an unexpected person

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Harry Potter and all its affiliates belong to JK Rowling, Bloomsbury/Scholastic and Warner Bros. Studios. No copyright or trademark infringement is intended and no money is being made from this.

My Disclaimer: If I owned Harry Potter; Ginny would've died in the CoS, Harry would've broken free from Dumbledore's manipulations and Molly's overbearing, Sirius wouldn't have died, Hermione never would've dated Ron, Harry would've ditched Ron in fourth year, and most importantly, there'd be lots and lots of Harry/Draco slash

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Last time on RDA:

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"Yes Pet," Vernon whispered. "He's back; God help us he's back." For the first time in years, Petunia and Vernon were terrified of their nephew.

~...~

When Harry opened the door to his bedroom, he saw that it was still the same. Walking into the room, he closed the door behind him, walked over to the bed, and dropped his trunk near the foot. Hearing a trill from Hedwig, he walked over to the window and opened it. Harry smiled at the slight breeze that caressed his face before he shifted his body to allow Hedwig to move to the ledge; when she did, she closed her eyes for a few seconds before turning to look at her master.

"Things are going to change Hedwig," Harry spoke softly to her. "We're done being the goody two-shoes that everyone wants."
Hedwig shuffled her feathers and trilled at Harry.

"Yes, that means we will look the way we are supposed to." Raising a hand, Harry rubbed Hedwig's head gently. "Sirius grounded us didn't he? Because of him we were thinking of making the change permanent; but no more. They took him from us and I think it's time they knew exactly who we are and what we're capable of."

Excited trills came from the owl as she listened to her master; she knew what he was going to do and she couldn't wait. It was tiresome being in her current form and she missed her true form dearly. She shuffled on her feet and moved closer to Harry with another trill.

"Go on girl," Harry urged her. "Change."

Giving him another trill, Hedwig did as he asked. It took just a few minutes and when she was done, she spread her wings and ruffled her feathers, almost as if she was shaking herself off. She looked up at Harry and felt pleasure go through her at the affection in his eyes.

"You're beautiful Hed," Harry smiled as he held out his arm for her to move to. When she did, he rubbed her breast gently with his knuckles causing her to let out a pleased trill. "Everyone will be shocked when they see you; I wonder if it'll cause any of them to have a heart attack?"

When Hedwig gave a few trills, Harry knew she was laughing at what he had said. She shifted closer and bent down to give him a pick on his arm before giving a few trills.

"Alright, alright," Harry laughed. "I'll change; but you have to get off my arm for it to happen."

Trilling once more, Hedwig flew from his arm and landed back on the windowsill.

"Here goes," Harry muttered. Closing his eyes, he focused on his appearance, on what he really looked like; he waved an arm over his body and said the spell. "*Finite Incantatem.*"

A glow surrounded him for a few minutes and when it faded, a different looking person stood there. Walking over to the mirror, Harry waved his hand and cleared away the muck so that he could see himself clearly.

His messy, jet-black hair was now like Sirius'; it was longer and slightly curled, coming to rest on his shoulders. His eyes, which in the past were referred to as emeralds, now shone as bright as the color of the killing curse, Avada Kedavra. He saw that he was taller, but he knew that he was still a few inches shorter than Ron; since he had taken to exercising every summer after he got his Hogwarts letter, his skinny frame had filled out evenly with muscles. His face had lost the softness and baby fat and was more angular, and his lips were not as thin and dried as they were but slightly full and pouty. In short, in his true form Harry was the epitome of gorgeous.

Hedwig flew from her perch on the windowsill to land on his shoulder; reaching up a hand, he petted her softly before removing his glasses. His eyesight had been corrected since the end of his second year but he had kept the glasses on as a front.

"We make quite the impression don't we?" he asked his faithful companion and she trilled in response; with both his and Hedwig's new looks and her on his shoulder, the two did indeed make an impression. "Alright, now that that's out of the way; we need to figure out what we're going to do. Alright, first things first: the traitors."

Hedwig trilled at him before flying off and landing on the headboard of the bed. Harry walked over to his closet, and searched through it for a few minutes before coming back out with one of Dudley's old notebooks in his hands. Harry searched through the room until he found a pen before making his
way to the bed; he fixed his pillows against the headboard before settling against them with Hedwig looking over his shoulder.

"Alright," Harry said as he opened the book. "Would you like to know what I came up with when I was on the train?"

Hedwig trilled twice and Harry nodded.

"Ok, let's start with the Weasleys; as far as I know, the Weasleys are a pureblood family and they have never had any muggleborns in their family, if that is true why then did they decided to use the muggle means of getting to Kings Cross Station? Seeing how strict the Ministry is on the muggles not learning of our world, why would Mrs. Weasley be in Muggle London screaming for the whole platform to hear her about Platform 9 ¾? Why was she even in Muggle London in the first place considering their entire family is purebloods?"

Hedwig trilled twice more before leaning down and rubbing her head against his; she knew that he had become extremely angry on the train and she was curious as to what had caused her master to react like that. She wondered if he was still angry about it, but from his tone, all he sounded to her was amused and curious. She butted her head against his once more to let him know he could continue.

"This is what I think," Harry said as he reached a hand up and rubbed his owl before letting fall back to rest on his leg. "I think that it was a set up from the start; since I was new to the Wizarding World, the Old Man needed me under his control from the very beginning and who better to make sure that happened, than the Weasleys who follow his every command? They're the only Light Family Dumbledore knows will never question anything he says or does. Since I was so "mistreated" by my family, I would see the Weasleys as my surrogate family; becoming best friends with their son who was my age and falling in love and marrying the younger sister, thus have me blindly following Dumbledore like they do."

Harry shook his head. "Molly is too overbearing, Arthur bows to Molly too much considering he's supposed to be the Head of the House, Ron is a jealous git who thinks that everything should be handed to him and can't stand the idea of someone doing better than him; and Ginny, well Ginny is just too much of a Boy-Who-Lived fan and she creeps me the fuck out; always staring at me when she thinks I'm not looking."

Hedwig shifted on the headboard before letting out a few trills.

"Good question," Harry nodded. "I'm not too sure about them, but I guess I will have to find out; although, they do seem to be different from the entire family don't they?"

His faithful owl gave the equivalent of a nod.

"Ok; who's next in line? Ahhh, the Mudblood Hermione Granger: you know what Hed? Something she said in our first meeting struck me as odd. She said that she had been practicing spells during the summer and from what I know, she never got an owl from the Ministry for it. Why didn't she get one and I did for what Dobby did?"

Hedwig gave a trill as if to say she didn't know either.

"Moving on; the thing I hate about her is that she believes that she is always right and unless it's in a book, then it can't be true or real. Remember how she treated Luna just because she was different? And when she refused to believe me when I told her about the Thestrals the first time I saw them?"
Hedwig trilled in indignation; she had always been angry the bushy-haired when Harry had told her about it and she had never got over it. She herself had lived there her entire life and she was appalled by how the witch seemed to think she knew more about her world that the purebloods did.

"I know Hed," Harry soothed her. "And when she had started S.P.E.W?" Harry laughed. "For someone who is so passionate about learning, you would think she would've researched the way the Elves were before she even thought of starting S.P.E.W."

Harry snorted with laughed when he remembered the looks on both Dobby and Kreacher's faces whenever Hermione mentioned being free; Hedwig's trills sounded like she was laughing along with her wizard.

"I mean," Harry said. "How is it that someone who's never been to the Wizarding World until she was twelve, believe she knows more about it than the people that have lived there their entire lives… people that have generations and generations of family roots there. I can't believe she thinks she actually knows better than the ones that live there. I don't know how she can be referred to as the brightest witch of her age when she's monumentally stupid when it comes some of the Wizarding customs."

Turning his head, he looked at his familiar. "Do you know that she and Ron are a couple? Ron, the guy that made her cry from day one is the one she wants to be with; just goes to show how stupid she really is. I'm going to have a lot of fun knocking her off her high horse."

Hedwig ruffled her feathers and shook her head with a trill.

"And you can eat the cat of hers," Harry chuckled. "I swear the thing is just like its owner; walking around as if it knows everything. You know, the only difference between Hermione and Draco is their blood; Hermione is just as prejudiced and judgmental as he is and she walks around acting as if she knows better...that she is better. But we're going to fix that, aren't we?"

When Hedwig trilled, Harry chuckled again. "Yes we are."

The two were quiet after that; just enjoying each other's presence and taking comfort in it. Because of his warning to his family earlier, they left Harry alone; the sun was setting when he shifted on the bed. He turned and brought Hedwig to stand on his lap.

"We're going to need help before we do anything," he told her. "And there are some questions that I have and as crazy as it may sound, there's only one person I trust to actually give me the correct answer."

Hedwig trilled; she knew exactly whom her master was talking about and she knew that he was right; the man would be the one to tell him what he needed to know.

"Yes him," Harry nodded. "You up to deliver a letter?"

She gave a squawk, as if to say she couldn't believe he would ask that and Harry chuckled. "Sorry girl, of course you are."

Turning to a clean page, Harry started on his letter; when he was done, he folded it and placed it in Hedwig's beak. "You know who to take this to; make sure him and only him gets this letter and stay with him until he's ready to talk or send a reply. Knowing him, I'm sure it'll be a few days at the most."

Hedwig trilled a few times and then she rubbed her head against Harry's chin before disappearing. After she left, Harry turned back to his room.
"Well," he mused. "Since I'm no longer the Golden Boy, I think it's time my living arrangements change."

With a wave of his hand, his bed expanded to a King size which was already made; his mirror expanded enough to see just above his waist; the broken table was turned into a desk with a chair behind it. He turned to the far wall and concentrated; focusing on his magic, he allowed it to do what he wanted and a door appeared. Walking over, he opened the door and gave a satisfied smile when he saw a bathroom and it was exactly how he wanted it; a large size tub, double tap sink and a toilet. Closing the door, he glanced at his walls waved his hands once more, turning the colors from the dull, boring peach color to a vibrant green. When he was done, his stomach growled.

"Forgot doing this always makes me hungry," he chuckled softly. He left his room and headed down the stairs; ignoring uncle who was watching TV, he went to the kitchen where his aunt was.

"Oh my," Petunia's hand flew to her mouth as she took in her nephew's true appearance. Her eyes roamed his entire body before meeting his eyes only to see a smirk on his face.

"If we weren't family Aunt Petunia," Harry said. "I'd wonder why you were just checking me out." He laughed when he saw the slight blush on her face.

"I see you were serious about that boy being gone," Petunia said; she kept the sneer out of her voice, as she did not want to suffer the consequences from him.

"Did you think I was lying?" Harry asked as he started to make some dinner. "That boy is gone Petunia; I'm no longer you're slave, whatever you want, you'll do it yourself. You won't be able to tell me what to do anymore and if you or that walrus of a husband and that whale of a son of yours think that they can put their hands on me or order me to do anything…well, let's just say that you wouldn't have to buy any more fertilizer from the store."

Petunia gulped as her nephew's words washed over her; she knew that he meant every word and she cursed the magical world for being the reason he was back. She shivered slightly as she remembered what he was like as a child; the trouble he caused, the way he took pleasure in other people's pain, and the damage that he did, especially after he learned how to control his magic. Without saying anything, she left the kitchen.

"I can tell this will be the most exciting and pleasurable summer yet," Harry chuckled.

As he finished what he was making, his thoughts drifted to his cousin. "Hmm, Dudders has yet to be home and I have no doubt he will try and cause his usual ruckus; well, what better way to reacquaint myself with my past." Harry let out a dark chuckle as he left the kitchen and headed back to his room.

Back in the living, Petunia turned fearful eyes to her husband. "What are we going to do Vernon? Vernon was silent as he thought on his wife's question. "We could go visit Marge?"

"Yeah," Petunia nodded. "We could."

The couple was silent as they absently watched the TV; they knew that with Harry back to the way he was, things would change as well and they knew that if they valued their life, which they did, they would have to be careful of how they acted around him. They still had nightmares sometimes about his time as a child, when he had gained enough control of his magic to punish them for the abuse that they had done to him.
They were jerked out of their thoughts by the footsteps on the stairs; turning around, they saw Harry walking down with a smirk on his face and a dark look in his eyes. It confused and terrified them and they wondered what had caused it. Their answer came when the front door opened and they watched as their son came through the door.

(Earlier)

Harry smiled and laughed silently to himself as he remembered the look in his aunt's eyes. It thrilled him to know that he had put it there and that she was absolutely terrified of him and what he could do. He sat on his bed and ate his dinner; his mind wondered to Hedwig and the person she delivered the letter to and he smirked when he thought of the shock at seeing Hedwig's new look and the annoyance as they read his letter. He knew that the person would be skeptical to say the least, more than likely angry; but he also knew that their curiosity would get the better of them and they would end up at his place. He finished his food and placed the empty plate on the table. He looked around his room once more and smiled; he knew that he should've gotten a letter from the Ministry for the use of magic, but his control over his powers had allowed the magic to be virtually less than it actually was which wouldn't cause much of a blimp on their records.

Hearing noises outside, he moved to his window and opened it; when he saw who it was, a smirk came over his face. It was Dudley and his friends. He watched as they left and Dudley made his way around the house to the front door. He turned from the window and leaned against it for a few seconds. He thought on his cousin and knew that Dudley would try something this summer, as he always did when he realized that Harry wouldn't retaliate.

"Well," Harry said, "might as well let him know that those days are over."

Grinning, he moved from the window and made his way out of his room. As he was going down the stairs, a smirk came on his face while his eyes held a dark look as he thought on what he would do his cousin; he saw the confused and terrified on his aunt and uncle's face and when the door opened, his smirk got wider.

"Mum, dad," Dudley said as he came in. "I'm home."

He did not see Harry standing on the stairs as he moved to the living room to where his parents were.

"Hey mum, dad, is the freak home yet?" He had been in a hurry to get home all day because he knew that Harry would be there; he had missed his favorite punching bag, especially since Harry had stopped fighting back.

"Dudley," Petunia whimpered at his words; she looked behind him and saw the dark look in her nephew's eyes turn murderous. Before Dudley could answer however, Harry spoke.

"Would you mind repeating that Dudders?" Harry asked; he felt a flare of anger at him at his words, but didn't let it show in his voice.

Dudley turned around, ready to sneer at his cousin, only to lose said sneer as he took in Harry's look. "Wh-wh-what happened to you?"

"Magic," Harry smiled. "Now, I do believe I asked you a question; would you mind repeating what you said when you came in the door?"

"You can't do magic here," Dudley sneered to hide the fear that was going through him. "You're not allowed; that old man said so."

"Yeah well," Harry sneered. "That old man aint here and I'm done doing what they want; which
means, I can do this and not care at all." He used his magic to blanket the sound around the house before he pointed his hand Dudley's shoulder and said. *Diffindo.*

Dudley screamed as he felt the pain in his shoulder; blood quickly soaked through his shirt, turning the light color dark. Dudley fell to his knees as his other hand flew to his shoulder to try and stop the pain and the bleeding. Petunia screamed while Harry laughed.

"Please stop," Petunia pleaded to her nephew; she knew that they deserved it for the way they treated him over the years and the blind eye they kept when Dudley did the same, but she still tried to get her nephew to stop.

"Give me one reason why I should?" Harry asked before turning back to Dudley. His finger in the air, he used his magic and carved the word *freak* in big bold letters across Dudley's back. Dudley screamed even more and used his remaining hand to try and tear his shirt off his back.

"Can't take a little pain Dudders?" Harry tsked. "This is nothing compared to the hell I've been through, but I suppose I shouldn't tire out all my fun."

He moved from his spot and walked around Dudley until he was facing his back. "Now hold still Dudders, this is going to hurt."

He moved his hand and he healed the cut on Dudley's shoulder. When he came to the one on his back, he looked at it for a few seconds before he smiled. The darkness in his smile would have made Dudley pissed himself if he saw it. *Cremocarnis.*

Dudley screamed as he felt the pain of the fire on his skin while Petunia and Vernon cringed at the smell of the burnt flesh as Harry cauterized the wound.

Looking at the flesh as it burned, Harry whispered another spell. *Occludictus.*

When he was satisfied, he cancelled the spells; Dudley had already lost consciousness before he was finished. When he was done, he turned to go back to his room and Petunia and Vernon hurried to their son's side.

Harry paused when he was on the second step. "Just so you know, the word 'FREAK' will never be able to be removed from his body; not even surgery will get it off."

With those words, he left his aunt and uncle crying on the floor over their unconscious son and headed to his room.

~...~

It's been about four days since Harry got back to his family's place and four days since he had attacked his cousin. Dudley had spent the rest of the day unconscious from the wound that he had received from Harry and to the surprise and relief of his parents, had woken up the next morning without any pain or inflammation in the wound; the words however, were still there for everyone to read and they knew that it was punishment for all the times they had called Harry by that name.

Since then, the trio had taken to avoiding him and staying out of his way, which Harry couldn't be happier about it; he had his privacy and he didn't even had to do much to get it. Stepping out of the shower, Harry wrapped the towel around his waist before opening the door to his room. He walked over to his closet and pulled out a pair of jeans and a t-shirt before throwing them on his bed. He was turning away when he heard the tapping at his window; he looked up and saw Pig, Ron's owl.

"What the hell does that traitor want?" Harry muttered to himself. He debated on whether or not to
let the owl in, but in the end, he pulled on his jeans and decided to let the owl in. "Might as well read it and get a laugh."

Walking over to the window, he opened it and watched in distaste as the owl flew hazardingly around his room. Seeing that the owl had not one, but two letters and not wanting to deal with the trouble of fighting to catch it, he raised his hand and cast the Summoning spell, bringing the letters to him. He glanced at the writing on the parchment, noting that both were from Ron and Hermione before throwing them on his bed and turning to the owl.

"You can leave now, or if you want, you can stay until Hedwig gets back; and you know how she is when it comes to other owls near me." Harry chuckled silently at that; his Hedwig was very territorial.

With a squawk, the owl flew back through the windows, hurrying out of there not wanting to deal with the enraged owl.

His warning couldn't have been timed more perfectly because seconds later, he felt the rush of familiar magic over and knew that his beloved familiar had returned, and that she had a guest. He turned around fully expecting to see the annoyed and ever present sneer and glare, only to smile at the shocked look on the man's face as he took in Harry's appearance. He held out his arm, allowing Hedwig to land on it before smiling at his guest.

"Hello Severus."

(Four Days Ago)

There are three things that the students and teachers of Hogwarts could tell you about the Potions Master, Severus Snape: He favored his Slytherin students above the others, he wasn't a polite person to be around, and he held utter contempt for one Harry Potter.

However, the one thing that they did not know, which would shock most to their death, was that he also cared for that same Harry Potter. It was a promise actually, a promise made to a woman he had been in love with; a woman he had unintentionally sentenced to her death...a woman that went by the name Lily Potter, Harry's mother. Though Lily was already dead when Severus had made his promise, it didn't matter; he supposed that he had done it as sort of penance for being the reason, or at least one of the reasons, why she was dead.

Snape sat in his office, his mind on what had happened in the Headmaster's office a few days ago. He had been on his way to talk to Dumbledore and was on the stairway to the office when he felt the power. Stunned, he had hurried up the steps and into the office, only to stop dead when he saw Harry standing there, his magic whirling around him. He had no idea as to what had caused that to happen, but he did the only thing he could have thought of, he had yelled out to Harry. To his surprise, though it hadn't shown, the boy had regained control of his magic and had left the office.

When he had turned to Dumbledore, he had expressed his need to know what had caused the boy to lose control and had not been given an answer, which in all honesty, hadn't surprised him. The words that Phineas had spoken to him had left a sense of foreboding in his mind. Thinking over it now, Severus was deeply troubled by the words.

It was no secret that Phineas held contempt towards Dumbledore. Phineas thought the man was pretending to be something he was not; that he was just as manipulative, perhaps more than Voldemort himself. As a former headmaster, he was privileged to the happenings inside of Dumbledore's office, which is why his words about Harry finally seeing what he knew, struck a chord inside of Severus.
"What really happened in that office?" Severus asked himself. As if his questioned was answered, a noise jerked him from his thoughts. Looking up, a retort on his tongue, ready to lay into whoever chose to disturbed him, he stopped short seeing the bird on the back of his couch.

"My word." He got up from his chair and took a few cautious steps until he was standing just a few feet away. "A Phoenix, but I have never seen one this color before."

The bird was white; the tips of its wings were black, as if they had been dipped in black ink, and its feathers were interspersed with black as well. As Severus looked into the eyes of the bird, the soulful amber-colored eyes struck him.

"You are very magnificent," he murmured. "More so than Fawkes, Dumbledore’s own Phoenix."

The phoenix thrilled and puffed its chest out in obvious pride and pleasure.

"But, who do you belong to?" Severus asked the stunning bird.

His gaze went over the bird once more, taking in the colors again, before moving up to look into the soulful amber-colored eyes; eyes that seemed very familiar, but he couldn't place where he had seen them before. His gaze went to the parchment that the Phoenix held in its beak and he reached out to take it from the bird. When he did, he noticed that the bird did not leave immediately, which left him to believe that the bird was waiting on a response. He moved to his desk and took a seat in his chair. He opened the letter and as he read, his scowl became more pronounced.

Hello Severus,

I can call you that, can't I? Well it doesn't matter; I'll call you that anyways. The reason for this missive is because I need to talk to you. I have some questions I need answered, and, I know this will come as a surprise to you, but you're the only one I can trust not to lie to me. You're probably scoffing at this right now or calling me an impertinent brat or foolish Gryffindor in your mind, but it is the truth.

I was recently told some information; information that, if it had been given to me sooner, could have created a very different outcome that the one that happened because it was kept from me. Because of that information, and the consequences of it, I find myself shedding my image so to speak and cutting the puppet master's strings or rather, the strings that he thought he had placed on me. The Harry Potter that you know is only an image created to hide the real one. Confusing aint it? Don't worry, everything will be explained...if you want to know the truth. I know that you're curious as to what Dumbledore told me that caused me to have the kind of reaction that I did, just like I know you're also curious about the Phoenix that is sitting on your desk right now...

Snape looked up and true to the words on the paper, the Phoenix was sitting on his desk; scowling at it and the letter, he looked back down and continued reading.

I was right wasn’t I? Back on point; I know this because I know the one thing about you that no one else knows, and that is, you care about me. If you truly hated me like you claimed, then you never would've tried to save my life back in first year or all the other times you've helped me; you would have left me alone, but you didn't. The thing is Severus, I'm tired of being who everyone wants me to be and I'm tired of not being who I really am. There are things that I need to do and I am going to need your help to accomplish them; I am not stupid nor am I an idiot, no matter how I acted or what you believed. I'm giving you the chance to know everything and to know the real Harry Potter.

Knowing you like I do, you will fight with yourself on whether or not to reply; so take a few days to think it over. When, that's right, when not if, you make the decision to reply, just say the words "I'm
“ready” to the Phoenix; she will bring you to me.

See you in a few days Severus.

HJP

Oh and could you not tell the Old Man anything? I would appreciate it if he wasn't involved in this. Toodles.

"That impertinent brat," Severus snarled. "How dare he presume to know such things about me? Well he is wrong; I am not that curious as to what Dumbledore told him nor do I want to know the real Harry Potter. I know just who he is and that is a pain in my ass!"

He looked up, the snarl on his lips, as he heard the phoenix let out a thrill…one that gave him the impression that the bird was laughing at him. Cursing, he turned away from her and looked down at the parchment once more.

"I will not," he murmured to himself. "I have no need or desire to."

Ignoring the letter and the Phoenix, he left his rooms. As he stalked through the corridor, the people in the portraits shivered and turned away as they noticed the dark look on his face. He spent the next few hours out of his room, before he returned just after dinner was over. The moment he stepped inside, his eyes were drawn to the letter still lying on his desk. He stalked over to his desk and pulled out his wand, an Incendio on his lips; however, he did not say it as he found himself hesitant to cast it. He turned away and paced, his eyes drifting to the letter now and again, and started muttering to himself, all to the amusement of the Phoenix who was watching him.

"Stupid brat." Severus muttered. "Why didn't I burn the blasted thing? There is nothing, absolutely nothing he has to say that I want to know. I will not be made a fool of! And I will not lower myself to that…that whelp's insistence that he believes he knows me and that he thinks that I will do what he says. Ha! I'll show him." he paused in his pacing and walked over to the desk; picking up the letter, he read it once more before throwing it back on the desk; the Phoenix thrilled in laughter making his scowl even darker.

The three days was a repeat of the same thing; on the fourth day, as he opened the door from his personal rooms and stepped into his office, his eyes once again caught sight of the parchment lying on the desk. Scowling yet again, he took a glance around and saw that the Phoenix was still there and still had that look of amusement in its eyes. He turned away and picked up the letter once more; just as he had done since he got the letter, he took it up and read it once again; unlike before, he didn't throw it back onto his desk, but rather kept a hold of it, his grip tightening ever so slowly. After a few minutes of tense silence, his hand relaxed and he let out a half frustrated, half resigned sigh. The Phoenix, seeming to sense it, flew from her perch to his shoulder.

"I guess I'm going to the brat after all," he said. Looking around, he let out another sigh before tossing the letter into the fireplace. "I'm ready."

The Phoenix thrilled before the two disappeared in a flash of fire. When they cleared, Snape looked up and saw a young man in a pair of jeans only with his back to him. He saw the person was muscled and had shoulder length curly hair. He scowled as he watched the person straighten up.

"Where's Potter and who is this? If this is a trick, that brat will die a slow, painful death.'

As if hearing his thoughts, the person turned around and Severus stood in shock as he saw the familiar green eyes. He watched as Harry held out his arm and the Phoenix flew off his shoulder and landed on his arm before the teen turned to him.
"Hello Severus."

"Potter?" he asked; he knew that he was supposed to be more composed than he was, but he could not move beyond the shock. With some difficulty, he was able to wipe the shock from his face and replaced with his usual blank expression.

"Yep," Harry nodded with a grin. "Like I said in the letter, the Harry Potter you knew was only an illusion."

"Explain yourself," Severus hissed.

"Alright," Harry said. "But first, let me get Hedwig something to eat."

"Hedwig?" Severus' eyes traveled over to the Phoenix. "Are you telling me that that Phoenix is your owl?"

"Yes," Harry said as he moved Hedwig to her perch before securing a dish with water and a box of crackers that he had grabbed from the kitchen earlier. "Here you go girl."

Hedwig trilled as she nipped Harry's fingers; she trilled a few more times in succession, the sound musical, and it caused Harry to laugh.

"Really?" Harry turned to look at Severus. "You'll have to tell me about it later."

She trilled in agreement before settling down, leaving him to talk to Snape. Smiling, Harry rubbed her breast before turning to the man.

"Potter," Severus drawled. "You will explain to me exactly what is going, starting with why your owl is now a Phoenix and why you look that way."

"Alright," Harry nodded before pulling a t-shirt out of his trunk. He moved to his bed before gesturing to the chair at the table. When Severus sat down, Harry made himself comfortable. "Hedwig was never really an owl; when Hagrid bought her for me I could tell immediately that something was different about her, and she could tell the same about me. When we were alone for the first time, she showed me her true appearance and then told me what she was and I did the same."

"Continue," Snape nodded.

"Apparently Hedwig here is a very special kind of Phoenix," Harry looked over at his bird with affection in his eyes causing her to trill softly. "She is more powerful than Fawkes is; I think she goes back to the time of Merlin. Apparently, because of her power, witches and wizards have tried to bond her to them to gain access. She got tired of it; the last wizard that tried to forcefully bond to her had an apprentice, one that was angry with his master for wanting to force his magic on her so she asked him to cast a mild curse on her. The nature of the curse was basically to keep her in owl form until she found the wizard she belonged to, the one she was destined to bond with and any wizard or witch that tried to force a bond on her would have a painful experience."

"You were the wizard she was meant to bond with," Snape said.

"Yes," Harry said before he let out a chuckle. He watched as Hedwig flew from her perch to land on his lap, bringing up a hand, he let his knuckles rub her chest gently. "I was confused; I mean, even if I was new to the Wizarding World, I knew enough to know that Phoenixes were creatures of light, so I couldn't understand why her as a Phoenix would want to bond with me."
"What exactly does that mean Mr. Potter?" Snape asked.

"It means Severus," Harry said; the use of his first name caused Snape to scowl. "That I am not the Golden Boy of Gryffindor that everyone believes I am."

"Please," Snape scoffed. "You're a Gryffindor through and through; like your parents."

"Oh really?" Harry mused. "Did you know I was supposed to be a Slytherin? The Sorting Hat told me Slytherin would help me to excel and that I would find what I needed there."

"What?" Once again, Snape was in shock and could not stop it from showing on his face; he found it hard to believe that the Golden Boy of Gryffindor was actually supposed to be a Slytherin Snake.

"Oh yes," Harry smiled. "It's true, but as I didn't want anyone knowing how I really was, I convinced it to put me in Gryffindor."

"And how are you really?" Snape asked.

"I'm as dark as you are," Harry said.

Snape stiffened slightly as his face became paler before he composed himself. "I have no idea what you're talking about and I would appreciate it Mr. Potter if you refrained from making such accusations."

"You do know what I'm talking about," Harry went on, unperturbed. "And they're not accusations; Hedwig is a Phoenix, and like all Phoenixes, she can sense if a person is evil or not. Unlike most Phoenixes however, Hedwig's nature is dark."

"That cannot be," Snape said. "As you have said and as I can see, the bird is a Phoenix and if you're as dark as you say you are, though I doubt that, she would not be bonded with you."

"Unlike popular notion Severus," Harry said. "Phoenixes are neither good nor evil; they bond with a wizard because sometimes it is what they want, other times it is because they are destined to do so. The nature of the bonder does not matter and in rare cases, if the bond is true and deep or strong enough, the Phoenix will take on the nature of its witch or wizard."

Snape was silent as he took in the teen's words; he found it hard to believe that Harry wasn't as pure as everyone thought.

"I know you still don't believe me," Harry interrupted his musings. "So I'll show you; follow me."

He got up off the bed, Hedwig moving from his lap to his shoulder and went to the door. Snape, after thinking for a few seconds, got up and followed him. The two went down the stairs and Snape tensed when he heard the sound of the television. When they were a few steps from the bottom, Snape could see three heads in the couch area and knew they were his family. He went to keep walking, but was stopped by Harry.

"Stay here until I call for you," Harry said. Snape bristled at the command, but did as he was told. Harry continued down the stairs and headed for the living room.

"Hello," he said cheerfully; he smiled as he watched his family freeze before turning around. When they saw that it was really him, they jumped from the couch, which to Harry was impressive considering the size of two of them, and back away.

"What are you doing down here?" Petunia asked. "We did as you said and we stayed out of your
"I know," Harry shrugged. "But I was in a mood."

"Wh-wh-what kind of mood?" Dudley stuttered out; his back still held the words Harry had carved there four days ago and he was terrified that Harry was going to do more damage.

"Don't worry Dudders," Harry smiled, which caused their fear to increase. "I won't hurt you; the only thing I want is to see your back; have to make sure my mark is still there." Dudley whimpered.

On the steps, Snape's eyes widened slightly at the fear he could hear in the family's voices; he hadn't believed Harry when he had said he wasn't the Golden Boy, but now, it seemed as if he was telling the truth.

"Severus," Harry called out. "Could you come here please?"

Wondering what the boy was up to, Snape went down the stairs. When he came into the living, the fear in the family went up. Petunia let out a gasp as she recognized him.

"You?" She gasped. "What are you doing here?"

"Aunt Petunia," Harry's voice held an edge to it, one which made Petunia cower in fear. "It is impolite to be rude to my guest."

Dudley's eyes kept darting over to Snape and when the man scowled, he whimpered and shifted closer to his father; he wondered if Harry had called the man to hurt them as well. Seeing the look on his cousin's face, Harry chuckled.

"Don't worry Dudders," He said. "He's not here to torture you; that pleasure is for me alone. I just need to show him something real quick."

Snape hid a look of surprise at Harry's words, keeping a blank expression on his face.

"Turn around Dudley," Harry commanded. Terrified of what Harry would do, Dudley slowly turned. With just a thought, Harry banished his cousin's shirt, causing him to start crying softly and Snape to raise an eyebrow. He turned to Harry to question him but stopped as soon as he noticed the writing on Dudley's back. Looking closer, he saw that the boy's back had the word 'freak' in big letters and it seemed to be cauterized.

"Beautiful isn't it?" Harry snickered. "I did it because he called me a freak when he came home from school four days ago; now he is the one that has the label on him and it can never be removed. My magic placed it there and my magic alone can remove it and I have no intention of ever doing that." With that, he turned and headed back up stairs; after a few moments, Snape followed.

When they got back to Harry's room, Hedwig flew off his shoulder and went back to her perch. Harry took up his place back on his bed while Snape took his place in the chair.

"You have a lot more explaining to do," Snape said.

"I know," Harry smiled. "That's why you're here; things are going to change Severus and like I said in my letter, you're going to help me." He paused for a few seconds before continuing. "I know that you have questions, so you can go ahead and ask; I will answer whatever question you ask and tell you everything you need to know and I expect the same courtesy."
"Alright," Snape nodded after thinking it over for a few minutes.

"So," Harry gestured with his hands. "Ask away."

“So, how long have you been able to do wandless magic?” Snape asked.

Chapter End Notes

A/N 2: I love the scene with Severus and I had a lot of fun writing it. Next chapter will continue with Harry and Snape's talk. As always, now that you've read, review and let me know what you think.
Harry and Snape finish their talk and also, he gets post from Ron and Hermione; meanwhile, Neville gets an interesting dream

"speaking"
'thinking'
'letters'

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Last time on RDA:

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"Alright," Snape nodded after thinking it over for a few minutes.

"So," Harry gestured with his hands. "Ask away."

"How long have you been able to do wandless magic?" Snape asked.
Harry wasn't surprised that Snape would ask that question first; in fact, he was kind of expecting it. He had seen the shock in Snape's eyes, though his face showed nothing, when he had seen Dudley's back and knew that the man was starting to believe him about being dark.

"Let me tell you something first," Harry said. "My family hates magic; they hate any and everything that has to do with it, including me. Petunia hates it because of my mother; apparently, she and Lily were close when they were kids, but when they found out Lily was a witch and Petunia was not, she became jealous. That jealousy soon turned to anger and hatred and Petunia turned that anger to her sister.

"As they got older, it became worse; especially when Lily fell in love with James. The night Voldemort died, Dumbledore left me on the doorstep with only a note telling them my parents were dead and they were now my guardians. So you can only imagine the life I was going to have. Me, a magical baby, placed on the doorstep of magic haters."

"It seems I was led to believe that you lived a charmed life," Snape said. "That your family treated you like a prince."

"Please," Harry snorted. "More like a servant; from the moment I was old enough to reach the stove, which would've been age four, I've been cooking for them. However, my job started a year before; I was three years old when I did my first bit of accidental magic. My uncle decided I was ungrateful just because I told him I was hungry, so he kicked me in my stomach and punched me in my face. My magic reacted and broke one of Petunia's vases and it healed my bruises; my uncle didn't like that. Petunia made me scrub my blood off the floor; age three and they forced me to clean up.

"As the years went by, the beatings got worse because my magic kept reacting, though I didn't know it was me. When Dudley was old enough to understand, I became his favorite punching bag. I didn't know what my name was until I went to school; I was always called 'freak' or 'boy'. During one of Dudley's Harry Hunting games, I was running from him, wishing I could get away and the next thing I know, I'm no longer on the ground but on the school roof."

"You were able to Disapparate at such a young age?" Snape's voice held disbelief.

"I didn't know that that was what I was doing," Harry said. "All I cared about was getting away. I was seven when I realized that I could make things happen; it was just after my seventh birthday and Petunia had me outside cleaning out her garden. When I was done, I was hungry and messy so, silly me decided it would be ok to go in the house; it wasn't. Petunia freaked out and hit me across the head with the book she had in her hands and that's when things changed; for the first time I became angry.

"I was so angry I wished that the book would attack her so she could see how it felt to be hit and to my surprise, it did. Of course I got the beating of my life for that, but I didn't care. I realized I could do things and I started practicing. I started out small, doing things like pushing my cot away or wishing away the smell of urine in my room and when I got control over that, I went bigger. By the time I was eight, I had enough control over my magic so that whatever I wanted, my magic did it for me. And at that time, there was only one thing I wanted; revenge."

"You attacked your family," Severus remarked. It was not a question.

"Yes," Harry nodded. "I broke Dudley's arm and his leg and then I made him do jumping jacks before I made him clean all his blood off the floor with his broken arm; I loved his screams. I placed Vernon in a glass cage with a couple of snakes, as he's completely terrified of them. I forced Petunia
to clean the bathroom with her own toothbrush before she brushed her teeth with that same toothbrush and then I placed a harness over her face and made her drink from the toilet; I had so much fun doing that."

Harry laughed and Snape held back a shiver at the dark undertones to it.

"Anyways, after that, my magic healed them up and I spent the next few years perfecting my control over my magic by having revenge on every person that tormented me," Harry continued. "When Hagrid came to get me that first summer, I realized that he had no idea I could do magic and he expected me to be, for lack of a better word, untouched; so I decided not to tell anyone just what I can do."

Any and all doubts that Snape had about Harry's claim of being dark was destroyed by what he had just revealed.

"What about your school work?" Snape asked. "Was that the true extent of your abilities or were you hiding that as well?"

"I was hiding," Harry smiled. "Before I went to Hogwarts, before I really had any control over my magic, I wasn't allowed to do better than Dudley. I learned at a young age that my scores should always be lower than his, so I had to pretend that I didn't know anything. When I got to Hogwarts, I realized that I had to do the same thing there as well, especially if I wanted them to believe I was the innocent, naïve boy they thought I was. After Granger and Weasley became friends with me, I knew I definitely had to go that way; Weasley was too jealous and Granger didn't seem like she'd be able to stand someone being better than her."

"So you noticed that?" Snape drawled with a slight twitch to his lips; he was curious as to what happened to make him refer to them by the last name, but would wait before asking that question.

"Yeah," Harry laughed. "Like I said, I was a lot more observant than I let on; made it a lot easier for everyone to underestimate me."

"I have to say I am one of the ones that did," Snape confessed.

"I know," Harry nodded. "But the thing of it is, even though you did underestimate me, you were one of the few people in the school that didn't see me as the Boy-Who-Lived. To you I was just Harry; messy-haired, irresponsible and a pain in the ass. And I really appreciated it."

"You're welcome," Snape said. "I cannot for the life of me, fathom that I am actually sitting here with you having a real conversation."

"I bet if someone had told you that a week ago you would've had them committed to the insane ward at St. Mungo's," Harry laughed. "I think it's because a part of you knew something was off about me, and with all that happened with Dumbledore, you now find a way for you to get the answers you wanted."

"I think I'm beginning to like this Harry Potter," Snape said. "And if you ever tell anyone I told you that, you will find yourself as one of the ingredients in a potion."

"You wouldn't," Harry laughed. "And I guess I'll have to call your bluff seeing as this coming school year, I refuse to act the way I did for the past five years. A new Harry Potter will be entering Hogwarts come September, one that doesn't give a damn about appearances and what everyone else thinks."

"I look forward to teaching that Harry Potter," Snape said; the twitching of his lips could almost pass
off as a smile threatening to break free. "One more question and then you can ask what you need to know."

"Ok," Harry nodded. "Go ahead."

"Your appearance," Snape gestured to his body. "Could you explain that?"

"Well, after my first year," Harry said. "I realized something; I realized that the Headmaster had to know about my home life and that he expected me to look a certain way. Since I had gained control over my magic at eight, I no longer allowed the Dursleys to starve me. I started getting more food… healthier food and I didn't do all of the chores that my family gave me. I did the ones that actually required working; like Petunia's garden.

"By the time I entered Hogwarts, I was actually very healthy; but since I needed everyone to think I didn't know squat and I didn't want to draw much attention to myself, which looking back I can see that made no difference, I wore Dudley's old clothes to hide my body. Why do you think Madam Pomfrey never reported anything about undernourishment or malnutrition? It's because she had nothing to report."

"But why exactly did you decide to start working out?" Snape asked.

"It was because of Dumbledore," Harry answered. "I noticed something the night he saw me in Dudley's clothes; it was a look of satisfaction. It was as if he was happy with the way I looked. It was then that I realized that I was doing the right thing in having them think I was naïve. That summer, I started working out…I know, I know; an eleven year old working out, but I did. Every summer I would work out and at the end of the summer, I would cast the glamour spell over myself so that no one would know. And well, working out every year for five years and eating food to nourish your body and this" he gestured to his body "is the end result."

"And your eyes?" Snape asked; he had noticed that Harry was not wearing his glasses and was curious as to how he had gotten his eyesight fixed.

"That's thanks to Hedwig," Harry smiled over at his familiar. "You know that Fawkes healed me after my fight with the Basilisk in the Chamber of Secrets; when I got home that summer, I was outside working in the garden and I had gotten some of the chemicals in my eyes. I stumbled my way into the house and into the bathroom. I tried washing it out with water, but when it didn't work, I made my way to my room and collapsed on my bed.

"Now, in my panic, I completely forgot I could just use my magic to make the pain go away. Hedwig came in and she cried directly into my eyes. Well, you know how a Phoenix tears work and the next thing I know, I'm blinking my eyes really fast and when the pain was gone, as well as my need to blink, I realized that I could see perfectly; in fact, my eyesight was better than ever. Then I had something else to hide from everyone."

"So I am the first magical person to see how you truly look?" Snape asked; he couldn't explain why he felt the beginning of a warm feeling through his body at that thought.

"Yes," Harry nodded. "My aunt saw it first, then Dudley and Vernon."

"Speaking of you family," Snape said. "That wound on your cousin's shoulder…that is advanced spells."
"I know," Harry said. "Granger wasn't the only one that loved to read; I wanted to be better than everyone and I knew that for that to happen, I would have to know what I was doing. I spent a lot of time in the library. I was there so often, that Madam Prince warmed up to me and she showed me a place in the library where I could go and not be disturbed and she never told anyone I was there. She even showed me where I could find books with more information about spells and magic in general. Granger would die to read the books I've read."

"Ok," Snape said; he was satisfied with the answer, as he knew that no matter how powerful Harry was his knowledge had to have come from somewhere.

"Now I suppose you have some questions for me?"

"Hmm," Harry looked a little thoughtful. "I guess I do; first off, when you found us in Umbridge's office and I gave you that little message, did you understand what I meant?"

"Yes," Snape nodded.

"So you knew it was about Sirius, Voldemort and the prophecy orb?" Harry raised an eyebrow.

"I wasn't completely sure when you said the place where it's hidden," Snape admitted. "But I did get the part about the Dark Lord and Black."

"How long did it take you to tell Dumbledore and why did it take so long for the Order to get the Ministry?" Harry asked.

"I sent word to Dumbledore as soon as I was back in my warded quarters." Snape said. "I could not use the floo, because Umbridge had them all monitored, but the Order has a secret way of communicating for such emergencies."

Seeing Harry opening his mouth to inquire, Snape raised his hand. "No, I won't tell you about this just now. I relayed word for word what you said. I assumed the Headmaster would first check up on Black at Headquarters and then send someone to the Department of Mysteries to look for anything suspicious."

"The Order showed up about half an hour after we met up with the Death Eaters," Harry said. "By then we had already been through hell."

"I had no idea," Snape said. "I was in my rooms after I send of my message to Dumbledore and I didn't come out until it was time for dinner. I didn't realize that you and your little friends had left the castle and travelled to London, although I should have anticipated some foolish Gryffindor stunt like that. What were you thinking? A group of six teenagers on a harebrained rescue mission against the Dark Lord and his inner circle?"

Harry glared at the Potions Master. "Yes, looking back it was very stupid and reckless, but then I believed that vision was true. I thought Sirius was really in terrible danger, Voldemort Crucio'd him and threatened to kill him! I believed that nobody else could help him."

Harry dragged his hands through his hair in rising agitation. "Dumbledore never told me that the Order had any secret means of communication. You just sneered and scowled at me, how was I to know that you would contact Dumbledore and pass on my message? I had flooed Headquarters from Umbridge’s office before she caught us; that's why I broke in her office to check up on Sirius. Kreacher said he was out, not at home. I didn't want to take my so called friends along at all, they insisted and then Luna came up with the idea to ride on Thestrals to London. Whoa, that flight was
so brilliant!"

Harry sobered quickly and sighed. "Turned out it wasn’t such a great idea to race to the Ministry like we did. I must admit that it was a clever trap. Voldemort played me so well. You were right all along; he used my weakness and love for Sirius against me. It’s partly my fault Sirius paid the price, partly Kreachers fault for lying to me, but it’s also Dumbledore’s fault, because if he had only told me right from the start about the prophesy and that this prophesy was that all important secret something Voldemort wanted all year, I think I wouldn’t have acted quite so rashly. Sirius might still be alive," Harry finished bitterly.

After a moment Harry asked, "Do you know why it took so long for the Order to show up in the Department of Mysteries?"

Snape ran a finger across his lips and mused, "Well; only Black and Lupin were at Headquarters on that day. All the other Order members were occupied elsewhere, I suppose either at home or at work. It would have taken some time for Dumbledore to contact them and more time for those members who could get away from their duties to Apparate to the Ministry and start searching for you."

Leveling a glare at Harry, Snape mocked, "You realize, Potter, that the Order of the Phoenix is not organized exactly like the Dark Order? Dumbledore cannot call the Order members immediately to him wherever he is and dispatch them into battle at once without a discussion like when the Dark Lord calls his Death Eaters?"

Harry's cheeks flushed with the embarrassment. "Of course, sorry I didn’t really think about this."

"That is more than obvious", Snape drawled.

Harry fought to calm down; he would not fall back into his usual reaction of anger and resentment.

"Do you know what the prophecy is?" Harry asked; he had no idea why he had asked the question, but like with Neville, his instinct had urged him to.

"I know that it's about you and the Dark Lord," Snape said. Snape for his part debated whether or not he should continue on and tell Harry just how he came to know about the prophecy. In the end, he decided to be honest, simply for the fact that Harry had been nothing but since he got there; if Harry asked, then he would answer. And as if he had heard Snape say that, he asked.

"Do you know what it says?" Harry asked; he was curious to know if Dumbledore had told anyone else.

"Yes," Snape answered; since not minutes ago he had just vowed to tell the truth. The only thing he did was pray that Harry didn't ask the question he truly did not want to answer. However, he should've remembered that the impossible always happened to Harry and if he wished that Harry wouldn't ask, he would and he did.

"How?" Harry asked.

Snape was silent for a few minutes before he began speaking; he knew that what he was about to reveal would expose a secret that was known by only a few people.

"Remember earlier I told you that was I as dark as you are," Harry told him. "It means I know where your true loyalties lie and I didn't need Hedwig to tell me that; in fact, all she did was confirmed it. I know you want to know how I know, but I'll tell you after you tell me how you know what the prophecy says."
"Fair enough," Snape nodded before he continued. "The night Dumbledore was told the prophecy I 
was there; I overheard the first part and I immediately left to inform the Dark Lord. The Dark Lord 
and I discussed the possibilities of just who exactly the child could be and thanks to Pettigrew; we 
learned it was the Potter's.

"At the time, I was still desperately in love with Lily Evans Potter and I must confess I cared nothing 
for you or your father. I pleaded with the Dark Lord to spare her life if he insisted on getting rid of 
you and he assured me that he would at least give her the choice. When I heard that Lily had died, I 
left and went to Dumbledore to confess what I did and I convinced him that I truly regretted my 
actions; he gave me the choice 
to become his spy."

"But Dumbledore doesn't know that you're a spy for Voldemort and not for him," Harry smirked.

"No he doesn't," Snape admitted. "No one does; which begs the question, how do you know where 
my loyalties truly lie?"

"You called Voldemort the Dark Lord," Harry said. "Only his most faithful followers call him that; 
when did you switch back over to his side?"

"I never left," Snape said. "The night I told him about what I had overheard, he was concerned and I 
was the only one that saw it. We discussed well into the night many different possibilities; the biggest 
and hardest discussion was one where he didn't succeed. It was difficult to get him to see reason, but 
I did. I told him that despite how powerful he was, he shouldn't underestimate the fact that 
Dumbledore would probably have some kind of trick waiting for him if he attacked Godric's Hollow. 
He had to consider the possibility of his defeat.

"He told me that he had a plan should the night not go the way he intended; if it didn't go in his 
favor, I was to go to Dumbledore and plead my case. We knew that Dumbledore would say yes 
because next to Lucius, I was the most trusted follower that the Dark Lord had. So if I was on 
Dumbledore's side, then he could gain information into the Dark Lord's plans. When Dumbledore 
said that he didn't believe the Lord was truly dead, I knew him to be right; if he had died, I would 
have felt it through the mark."

"Knowing that Dumbledore would have had compassion and power behind him," Harry stated. 
"You would have been safe from any persecutors and in a position to help Voldemort return."

"Exactly," Snape nodded. "Even now, Dumbledore still has no idea that I am loyal to Voldemort; he 
thinks I am on his side."

"You are the ultimate Slytherin to pull off this deception for so long," Harry chuckled. "I would love 
to see the look on the Old Man's face the day he knows exactly who you're loyal to."

"When that day comes," Snape smirked. "I'll let you know."

"Good," Harry smiled.

"What really happened that day in Dumbledore's office?" Snape asked.

"He told me the prophecy and then he basically told me that it was my fault that Sirius died," Harry 
said. "And then, when I asked why he never told me from the start the real reason why Voldemort 
was after me, he said it was because he wanted me to have a normal childhood; needless to say, I 
didn't take that well."

"After everything you have just told me about your childhood," Snape said. "I can say you were in
the right with how you reacted. I do have something to ask though."

"What is it?"

"I just told you that I was basically the reason your parents were killed," Snape said. "I must admit I
expected a different reaction than the one I got."

"Did you expect me to yell at you or something?" Harry raised an eyebrow.

"Yes," Snape nodded.

"Why would I?" Harry asked. "I know people expect me to be upset or sad about my parents being
dead, but I'm not. For the first eleven years of my life, I was told that my parents were drunks who
died in a car crash and I believed it. It wasn't until Hagrid came to get me that I learned that they
were actually killed by Voldemort, but by then, I didn't really care."

Seeing the slightly confused look on his professor's face caused Harry to chuckle.

"Sev," Harry said. "It didn't make any sense to me to cry and be angry over someone I'd never met in
my entire life; sure my parents loved me enough to die for me, but that's as far as it goes. I can't miss
what I never had; sure I'd wonder sometimes what my life would be like if they had survived that
night with me, but they're didn't and I accepted that and their deaths a long time ago. When I heard
about Sirius in third year, I was excited to meet him regardless of the fact that everyone thought he
was the betrayer—"

He stopped suddenly.

"What is it?" Snape asked.

"Something you said earlier," Harry had a thoughtful look on his face. "You said that you got
information about my parents from Pettigrew and that was the only way that the Dark Lord could
find my parents."

"Yes," Snape nodded wondering where Harry was going with the questions.

"But how did Voldemort know to question Pettigrew when no one knew that Sirius had switched the
role of the Secret Keeper from him to Pettigrew?" Harry asked. "Exactly who is involved in the
Fidelus Charm?"

"Well, you have the ones being put under the charm, which would be you and your parents," Snape
said. "The Secret Keeper, which would've been Sirius and the one to cast the charm, which would've been…"

"Which would've been who?" Harry turned questioning and hard eyes to his professor. "Who would
be the one to cast the spell?"

"Since it was not only your family but your house as well that was placed under the Fidelus Charm,
it would've required someone very powerful to cast it and that same person would have to be the one
to transfer it. And at the time, the only one that the Potters trusted to do that would be—"

"Albus Dumbledore," Harry said. "That means that Dumbledore had to have let it out to someone,
knowing it would get back to Voldemort."

"Yes," Snape nodded; his eyes widened slightly as he realized just what Harry was getting at. 'Is he
trying to say what I think he is? But he is right; everyone thought that Sirius was the Secret Keeper,
Harry stood up off the bed and walked over to the window; he leaned his palms flat against the glass and looked out. He was slightly surprised to see that it was mid afternoon, not even realizing that they had spent so many hours just talking.

His mind went over everything they had just talked about; 'It's hard to believe Dumbledore betrayed my parents…and for what? What could he possibly benefit from it and why would he do it in the first place. He knew that Sirius wasn't the Secret Keeper and yet he did nothing; he let my godfather spend twelve years in Azkaban for a crime he didn't commit. All because he wanted me under his thumb? He destroyed my family and I'm going to find the real reason why.

Without turning back to Snape, he spoke. "When the time comes, Dumbledore will be mine to kill."

"Understandable," Snape nodded. "Do you have any more questions for me?"

"No," Harry shook his head. "Not right now. I want to process everything that happened today, but if I do, I'll ask."

"Very well," Snape said as he stood up. "I should be returning before the headmaster gets a wind of my being gone."

"Alright," Harry turned to him. "Be careful; Albus is as slippery as a snake, and just as dangerous. I wouldn't be surprised to learn he had been in Slytherin in his school years."

"I can take care of myself brat," Snape said; though the brat was laced with affection rather than scorn.

"I know that," Harry smiled. "But like I said, you're one of the few people in this world I actually like and I'd hate to see something happen to you… especially since it's so much fun annoying you."

"I can tell this school year will be very interesting," Snape mused, his lips twitching as if fighting a smile. "I look forward to it."

"As do I," Harry smirked. "Feel free to stop by anytime; just call Hedwig's name and she'll come to you."

"I'll see you Harry," Snape said.

"Severus?" Harry called just before they left.

"What is it?" Severus raised an eyebrow.
"I realized you didn't ask about my views on Draco," Harry said; he was curious as to why that was as his rivalry against Draco was legendary.

"That is true," Snape nodded. "I suppose that like you're outlook on Granger and Weasley, yours on him has changed."

"There was no reason for my outlook on Draco to change," Harry said. "Because it's always been the same."

"You still harbor feelings of hostility towards him?" Snape raised an eyebrow.

"I've never hated Draco," Harry shook his head. "In fact, my feelings about him are quite the opposite."

Snape was silent for a few minutes before he nodded; he and Hedwig disappearing in a flash of fire. When the two left, Harry sighed before falling back to his bed. A smile came on his face as he thought of the upcoming school year; he was truly looking forward to it as he would be himself and not the illusion that has been there. But for that to happen there were still some things that he needed done. He got up off the bed and stopped when he heard the crinkling; looking back he saw the letter's that Pig had delivered earlier.

"Might as well see that they traitors said," he muttered to himself. He grabbed one and opened it and recognized the feminine handwriting. "Granger."

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Harry

You've been my friend for that past five years; however I never thought that being your friend would have me risking my life every single year. And this past year was the worst; I told you it was a trap and you didn't listen to me and now Sirius is dead. You never listen to me and we always have to pay the price for it. I can't go through another school year like the others. Trouble always seem to follow you and I want a normal school year for once and plus, the NEWTS are coming up and I need to concentrate on those and not suicide missions. I truly am sorry, but I cannot be your friend any longer. You are just too reckless and you simply refuse to listen to reason, especially when I know I'm right. I would really appreciate if you didn't write to me this summer.

Your Former Friend,

Hermione J. Granger

"Well," Harry mused. "That was not unexpected; what surprised me was that I didn't think it would have taken her this long to write. Incendio." He smiled as he watched the parchment burn before turning his attention to the other one. He opened it and couldn't stop the snort that escaped as he read it;

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Harry

I don't think we should be friends anymore. You're too reckless and you keep putting us in danger. I didn't think it'd be this much trouble to be the best friend of Harry Potter; I don't even get the fame that comes with it; you always get everything. Just stay away from us from now on.

Ron

"Wow," Harry said. "I didn't think he was this eloquent. His bitch of a girlfriend probably helped him; oh well, no love lost, don't really care if they're my friend or not."
A trill alerted him to Hedwig's return.

He looked up and smiled at her. "Hey girl; so I read the letters from Weasley and Granger."

A few trills had him shaking his head. "I know, I know, but I figured I might as well see what they had to say; at least that way, I can prepare for the upcoming school year."

She ruffled her feathers as she let out a few trills.

"Yeah," Harry nodded. "I'm going to talk to Severus about that; I can't believe I actually took Divination as a subject. Hopefully I'll be able to trade it in for a free period; I don't really have any interest in any other subject and even if I did, there are things that need to get done without the added pressure of another class."

Looking around his room, Harry sighed before he decided to fix it; instead of using his magic, he decided to do it by hand. When he was done, Hedwig trilled at him before settling down and closing her eyes. Smiling, Harry left his room and headed downstairs.

Avoiding his family, he went outside towards the garden; this was the one chore that he didn't mind doing. He loved cleaning it out and fixing it up because it had a calming effect on him. He went to the tool shed and grabbed a bag of fertilizer and his gloves. Walking back to the garden, he placed the bag of fertilizer on the ground and knelt down next to it just outside the flower bed; he cleaned out the weeds that had grown up, throwing them to side. As he worked, his mind worked as well; as he went over information, he thought on two things that he definitely needed to work on; Draco and Voldemort.

Contrary to what everyone else believed, he never hated Draco; in fact, from the first time he saw him, he was captivated. That day in Madam Malkin's, he had so wanted to speak to him, but he knew that if he wanted them to think he was naïve then he couldn't be with him. When Draco had insulted Ron, it had taken a lot of his control not to laugh out loud. He had seen the hurt look in Draco's eyes when he had rejected his friendship and it had hurt him to do it, but at the time, it was what he needed to do.

But now that he was done with being the good boy, he could finally do what he had wanted to all those years; he could finally have that friendship with the blond…and maybe more; it was no secret that Draco was attractive. Throughout the years, Harry had noticed his feelings for the blond had changed from friendly to something more. While he did want to be Draco's friend, what he wanted more than anything was to be with the blond; he wasn't sure when his feelings had changed, but if he had to make a guess, it would've been around third year. He was glad for the change, though at first he was a little worried about it all. But now, he wasn't afraid to admit what was in his heart; truth was that he was glad that he would finally get the chance to tell Draco how he really felt about him.

"I wonder how he'll take it when I tell him I'm in love with him," Harry mused to himself as he cleared away the last of the weeds. "I bet it'll be the first time the sophisticated Slytherin Ice Prince will be speechless."

While anyone else would be worried as to how they would be received if they told the person they liked how they felt about them, Harry wasn't worried; he knew that Draco felt just about the same way as him. After all, why else would he do things that made sure Harry's attention was on him and him alone? He got angry and mean whenever Harry showed any interest in anyone and hated it when Harry's attention was not on him.

To anyone else it would seem like a petty rivalry, but Harry knew better. He knew Draco better than
anyone else did; after all, if you are going to have an enemy, you have to know everything about them.

He was about to spread some fertilizer through the garden when the flapping of wings alerted him to an owl's arrival; looking up, he saw a black owl heading towards him. Harry moved to his feet and held out his arm so that the owl could land; when it did, he carefully brushed its head.

"I wonder who you belong to," he asked softly.

He took the letter from the bird before turning to look at it. "You can go; I'll send my reply later on with my own bird."

The owl hooted twice before taking off. Harry sighed before pushing the letter in the back pocket of his jeans. He knelt back down and grabbed the fertilizer, spreading it throughout the garden. He continued to work for another hour and a half before deciding to stop. After putting the tools and fertilizer back in the shed, and throwing the weeds in the garbage, he was surprised to note that it was already sunset. He never thought it would've taken him so long, but it didn't really surprise him as he always seemed to lose track of time when he worked the garden.

He made his way back to the house; he knew that his shoes were dirty, and he would be tracking dirt through the house, but he didn't care. He smiled as he thought on his aunt and her reaction. When he got to the stairs, she was coming out of the kitchen; he watched as she paused and looked down at the mess he made before looking back at him. Seeing she was getting ready to say something, Harry turned fully towards her and raised an eyebrow.

"Is there something you'd like to say Petunia?" he asked, his voice devoid of emotion.

"No," she said stiffly as she shook her head. "I have nothing to say."

"If you say so," Harry said before turning to go up the stairs.

He locked his door behind him and headed to the bathroom. He placed the letter on the sink before going in the shower. Half an hour later, he stepped out of the shower and grabbed the letter before going back to his room. He tossed it onto his bed before pulling out a pair of jeans and a muscle shirt. After getting dressed, he sat down on his bed, his back resting on the wall, facing the door. He picked up the letter and opened. Hedwig, who had woken up when he came into the room, flew from her perch to his legs.

"Hi girl," Harry cooed to her. "Nice nap?"

She trilled a couple of times, the musical tone washing over Harry.

"It's a letter from Nev," Harry told her. "I wonder what he says."

Hiya Harry,

How are you? I hope you're summer's going ok so far. Mine is ok, my grandmother's been acting a bit strange; she keeps giving me these looks. I mean, she's always giving me looks, but before they were smug and now, it's like she looks at me with hatred and anger. I am so confused. I don't even know why I just told you that because I'm never this open about anything with anyone, but I trust you Harry. Anyways, I can tell you about that later.

The reason I'm writing is because Ron wrote to me and told me to stay away from you; that you were dangerous and would only cause me trouble. And that it wasn't worth being the friend of the Boy-Who-Lived when we were in danger so much. He also said that you're just an attention seeking
prat that doesn't like to listen and everyone else ends up paying for it.

I laughed when I read it and I couldn't believe that he would say things like that; well, actually I could. Ron has always been jealous of you Harry; remember fourth year when he thought you had entered the tournament yourself? He was mad because you were once again the center of attention. I don't believe Ron Harry and I meant what I said to you that day by the lake; I will always stand by your side no matter what. You were the first person to stand up for me and try to be my friend and I will forever be grateful for that. Even Hermione, with all her talks about equality, still saw me as a clumsy boy, but you saw me as Neville and you made me believe I had potential in myself. You're my first friend Harry and I will always be on your side.

Ron is an idiot and truthfully, I think you're better off without him. Anyways, I'm going to go; I have to check on some of the plants. I hope to hear from you Harry and I hope your summer is better than before.

Your friend,

Neville F. Longbottom

"Well," Harry looked at Hedwig. "That was interesting; the traitor tried to turn Neville against me. It doesn't really surprise me that it didn't work. Neville might be a little shy, but when it comes to something he believes in, he sticks to it with everything in him."

Hedwig trilled a few times.

"I agree," Harry nodded. "He's going to be a strong ally and an ever greater friend; I'm glad the Old Man didn't get to him; I wonder why his grandmother is giving him those looks. I'm going to write back."

Hey Nev,

I'm a little curious as to why your gram would look at you that way and I hope you find out soon. I'm glad you trust me Nev; I don't trust easy and I don't trust a lot of people, but you are one of the few that I do trust.

I got a letter from Ron as well and he said he couldn't be my friend anymore as I was too dangerous; I also got one from Hermione and she basically told me that she's always right and I never listen to her and because I didn't, Sirius is dead and they got hurt. She actually blamed me for Sirius' death. Needless to say, I've decided to cut all ties with those two.

I've been thinking a lot Nev, and a lot of things about the past five years just don't add up and I won't stand for any crap anymore. I'm tired of hiding who I really am and this September it will be a new Harry Potter that enters Hogwarts and I am really looking forward to it.

You and Luna are two people I completely trust. I'm glad you're both going to be on my side. If you ever want to talk Nev, just write.

Your friend,

Harry J. Potter

"There," Harry said. "That should do it." he folded the letter before turning to Hedwig. "Deliver this for me, please?"

She trilled before moving from his legs to his lap, making it easy for him to give her the letter.
"You can wait for a response," Harry told her as he placed the letter in her beak. "Don't let his grandmother see you; I don't want the Old Man to know of your appearance until we're back at Hogwarts."

Hedwig trilled a few times, giving Harry a peck on his finger before disappearing in a flash of fire. After she left, Harry headed down to the kitchen to make something to eat; this time, his aunt was not there and he was able to fix his meal and head back to his room without any interactions with his family.

He settled into his bed once more, eating his meal while his thoughts ran over Voldemort. Contrary to popular belief, he did not hate the guy, in fact he held admiration for him; people might think him crazy for thinking that, after all, the guy killed his parents, but it was the truth. And in all honesty, Harry understood why he did it. it was a time of war and Voldemort came across a threat to his victory; one that he needed to eliminate, though he never thought that by doing anything, he caused the prophecy to go in effect.

"He should've thought things through before he decided to attack," Harry mused. "But, what's done is done and the past can't be changed."

What Harry admired about Voldemort was that he knew what he wanted and he went after it with no care as to what others thought.

"People say Dumbledore is the greatest wizard alive and yet Voldemort has accomplished things even he couldn't," Harry snorted.

Finished with his meal, Harry placed the empty plate on the bedside table before lying down on his back; this time, his thoughts went over the prophecy and what it truly meant. He twisted the words, the different meanings, trying to see it in a different angle. He was just about to fall asleep when a realization came to him.

"Sweet Merlin," Harry gasped. "It can't be! Is it really that simple?" he ran the words through his head once more, trying to see if the answer would change, but it didn't.

"Well," he smirked as he lay back down. "They never said which one."

~...~

While Harry was having his epiphany, Neville was in his room staring at the phoenix in shock. He had been going over Ron's letter and the one he wrote to Harry when the phoenix flashed into his room. His eyes travelled over the bird, taking in its unusual colors, until he came to a stop at its eyes.

"Who do you belong to?" he asked he stared at it. He looked into the eyes once more and saw amusement in the soulful amber-colored gaze. 'Amber-colored? Wait a minute, there's only one bird I know with that type of eyes.'

"Hedwig?" Said bird trilled a few times, making warmth spread through Neville. He got up off his bed and walked over to her. "Wow; what happened to you girl? Last time I checked, you were an owl."

He looked down at her feet and saw the letter lying there from when it had fell from her beak as she trilled. He picked it up and gave her a few snacks and some water before sitting back down on his bed. He opened the letter and read what Harry wrote. When he was finished, he placed the letter on the bed beside him.
"Ron doesn't really surprise me," Neville said to himself. "But I never thought Hermione of all people would be so mean to Harry. I can't believe she blamed him for his godfather's death. What was she thinking?" he turned to look out the window before looking back at Hedwig.

"I know you're a phoenix," he said. "But do you mind staying here for the night and going back to Harry tomorrow?"

Hedwig nodded her head before moving to Neville's own owl's perch. After that, Neville changed into his pajamas before climbing into his bed. He fell asleep the moment his head hit the pillow.

Hedwig looked up at him, her eyes staring at his head; now that she had full use of her true powers, she could sense something off about the boy. She let out a few trills, her magic weaving through the air to caress his body; she saw her magic wrap around his mind and her amber eyes lit up as she found what she was looking for. She let out a couple more trills, her magic pouring through him, before she pulled it back. Satisfied, she settled down and closed her eyes.

Soon after, Neville's brows furrowed as he turned in his bed, a dream taking hold of him.

(Dream)

It was dark, but the little light that shown in the room helped him to see. He heard a noise, a child's whimper followed by shouting and yelling and he followed it. He got to a room, one that seemed very familiar to him, though he couldn't place where he had seen it before. He stepped through the doorway and stopped; looking in, he saw a young child, probably just over a year old sitting in a crib crying with its arms raised. With a jolt he realized that he should know who the baby was, but its face was blurry so he couldn't place him.

"What is going on?"

He took a step forward but a sound to his right drew him; he looked up and saw five people standing there, wands pointed towards each other. Their faces, like the baby's, were blurry, so he couldn't really tell who they were.

"Give back what's mine." He heard one of the voices scream; he identified as being a woman.

"Never," another voice, another woman, said. "You don't deserve him."

"He is mine," the first female voice spoke. Without thought, she said a spell and he watched as the second woman ducked out of the way. That seemed to be the trigger for the others because they started firing spell after spell. He watched as they fought, his eyes drawing to the baby. The second woman made a dash for the baby and grabbed it before the others could get there. She held the child in front of her and started taunting the first woman. The woman screeched before launching herself at the two. He heard a scream and looked back to see one of the men on the floor; his gaze snapped back to the two women. The first women had managed to get the child and had cast a curse on the first woman.

"He is mine!" the woman snarled. The baby in her arms cooed and snuggled down to her chest while she cursed the woman; she held the curse for what seemed like a long time before she released it. She turned to the others, seeing the man was in the other state. She looked at the two standing over him before bringing her arm up to rub the child's back. She nodded to them and they turned to leave. But they were stopped by the arrival of someone else.
"I'm afraid I can't let that happen," the newcomer said and Neville felt his heart racing as his mind tried to place where he recognize the person from. The man raised his hand towards the woman, seeming not to care about the baby she held.

Neville didn't hear the curse; all he saw was the spell speeding towards the woman and her son. He moved forward, hoping to stop it.

"No!" he yelled as he tried to reach them.

(End Dream)

Neville jerked out of his sleep, sweat coating his body.

"What the hell?" he stuttered out. He grabbed his wand from his bedside table and cast a quick Tempus and groaned when he saw that it was three in the morning. He put his wand back on the table and dropped back on the bed. His mind went over his dream, but to his consternation, the more he tried to recall, the more it faded until he could only remember snippets of it. With a sigh, he shifted on his bed, finding a comfortable position before falling back asleep.

The next morning, he woke up to the Hedwig trilling softly and hoots from his own owl. Groaning, he rolled over to face the two of them. With a quiet 'behave', he got out of the bed and headed to the bathroom. When he came back out, Hedwig flew from the perch to land on his shoulder.

"Morning Hed," he said before turning to his own owl. "Morning Damien."

He walked over to his table and picked up Harry's letter once more to read it over; as he went through it, he scoffed and shook his head when he saw what Harry had said about Ron and Hermione. Grabbing his quill, some parchment and ink, he started writing a reply to Harry.

Harry,

I'm glad that I'm one of the few people that you trust and I promise you that you will never regret it. I wish I did know why she looks at me the way she does, but I don't.

You're not dangerous Harry; it's not your fault that trouble finds you, it's not like you ask for it. Ron is wrong...which doesn't surprise me. And I can't believe Hermione blamed you for what happened to Sirius. Listen to me Harry; it is not your fault. You didn't make us come with you and you didn't tell Sirius to come after you; we, or I should say, I did it because I wanted to help you and you're my friend and Sirius did it because he loved you. You tried to get us to stay back remember? But we chose to go with you, so it is not your fault. They were never really friends to me, so I have no problem not being friends with them anymore.

You told me that day by the lake that a change was coming, and I told you I would stand by your side. I will. I'm not too sure what you mean by a lot of things not adding up, so you will have to explain it to me...that is if you want to. It's good that you're not going to stand for any more crap; maybe I shouldn't either. A new Harry Potter huh? Well, I am looking forward to meeting him. I know Luna feels the same way; she told me that you were the first person to see beyond her "Looney" persona. Despite Ginny being her first friend, she treats her like everyone else.

Oh yeah; what the bloody hell happened to Hedwig?

N.F.L.

Finished with the letter, Neville stood up and allowed Hedwig to move from his shoulder back to the
"Here you go Hed," he said. "Take this to Harry."

Hedwig trilled, filling Neville with warmth, before taking the letter in her beak and disappearing in a flash of fire. Seconds later, his bedroom door opened to reveal his grandmother glaring at him.

"Do you plan on lying in bed all day?" She asked; her tone borderline on disgust. "There are things to do, you know?"

"I'm coming grandmother," Neville sighed, resisting the urge to yell at her. He had no idea why she had started acting the way she had, but it was getting to him and he wanted to know what happened.

"Hmmm," she said, looking at him with something akin to scorn before turning and walking back down the stairs.

"What the hell is wrong with her?" he asked himself the moment she was out of sight. "I have to find out what's going on."

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Neville will have more than a few lines in this story and role that I don't think has been touched yet, so yes, there is a reason why his grandmother is acting the way she is… it all ties in to his specific role.
Meetings

Chapter Summary

Harry learns of Sirius' will; Snape talks to LV about what Harry told him; Sirius' will reading; Harry visits one of his properties; Harry gathers his allies to talk with them

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Harry Potter and all its affiliates belong to JK Rowling, Bloomsbury/Scholastic and Warner Bros. Studios. No copyright or trademark infringement is intended and no money is being made from this.

My disclaimer: If I owned Harry Potter; Ginny would've died in the CoS, Harry would've broken free of Dumbledore’s manipulations and Molly’s overbearing, Sirius wouldn’t have died, Hermione never would’ve dated Ron, Harry would’ve ditched Ron in fourth year, and most importantly, there’d be lots and lots of Harry/Draco slash.

"Talking"
'Thinking'
Letter or commentary/introduction
{Parsseltongue}

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Last time on RDA:

"What the hell is wrong with her?" he asked himself the moment she was out of sight. "I have to find out what's going on."

(This scene is on the same day Harry talked to Snape)

When Hedwig dropped Snape back in his office, he went directly to his cupboard, grabbed his bottle of firewhiskey, a glass and headed to the couch. After sitting down, he poured himself a glass, downing it all in one gulp before pouring another. He held the glass in his hand as he focused his gaze on the fireplace. He was having a little trouble processing what he had learned from Harry; make no mistake, he did believe him, but it was like having a battle between old information and new information.

"Perhaps I was a bit too hasty in aligning myself to listen to what Potter had to say," he murmured to himself. "However, the truth he spoke was undeniable and it raises questions towards the Headmaster's actions concerning him. It is curious as to how the Dark Lord came upon the knowledge to question Pettigrew concerning the Potters' whereabouts."

He sipped the firewhiskey and stared into the fire as his mind ran over everything he had discussed
with Harry, coming to a stop on that fateful Halloween night.

"Was the Headmaster truly the one that led the Dark Lord to Pettigrew?" he mused. "If it was, then perhaps we are dealing with a man that is far more sinister that anyone knows."

He sighed as he stood up, placing the glass on his desk. He walked over to his potions closet, going over them absently as he thought more on Harry and his powers. 'How is that the boy could display that magnitude of power and from such a young age and no one knows anything about it? Disapparation, wandless magic…these are things that should have caused ariot at the Ministry and yet, nothing.'

His thoughts drifted to the Headmaster. 'What exactly will he gain from his actions? The years have proven that he has no knowledge of Potter's true abilities. How is it that one that seemed to know it all could be so oblivious to his most precious tool?'

Snape stood next to his desk before looking down at his left arm; he touched the mark on his arm and sighed, as he knew that he had to share the information with the Dark Lord, lest he found out some other way.

"As much as I am not looking forward to this meeting, it is one I must regrettably partake of." He spoke aloud before grabbing his robes and heading to the Floo.

"Malfoy Manor, Master study, Meliora cogito!" Snape called out just before he stepped in. When he came through on the other side, he saw Lucius Malfoy sitting behind his desk.

The blond looked up when he heard the noise.

"Severus," his voice drawled, "To what do I owe the pleasure of seeing you at this hour?"

"I understand that as a Malfoy," Snape's silky drawl was filled with sharp undertones, "your ego knows no bounds, and so, it is with great pleasure that I disperse of that; I am not here to visit you Lucius."

"Then why, Severus," Lucius leaned back in his chair as he looked at him, "Are you here?"

"I do not see how that is any of your business," Snape replied softly, the sharpness in his voice becoming even more pronounced. "However, as it is your home, I suppose it is the polite thing to inform you; I am here to see the Dark Lord and no Lucius, you cannot know the reasons as to why."

The blond scowled before getting up from his seat. "This way."

He led Snape out of the room and down the hallway. The two walked for a while before turning onto another hallway; ten minutes later, Lucius stopped in front of wide oak doors. Without saying anything, he turned and left Snape standing there.

When he was sure that Lucius was gone, Snape raised his hand and knocked on the door three times.

"Enter." A voice hissed.

Snape opened the door and walked in; he came to a stop next to a person sitting in the dark red wingback chair close to the fire and fell to his knees. "My Lord."

"What is the meaning of this Severus?" Voldemort hissed.
"I have recently gained some information My Lord," Snape said as he kept his head bowed. "Information that I believe you will be interested to know."

Voldemort looked down on his most faithful follower; he knew that many believed that Lucius was his right hand man, but they were mistaken. His potions master Severus Snape held that title.

"Information about what Severus?" Voldemort asked. With the position that he had, he knew it was unwise to trust many of his followers, but he trusted Severus, as he knew the man was extremely loyal to him and would not have brought information to him if he did not believe it was truly important or worth knowing.

"Information on Harry Potter," Snape said, his head still bowed. "Information that will inevitably please you."

"Rise Severus," Voldemort said, "and speak." He leaned forward slightly as he waited for his follower to talk. His curiosity was peaked when he heard it was about the boy; when he had possessed him back at the Department of Mysteries, he had gleaned something from his mind, something that made him pause and think.

"After the Headmaster left the Department of Mysteries with the students," Snape began, "he took them back to his office; the injured were healed and sent on their way while Potter stayed behind. Based on my information, and I have sufficient proof to believe that it is correct, the contents of the Prophecy were disclosed to him."

"The boy knows of the Prophecy?" Voldemort hissed; he had been extremely displeased with Lucius when he failed to retrieve the orb and had let his anger known with a well-placed Crucio.

"Yes my Lord," Snape nodded.

"What does the Old Fool have to gain by letting the boy know?" Voldemort asked.

"From my understanding my Lord," Snape continued, "it seems as if the Headmaster revealed the information when he did as a ploy to get the boy further under his thumb; Potter had just lost his Godfather and was in a state of grief. It is my belief that he was told the prophecy so that he would further align himself to the Headmaster and his goal of destroying you."

"Dumbledore was always ambitious about that," Voldemort hissed. "Is that the only information Severus?"

"No my Lord," Snape shook his head. "There is more; it is apparent that Potter did not react how he was expected to. He lashed out, destroying the Headmaster's office in the process, and then proceeded to inform him that he wished to be left alone for the entire summer. I tried to get the Headmaster to disclose what had happened but he refused."

"But," Voldemort narrowed his eyes at him. "How have you come to know all of this?"

"That is where it gets interesting," Snape's voice had an 'ahh' sound to it, one that revealed he was most amused by what he was about to say. "I was told by the brat himself; according to him, he is no longer blinded to the Headmaster's dealings or to the Light side of things. We were all fooled by him."

"Explain yourself," Voldemort hissed.
Therefore, Snape explained to the Dark Lord all that Harry had revealed to him. When he was done, he was quiet as he waited for his Lord to speak.

"So you believe the boy was telling the truth?" Voldemort questioned; his question surprised Snape a little, as he had thought he would have been more interested in finally getting to know the exact contents of the prophecy.

"As I said earlier my Lord," Snape said, "I have seen substantiate proof that supports his words."

"So Harry Potter is not as light as everyone perceives him to be," Voldemort mused. "Interesting; it confirms what I have suspected."

"My Lord?" Snape raised a dark eyebrow.

"During the…fiasco at the Department of Mysteries, I was able to possess Potter for a short amount of time," Voldemort said. "I saw darkness in his mind and with that darkness I saw images, images that correspond to what you've revealed about his family."

Voldemort was quiet for a moment before he looked at Snape. "You say Dumbledore has no knowledge of the boy's true nature?"

"None whatsoever," Snape confirmed. "The fact is that no one knows shows just how…Slytherin the boy truly is."

"I see." Voldemort was quiet once more as he thought on the implications of what they just discussed. "This changes things Severus. Do you believe the boy would be open to a meeting?"

"I have no doubt he will be my Lord," Snape nodded. "I believe he will make an excellent addition to our side and the news about his defection will severely damage the Light."

Voldemort stood from his seat and walked up to Snape. He lifted a hand and trailed the back of his hand down Snape's cheek. "Excellent work Severus; I want you to continue working with the boy. From what you've told me, he seems to trust you; get him open to the idea of working with us."

"Yes my Lord," Snape answered; when he had felt his master's hand touching his cheek, he was unable to hold back the shiver that went through his body, a shiver that had nothing to do with fright, disgust or the cold. The touch brought confusing feelings to the forefront, feelings that intensified when he looked directly into Voldemort's eyes.

Voldemort for his part, held back a smirk when he saw the look in his Potions Master's eyes; he knew what he was doing to him and it sent a thrill through him. It would shock people to know that Severus meant more to him than any other of his followers. The only time he had ever truly hurt him, was the night Severus reported what he had heard about the prophecy and he had questioned him intensely. Voldemort had cast a Crucio on Severus for about five minutes and when he released it, to his surprise, he had felt a surge of guilt, something he didn't think he'd ever feel.

Since that night, his punishments to the Potions Master had never been so severe. Because he had never experienced love, he had no idea that that was what he was feeling for the man; lust was a definite, but beyond that, his own feelings towards his master were confusing.

"You have pleased me Severus," he spoke, his voice was soft and captivating. "You have been my most faithful servant and have done more for me than any of the others."

"It is my honor to please you my Lord," Snape murmured as he tried hard to fight the flush that wanted to come on his face. "And it is my honor to continue to do so." He could not understand why
he was feeling the way he was and why it was the Dark Lord that evoked the confusing feelings inside of him.

"I know, my slippery serpent," Voldemort said. "And you shall be rewarded when the time is right." As soon as his thought was complete, lustful thoughts on how he could reward Severus flashed through his mind and he could feel himself hardening.

Snape looked up into his master's eyes and this time, he could not help the flush that took over his face; the desire he saw in the red eyes left no doubt as to what the reward would be and to his surprise, he felt an answering desire rise up inside himself.

Seeing the burning embers in Snape's eyes, Voldemort stepped back from the man; he hid his smirk when he saw that Snape had unconsciously shifted slightly towards him. "That will be all Severus."

Snape had to restrain himself from taking an actual step towards the Dark Lord; the desire coursing through him was stronger than what he had ever felt for anyone else. He knew the words were a dismissal and he quickly composed himself before nodding at his Lord.

"If you have no further use of me Lord," Snape said. "I must return before he notices I'm gone."

"Very well," Voldemort said once he reclaimed his seat. Snape turned to leave and he waited until he was at the door before he spoke again. "Severus?"

"My Lord?" Snape turned when he heard his name.

"Regarding Potter's feelings towards young Mr. Malfoy," Voldemort continued. "Perhaps it would not be a bad idea to have him accompany you on some of your meetings."

"As you wish my Lord," Snape nodded once before opening the door and closing it behind him.

Back inside, Voldemort smirked as he thought on his Potions Master; he could not deny that he had enjoyed teasing the man and a sense of satisfaction flowed through him as he recalled Snape's own reactions.

{You ssshould not have teasssed him ssso} his snake Nagini said as she slithered out from a dark corner and up to his comfortable, well padded wingback chair to wrap herself around him.

{I did not teasssse} Voldemort replied as he stroked the top of her head.

{Oh? Then what do you call it oh Great One?}

{It wasss merely a meanssss to get information} Voldemort knew he wasn't being truthful but he wasn't in the mood to say anything more; his own feelings towards the Potions Master confused him and he refused to allow them to dominate his thoughts more than necessary.

{Sssure it wasss} by the tone in Nagini's voice, you got the distinct impression that she was smirking.

{I need not explain myssself to you sssnake} Voldemort knew if it was anyone else, they would have already been under the Crucio curse. But not Nagini, she had been with him for years and was his most faithful pet...though to call her a pet to her face would more than likely result in death.

{Sssomeone sssure isss touchy} now he could definitely hear the smirk in her voice.

"Nagini," Voldemort's voice held a hint of warning, but the snake wasn't cowered; she knew he wouldn't hurt her.
Nagini hissed. And I will leave it at that... for now

Voldemort's eye twitched as he thought of ways to rid himself of the snake. Judging by the hissing coming from Nagini, he knew she was laughing at him.

Alright, I'll behave Nagini hissed. What information did you receive from the dark haired one?

Information about a certain nuisance Voldemort replied. It wasss information about Harry Potter

(The boy?) Nagini shifted around until her head was resting in his lap. What sssort of information wasss it?

And so, Voldemort told her what Snape had revealed to him. He had no qualms of letting her know as he knew without a doubt that she would never betray him and even if she did, there was only one person who would be able to understand her anyways and from the looks of things, he would more than likely be on their side soon.

What isss your opinion, my beloved? He asked her.

I think that before the sssummer isss over, the dark side sshall gain the upper hand over the Light.

I agree. Voldemort nodded.

Now, back to your potionsss massster Nagini hissed, causing Voldemort to let out a curse.

~...~

While Nagini annoyed her master about the Potions Master, said person was stalking back through the hallway of the Manor, heading towards Lucius' office thinking on what had just happened in his meeting.

'This is ridiculous.' He snarled to himself. 'I am not some hormonal teenager or a simpering slip of a school girl salivating over a crush! It was nothing! It meant nothing! Then why did you shiver so? Why did you felt such desire... desire you have never experienced for anyone else. Shut up! It was not desire. Sure it wasn't; just admit it, you desire the Dark Lord. All that power, that control—

"I do not desire the Dark Lord!" he yelled out.

"Godfather?"

Snape, startled by the call, quickly composed himself and turned to see Draco standing there. "What is it Dragon?"

"What are you doing here?" Draco took a few steps forward until he was close enough to Snape. "Is something wrong?"

"No Draco," Snape reassured him. "Nothing is wrong." While Snape may dislike Lucius, he adored his godson; they might be similar in looks but Draco was different from his father and for that, Snape was grateful.

"Are you sure?" Draco questioned.

"Yes I am sure," Snape said; he may prefer Draco's company to Lucius' but in relation to what he
had thought just seconds ago, he wondered briefly if he should recant it. It seems that being nosy was a trait that Draco got from his father.

"Why were you yelling just now?" Draco asked.

"I fail to see how that is any of your business Draco," Snape drawled. "Furthermore, I am not so uncouth as to stand in a hallway, yelling for everyone to hear me. Such actions, I assure you, are quite beneath me."

"But—"

"But nothing Draco," Snape cut him off. "And since you are too much like your father in the fact that you cannot stay out of other's business, I shall satisfy you with an answer; I was just in a meeting with the Dark Lord."

"Oh?" Draco looked down the hallway Snape just came from before looking back at it. "Is there something going on?"

Snape was quiet as he looked at Draco. On Voldemort's orders, he was to allow Draco to accompany him whenever he met Harry because of Harry's feelings for him. What he was not sure about however, was Draco's preferences. He knew from observing him that Draco did not have any relationships with any female at school but he was not sure what he did when he went on vacations with his parents.

"Draco," Snape started. "I was given an assignment and it was requested that you join me."

"What?" Draco turned wide eyes towards his godfather. "The Dark Lord wants me to join you on a mission?"

"I am positive that that is what I just said," Snape's voice held a reprimanding undertone. "So kindly refrain from repeating my words."

"Sorry Sir," Draco nodded. "What is the mission?"

"Recruiting a potential ally," Snape said.

Draco could not believe what he was hearing. The Dark Lord wanted him to help Snape with an ally. To know that he was given something like that and he hadn't even started his sixth year as yet filled him with awe. He was beyond excited because he knew none of his Slytherin classmates had ever been given a task like this. He could not wait to brag about it to his father. As if sensing his thoughts, Snape spoke up.

"I understand your excitement to do this; however, it is imperative that you tell no one of this; not even your father." His voice held a harsh note to it that promised retribution if Draco went against his words. "And certainly not any of your classmates; if the Dark Lord wanted this to be broadcasted to everyone, he would have held a full meeting. Are we understood?"

"Yes godfather," Draco nodded. He heard the warning in Snape's voice and he did not fancy finding out what would happen if he went against it.

"Good," Snape nodded. He looked over his godson once more and his thoughts drifted to what Harry had told him.

…I've never hated Draco...in fact; my feelings for him are quite the opposite.
True, he wasn't too sure about his godson's preferences, but what he was sure about was the way that Draco always seemed to talk about Potter and the way he always seem to want Potter's attention on him alone and the way he would react if it wasn't. All of that led him to believe that the feelings that Potter had for Draco may be mutual.

'Hmm, it will be interesting to see how this plays out,' Snape mused to himself. 'Draco is a Malfoy and they are stubborn and proud if nothing else. Harry will have his hands full.'

He paused as he remembered the raw confidence that Harry exuded. 'Draco will be no match for the new Harry Potter. The Malfoys pride themselves on being cool and collected at all times...especially Draco. I look forward to seeing the Ice Prince of Slytherin ruffled.'

"Godfather?" Draco called out; the smile on Snape's face was a little disturbing as he had rarely seen the man smile and if he did, it was when he was taking pleasure out of someone else's suffering.

"That will be all Draco," Snape said. "Now, if you will excuse me, I must return to the school."

With that, he walked off, leaving his godson staring after him in confusion.

(With Harry)

It has been three days since Hedwig had returned from Neville and Harry had spent those three days preparing for his upcoming school year. The first day after, while he was on his way back from running at the park, he had come across a sign for an upcoming Karate class; intrigued, he had gone inside to ask about it and had ended up signing the roster that same day. The class would start next week, so it gave him time to get the stuff needed for the class.

It was now the third day and Harry knew that he would need to make a trip to Gringotts. However, he didn't feel like going through Diagon Alley to do it as he didn't want to be seen by any of the order members or Dumbledore himself and as much fun as it would be, he didn't want to use the Dursleys either. He also didn't want to use Hedwig as he wasn't sure what the goblins policy on phoenixes flashing into their bank was.

He was thinking things over in his room when an owl came through his window. It was very regal looking and Harry got the impression that it was very important.

Getting up, he walked over to the bird and removed the letter from its leg. He gave it a couple of Hedwig's treats and watched as it flew off before walking back over to his bed.

"I wonder who this is from?" he asked as he sat down. "Only one way to find out."

He broke the seal and opened the letter.

Greetings Mr. Potter,

We here at Gringotts would like to inform you of the will reading of one Lord Sirius Orion Black. The will reading is in four days and all recipients are asked to be present.

However, due to a stipulation placed by Lord Black himself, it was requested that a separate will reading be held specifically for you. We've set up an appointment for you for tomorrow at 1p.m.

When that time comes, just tap this letter with your wand and say "Gobblehook"; it is a portkey that will bring you directly into the meeting room.

Until then,
"Why would Sirius ask for two different will readings?" Harry asked. "I guess I'll find out when I go tomorrow."

The rest of the day passed by with no major happenings; Harry worked out in the garden until nightfall and then he went inside to take a shower. After the shower, he changed into a pair of black pajama bottoms, foregoing the top and went to bed. He was asleep the moment his head hit the pillow.

The next day, he woke up just before ten. After using the bathroom and brushing his teeth, he went downstairs. When he got there, he saw that his family was dressed. Looking at them, he raised an eyebrow.

"We're going to go visit Marge," Petunia said. "We're spending two weeks at her place and then we're going on a vacation. We won't be back until the end of July."

"Dudders," Harry turned to look at his cousin. "I'd imagine you'll be careful and not let anyone see your back. It could have serious consequences for you if that were to happen."

Heeding the warning in his words, the Dursleys left the house. Harry chuckled to himself as he walked into the kitchen. He prepared breakfast, which consisted of scrambled eggs, toast, bacon, hash browns and orange juice. Levitating the tray of food in front of him, he headed back to his bedroom.

After giving Hedwig the hash browns, he settled on his bed to eat. When he was finished, he took his empty dishes down to the sink and went outside to do some exercises. He stretched a bit first to loosen his body. When he was done, he did a few jumping jacks to start him off before moving on to push ups and then sit ups. He did added more routines, quickly working up a sweat.

A little while later, he stopped and walked back into the house. He went up to his room and when he saw that the clock read twelve thirty, he hurried into the shower. Fifteen minutes later, he came out and saw that he had just over ten minutes to get dressed. He waved his hand over his body, drying off the excess water, before he pulled on a pair of boxers. His hair was still a little wet, leaving them more curly than normal, as he pulled on his jeans. Drying his hair, he put on a dark green t-shirt and he grabbed his wand and the letter from his dresser.

"Ready girl?" Harry looked at Hedwig, who flew from her perch to his shoulder. She nipped his ear and he smiled. "Alright, let's go."

He touched his wand to the parchment and said the phrase. "Gobblehook."

The two disappeared and reappeared in an office inside the bank of Gringotts.

"Greetings Mr. Potter," a regal looking goblin was sitting behind a desk in front of him.

"Good Afternoon," Harry bowed at the waist and a shocked look crossed the goblin's face for a split second.

"Sit," the goblin gestured to the chair and Harry moved to it, mindful of Hedwig on his shoulder.

"Interesting phoenix you have there," the goblin said.

"She is, isn't she?" Harry's hand reached up to rub Hedwig's breast. "Not to be rude or anything, but
could you please tell me why Sirius wanted me to hear his will separately?"

"Mr. Potter," the goblin started. "My name is Ragnok and I am the Head Director of Gringotts."

"Pleased to meet you," Harry said. "It must be something if you are dealing with this directly."

"It is," Ragnok nodded. "Your godfather came to the bank and requested the meeting specifically
with me. Normally, I do not concern myself with things that I consider trivial and a wizard's affairs
are one of them. However, when Lord Black explained why he wanted to meet, I was inclined to agree."

"And what was it that made you agree?" Harry asked.

"His distrust of Albus Dumbledore," Ragnok said.

"Explain please?" Harry leaned forward slightly in his seat.

"It is no secret that goblins despise wizards," Ragnok said. "However, in all my years of being
among them, only two of them have managed to gain respect in my eyes; you and the late Lord
Black. I've heard about the things that you have been through from the moment you graced the halls
of Hogwarts and for a child so young to overcome such obstacles each year…"

"Thank you," Harry nodded his head. "Why didn't my godfather trust Dumbledore?"

"Because Albus Dumbledore could have prevented your godfather from going to Azkaban and he
didn't."

"What?" Harry's eyes narrowed and his magic spiked as the words sunk in.

"Albus Dumbledore is not only the Headmaster of Hogwarts," Ragnok continued. "He's also the
Chief Warlock of the Wizengamont. That means, he could've gone above the Minister of Magic's
head and order a trial for Lord Black, but he didn't."

"So he knew Sirius was innocent and he still allowed him to go to prison?" Harry couldn't believe
what he was hearing. It shouldn't shock him hearing what Dumbledore did, but it did.

"Yes," Ragnok nodded.

"Let me guess," Harry snorted. "It was done because he needed me to be in the position that I was
in. He needed me with the Dursleys because he knew they hated magic."

"He placed a magical child with magic haters?" Ragnok looked livid.

"Yes," Harry nodded and a dark scowl was present on his face. "He needed me to be his perfect
weapon and the Dursleys would've made sure of that. He couldn't allow Sirius to take me as that
would ruin his plans, so he allowed him to rot in Azkaban. What he didn't count on was that my time
at the Dursleys would have the opposite effect."

"How much of an effect was it?" Ragnok asked.

Harry smiled and the darkness in it made Ragnok decide there and then that he would be an ally
rather than an enemy.

"Let's just say that I no longer have to worry about Voldemort wanting to kill me," Harry said.

"Right," Ragnok nodded. "I think you should listen to the will now." He opened the desk and pulled
a few documents out. He placed them on the desk before reaching back in to pull out an orb. Closing
the drawer, he tapped the orb with his wand.

This is the last will and testament of I, Sirius Orion Black.

Before we do anything else, Ragnok, will you give Harry the letter now?

Ragnok stopped the orb and picked up one of the documents before handing it to Harry.

He took it, his hands trembling slightly and opened the parchment to read his godfather's final words.

Pup,

If you're reading this, then it means I'm dead. First off, IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT! However I died, I
don't want you to blame yourself for it, alright? Secondly, I am so sorry I am not there for you. You
have no idea how much I've regretted going after Peter that night. If I could go back in time and stop
myself from doing it, I would. You mean the world to me Harry, and not because you're the last link
I had to James and Lily but because the night you were born, the night I first held you in my arms, I
loved you.

I often used to tease James and Lily about kidnapping you away from them and raising you as my
own. James was my escape from my family, but you changed me. When you looked at me with those
gorgeous green eyes of yours, even greener than your mother's, I wanted to do everything to be
someone that you would be proud of.

My years in Azkaban were the worst because I was away from you. All I could think about was you
and how you were doing. Thinking of you also gave me hope; hope that I would see you again…
hope that you were fine. It was a hope that refused to die.

What I'm about to tell you might be hard for you to hear, but it is something that you need to know.
Don't trust Albus Harry. I know right now you're probably confused as to why I said that, but let me
explain a few things I found out. You were never supposed to go to the Dursleys; Albus went against
James and Lily's will. If you couldn't be with me, you were supposed to go to either Remus or
Severus. I know you're shocked about Severus. I was too when Lily first told me and I made her
explain her reasons. She suspected, as did James, Remus and I, that Snape was a Death Eater. But
what James and Remus didn't know is that she thought it was because of her.

James and I weren't the best to Snape in school; we made his life hell. And after one of our pranks, I
guess he finally had enough. Unfortunately, Lily was the one that paid for it. That was the first and
last time Snape called Lily a "mudblood" and it was also the last time they spoke. Lily told me that
she was sure that Snape had joined Voldemort because he finally felt like he had no one. Through
his fault, but majority of it is ours, he had pushed away the only friend he ever had.

Now I know you're wondering why your mom would leave you to Snape if she suspected he was a
Death Eater. Simple, she believed that he didn't truly want to be one, but did because he felt like had
no other choice and with Voldemort gone, she needed him to have a reason to be the person she
knew he could be. She forgave him for calling her a mudblood and she forgave him for joining
Voldemort, but she knew he wouldn't be able to forgive himself. She wanted you to go to him
because she felt that by having you to take care of he would understand that she still trusted him…

However, I suspect that Dumbledore knew that if Snape had you to care for, then he would've lose
out on having a spy, so he did what he could to prevent it from happening. I knew Petunia when she
was an Evans and I knew her after she married Vernon and even then, she was not the most open-minded person, on the contrary. Petunia hated Lily and everything she stood for. During your third year when you asked me to take you with me, I wanted to; Merlin how I wanted to. But I couldn't. I was fleeing from the Ministry and I refused to put you through that. Even after, when I finally moved to Grimmauld Place, I still couldn't take you from them because I was still wanted by the Ministry. And that brings me to my next point; my incarceration.

You know your parents were under the Fidelius Charm. What you may not know is that Albus was the one to perform the charm and it was Albus we used when we switched the Secret Keeper from me to Peter. The Wizarding World looks up to Albus Dumbledore. Not only that, but he held a position that could have helped me. He was and is the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamont. I don't know if you know what that is, but the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamont could've have gone above the Minister of Magic's head and order trials for people suspected of crimes. That means that if Albus had truly wanted to, he could've demanded a trial for me to declare my innocence, because he knew I was innocent.

He didn't because he needed me out of your life. Anyone that could influence you into being someone independent, he took away. It's why Remus nor Severus got you and why the Weasleys are so close to him. They believe everything he tells them. Don't trust them Harry; they are under his thumb. The only exceptions are the twins and I'm not too sure about Bill and Charlie.

I got out of one prison and was placed in another. Being in my ancestral home was not fun for me. The only joy I ever had in that place was the time you were there. The only difference between Azkaban and Grimmauld Place was that it didn't have any Dementors.

I truly am sorry I cannot be there for you cub. Nobody wants to die, but if there is one way I would be ok with dying is if it was done to protect you. Take care of yourself pup and Moony as well. I love you both.

Sirius Orion Black

"Sirius," Harry whispered. His throat felt as if it was clogged with tears. His godfather was taken from him and it was all because of one person. Albus Dumbledore was going to pay.

Hundreds of miles away in the headmaster's office at Hogwarts, Albus sat up as he felt Death's icy fingers travel down his spine.

"I didn't even know Sirius had suspicions about Dumbledore," Harry said.

"No one knew," Ragnok answered.

"The will please," Harry said. "What does it say?"

"This is the reading of the last will and testament of Sirius Orion Black," Ragnok said just before he tapped the orb.

I, Sirius Orion Black, being of sound mind and gorgeous body (shut up Moony) hereby bequeath (do I really have to say that word?) my possessions to the following people:

To my best friend and pack-mate Remus J. Lupin, I leave you with 1,000,000 galleons with the instructions to buy yourself some new wardrobe. And sorry Remy, but you can't give it back.

To Nymphadora Tonks, I leave you with 10,000 galleons. The only reason for that is because you're family. Blacks may have their disagreements, but the ones that were close, looked out for each other. You chose
your job over me. You not only suspected, but you know that I was innocent and as an Auror, it was your job to tell your boss. Amelia would've at least demanded they look into what really happened.

To Andromeda Tonks, I reinstate you to the Black Family line; just because I am disappointed in your daughter doesn't mean anything when it comes to you. I also leave you with 100,000 galleons.

To Draco Malfoy, I leave you with 50,000 galleons. I know your secret Draco and it may shock you but I am glad and I wish you well. I've seen how you've acted and I have to say, it does me proud to see that you truly are a Black. Masks are something I'm familiar with.

To Narcissa Malfoy, I leave you with a Knut. We may have been close as kids, but that changed. I've heard things Cissy and I'm disappointed to note that you turned out just like my mother, your Aunt Walburga.

To Arthur and Molly Weasley, I leave 1,000 galleons. Molly, you may be a mother, but Harry is not your son. Moreover, while I do appreciate you taking him in, it doesn't give you the right to try and control his life. You were a guest in my home and I wasn't supposed to put up with you demeaning my every action concerning him. You are not his mother and you are not his guardian. But it doesn't surprise me knowing what I do now.

To Ron Weasley, I leave you with this advice; grow up. You're nothing more than a jealous arse. You hate Harry for the fame that he has and seem to want everything to be handed to you. For someone who is supposed to be Harry's friend, I don't know how you couldn't tell that Harry would trade everything in to have what you have—a family. All you care about is the Boy-Who-Lived and nothing about Harry.

To Hermione Granger, when I first met you, I was intrigued and happy that my godson had someone like you in his corner, but now...if circumstances were different, I would've left you the entire Black Library, but as it is, things change as do people. The only difference between you and Peter is your gender and blood status.

To Albus Dumbledore, I leave you with nothing. I won't have to explain as I'm sure you know why.

To the Weasley twins Fred and George, I leave you the trunk in my vault. It's filled with all the pranks the Marauders did and ones that we thought of. Moony can help you guys with it. I also leave you both with 100,000 galleons each. You guys have been a better friend to Harry far more than the other two.

To Severus Snape, the first thing I leave to you is this: my deepest apologies. James and I were absolutely horrible to you in school and I know that just saying sorry will not erase everything, but I hoped it would be a start. I also want to thank you. Despite everything, you've still looked out for Harry and I will be forever grateful to you for that. I leave you with 200,000 galleons; it might seem much to you, but to me, it's nothing when compared to keeping Harry safe. There's also something you should know, but Harry has to be the one to tell you.

And lastly, to my godson Harry James Potter, I leave you with the rest of the Black fortune. I also declare you legally emancipated and my heir. You haven't been a child in a long time Harry, and with everything that has happened, it's time you took control of your life.

Remus, despite Harry's emancipation, I name you his legal guardian in the Wizarding World. Only you and Harry can touch his vaults and money. Anyone else will need to not only provide identification, but they have to have authorization from either one of you. Don't worry; the goblins
have a way of knowing if the authorization is authentic or faked. Take care of our cub Moony and please, I truly don't want either of you to feel guilty over my death and I don't want you to blame yourselves either. If you do, I swear I will create enough of a ruckus in the afterlife just to come back and haunt both of your asses...understand?

Finally, the Black Family Townhouse in London, number twelve Grimmauld Place, is no longer in use by the Order of the Phoenix. Draco, it's yours to do whatever you want with.

I know a lot of you are angry about what you have received, but, well, I'm dead, so there's nothing you can do and everything is already done and cannot be changed...well, they can only be changed by the heir. Ha ha ha ha ha ha.

Toodles.

Sirius Orion Black
Lord of the House of Black
Marauder
Godfather to an Amazing Young Man
Best Friend to Amazing Man

"I didn't realize Sirius knew so much about all of them," Harry said.

"Mr. Black might've been a prankster," Ragnok said. "But when it came to you, he was very serious."

"Is there anything else?" Harry asked. "And what do I have to do in regards to being emancipated and what does being Sirius' heir mean?"

"Lord Black had asked us to check into the Potter's will," Ragnok said. "And to see if there were any inconsistencies with the Potter vaults."

"Was there?" Harry asked.

"Yes," Ragnok said. "Your godfather was right; Albus went against your parent's wishes and placed you with the Dursleys. I've also found out that he has taken money from your vaults and has distributed to Molly and Arthur Weasley as well as kept some for his own."

"Did they know where the money came from?" Harry asked; he didn't want to jump to any conclusions and he didn't want to do anything without all his facts.

"Yes," Ragnok nodded. "Both Molly and Arthur knew that Albus was taking the money from you. They didn't stop him because they felt that it was owed to them for taking you in."

"Is there anything we can do to fix that?" Harry asked. He was angry to know that Molly would steal money from him. He wanted them to pay for it and they would.

"Yes there is," Ragnok nodded. "And as for you emancipation, all is requires is your signature and a drop of blood."

He held out a parchment and handed Harry a quill. After Harry signed, he held out his finger and watched as Ragnok pricked it, letting the blood drop onto the parchment below. When he was finished, Ragnok took the document and placed it with the others.

"Whatever it is that can be done," Harry said. "Do it. I may not care much about money, but they stole from me and I want it all back with interest. I want them to know that they cannot do that."
"As you wish," Ragnok gave a toothy smile, which made him look dangerous. "Now, as for being his legal heir, you inherit everything, including his title."

"Title?" Harry looked confused.

"Young Black was disowned by his mother when he was still at school," Ragnok explained. "However, due to the death of his brother, the title of Lord Black was transferred back to him. And being that he named you his heir, you now hold that title. You are now, Lord Harry James Potter-Black."

"So that's why he's called Lord Black," Harry said. "I thought you called him that because he was from an old family."

"That is not the main reason," Ragnok said. "The Black line is an old one, and the heir becomes the Head of the family. Sirius named you his heir, so you gained that title."

"I understand now," Harry nodded.

"Is there anything else you would like to do?" Ragnok asked.

"Could you assign Griphook as the manager for my accounts?" Harry asked. "If he is not under Dumbledore's manipulations, I want him in charge of them with the explicit instructions that only myself and Remus Lupin can access the account until I say otherwise. I will, of course, have no problem with paying him for his help."

"If you don't mind my asking," Ragnok said. "Why Griphook?"

"He was the first goblin I met when I first came to the Wizarding World," Harry said. "And he took me to my vault; I don't think he liked riding the carts. I had fun though." When he was done, he had a smile on his face.

Ragnok looked at Harry. To most wizards, goblins were beneath them and no one bothered to treat them with respect or much less remember their names. But in the last hour, Harry had proved different. Not only was he respectful and courteous, but he also remembered the name of the goblin that had helped him five years ago.

"You surprise me Mr. Potter," Ragnok said at last. "One so young and yet you treat us goblins as if we are your equals."

"I'm friends with an elf called Dobby," Harry smiled. "And I know what it feels like to be discriminated against and judged because I'm different."

"Mr. Potter," Ragnok said. "As I have already told you, Lord Black and yourself are the first two wizards to gain my respect in centuries. It is safe to say that you can now count on the goblins as allies."

"Thank you," Harry said. "But I thought goblins didn't concern themselves with human affairs?"

"We don't," Ragnok nodded. "Only if the wizard is proved worthy."

"Well, I'm grateful you deem me worthy," Harry smiled. "What exactly did my parents and Sirius left me in terms of property?"

Pulling out more documents, Ragnok gave a detailed list of all his properties. When he was done,
Harry's eyes were wide with shock.

"That's a fair amount of property," Harry said.

"Yes it is," Ragnok said. "The total amount of money you have from your parents is 50 million galleons and the total amount you have from your godfather is 50 million galleons, which brings a grand total of 100 million galleons, making you one very wealthy wizard."

"Fuck!" Harry was shocked at the amount of money he had. Never did he think he had that much money from both his parents and Sirius.

"And that does not include your properties," Ragnok continued. "If you include those, your wealth would easily increase."

"Holy damn," Harry ran a hand through his hair. "You mentioned a property in Wales?"

"Yes," Ragnok nodded. "It belongs to the Potters. It was one that was used by your parents before and just after your birth before they moved to Godric's Hollow. It has ten bedrooms, seven bathrooms, a potions lab, a greenhouse, Quidditch pitch and it's under a spell which makes it look like an abandoned house to muggles."

"I'd like to see it," Harry said. He needed a place to live as he had no intentions of staying at the Dursleys forever. There were things he needed to do and they couldn't happen in Surrey.

"I will have a portkey ready for you in ten minutes," Ragnok said. "Is there anything else?"

"Not at the moment," Harry shook his head.

"Alright," Ragnok nodded as he moved to his feet. "I thank you for your time today. I shall return with your portkey."

"Thank you," Harry said as he stood up as well. When Ragnok left, he turned to Hedwig. "What do you think girl?"

She trilled a few times, her sounds light and musical.

"I can't believe it either," Harry said. "Especially the part about the money. They're all going to pay Hed…all of them."

Hedwig trilled in agreement, as she nipped his ear. She trilled again.

"I know," Harry nodded. "I definitely have to talk to the two of them. Now that I've heard Sirius' view on them, I know for sure now that they will back me up."

He listened to her trill a few more times.

"I'm going to send for Neville after we see the house," he told her. "It sounds like he needs to talk to someone."

Ragnok walked back into the room, a necklace in his hand with a lion pendant.

"The pendant on this necklace is the portkey," Ragnok said. "It will take you to the front gates of the Manor no matter where you're at."

"I assume that the Manor will have wards on them," Harry said. "Would you mind accompanying me so that I could know what to do in regards to allowing and denying entrance?"
"I'd be honored," Ragnok inclined his head.

"Alright," Harry turned to him. "Let's go."

He grabbed hold of the portkey and Ragnok activated it, the three disappearing with a whirl. When they landed, it was in a clearing and in front of them was a huge gate with the Potter insignia on it as well as two lions. Behind the gates was exactly what Ragnok had said, an old, abandoned, run-down looking house.

"So," Harry said. "How do I do this?"

"It requires a drop of blood," Ragnok said and smirked slightly as the grimace on Harry's face.

"Of course it does," Harry grimaced; it's not that he was afraid of blood...he just hated having to go through all of it.

"Just place your finger in the lion's mouth," Ragnok instructed.

Harry did as he was told and watched as the old building disappeared and a huge manor appeared in its place.

"Whoa," Harry breathed as the gates swung open. As they walked through, Harry could see the Quidditch posts in the distance. They got to the house, and he placed his fingers in the lion's mouth that was on the door.

The door opened up and just as they stepped in, two elves appeared.

"Oh Master Harry," the elf cried. "The master has come home."

"Eh...what's your name?" Harry asked as he looked down at both of them.

"I's be Minky," the house elf said. "And this be Tanna."

"Well," Harry smiled. "Pleased to meet you Minky and Tanna."

"Mr. Potter," Ragnok said, "not to be seen as rude as you have been undoubtedly courteous, but I will leave you in the hands of your elves. They will be able to tell you everything you need to know about the Manor."

"It's ok Ragnok," Harry smiled as he shook his head and held out his hand. "I understand. I hope you have a good day and may your vaults overflow with money."

Ragnok's eyes widened in surprise at the farewell. He composed himself and clasped Harry's hand in his, completing the handshake. "May your life be fulfilling."

Hedwig flew from Harry's shoulder and went over to Ragnok. When she settled on his shoulder, she disappeared in a flash of fire, reappearing seconds later.

"Thanks girl," Harry smiled at her before turning to the two house elves. "Ok, so can you tell me how to stop people that I don't want from coming here?"

"Yes Master Harry," the elf, Tanna said. "We's be knowing how to do that. Alls youse have to do …"

The rest of the day was spent with the elves showing Harry what to do and him making the
necessary adjustments. He knew that he'd have to bring Snape, Neville and Luna to add them to the wards and after he spoke with the twins and Remus as well.

By the time they were done, it was already dark.

"Wow," Harry breathed as he collapsed onto a couch. "I didn't think it'd take that long."

"Would Master be liking dinner?" Minky popped into the room.

"Yes Minky," Harry nodded. He leaned his head against the back of the couch and closed his eyes. Minutes later, he heard his name.

"Master Harry," Tanna said. "Dinner be ready."

"Thank you Tanna," Harry smiled down at the house elf.

"Master be so kind," Tanna's huge, round eyes grew slightly wider and shined with wetness. "Just like last Master."

"My dad," Harry said as he walked into the kitchen. He sat down at the table and felt his mouth water at the food. Being at the Dursleys had forced him to learn how to cook and he knew that he was very good at it, but it felt nice to be cooked for.

"Will you two sit down and join me?" Harry said as he grabbed a plate and started placing food on it.

"Master, are you sure?" Minky asked.

"Yes," Harry nodded.

"Just like Mistress youse be," Minky's eyes shined with tears.

"My mom was like that?" Harry asked.

"That she was," A voice spoke up. Harry looked up and saw a portrait on the far wall.

"Uhm...hello?" Harry raised an eyebrow at the man. "Who are you?"

"Harrison Charlus Potter," the man said. "Your ancestor."

Harry's eyes widened in shock. "Really?"

He looked at the portrait more closely and could see the resemblance. He had the same messy, jet-black hair, but piercing brown eyes. He was also wearing small, round spectacles on his face. His features were strikingly similar.

"So the hair really is inherited," Harry mused.

"Yes it is," Harrison said proudly. "Women would swoon when they saw it as it gave us the look as if—"

"We either just got out of bed or we just got the best shag of our life," Harry finished with a chuckle.

"Right you are," the man laughed.

"So," Harry said as he continued eating, Minky and Tanna had finally sat down and was eating
along with him. "What do I call you?"

"You can call me Gramps or Charlie," the man said. "As I guess it'd be confusing with two Harrisons."

"I guess," Harry laughed.

"So Harry," Charlie said. "What has your life been like?"

"I don't think you really want to know," Harry's voice had gone cold as he answered. He stood up and Minky and Tanna immediately cleared away the dishes. "And even if you did, I don't know you well enough to tell you my life story after my parents died."

And with that, he walked out of the kitchen leaving his ancestor staring after him in shock and wonder.

When Harry left the kitchen, he went upstairs and headed to the master bedroom. He stripped out of his clothes and headed to the shower. He pulled the hair band out of his hair, and stepped in. He turned the setting to hot and closed as the water cascaded down around him. Grabbing the body wash, he lathered his wash cloth and bathed his skin. As he washed, his thoughts drifted off to his plans. He knew without a doubt that if Voldemort asked he would join him; but it would not be as one of his followers as he would refuse to take the Dark Mark. He would be Voldemort's equal or he would go against him.

He wasn't stupid enough to believe he could fully take him on, as Voldemort had decades of knowledge on him. But Harry's magic was stronger in a sense because it bends to his will. Whatever he wanted to happen, his magic made it so.

It would be tiresome to wage a war with Voldemort, which is why he hoped the man would be open to the idea of an equal partnership and if not that, then at least allow him the discretion of not bearing his mark.

He shook his head to clear his thoughts and he rinsed his hair and his body. When he was done, he stepped out of the shower, grabbing the bath towel and wrapped it around his waist before heading back to the bedroom. He threw the towel over one of the chairs and waved a hand over his body, drying it immediately. He transfigured some of the towels into a pair of jeans, boxers and a t-shirt. He put them on and looked into the mirror. He noticed that his hair was still slightly wet, making his hair curl and he decided to leave it like that.

When he was done, he went back downstairs and walked into the foyer.

"Minky, Tanna," he called.

"Yes Master Harry?" Both elves popped in front of him.

"I have to go back to my relatives' house," Harry said. "But I will be back and possibly with some others."

"We're waiting Master Harry," Minky nodded.

"Alright," Harry nodded. "Hedwig?"

The bird flashed into the room, coming to land on Harry's shoulder. After he had left the kitchen, she had decided to fly around the property.
"We're going back for a while girl," Harry told his phoenix. "But don't worry, we'll be back."

She trilled a few times, making the elves' eyes widen as they felt the contentment pouring out.


~…~

Back at Privet Drive, Harry flashed into his bedroom. When the light cleared, Hedwig flew to her perch and Harry sat down on his bed. He pulled his notebook towards him and turned to a clean page. He summoned Neville's letter to him and re-read it. When he was done, he grabbed a pen and wrote a reply to him.

Hey Nev,

Sorry it took me so long to write back. It's been kind of a busy few days for me. Of course I trust you Nev, and I know I'll never regret it. You're the only one in our dorm I trust. You've proven over the years just what a trustworthy person you are, and in all honesty, in some ways, I felt closer to you than I did to Ron; which turned out to be a good thing in the end. And don't worry about your grandmother and why she looks at you the way she does; I'm sure you'll figure it out and I'll help you.

I know all that; I never blamed myself for it...well, I take that back. A part of it is my fault, but I'm not going to let it overwhelm me. Sirius wouldn't want me to. Seems we're both going to be doing some changes this year with regards to those two. I'm glad you've decided to drop them. I don't think we've ever really needed them or had them in the first place.

I know you'll stand by my side Nev; I trust you. And I will explain everything to you...I won't leave you in the dark. I've had that happen to me to too often, so I won't do it with you. You shouldn't. I've seen how you've been treated over the years and you're right, you definitely shouldn't stand for anymore crap. I think Hogwarts should meet a new and improved Neville Longbottom...one that's not afraid to speak his mind or stand up for himself and not just for others. Ginny is no friend to anyone unless it can help her. She only became friends with me because I'm the supposed "Chosen" one and what happened in second year only helped that. I've always seen her as more. I know Luna will be a great friend and I'm glad I saw beneath her "Looney" persona.

Ha ha ha. Hedwig's appearance can be explained and since you want to meet the new Harry Potter, then this works out perfectly. Is there any possible way you can leave your grandmother's place without her being suspicious? Like, would she give you trouble if you told her you wanted to spend the summer at a friend's place? I have some things I want to do this summer and I want to include both you and Luna.

Let me know Nev.

Your true friend,
H.J.P.

When Harry was finished, he folded the letter and placed it on the bedside table. He turned back to the notebook and turned it to a clean page.

Hi Luna,

I'm sorry I haven't written to you before, but I'm willing to make up for it. I've been talking to Nev and some decisions were made and we'd like to include you in on them. Will your dad let you spend the summer at someone else's place? I'll be doing some things over the summer that will change this
school year and I'd like you to be involved.

Both Nev and I have decided to stop being who we are now and to show Hogwarts the new us; and I know you would or should too. I know, Nev too, that you're not Looney like you wanted others to believe and in all honesty, I would like to know why you have a "Looney" persona anyways. I do think it's time that people got to know the real you.

Let me know what your dad says, and if you're surprised by the Phoenix, but knowing you, I'm sure you won't be, I'll explain everything to you when we meet.

Send a reply with the phoenix and depending what your answer is, I'll see you in a day or two.

Your friend,

Harry J. Potter

When he was done, he grabbed the one for Neville and turned to Hedwig.

"Hey girl," he cooed to her. "Sorry to do this, but are you up for something traveling?"

Hedwig flew from her perch to land in front of him and trilled softly, reassuring him that she didn't mind.

"Can you take these notes to Neville and Luna?" he asked. He showed which was for whom and tied them to her leg.

Hedwig trilled once more, moving closer to butt her head against his hand before she disappeared in a flash of fire.

After she left, Harry moved to lie down on his back; within seconds, he was asleep. Hedwig flashed back minutes later and when she saw him, she trilled softly, her love and contentment pouring over him, making him relax even more before she flew to her perch to settle down for the night.

~...~

The next day, Harry woke early. He went straight to the shower and had just entered his bedroom when Hedwig flashed into his room, but she wasn't alone; she had Snape and Draco with her, who was staring at Harry in shock.

"Morning Severus, Draco," Harry nodded as he walked over to his dresser. With his back to them, they couldn't see the smirk on his face as he felt Draco's stare bore into him.

"Harry," Snape nodded as he moved to sit in the chair. He looked over at his godson and smirked in amusement as he saw the look on his face.

Draco for his part was oblivious to the look from his godfather, as he was still staring at Harry in shock. His eyes roamed Harry's body taking in the muscles, his hair and his overall presence. His eyes fell to his ass and a blush crept over his cheeks as he hurriedly brought his eyes back up.

'What's Potter? When did he get that body? And that hair? When did Potter get so bloody hot?'

He bit his lip to hold in his whimper at the thought. His eyes moved back up and locked onto Harry's. He saw the amusement in them and he cursed himself silently for getting caught. He quickly schooled his features into indifference and placed a sneer on his face.
"So tell me Potter," Draco said as he moved to sit on the bed. "What's with your change in appearance?"

"Like what you see?" Harry teased.

"You wish," Draco sneered. He swallowed forcefully when Harry waved his hand and transfigured his towel into a pair of jeans. His eyes dropped and he held back a moan as he saw how the jeans outlined Harry's cock.

"Draco," Snape's voice broke through his musings. "If you could desist in salivating over Harry's appearance, it would be much appreciated."

"I was not drooling over him!" Draco scoffed. "As if." He turned his head away as he tried to remove the image of Harry in jeans out of his head. He knew that he liked guys, he knew since third year when he was kissed by Henri Laurent; he had been in France for Christmas break when they had met. His father was an acquaintance of Michel Laurent, Henri's father. When the families had met up, Henri had confessed to him that he liked him…despite being three years older. They had a relationship up until fourth year, when Draco broke it off. But somehow, seeing Harry shirtless and in those jeans, was more intense than the entire relationship with Henri.

"So what brings you here Sev?" Harry asked. Draco's head swerved back around to look at him so fast, that Harry was surprised he hadn't got whiplash.

"Since when do you call him Sev?" Draco demanded. He was still a little put out that he was caught lusting after Harry. "And since when is he Harry? And why are we even here?"

"I was wondering when that question would leave your mind," Snape said. "And Draco, I may be your godfather, but I am still your superior and you will desist in "demanding" anything of me. Is that clear?"

"Yes sir," Draco crossed his arms across his chest.

"Very good," Snape nodded. "Now, to answer your question, we are here to speak with Harry regarding a certain mission."

"Mission?" Harry questioned at the same time Draco's eyes went wide.

"Uncle Sev," Draco gestured frantically with his arms, leaving the two staring at him in amusement. "What are you doing? We can't tell him."

"I'm guessing from the way Drake's acting," Harry smiled and Draco's rambling stopped as he sucked in a breath. "It has to do with Voldemort."

"You'd be correct," Snape said. "Now, if only you had shown such intelligence in school."

"Bite me," Harry chuckled.

"I believe you are talking to the wrong person in this room," Snape's lips twitched.

"What are you two on about?" Draco snapped. "And don't call me "Drake"!"

"I think we should get on with things," Harry said. "What does Voldemort want?"

"He wants you to consider joining his side," Snape said.

"Wait," Draco turned wide eyes between Harry and Snape. "He is the mission? He's the potential
ally?"

"Yes." Snape and Harry replied.

"I'll do it on one condition," Harry continued.

"And what, pray tell, is that?" Snape raised an eyebrow.

"I refuse to wear his mark," Harry said. "It'll be as his equal."

Snape was quiet as he thought over Harry's words while Draco was still watching the two in confusion.

"Very well then," Snape said. "I shall inform the Dark Lord of your answer."

"Alright," Harry said before he turned his gaze to Draco. His eyes drifted over the blond and noted, with approval, that he was wearing black slacks that hugged his ass and a black shirt that had some room for him to move in. Draco had taken off his cloak and thrown it on the end of the bed. Harry smiled to himself as he saw that Draco was trying to avoid looking at him.

Snape, seeing the interaction between the two, held back a smirk. He could see how flustered his godson was becoming and saw the glee on Harry's face at the fact.

"Harry," his voice drew both boys' eyes to him. "Your...family..."

"Not here," Harry smirked. "They're on vacation, visiting Vernon's sister until the end of July."

"Then I shall observe the dwelling now that it's free of their presence," Snape said before he got up to walk to the door.

"Wait!" Draco flew from the bed to hold Snape's arm.

"What is it Draco?" Snape asked as he turned around, effectively removing Draco's hand. "Surely you are not afraid of being in the presence of Mr. Potter on your lonesome?"

"Of course not," Draco denied. "It's only Potter."

"Well then," Snape said before he walked out the door.

Draco cursed softly as he stared at the closed door. Seconds later, he stiffened as he felt Harry body stand behind him.

"What's the matter Draco?" Harry leaned forward to whisper in his ear, causing a shiver to go through Draco's body.

"N-nothing," Draco swallowed.

"Are you sure?" Harry asked as he stepped closer, melding his body to Draco's, pressing his groin against Draco's backside.

"Yes," Draco couldn't hold in the whimper as he felt Harry's cock against his ass.

"Hmmm," Harry said as he leaned his head down to kiss Draco's neck; Draco immediately tilted his head to give him better access. Harry's arms went around his waist before moving down to palm Draco's cock
through his pants. "This doesn't feel like nothing."

"Fuck!" Draco said as his head fell back to rest on Harry's shoulder.

"I want you Draco," Harry whispered and Draco turned his head to look at him. "And I mean to have you."

With that, he turned Draco around and captured his lips in a kiss. He swiped his tongue across Draco's lips and couldn't help but to groan when his tongue gained entrance. He tightened his hold on Draco's waist and pulled him close, relishing the moan that came from Draco as their groins touched. He broke the kiss and trailed a path down his neck, sucking and nipping on the skin as he went.

When Harry had kissed him, Draco's mind went straight into a pleasurable fog; he couldn't think of anything beyond the feel of Harry's lips on his. He had felt Harry's tongue on his lips and he couldn't help but to immediately open his mouth to give him entrance. Feeling Harry's tongue in his mouth and playing with his was pure heaven for him. When he was pulled closer, their cocks touching, he couldn't stop the moan even if he wanted to. He whimpered as Harry's lips left his, but moaned as he felt them trail down his neck. After a few seconds, he grabbed Harry's head, bringing his lips back to him.

When Draco pulled him back in for a kiss, Harry walked them backwards until Draco's back hit the door. His hands moved down to cup his ass, drawing a groan from him, and he lifted him up, allowing Draco to wrap his legs around his waist. The movement brought their cocks even closer together and both moaned at the feeling. Harry pulled away to look in his eyes.

"Do you know how much I want to fuck you right now?" he panted. "Merlin, I want to sink into that tight ass of yours…watch as your ass swallows my cock inch by inch."

"Harry." Draco whimpered at the image his words created.

"I bet the heat will be incredible," Harry moaned; his words were making him painfully hard and he was restraining himself from stripping the both of them and taking Draco right there against the door. "You'd like it, wouldn't you? The feel of my cock in your ass…(moans)...I can feel you pushing back against me, taking me deeper…fuck Draco…you're so hot…so tight…"

Draco's head fell back against the door as he listened to Harry's words. Without him realizing it, he had started grinding against Harry and the stimulation was making his cock even harder.

"Tell me you want that," Harry whispered as he leaned forward. He increased the grinding. "Tell me…I want to suck your cock Drake…I want to feel it in my mouth…I can taste you already…"

"Fuck." Draco whimpered before he leaned forward and seized Harry's lips in rough, demanding kiss. His grindings became even harder and he could feel his balls tightening up. He wrapped his arms around Harry's neck and pressed himself closer, moving his body off the door to mould them chest to chest. Harry's hands gripped his ass tighter.

"I…(pants)…I w—"

"I hope that both of you are quite decent as I have no interest in seeing more than I ought to." Snape's silky drawl broke through their haze of passion and Draco tore his lips from Harry's.

"Let me go," Draco said as he tried to scramble out of his arms.

Harry reluctantly moved his hands, allowing Draco to slide down his body. They both groaned when
they felt each other's obvious arousal. They heard the doorknob rattle, and Draco practically flew across the room just as the door swung open.

Snape walked in and Harry looked at him before walking over to lean against his dresser; as he walked, he used his magic to hide his erection.

"Hmmm," Snape looked between the two. "If you two are quite finished…"

"Let's go," Draco moved to stand next to his godfather without looking at Harry.

"For now we are," Harry nodded.

"Nothing is ever going to happen," Draco said. He had gotten his body under control, but not without difficulty. Even now, it took all he had not to go across the room to finish what they started. "That was a fluke Potter and it is something that will never happen again either."

Harry didn't say anything; he smirked, and Draco suppressed a shiver when he saw it.

"Hedwig." Harry called out and his girl flashed into the room. She had left the moment she felt what her human was up to.

Hedwig trilled as she flew to Harry's shoulder.

"Hedwig?" Draco looked at the phoenix in shock. "Your owl?"

"Yes," Harry nodded.

"But she's a phoenix," Draco pointed out.

"Brilliant observation," Snape mocked. "Now, if we may; Hedwig, we're ready to go now."

She trilled a few times, rubbing her head against Harry's before flying over to land on Snape's shoulder.

"Hello girl," Snape's voice went slightly softer as he addressed Hedwig.

"She's beautiful," Draco's voice held awe as he raised his hand to pet her. Hedwig ducked her head to give him better access.

"She's not the only one," Harry said, causing Draco's head to snap towards him. A flush crawled across his cheeks and he straightened up.

"I shall relay your message and get back to you," Snape told Harry.

"Alright," Harry nodded. "I'll see you…both of you."

Draco sneered while Snape nodded as the three of them disappeared in a flash.

Harry stayed leaning against his dresser as his mind ran over what happened between him and Draco.

"This will be interesting." He laughed.

~...~

Before he knew it, it was the day of the will reading. Harry had gotten replies from both Neville and
Luna the day before, each confirming that they would be able to spend the summer with him. The will reading was at one, like last time and it was now eleven.

Harry had spent the morning out in his garden, before going on a run. He came back ten minutes ago and headed straight to the shower. Five minutes later, he walked out of the bathroom with a towel around his waist. He got quickly dressed before heading down to the kitchen to make something to eat.

Ever since his family had left, his summer had gone better than ever. He didn't have to hide and it was peaceful enough for him…not that he was planning on staying there. As he made breakfast, his thoughts drifted to the will reading later on and wondered on how the others were going to react. He knew that all involved would receive notices, so the others would be surprised to see Snape and Draco there…he couldn't wait.

He finished making breakfast and sat down at the table to eat; Hedwig flashed in and landed next to his plate.

"You were just waiting for me to finish, weren't you?" he teased her. She trilled a few times and he laughed.

The two took their time eating and by the time they were done, they saw that it was after twelve. He wanted to be there before the others, so he cleaned away his dishes while Hedwig flew to his shoulder.

"Alright girl," he said. "Let's go."

~...~

Harry and Hedwig appeared in the office room that he was in last time. Ragnok was sitting behind the desk and he looked up when the two appeared.

"Greetings Lord Potter-Black," the goblin spoke as he moved to his feet.

"Greetings," Harry replied. "And it's just Harry. None of that "Lord" stuff."

"As you wish," Ragnok nodded. "Everyone will more than likely arrive early. Would you like to be disillusioned or would you rather they see you?"

"I think I'd like to be disillusioned until after the reading," Harry said. "That way, no one will have to fake their reactions if they believe I'm not here."

"Excellent idea," Ragnok gave another one of his toothy smiles. He was just about to say something when a signal went off, alerting Ragnok to the arrival of the others. "They are here."

"Let's do this," Harry said. He moved to the corner behind Ragnok's desk where he could see everyone clearly. He leaned against the wall and before Ragnok could disillusion him, his magic reacted and he faded from view.

Ragnok moved back to his desk and sat down just as Griphook opened the door and walked in with Dumbledore, Molly, Arthur, Ginny, Ron and Hermione in tow. When Ragnok saw Ginny, he held back his scowl, but had another chair for her. They took their seats, but looked shocked to see the remaining eight seats. Before they could comment, the door opened once more and Tonks and her mother Andromeda strolled in. Just after they had taken their seats, the door opened again and this time, Remus, Fred and George walked in.
When Remus walked in, his wolf started reacting; his cub was near. Without letting anyone know, he scanned the room, but couldn't see Harry anywhere. He did it once more; letting his senses help, he picked up on Harry's scent. He looked directly into the corner where Harry was and his gaze narrowed. He walked over to the chairs, fixing them in a way so that they were closer to Harry.

"Fred, George," Molly faced her sons with a slight scowl on her face. "What are you two doing here?"

"Got a missive, didn't we Forge," George said.

"That's right Gred," Fred agreed as he shared a smirk with his twin.

"Why the bloody hell would they get a missive?" Ron looked at his brothers.

"Now, now ickle Ronnikeins…" Fred started.

"…that is none of…." George continued.

"…your business," Fred finished.

The two smirked as they took their seats next to Remus; the three seats just happened to be away from the others. Just as they sat down, the door opened once more and Draco, Narcissa and Severus walked in.

"What the hell?!" Ron moved to his feet. "Malfoy, what the hell are you doing here?"

"It is obvious that the limited time you have been away from the school for the summer has dimmed what miniscule intelligence you had even further Mr. Weasley," Snape's icy drawl made Draco snicker and Ron to glare at them even harder.

"Severus," Dumbledore turned to look at his teacher; the twinkle in his eyes was not present. "Why are you here? I wasn't aware that you and Sirius were under good terms."

"I assure you Headmaster," Snape turned to him. "It is as much of a shock to me as it is you and it is in my belief that the answer will be given by the mutt himself."

"Perhaps we should get started," Ragnok said.

"But what about Harry?" Remus spoke, not missing the narrowed and calculating gaze of Snape or the blush the stole Draco's cheek for a split second. After he had sat down, he had felt a hand on his shoulder for a split second and he knew it was Harry. What had him puzzled was the reason why Harry was disillusioned.

"Mr. Potter will not be here," Dumbledore spoke up. "But he wrote me a letter asking me to go in his place."

Remus held back his growl as he felt the hand grab his shoulder once more in a tight grip. With its cub near, the wolf was on high alert and he could smell the deception coming off Albus. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Snape turn a hard look towards the man and Draco's eyes had narrowed.

"Let's begin shall we?" Ragnok said. He brought the orb out on his desk and placed it in front of him. "This is the reading of the last will and testament of Sirius Orion Black."

_I, Sirius Orion Black, being of sound mind and gorgeous body (shut up Moony) hereby bequeath (do I really have to say that word?) my possessions to the following people:_
To my best friend and pack-mate Remus J. Lupin, I leave you with 1,000,000 galleons with the instructions to buy yourself some new wardrobe. And sorry Remy, but you can't give it back.

Remus shook his head with a chuckle as he felt his throat clog with tears; it had finally sunk in that his best friend was gone. He felt on the hand on his shoulder squeeze him.

To Nymphadora Tonks, I leave you with 10,000 galleons. The only reason for that is because you're family. Blacks may have their disagreements, but the ones that were close, looked out for each other. You chose your job over me. You not only suspected, but you know that I was innocent and as an Auror, it was your job to tell your boss. Amelia would've at least demanded they look into what really happened.

Tonks scowled as she sat in the chair. She had hoped she would get more as that was what she was told. She studiously ignored the looks her mother sent her.

To Andromeda Tonks, I reinstate you to the Black Family line; just because I am disappointed in your daughter doesn't mean anything when it comes to you. I also leave you with 100,000 galleons.

Andromeda or Andy as she preferred, gave a sad smile at his words. She loved her cousin, despite everything that had happened and she was angry that his life had been cut short before he could gain his innocence. She turned a disapproving look to her daughter, vowing to talk to her when they got home.

To Draco Malfoy, I leave you with 50,000 galleons. I know your secret Draco and it may shock you but I am glad and I wish you well. I've heard of how you've acted and I have to say, it does me proud to see that you truly are a Black. Masks are something I'm familiar with.

Draco, along with Ron, Hermione and Ginny, were shocked, though Draco didn't show it. Draco couldn't believe that his cousin had actually left him anything. He was also shocked because Sirius knew what his secret was…something only one other person knew. He felt something let go inside if him at the approval in Sirius' words. In the back, Fred and George shared a grin.

To Narcissa Malfoy, I leave you with a Knut. We may have been close as kids, but that changed. I've heard things Cissy and I'm disappointed to note that you turned out just like my mother, your Aunt Walburga.

Narcissa held back the scowl that threatened to break free; she was a Malfoy after all and Malfoys do not show emotions in public.

To Arthur and Molly Weasley, I leave 1,000 galleons. Molly, you may be a mother, but Harry is not your son. Moreover, while I do appreciate you taking him in, it doesn't give you the right to try and control his life. You were a guest in my home and I wasn't supposed to put up with you demeaning my every action concerning him. You are not his mother and you are not his guardian. Nevertheless, it doesn't surprise me knowing what I do now.

"How dare he!" Molly surged to her feet.

"Molly," Albus spoke. "I'm sure there's a misunderstanding somewhere. Ragnok, are you sure this is Sirius' will?"

"Yes," Ragnok said. "Now, if you could kindly be quiet until I finish or I shall ask you all to leave."

Molly was furious, as was Arthur, but they said nothing.

To Ron Weasley, I leave you with this advice; grow up. You're nothing more than a jealous arse.
Ron, like his mother, moved to his feet ready to let out a retort. His mother saw the goblin guards stepped forward and she pulled her son back to his seat.

"Not now Ron," Molly reprimanded. "When it's over we'll have our say."

Harry snickered to himself; Draco as well as Snape, was trying to hold back their laughter…the twins didn't have that composure as they laughed outright.

To Hermione Granger, when I first met you, I was intrigued and happy that my godson had someone like you in his corner, but now…if circumstances were different, I would've left you the entire Black Library, but as it is, things change as do people. The only difference between you and Peter is your gender and blood status.

Hermione's eyes narrowed into slits as she crossed her arms across her chest. The Black Library was huge and she could've really used it. Her gaze slid to Dumbledore's and became harsher. She bristled at Sirius' comparison to Pettigrew, but as she didn't fancy being escorted out, she said nothing.

To Albus Dumbledore, I leave you with nothing. I won't have to explain as I'm sure you know why.

It was Albus' turn to narrow his eyes in anger. He wanted to speak up, but one look at Ragnok's face told him otherwise. That's not the will that was supposed to be read! How the hell did Black manage to get a new one?'

To the Weasley twins Fred and George, I leave with you the trunk in my vault. It's filled with all the pranks the Marauders did and ones that we thought of. Moony can help you guys with it. I also leave you both with 100,000 galleons each. You guys have been a better friend to Harry far more than the other two.

The twins held onto each other as they heard what Sirius had left to them; not only was he leaving them money, he was also leaving them his trunk filled with pranks and prank knowledge. Happy grins stole across their faces, but they lost it instantly when they heard the end.

"We would give it all back…"

"…if it meant he was still alive…"

"…because that would make Harry happy."

Ragnok looked at them with approval, and unbeknownst to everyone else, so did Harry.

"Are you bloody well kidding me?" Ron couldn't hold his tongue. "I'm his freaking best friend. Why do I get nothing and you get something? And I can't believe you'd give back 200, 000 galleons!"

"Careful Ron," the twins turned as one to glare at him. "You might be blood, but we owe a lot to Harry. And when it comes down to it, he's a right better bloke than you are." The hard and hateful expression on their faces shocked the room as they had never seen them as anything but playful.

"I'm your brother," Ron said. "Are you saying you'd choose him over me?"
"Yes." The two didn't even hesitate in their answer.

"Why?" Arthur asked his sons.

"With the way you lot are..." Fred spoke.

"...Harry needs someone in his corner," George finished.

"Shall we continue?" Ragnok cut off whatever it was Molly was going to say.

To Severus Snape, the first thing I leave to you is this: my deepest apologies. James and I were absolutely horrible to you in school and I know that just saying sorry will not erase everything, but I hoped it would be a start. I also want to thank you. Despite everything, you've still looked out for Harry and I will be forever grateful to you for that. I leave you with 200,000 galleons; it might seem much to you, but to me, it's nothing when compared to keeping Harry safe. There's also something you should know, but Harry has to be the one to tell you.

It was only through all his years as a spy that Snape was able to prevent his body and facial features from expressing the shock that he was experiencing. The apology that he didn't even realize he was still looking for, was finally given to him and a weight was released from his soul. In that moment, without him realizing it, Severus granted Sirius the forgiveness that Sirius himself hadn't thought he deserved.

And lastly, to my godson Harry James Potter, I leave you with the rest of the Black fortune. I also declare you legally emancipated and my heir. You haven't been a child in a long time Harry, and with everything that has happened, it's time you took control of your life.

Remus, despite Harry's emancipation, I name you his legal guardian in the Wizarding World. Only you and Harry can touch his vaults and money. Anyone else will need to not only provide identification, but they have to have authorization from either one of you. Don't worry; the goblins have a way of knowing if the authorization is authentic or faked. Take care of our cub Moony and please, I truly don't want either of you to feel guilty over my death and I don't want you to blame yourselves either. If you do, I swear I will create enough of a ruckus in the afterlife just to come back and haunt both of your asses...understand?

Finally, Grimmauld Place is no longer in use by the Order of the Phoenix. Draco, it's yours to do whatever you want with. And Severus, the money? Use it to buy a better shampoo and some clothes...ha ha ha ha ha ha.

I know a lot of you are angry about what you have received, but, well, I'm dead, so there's nothing you can do and everything is already done and cannot be changed...well, they can only be changed by the heir. Ha ha ha ha ha ha.

Toodles.

Sirius Orion Black
Lord of the House of Black
Marauder
Godfather to an Amazing Young Man
Best Friend to Amazing Man

The moment Ragnok was done chaos broke out in the room.

"Quiet!" everyone went silent at the noise from the goblin.

"Ragnok I must ask once more if you are sure that you read the correct will," Albus spoke up.
"Yes, I am," Ragnok said.

"But that is not the will I witnessed Sirius making," Albus stated. "He had made a will about a week and a half before he died."

"Well," Ragnok said. "This will was made just days before his death, so it is more effective than the one you are talking about."

"What about the engagement?" Ginny spoke up for the first time.

"What engagement?" Remus growled out. The twins had taken a stance next to him and were looking at their sister in shock and anger. Draco's eyes narrowed in anger as he listened.

"The engagement that was to take place between Ms. Weasley and Mr. Potter," Albus smirked.

"Was that made around the time of the first will?" Ragnok asked.

"Yes."

"Then I'm sorry to say that it has no bearing," Ragnok smiled, which scared most of the occupants in the room. "Because the previous Lord Black made his will after this marriage stipulation, it cancelled it out. Add in the emancipation and heir clause, the now Lord Black has no need with pre-organized marriage contracts. He is free to marry whomever he chose."

Draco fought his blush at that statement.

"What?!" Ginny moved to her feet. "You can't do that!"

"I assure it can and has been done," Ragnok said. "Now, that is all the matter that needs to be discussed today, I suggest you leave."

He motioned to the guards and they came forward. As they were leaving, Ragnok stopped them.

"Would Severus Snape, Draco Malfoy, Remus Lupin and Fred and George Weasley remain behind?"

"Why?" Ron asked. "Why do they have to stay and we have to leave? Is it more money?"

Ragnok said nothing; he gestured to the guards to remove the rest while the five remained behind.

"Is there something wrong?" Fred asked.

"No." It was not Ragnok that spoke. They looked up and saw Harry standing there with a phoenix on his shoulder; Remus, though the only one that wasn't shocked to see Harry, was shocked to see the phoenix.

"Harry!" Fred and George rushed forward to grab him in a hug. Hedwig, seeing them approach, flew to land on Draco's shoulder, whose hand automatically went up to rub her breast.

"Hey guys," Harry laughed. "Could you let me go?"

"Sorry." Both boys smiled as they pulled back.

"Now…"

"…what's going on…"
"...with you?"

"Hold on a minute," Harry said. "Hedwig? Can you go get them please?"

Hedwig trilled before disappearing in a flash of fire.

"Hedwig?" Remus, Fred and George all spoke at once.

"Not yet," Harry smiled. His gaze drifted to Snape, who gave a smirk before schooling his expression, and then stopped on Draco. The blond shifted closer to his godfather and turned his gaze away from Harry's.

Hedwig flashed back into the room and she had two people with her: Neville and Luna.

"Hi guys," Harry smiled over at them.

"Harry," Luna smiled and moved to hug him. "Hedwig looks beautiful as always."

"I knew you'd figure it out," Harry told her as he pulled back from the hug. "Before anyone says anything, we should go. I'll take Luna, Nev, Fred and Remus with me and Hed can take Sev, Draco and George."

"Sounds like a plan," Remus said.

"Ragnok," Harry turned to the goblin. "I will talk with you later."

"Alright Lord Potter," Ragnok nodded.

"May your vaults overflow with gold," Harry said which shocked the others.

"And may your life be fulfilling," Ragnok replied and it shocked the rest even more.

"Let's go." Harry said to the others and they disappeared.

~...~

The group reappeared outside the gates to the Manor. Remus looked around with wide eyes; he hadn't been there since Lily and James were still alive.

"What are we doing here?" George asked.

"Don't tell me you own that godforsaken shack?" Draco snorted.

"Hang on," Harry said. He pressed his finger into the lion's mouth and the others stood still at the manor that appeared. "That is what I own."

He chuckled at the looks on their faces and smiled when he saw the tears in Remus' eyes. "Come on."

He led them up to the door and like the last time, he pricked his finger to allow the drop of blood; instead of opening the door like it did before, he cast a spell and turned to each of them.

"Prick your finger on the lion's teeth and let your blood drop into its mouth," He told them.

Trusting him, they did as they were told. The doors opened and they stepped inside. When they got inside, he cast another spell, the one the Minky and Tanna had told him to.
"What just happened Harry?" Neville asked.

"We were keyed into the wards," Remus answered.

"Why?" Draco asked.

"I suppose we allow Harry to explain to us exactly what is going on and why he brought us here," Snape's drawl cut across any more questions the others might've had.

"Just follow me and I'll explain everything," Harry said as he led them to the living room. They all found seats before they turned to Harry.

"Now cub," Remus said, "Explain everything."

Chapter End Notes

Now that you've read, please review so that I can know what you thought

Kila
Truths Revealed

Chapter by mykkila09

Chapter Summary

Harry explains everything to the others; meeting with LV; the group starts their training; the group is introduced to the Death Eaters; a shocking answer to Neville's dreams

Chapter Notes

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My disclaimer: If I owned Harry Potter; Ginny would've died in the CoS, Harry would've broken free of Dumbledore’s manipulations and Molly’s overbearing, Sirius wouldn’t have died, Hermione never would’ve dated Ron, Harry would’ve ditched Ron in fourth year, and most importantly, there’d be lots and lots of Harry/Draco slash.

"Talking"
'Thinking'
Letter or commentary/introduction
{Parsssel tonguel}

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Last time on RDA:

The group reappeared outside the gates to the Manor. Remus looked around with wide eyes; he hadn't been there since Lily and James were still alive.

"What are we doing here?" George asked.

"Don't tell me you own that godforsaken shack?" Draco snorted.

"Hang on," Harry said. He pressed his finger into the lion's mouth and the others stood still at the manor that appeared. "That is what I own."

He chuckled at the looks on their faces and smiled when he saw the tears in Remus' eyes. "Come on."

He led them up to the door, like last time, he pricked his finger to allow the drop of blood; instead of opening the door like last time, he cast a spell and turned to each of them.

"Prick your finger on the lion's teeth and let your blood drop into its mouth," He told them.

Trusting him, they did as they were told. The doors opened and then stepped inside. When they got
inside, he cast another spell, the one the Minky and Tanna had told him to.

"What just happened Harry?" Neville asked.

"We were keyed into the wards," Remus answered.

"Why?" Draco asked.

"I suppose we allow Harry to explain to us exactly what is going on and why he brought us here," Snape's drawl cut across any more questions the others might've had.

"Just follow me and I'll explain everything," Harry said as he led them to the living room. They all found seats before they turned to Harry.

"Now cub," Remus said. "Explain everything."

Harry looked at them; his gaze travelled over each of them, staying longer on Draco, causing the blond to squirm.

"I know you guys want explanations," Harry spoke. "So, any questions you have, I'll answer."

"What the bloody hell happened to you?" Neville blurted out the question that was on everyone's, minus Snape's, mind.

Harry laughed and Draco found himself mesmerized at the sound; he had never heard him laugh like that before. Feeling a gaze on him, he looked around and saw his godfather looking at him with a knowing look in his eyes. He scowled before he schooled his expression into boredom.

"Well," Harry started. "Before I tell you that, I need to know something first."

"What is it?" George asked.

"How loyal are you to Dumbledore?" he asked.

"Loyal only to you," Luna said; as before, her voice and eyes were clear and precise.

"I told you before," Neville said. "I'm sticking by you, no matter what."

"We meant what we said at the will reading," Fred said. "We'll choose you over anyone else."

"Why is that?" Harry asked. "Why did you say I need someone in my corner?"

Fred and George shared a look before turning back to Harry.

"We overheard mum and dad talking one day," Fred started.

"They were talking about vaults and your name came up," George continued.

"Mum made a comment about asking Dumbledore for more money," Fred picked up. "And then she started talking about a possible engagement between you and Ginny."

"We already think of you as our little brother," George said. "And if things were different, we probably wouldn't have minded, but we know how Ginny is…"

"And we also know that she is not your type," Fred said. "We were a bit concerned, so we started paying more attention to things around us."
"But what made you guys decide to be behind me?" Harry asked. "What made you basically abandon your family?"

"Because our family," Fred said and the word family was sneered, "was already thinking about your death and what they would get upon it."

"What?!" that was exclaimed by the rest of the room's occupants.

"We overheard mum, Dumbledore, dad, Ron and Hermione talking about your will," George said. "They were saying that you would have to die with You-know-who, leaving everything to them and if that didn't work..."

"Then Ginny would marry you and somehow, they'd set you up," Fred continued. "That way, Ginny could file for a divorce and get everything from you. Or if you didn't fall for some lust potion trap, they would set up some accident. In this case, Ginny would inherit as the unfortunate, tragic widow."

The others stared in shock, anger and disbelief over what they were hearing. Harry's reaction was more explosive; his magic went wild. Everything in the room started levitating; the windows shattered and the pieces were swirling around in the air above them.

Hedwig started trilling and the angry tone to it had them cringing.

"Harry!" Remus shouted to his godson. "Calm down!"

He didn't; his mind was too focused on what Fred and George had just revealed. The others tried as well, but to no avail.

Draco sat in his seat, terrified at what he was seeing and feeling. He'd always known Harry was powerful, but seeing it now was beyond anything he knew. He knew they needed to calm Harry down, but so far, nothing they did had worked. His mind drifted back to what had happened in Harry's room a few days ago and he got a thought. It was ludicrous, he knew, but it was worth a try.

He got up from his seat and made his way towards Harry; to his surprise and the surprise of the others, the shards of glass seemed to make a path for him. He walked directly to Harry and touched his shoulder; the effect was instant.

Harry's magic started calming down and everything fell to the floor. He blinked, and when he saw the shards on the floor, he waved his hand, repairing the windows easily, making the others gape at the display of wandless and wordless magic.

Draco ignored the looks from the others as he went back to his seat, crossing his arms across his chest.

"Sorry about that," Harry said and Hedwig flew to his shoulder. She butted her head against his and he reached up to rub her breast. "Sorry girl."

She trilled, this time, the tone was soft and light.

"I know," Harry nodded; none of the others looked surprised, as they knew that Harry was always able to talk to Hedwig.

She trilled one more, only to pause before trilling in succession.

"Alright," Harry nodded. "I trust you. If you say they are, they are."
"I take it she has established that their auras are compatible?" Snape raised an eyebrow.

"Yes," Harry nodded. "And it makes things so much easier."

"Harry," Remus called, "what's going on?"

"You guys should settle down," Harry said. "It's going to be a long night."

He called Minky and Tanna and had them prepare a meal for them. As they ate, he told them everything: from his home life at the Dursleys to his theories about Ron, Hermione, Molly and Dumbledore. He also told them the truth about Hedwig and the letters that he had gotten from both Ron and Hermione. When Harry was finished, everyone was quiet as they digested what he had revealed.

"Merlin," Fred was the first to speak. "I never really looked at it that way. I mean, it had always bothered me as to why mum would make a sweater for someone she's never met…"

"…especially when she's known Lee was our closest friend since first year and he's never gotten one," George finished.

"And then," Fred continued, "when you add in our taking the muggle way to King's Cross station that year when we'd never done any other year…"

"…everything makes sense," George finished.

"Dumbledore set the whole thing up," Neville said. "He wanted Harry to make friends with the people he chose and to look up to him, with no questions asked."

"We should be thankful that the butterfly decided to fly in the other direction concerning Harry," Luna said, to the puzzlement of the others. "It is not the first time our esteemed Headmaster as made such a grave mistake; he sneezed the other way during that time as well. History does have a way of repeating itself."

"What the bloody hell are you on about?" Draco raised an eyebrow in her direction. He was still reeling from what he just heard; he couldn't believe that Harry's life had been what he said it was. Besides everything else, now that he reflected on the past five years, he could see that it all made sense. Why else would all those things start happening at Hogwarts when Harry started if it wasn't all orchestrated by the Headmaster?

"She's referring to the "Chaos Theory"," Snape said.

"Chaos Theory?" Everyone except for Harry, Luna and Snape questioned.

"What's that?" Neville asked.

"Muggles have this saying," Harry spoke. "A man sneezes one way, the world is fine, he sneezes the other, and the world is in utter chaos. There's also one that is called "The Butterfly Effect"; a butterfly dies in the past and the future is drastically changed. The one Luna is talking about though is the Chaos Theory."

"That makes no sense," Draco sneered. "Filthy muggles and their stupid sayings."

"Filthy though they may be," Snape's icy tone silenced Draco quickly. "There is truth in that saying. If you would listen to what was beneath Ms. Lovegood's words, you would understand."
At the confused look on not only his godson's face, but the others as well, had Snape sighing.

"What Ms. Lovegood said, or didn't say is rather simple," Snape said. "Had Harry not reacted the way he did that day when he was a child, he would've made the perfect tool for the Headmaster. If he had chosen not to act on his anger, then he wouldn't be who he is now."

"But he did," George said, finally understanding. "He acted on his anger and that changed everything. Harry changed his path so that he wouldn't become a weapon for the light, but rather a weapon against them."

"Exactly," Snape nodded in approval.

"History repeats itself?" Neville questioned.

"Voldemort," Harry said, causing the others to look at him and Snape to scowl, snarling "Don't say his name, Potter."

"Sorry, Sev, it's a habit, I'll try to remember," Harry replied with a sheepish look.

He saw the looks of confusion and disbelief, so he clarified. "Think about it; there have only been two Dark Lords in this time; Grindelwald and You-Know-Who. Luna said that Dumbledore made the same mistake before; it couldn't have been with Grindelwald as they were in school together, which meant it had to be someone that came after."

"And that's You-Know-Who," Neville answered, his eyes going wide with understanding.

"Exactly," Harry nodded. "I'm not too sure, but my guess is, the Dark Lord’s life as a child was similar to mine and he may have gone to the headmaster or some teachers at Hogwarts like Dumbledore for help, but was refused. He allowed his anger to take over until all he felt was hatred for all muggles and non-purebloods."

"And it would also explain his hatred for Dumbledore as well," Remus said. "Since Dumbledore refused him help, it made him into the Dark Lord he is now. And it's the same thing he did to Harry."

"Exactly how much like You-know-Who are you Harry?" Fred asked, and it was a question that all, except Snape, needed an answer to.

"Equal," Harry smirked, "and yet different."

"He's as dark as he is," Luna said as she examined her nails, "but with a more colourful and vivid imagination."

"You guys are taking this better than I expected," Harry said after a bout of silence.

"In all honesty," Remus said, "a part of me expected it sooner or later. Since I met you in your third year, Moony sensed darkness in you and it drew him even closer to you."

"Guess you really can't beat a wolf's senses," Harry chuckled.

"Of course not Harry," Luna remarked as she got up from her seat and moved to sit on his lap; his arm automatically went around her waist. "Shame on you for thinking otherwise."

"Why are we really here?" Draco asked; he would never admit that he was jealous of the fact the Luna was sitting on Harry's lap. "What the hell is she doing? And why is he letting her sit on him?"
He's mine! She has no business sitting there! Yours, is he? If I recall, you feel nothing for him. Didn't you say that episode in his room was a fluke? So, why the anger for him having someone else on him? I don't care! It was a fluke damnit, but still...

"Oi, Malfoy," Fred called out. "You ok over there?"

"I don't know Freddie," George smirked. "Looks like he's thinking awfully hard about something."

"Like he's AK-ing someone in his mind," Fred picked up on his brother's train of thought. "I wonder who it could be."

"Shut up," Draco hissed as he fought the flush. "I'm not thinking about anything or anyone. All I want to know is why Potter brought us here."

"I brought you guys here to include you in my plans," Harry said. "Like I told Severus, I have no intention of acting the same I have been doing the past five years. After everything that has happened with Sirius, I don't feel much like being the Golden Boy anymore."

"What are your plans?" Neville asked.

"My plans are to train this summer," Harry said. "I want to learn how to duel properly, advance my magic, especially my wand and wordless; I want to make sure I can properly protect myself. I might be more in control of magic than anyone else, but that doesn't mean there isn't anything I still can't learn."

"We're in," Fred and George said as one.

"Nev?" Harry asked.

"I'm with you Harry," Neville said. "All the way."

"Remy?" Harry turned to his guardian.

"It's taking a while for everything you've told us to sink in," Remus said. "Including the part about Dumbledore; I've placed my trust in him to take care of everything and to know he was responsible for everything. However, ever since Sirius, Moony hasn't trusted Dumbledore. And to hear all this destroyed what little trust either of us had left for him."

"You Gryffindors talk too much," Snape cut him off. "Put Harry out of his misery and give him the answer he so desires."

"You're my cub," Remus said. "Nothing is more important to a wolf than its cub…not even its mate. With that said, I'm with you. It might take a while to get used to the new you, but I'm standing on your side."

"Potter," Draco sneered. "I get what you're saying with everything, but are you seriously thinking of having us do muggle exercise? Are you that daft?"

"The muggle exercise that you're sneering at is effective," Harry said. "It's the reason I look the way I do."

Draco couldn't help but to let his eyes run over Harry's body once more.

"I suppose it does have some effect," Draco said grudgingly, not wanting to admit just how much he liked Harry's new body and Harry smirked because he knew it.
"What other things will we be doing?" Neville asked.

"Along with everything I said before, we'll also work on our speed," Harry said. "Our spell casting and everything else; just think of it as an advanced DA."

"Got it," Neville nodded.

"Harry," Snape called. "In regards to the will reading…"

"You're talking about what Siri said at the end?" Harry raised an eyebrow.

"Yes," Snape nodded. "Past actions caution me to be wary, but I would like to know."

"OK," Harry nodded before he held out his hand. The others watched as a parchment appeared in a flash of fire in his hand.

"How in the world did you manage that?" Draco asked.

"My bond with Hedwig," Harry said before he levitated the letter to Snape. "I want you to read it."

"Alright," Snape nodded as he took the parchment. With slight trepidation, though it didn't show, he opened it. As he read through it, Harry watched him closely to read the emotions that flashed across his eyes. When he was done, Snape turned to look at Harry and for once, his emotions showed in his eyes.

"You were supposed to be with me?" he asked, a slight tremble to his tone.

"What?" Remus asked. "What are you talking about?"

"You can give him the letter," Harry said. "And yes I was; that's another thing Dumbledore took from us."

"I don't believe this," Remus' hand trembled as he read the letter. "How could he do this? How could he destroy so many lives?"

"What's going on?" Draco asked as he looked between the three of them.

"It's a letter from Sirius," Remus said and then he proceeded to explain the contents.

"So much damage," Neville shook his head. "And for what?"

"To control me," Harry said. "He wants to control everything."

"Severus," Remus spoke up. "Sirius has already done this and I would like to do so as well; I am sorry for everything that happened in school."

"Foolish wolf," Snape said. "Your apologies are wasted as I have no use for them. Nothing untoward was done to me by you."

"I knew what they were doing was wrong," Remus explained. "And I didn't do anything to stop it. And for that, I am sorry."

Snape was quiet as he listened to Remus' words; ever since he had gotten that letter from Harry days earlier, he found that life as he knew it had been turned upside down. He had found out information that had rocked his foundation of beliefs and that same foundation was being rocked once more. He was shocked when he had gotten that missive from Gringotts about being a recipient in Sirius' will
and had been wary about attending.

Sirius' apology had shocked him as well and with Remus' own, he was at a slight loss. He looked at Harry and knew that there was really only one thing he could do. Harry had confessed that he was one of the few people he trusted and he surprisingly found himself reluctant to lose that. With that thought in mind, he turned back to Remus.

"I suppose it is the best interest of all parties involved to let bygones be bygones," he said and the small smile on Harry's face had him relaxing, as he knew he made the right decision.

"Thank you," Remus smiled. "Though from what I've observed and what I've learned, it was accepted because of Harry."

"Of course," Snape nodded and he shared a smirk with Harry.

"So that's why Sirius had Severus as a recipient in his will," Draco said. "What I don't understand is why he had me."

"We can…" Fred started.

"…answer that," George finished.

"We've looked out for Harry over the years," Fred said.

"So I think we'd notice anyone that develops a certain interest in him," George continued.

"We just happened to mention certain things to Sirius," Fred picked up. "And I guess his imagination took care of the rest."

"Wait," Neville held up a hand. "Are you saying that Draco has feelings for Harry?"

"And Harry feels the same," Luna said.

"I do not have feelings for Harry!" Draco said.

"Hmmm," Harry smirked as he looked over at Draco. "You're protesting just a little too much."

"I think so too," Remus smirked. "A wolf's senses never lie."

Draco turned his face to hide the flush that was working its way up to his cheeks. Hedwig trilled a few times, her tone light and musical, which gave them the feeling that she was laughing, before she flew to land on Draco's lap. He ignored everyone as he groomed her.

"Severus," Harry turned to the potions master. "What did he say?"

"After Draco and I left your place," Snape said. "We went back to Malfoy Manor…"

Flashback

When the light cleared away, Snape looked up at Hedwig. "Thank you."

She trilled twice before she flashed out. Both walked out of the room and headed directly to the West Wing where the Dark Lord was. As they passed Lucius' office, the door opened and said man stepped out.

"Severus, Draco," he inclined his head towards them.
"Father," Draco nodded.

"Lucius," Severus spoke, "is there something wrong?"

"No," Lucius shook his head, "except for the fact that the Dark Lord seemed to be in a good mood these past few days."

"Has he?" Snape raised an eyebrow. He had a feeling as to why the Dark Lord would feel that way and from the sounds of things, Lucius hadn't been confided in.

"Why do I have the feeling that it has to do with whatever news you had for him a few days ago?" Lucius raised an eyebrow.

"I will neither deny nor confirm that statement," Snape said. When he noticed the flash of irritation in Lucius' eyes, he sighed. "Lucius, I am aware of the fact that you may feel as if you are being excluded, however, the information that I am passing on is somewhat sensitive and I cannot and will not divulge it without expressed consent from the Dark Lord."

The two shared a long look before Lucius nodded slowly. "Understandable."

"If you will excuse us," Snape said. "We must speak with the Dark Lord."

"Dra..." Lucius looked towards his son.

"Yes," Snape nodded. "It is the Dark Lord's request."

Lucius was worried as to what the Dark Lord would need his son for, but as much as it pained him to do so, he refused to question it. He just hoped his son would not undergo any torture.

"So be it," Lucius nodded. "He is where he was the last time you were here."

"Good evening Lucius," Snape nodded before he walked off.

"Father," Draco looked at his father before he followed his godfather, leaving Lucius staring after the two of them.

They walked down the hallway in silence and when they came to the door, Draco stayed where he was, while Snape stepped forward and knocked on the door three times.

"Enter."

Snape and Draco walked into the room, the door closing softly behind them. As always, Voldemort was seated in that same wingback chair and Nagini lay curled in front of the fireplace.

"Severus, Draco," Voldemort beckoned them forward. "I take it you have news about Potter?"

"Yes my Lord," Snape said. "I spoke to him about an allegiance towards you."

"And?" Voldemort questioned as he leaned forward slightly.

"He has agreed, though he has one condition," Snape answered.

"And what may that condition be?" Voldemort raised an eyebrow.

"He does not want to bear your Mark," Snape said. "He revealed that he would join you only as an equal."
All three were quiet; Draco was slightly too terrified to say anything, Voldemort was thinking over his plans and Snape knew that the Dark Lord would need to think things through.

"He will not bear my mark," Voldemort said finally. "But he will not be my true equal."

"My Lord?" Snape looked up at him.

"The boy is powerful," Voldemort decided to elaborate. "But there can only be one Dark Lord. While in the past I would've rather he be dead, in light of the circumstances, having him on my side is much more beneficial to me."

"I understand," Snape nodded.

"When you meet next," Voldemort spoke, "I have no doubt that when he learns of this he will have questions or concerns. I would like to arrange a meeting with him."

"I shall pass the message on my Lord," Snape nodded.

"Good," Voldemort said before he looked at Draco. "Is it safe to assume that Mr. Potter was agreeable to Young Malfoy's appearance?"

"I would say my Lord," Snape tossed a smirk in his godson's direction, "that he was more than agreeable to having Draco there."

"Excellent," Voldemort said and he smirked as Draco tried and failed to fight the blush that was quickly staining his cheeks.

"Have you nothing to report Young Draco?" Voldemort said.

"No my Lord," Draco said as he bowed his head.

"What do you think of the new Potter?" Voldemort asked. "Do you think he is being truthful?"

"I was suitably shocked my Lord," Draco said as he looked up. "But, I do believe he was sincere."

"You are dismissed," Voldemort said. When both Draco and Snape turned to leave he held up a hand. "Not you."

Draco looked at his godfather before bowing once more to Voldemort and walking out the room.

When the door closed, Voldemort waved a hand, placing the suitable Silencing and Locking Charms. He got up from his seat and walked over to stand in front of Snape. As he did the last time, he brought up a hand and ran the back of it across Snape’s cheek.

"Tell me your thoughts on Potter joining us," Voldemort said as he let his hand fall back to his side.

"I truly believe it will be beyond beneficial to us," Snape said as he fought with himself not to react to the man’s presence. "He has changed; he is no longer acting the naïve part and he wants to be in control of his future."

"I must ask this," Voldemort said. "As I have truly come to appreciate the idea of having him on my side, how do I ensure it?"

"From what I have gathered my Lord," Snape said, suppressing the shiver of need as he heard his
name from Voldemort's lips. "He does not like to be lied to or controlled. He is strong, confident and bold. He will make a great enemy, but a more powerful ally."

"I will take your thoughts into consideration," Voldemort nodded.

End flashback

"He didn't mind me not wanting the Dark Mark?" Harry asked.

"No," Snape shook his head. "But like I said, he will not have you as a true equal either. He respects your power, but he wants to be the only Dark Lord."

"I have no problem with that," Harry nodded. "I have no intention of wanting to rule anything, so I'll leave that to him. He can consult me on raids, deaths and whatnot, but that's just about it."

"And what of the meeting?" Snape raised an eyebrow.

"I have no problem meeting with him," Harry said. "I would like to talk with him as I have some questions."

"Very well," Snape nodded. "I shall inform him of your decision. However, if I may ask, why are you willing to not pursue being his equal?"

"Sev, everyone here knows I'm powerful, but so is the Dark Lord and the one thing he has on me is the fact that he has decades of knowledge," Harry shook his head with a smile. "Not only does he know a vast amount of dark arts, spells, curses and rituals, he has had more than enough practice with them. I know many spells myself, but I haven't really had a chance to actually use them to familiarize myself with them. Knowing spells is good, but without the practice…"

Snape nodded when Harry finished, while Draco watched him in awe.

"This is all so weird," Neville shook his head, drawing looks from the others.

"What do…"

"…you mean?"

"I'm sitting in a room with Malfoy, Snape and all you lot," Neville explained. "Talking about turning on the Light and joining You-Know-Who's side. It's just weird is all and a little hard to take."

"I'm not asking you guys to join the Dark Lord's side with me," Harry said, not wanting to force them into something they didn't want.

"Harry," Neville shook his head at his friend before looking at him with a determined expression. "You don't have to ask that; I told you I'm sticking by you and I mean it. And with everything you've told us, I can see why you would. Sure this is a bit much to take in, but I trust you Harry and nothing will change that. If you're joining him, I'll be right beside you."

"As will I," Luna said as she ran her hand through his hair, drawing a glare from Draco.

"You don't really think…" Fred grinned.

"…you're doing this without us little brother?" George smirked.

"We're with you…" Fred continued.
"…all the way," George finished.

"You're my cub," Remus smiled at Harry. "I've been kept away from you for the majority of your life and I will not let that happen again. If joining the Dark Lord's side means I get to stay by yours, then so be it."

Harry smiled while Draco and Snape stared in awe and amazement; their master had just gained five more followers.

"So about this muggle exercise," Fred smirked. "Where can we get in on that?"

"Yeah Harry," George grinned. "If muggle means did that to you, by all means let us in on it."

"Well," Harry laughed, "I signed up for some Karate classes to take over the summer."

"What is that?" Neville asked as he leaned forward.

"It's kinda like muggle exercise," Harry said. "Except it teaches you how to fight and defend yourselves at the same time."

"Sounds fun," George grinned.

"Where can we join?" Fred asked.

Harry laughed as he explained the way the art was. By nightfall, the others had gotten more insight into his plans and he was beyond happy for that.

The tides of the war shifted once more as new changes emerged.

~…~

Albus Dumbledore was not having a good day; first, he was angry over the will reading and now he had to deal with the rest of the angry recipients, the Weasleys and Hermione.

"Silence!" he yelled as their noises became too much.

Everyone looked at him and he took a calming breath.

"I understand that you are all angry," Dumbledore said. "As am I, however, we are not going to let it get to us."

"Not let it get to us?" Molly spoke up. "How can we not let it get to us? We were cheated out of what we were rightfully supposed to get. I cannot believe that that dog said that about me."

"And how could he compare me to Peter?" Hermione was outraged; as far as she was concerned, she was nothing like Peter. She was conveniently forgetting the fact that she had done exactly what Peter did by betraying her best friend.

"I can't believe the twins got that much money and I got nothing," Ron complained. "You said we would get something; you said that we would get paid for everything we've been through."

"And I was supposed to marry him," Ginny added in. "We already had everything planned out and now because of that mutt it's all going to hell."

"I understand your concerns," Dumbledore said. "However, we should not let what has happened deter us."
"What the bloody hell are you on about?!" Ron shouted.

"Ronald," Arthur scolded his son.

"There was one person missing from that reading today," Dumbledore said. "If the cards are played right, things will look up and we will receive what we should've in the first place."

"You're bloody bonkers aren't you?" Ron gaped at him; his loss of the money from Sirius' left him angrier than he ever was and he forgot all about respecting Dumbledore. "What the hell does that mean?"

"He means Ronald," Hermione turned to glare at him, "seeing that Harry wasn't there, we can use it to our advantage."

"How so?" Ginny asked as she crossed her arms across her chest; she was peeved at what happened, because she had been guaranteed a marriage to Harry. Her mother had been grooming her for the position since she was old enough to understand. The Potter fortune, along with the Black, would guarantee her a life of fame for being the wife of the Boy-Who-Lived. She felt she deserved it and she was tired of not having enough money.

"Since he has no idea what the real will said," Hermione explained, "we can tell him about the one the Dumbledore had created, ensuring that we get what we're supposed to."

"Excellent deduction Ms. Granger," Dumbledore smiled at her while his eyes twinkled behind his glasses. "And along with that will, he will be told about the marriage contract for him and Ms. Weasley."


"Except," Ginny spoke up, "that the two of you wrote to him over the summer telling him you didn't want to be friends anymore."

"I forgot about that," Hermione sighed.

"Actually Ms. Weasley," Dumbledore spoke up, "that as well can work in our favourite."

"How so?" Molly asked.

"I will need to think things through," Dumbledore smiled. "For now, I suggest you go home and relax. Ms. Granger, perhaps it wouldn't be a bad idea if you were to reiterate your previous letter to Harry with a little something extra. If by chance, you feel the need to mention certain aspects of the will, then do so, but do it discreetly."

Hermione gathered the implications behind his words and she smiled as she nodded. "Yes sir."

"If that is all," Dumbledore said. "There are a few things I have to take care of. Good day."

Hearing the dismissal, the Weasleys and Hermione got up from their seats and left. When they were gone, Dumbledore leaned back in his chair, allowing his thoughts to drift to the will reading earlier.

"Why in the world would Black create a new will? Did he somehow manage to overthrow the memory spell?" he shook his head at that. "It was powerful magic...my magic, so he could not overthrow it no matter how much he tried. So then, how is the second will explained?"

Dumbledore sighed as he laced his fingers together; he was not as overly concerned about the will as
they thought he was. What he was worried about was the contents inside it; especially Sirius' analysis of the others.

"What exactly did that mutt find out? I cannot let all my plans go to ruins because of one dead man. I need to know what it is he knew."

He closed his eyes for a split second before he opened them. He got up from his seat and walked over to the bookcase. Moving to a specific book, he tapped his wand against it and spoke an incantation. The bookcase moved aside and a table came forward; on it was a pensive. Placing his wand at his temple, he pulled out the memory of the will reading followed by the one he just had. When he was done, he tapped his wand on the side and watched as the table and bookcase moved back into place.

He walked away without a backward glance, never noticing the smug look on Phineas' face as he watched from behind the bookcase in his own portrait.

~…~

The next day, Harry woke up before the others. After taking a quick shower, he dressed in a pair of black sweats with a green tank top before heading down to the kitchen. When he got there, Minky and Tanna were already there and were about to prepare breakfast.

"Morning Minky and Tanna," Harry said as he walked in.

"Morning Master Harry," Minky and Tanna replied.

"We's just be getting breakfast ready," Minky said.

"I'll help," Harry said as he moved to the stove.

"No Master Harry," Tanna shook her head. "Youse not be helping; our job."

"I know," Harry smiled. "But I want to help."

The two elves nodded reluctantly and allowed him to help. When the others woke up, it was to the smell of breakfast; they quickly showered before heading down to the kitchen.

"Morning," Harry said when he saw them. "Sit down; I hope you guys are hungry."

"Smells good," Fred said as he and the others moved to take their seats.

Even as Draco took his seat, he couldn't keep his eyes off of Harry and his gaze followed him as he moved around the room. A flush took over his face as he took in Harry's body; the flush grew even more when he remembered what his dreams consisted of the night before.

"Breakfast be ready for youse," Tanna said as she levitated the plates to the table.

"Thank you." The friends said as one as they ate.

"You alright there Drake?" Harry turned to look at him. "You are looking a little flushed."

"I'm fine," Draco scowled.

Remus stifled a chuckle as he could smell the pheromones coming off Draco in waves.

"So what are we doing today?" Neville asked.
"Interesting places you have here Harry," Luna spoke up. "Perhaps it would be fun if we were to wander about. We might come across a few herbs, feel the fresh air of the outdoors or even catch a glimpse of a cauldron."

Harry grinned while the others stared at Luna. "Every time Luna, every time."

"Alright that's it," Draco turned to the female blonde. "Since when do you speak like that?"

"Would you prefer I speak of Nargles and Crumpled-Horn Snorkacks?" Luna raised a delicate eyebrow.

"Luna wears a mask Drake," Harry said, "a very good one, but a mask nonetheless."

"What?" Draco looked between the two. "Are you saying that Looney Luna Lovegood is truly a mask?"

"Yes," Luna nodded; when she saw their interest, she continued. "My ancestry held seers from time to time, but I never got the full gift. My precognitive abilities are just highly more developed that the average person thus enabling me to know things that the average wizard wouldn't."

At the awed looks, she smiled before she continued. "I knew that people would treat me differently because of my abilities, after all, I had seen it first hand with my mother, so I created Looney Luna to protect myself and to keep people away. It worked."

"What about the Weaslette?" Draco drawled. "I was under the impression that the two of you were the best of friends? Didn't she see through it?"

"Ginerva fell into the same trap as everyone else," Luna shook her head. "She saw Looney, but because of the fact that she was the only girl and she didn't want to be alone, she became my friend. She never saw through the mask and though it was subtle, she treated me like everyone else. Harry is the first person to see through it and accept me for who I truly am. Neville was next."

"First Harry and now you," Snape spoke up. "I am impressed with the cunning and intelligence both of you has shown over the years. However, let me inform you that this coming school year, I expect to see more of that intelligence and cunning. I will not tolerate the Golden Boy or Looney Lovegood. You will be who you're meant to be and that is Harry and Luna. Is that in any way unclear?"

"No sir," Harry and Luna replied, leaving the others smirking at them.

"What about…" George started.

"…you Neville?" Fred continued.

"Are you hiding intelligence…" George picked up.

"…and cunning as well?" Fred finished.

"What about power?" Remus added.

"Me? Cunning? Powerful?" Neville shook his head.

"Don't underestimate yourself Nev," Harry said. "Remember, you went up against some of the Dark Lord's top Death Eaters and you held your own against them."
"He's right Longbottom," Draco said. "Not many people can say that."

"You're powerful Nev," Harry said. "You just need to tap into that power and express it."

"Why don't we check out the rest of the Manor?" Remus suggested.

"Alright," Harry nodded as he stood up, followed by everyone else.

He led them through the hallway, coming to a door; he opened it and went down the stairs. They came to another door, and he opened that as well, leading them inside.

"Lumos," Harry waved his hand and the room lit up; behind him, he heard the others gasp in surprise.

"Welcome to the Potions Lab," He smiled and watched as they walked around the room in awe. "What do you guys think?"

"Unbelievable," Draco breathed.

"Do you know…" Fred started.

"…the things we could…" George continued.

"…create in here?" Fred finished.

"Harry," George said. "This is bloody amazing."

"I was thinking you guys could use it whenever you wanted," Harry said.

"Truly?" Draco turned wide eyes to him. He knew that they thought that Snape favourited him in Potions, but the truth of the matter is that he is actually very good at it. He is Snape's godson and he grew up around him; since Snape spent a lot of time in a potions lab, so did Draco and as a result, he picked up the talent for it.

"Well, actually," Harry said. "I was going to ask if you guys, all of you, would like to stay here with me for the summer."

Snape, who was still looking through the room, turned to Harry. "I find myself at a loss for words to explain what that would mean. This lab is exquisite and to have access to it whenever I wanted would be beneficial. What shall you do for herbs?"

"That is where Nev comes in," Harry smiled. "And I have something for him as well."

He led them out the room and back up the stairs. They went back down the hallway, but instead of going back to the kitchen area, they turned to a door. He opened it and they walked in; he smiled when it was Neville's turn to gasp out in awe.

"Bloody hell!" Neville's eyes were wide as he walked further into the room.

"Welcome to the Greenhouse," Harry chuckled. "Is this to your liking Sev?"

"It is more than sufficient," Snape nodded as he walked around.

"Wow," Fred whistled as he looked around.
"Lily used to grow her potions herbs here," Remus said, "as well as many of her favourite flowers."

"The soil is amazing," Neville breathed. "And so much space; do you know how many herbs and plants can grow in here?"

"No," Harry shook his head. "But I have a feeling that you'd make use of it. There's something that makes it different from other Greenhouses."

"What's that?" George asked as he walked over to a flower.

"You can charm a section of the Greenhouse to host any plant you want," Harry said. When he saw the slightly confused looks on most of their faces, he explained further. "Like say you need a potion, but there's a specific ingredient in it that is not grown here in England; you can re-create the soil and climate in a small section and it will allow the plant to grow here as if it was its natural home."

"Amazing," Fred said.

"I know," Harry said. "So? Nev, what do you think?"

"I think he's too captured," Luna giggled. "Let's go show Fred and George something else that they'll like."

"Alright," Harry smiled. "Nev, we'll back or if you're ready to find us before, just call for Minky, Tanna or Hedwig."

All he got was an absentminded nod. Chuckling, he led the others out of the room. They went back down the hallway and out the back. He took them directly to the pitch and held his hands wide when they got there.

"Welcome to the Quidditch Pitch," he said.

"I shall rejoin Mr. Longbottom in the Greenhouse," Snape drawled as his eyes took in the pitch. "I find it more interesting than being here."

"Alright," Harry nodded as did the others as he made his way back inside.

"Let's play," George said and excitement was evident in his words and eyes.

~...~

By mid-afternoon, everyone had met up in the living room.

"That was awesome," George said as he collapsed in a chair.

"Now what?" Draco asked.

"We get something to eat," Harry said. "In two days, the first of the classes will start. I'll have to go back to Surrey to talk to the teacher to let him know four others will join up and to know what we will need for the class."

"Sounds like a plan," Remus nodded.

"Would you permit me to teach you the ways of dueling?" Snape asked.

"We're going to be in a war," Harry said. "So I'll need all the help I can get; if you're willing to teach
me how to better myself in a duel, who am I to say no?"

"Would you be willing to teach me as well, Sir?" Neville asked. "I'd really like to get better."

"I have no problem with teaching all of you," Snape said, "provided that you are willing to listen to what I have to say."

"No problem," Fred grinned.

"When we're not in class," Harry said. "We will be here, working on other things. I want you guys to learn how to increase your speed."

"How will that happen?" George asked.

"Remember those muggle things I said you'd learn?" Harry asked. "Well, there's this one game that's called dodge ball; it's a real treat for speed increase."

"Although I would like to stay and enjoy your company," Snape said as he stood up. "I must get back."

"Aren't you off for the summer as yet?" Harry asked.

"I have to close out the lab and my office at the school," Snape said. "And I have to meet with the Dark Lord to relay your answer to him."

"Alright," Harry nodded. "Just be careful around Dumbledore; he's cunning."

"I can protect myself brat," Snape said, though his tone was laced with affection.

"I know that," Harry smiled. "Oh and Sev? Tell the Dark Lord I can meet him next Friday."

"As you wish," Snape nodded just as Hedwig flashed into the room. She flew over to land on his shoulder and the two disappeared in a flash of fire.

~…~

The next week passed by quickly. On Monday, just as promised, Harry and the others had gone to Surrey to start their Karate classes. To the surprise of the purebloods, they had enjoyed the class immensely and had quickly gotten the hang of it, including Draco, who was known to be abhorrent of manual labour.

It was now Friday and Harry's meeting with the Dark Lord was later that afternoon. The others had wanted to go with him, but he had dissuaded them from that thought, saying it would be better if he went alone for the first time. They had agreed reluctantly.

Both Neville and Luna had spent the time that they weren't in class in the Greenhouse working with the plants and herbs. To the slight shock of the others, they could see that something was happening between the two and was happy for them.

Fred and George had spoken to Harry about furthering their plans to open the joke shop in Diagon Alley and he had promised to have Gringotts look into his properties once more to see what he owned or if he could buy the store that they wanted. They had protested his help, but he refused to budge on it. They, as well as the others, had taken up Harry on his offer to live at the Manor and had told the rest of their family that they no longer lived at the burrow, but they did not say where their new home was. Right now, the two were in the potions lab creating potential products.
Remus had spent time talking with his godson. He wanted to know him better as they had been
denied the opportunity far too often. The two were in the library when Hedwig flashed in with
Snape.

"Hi Sev," Harry smiled up at him.

"Severus," Remus nodded towards him.

"Brat," Snape said. "Wolf."

"What is it?" Harry asked as he closed the book in his hands.

"I have come with a message from the Dark Lord," Snape said as he sat down in the chair across
from Remus.

"What is it?" Harry asked.

"He would like to move up the meeting with you as he has a meeting with his followers today as
well," Snape told him.

"When does he want to meet?" Remus asked.

"Now, if you don't mind," Snape said.

"Alright," Harry nodded as he stood up. "Remy, could you tell the others I'll be back?"

"Sure thing cub," Remus nodded.

"Ok," Harry smiled. "Let's go. Sev, just hold the image of Voldemort's meeting room in your mind,
Hedwig will do the rest; Hedwig."

She flew to land on his shoulder. As he stood, Snape did what Harry had asked. He kept the image
in his mind and he felt a calming presence wrap around him. Hedwig trilled and Harry grabbed his
arm, the three disappeared as they flashed out.

~…~

Lord Voldemort was sitting in his room at Malfoy Manor awaiting the arrival of his potions master
and his guest. After Severus had told him of Potter's plan to join him, he had spent time after that
thinking over everything. He knew that Lucius had been particularly peeved about not knowing
what was happening, but with everything going on, he couldn't bring himself to care enough to
appease Lucius.

Someone flashing into the room pulled him from his thoughts. He was on his feet immediately as he
knew of only one person that could do that. He was shortly shocked when he saw who it was.

"Severus?" he raised an eyebrow as he looked at his potions master. "What is the meaning of this?"

"I apologize my Lord," Snape bowed. "I hadn't informed you of the phoenix as I wasn't sure Harry
was ready for you to know as yet."

"When did you acquire a phoenix Mr. Potter?" Voldemort asked as he reclaimed his seat.

"My first time in Diagon Alley," Harry answered. "I gained a snow-white owl by the name of
Hedwig and it turned out that said owl was actually a phoenix in disguise."
"Explain," Voldemort's eyes narrowed as he looked at Harry.

"Do you mind if I sit down?" Harry gestured to one of the empty chairs in the room.

"By all means," Voldemort waved his hand. "Severus, you as well."

"Thank you my Lord," Snape murmured as he took a seat.

"Well Potter?" Voldemort looked at him.

"Ok," Harry said. "Here's how it goes…"

When he was finished with his explanation about Hedwig, the Dark Lord was staring at the two of them with a calculating and slight disbelieving expression.

"It was shocking as well to me my Lord," Snape spoke up. "As it shattered every fact I believed to have known about phoenixes in general."

"I must agree with Severus," Voldemort nodded. "There is a question I would like to ask, but first, let us move on to the true nature of this meeting."

"Very well," Harry nodded.

"As I am sure you are aware," Voldemort said. "Severus told me what you revealed to him about your childhood, your relatives and your take on this war."

"Yes," Harry said. "I had no problem with him doing that."

"You also requested to be my equal, but would rather not take the Mark," Voldemort continued. "And I accepted those requests. A question had been created, but it had been answered by you through Severus."

"I suppose you're talking about why I was willing to allow you full control," Harry smirked.

"Yes," Voldemort nodded.

"I have no problem with having only one Dark Lord," Harry explained. "As Sev explained, I would like to be consulted on and share my opinions, but when it comes down to it, I don't want to rule. I leave all that to you simply because I'm too young. I'm about to have my sixteenth birthday and as far as I'm concerned, I have other things to do than to worry about ruling the Wizarding World."

"I have no problems with torturing people, punishing them or even killing them. You can think of me as an avenger of some sorts or your own personal mercenary. I have a phoenix that can go through any wards, no matter how strong they are, and I have more control over my magic than the average witch or wizard."

"I won't go against you as I'm not stupid enough to think I'd actually win; like I told Sev, which I have no doubt he told you, when it comes down to it, you have years of dark arts and knowledge in your arsenal…more than I do. I'd just as soon step out of your way, but I'd rather be fighting for you; if you'd have me that is."

All were quiet as Harry's words sank in.

"You are an enigma Harry Potter," Voldemort said after a few minutes. "One I will enjoy figuring out; welcome to the Dark Side."
"Thank you," Harry smiled. "I have no doubt I will not regret this."

"Brat," Snape said affectionately.

"And proud of it," Harry grinned. "Now, I don't mean to be rude, but I have to go; Drake and I are going over to Grimmauld Place to do some cleaning."

"As you should've done right away," Snape said.

"Hey," Harry said. "I had more important things to do than to worry about the Old Ass and his bunch of farts and what they're doing."

"Hmm," Snape said as he tried to stop the smile from taking over.

"Speaking of Old Ass," Voldemort said. "You said because of your bond with your phoenix, you can tap into her powers, I have never heard of Albus doing that."

"I have a theory as to why," Harry said. "But it is one I will keep to myself until I have further proof."

"And what of your friends?" Voldemort raised an eyebrow. "The last time I checked you were close with the blood traitor Weasley and the Mudblood; I'd like to hear your views on them directly from you, not that I didn't believe Severus."

"Now, now Voldemort," Harry smirked. "In this game, a player cannot give away all of his secrets at the start, now can he? Over time I will divulge more of my own, but for now, just trust what Severus told you regarding my feelings towards them."

"Well played," Voldemort nodded. "You truly are a Slytherin in disguise."

"And proud of it," Harry said.

[I take it everything isss ok?] Nagini hissed as she slithered up to Voldemort's lap.

[Yesss] Harry answered.

Nagini turned her head to look at him and her tongue flicked out. {Young ssspeaker; I take it by your presssence here you have decided to join our caussse?}

[Yesss] Harry nodded and smiled as she left her master's lap to slither into his. She rose up until her head was directly in front of his while the rest of her body curled on his lap and the floor.

[Good] Nagini’s head bobbed up and down. {It would be nice to have another ssspeaker to talk with}

{"Doesssn't Voldemort ssspeak with you?] Harry asked.

[Not too offfen] Nagini turned her head to look at her Lord before looking back at Harry. {He isss too busssy lusssting after hisss potionsss massster}

[Nagini!] Voldemort hissed out while Harry threw back his head in laughter and Snape looked at the three in confusion.

[I ssspeak the truth] Nagini flicked her tongue at Voldemort.
{That isss not the point} Voldemort hissed as his eyes narrowed at his snake and his new recruit.

{Ssssure it isss} Harry smirked. {Tell me Nagini, doesss he do it often?}

{He ssstared to do it recently} Nagini said and Harry laughed once more; she flicked her tongue at him, delighting in his joy. She hadn't been sure of her master's decision to recruit him, but she was glad he did. Not only did she get another speaker, she got someone who seemed like fun. She knew immediately, that they would get along.

{Did he?} Harry smiled.

{Yesss my little sssnakeling} Nagini hissed as she moved her body to wrap herself around Harry's neck, careful of the phoenix on his shoulder. She let her head rest on his other shoulder, allowing her to look out at Voldemort.

"Are you two quite finished?" Voldemort growled; he was contemplating placing Harry under the Crucius curse, but he did not want to hit his snake with it as well.

"Don't be such a spoilsport," Harry laughed; he knew he was taking privileges with talking to the Dark Lord the way he was, but he was still a teenager after all, and teens were rash if not anything.

{He isss right massster} Nagini said. {After all, I can't have my little onesss around sssomeone ssso ssseriousss}

{Little onesss?} Voldemort raised an eyebrow.

{You're pregnant?} Harry shifted his head slightly to look at her.

{Yesss} she hissed an answer.

"What?!!" Voldemort flew from his chair, startling Snape before he started speaking very fast in parseltongue.

"What is going on?" Snape turned to raise an eyebrow at Harry.

"Nagini's pregnant," Harry chuckled. At Snape's shocked and incredulous look, Harry laughed outright.

"His reactions are pretty much the same," he said as he nodded towards the Dark Lord.

"What are they saying?" Snape asked as he gestured to the snake and their master.

"She's telling him how she got pregnant," Harry mused. "And he wants to find the snake that got her pregnant in the first place; he also wants to know why the hell she would do it."

"What is she saying?" Snape asked as he heard Nagini hissing back.

"She told him it was during her heat cycle," Harry translated. "So she can't really be blamed for not being able to stop it." Harry paused as he laughed at Nagini's next words.

"What is it?" Snape would deny if asked, even under torture, but he was enjoying himself immensely. It wasn't often he got to see the Dark Lord how he was, but when he did, it was always enjoyable and to know that it was caused by his own snake just made it even better.

"She told him that just because she was a snake and his confidant," Harry giggled, the sound causing
Snape's eyebrow to shoot to his hairline. "And just because she was a cold-blooded animal, that doesn't stop her from having needs like every other race and warm-blooded animal. She said she needed her needs sated and since it was her heat cycle, she got them more than sated and the pregnancy was a result of that."

"My word," Snape couldn't help the chuckle that escaped. Nagini hissed something else, which caused Voldemort to stop ranting and smirk at her.

"What did she say now?" Snape asked.

"She killed the male," Harry giggled again. "Because he got her pregnant and because he thought she was weak so he could take advantage of her. She let him mate with her, before she showed him how strong she really was."

{Good girl} Harry hissed as he rubbed his finger across her head.

"She is isn't she?" Voldemort said with a proud tone to his voice.

"As much as I would love to stay here and continue talking," Harry said as he gently removed Nagini from his body. "I really do have to go."

"I'll see you Potter," Voldemort said as Harry and Snape stood.

"You will," Harry nodded. He reached up a hand to pet Hedwig.

"Oh before I forget," Harry said. "To show you the start of what I can do, I have five followers ready and willing to join your side."

"What?" Voldemort looked at him in shock.

"Sev can tell you all about them," Harry said just before he and Hedwig flashed out.

"Severus?" Voldemort turned to look at his follower. "What and who exactly is he talking about?"

Snape hid his smirk, not wanting to be Crucio’d, before he proceeded to tell his Lord of his five new recruits.

~…~

It's been weeks since Harry's meeting with the Dark Lord. Since then, he and the others had excelled in the Karate class and Harry had showed them how to play dodge ball. They had been reluctant at first, especially Draco, but then Harry had asked them to throw spells at him and when he had dodged every single one, they had come around after seeing the merit of him showing them the game. During the time that passed, the others were excited to note that their ability to dodge spells had actually increased. When Harry had suggested doing muggle exercises, the others had accepted it without much fuss; they had also taken to run with Harry when he started doing it on the Quidditch Pitch.

Snape, along with Remus, had also started teaching them how to duel properly. They taught them protective spells, defensive spells and offensive spells; the teens had no problem with learning the Dark Arts as they knew they would need it since they planned on joining the Dark Side.

Right now, the group was in the back yard of the Manor relaxing after another day of training.
"I am so bloody tired," Draco said as he leaned back on his elbows.

"You're not the only one," Neville said as he dropped to sit on the grass, Luna leaning against him.

"Yes," Luna breathed with a smile. "But it will all be worth it."

"Right you are Luna," Fred panted as he fell to the ground.

"But it's still bloody exhausting," George breathed heavily as he collapsed next to his brother.

"Amazing," Remus laughed as he and Snape looked down at them; to his surprise, he had been able to form a friendship with the potions master. It was a bit touchy at first, but they were able to get past it.

"Indeed," Snape drawled.

"Oh man," Harry laughed as he watched his friends. "I can't believe you guys."

"You can laugh Potter," Draco sneered. "But you're used…." Draco's voice trailed off and his eyes widened as Harry took off his shirt. Harry's muscles glistened as the sunlight caught the sweat that covered his body.

Draco couldn't stop his eyes from travelling over Harry's chest. His mouth went dry and he licked his lips as he watched him.

Harry smirked as he watched Draco; he saw how the lust flared in the blond's eyes as they went over his body. He took a deep breath to stop his body from reacting and he shifted his body, running a hand over his chest; he smiled at the slight whimper that escaped Draco's lips.

"Draco," Snape's voice cut through his godson's haze of lust. "It is unbecoming of a Malfoy to be caught in such a situation as yours."

"Wh-wh-what?" Draco stuttered out as he tried valiantly to drag his gaze from Harry; he was oblivious to the snickers from the others.

"Close your mouth Draco," Neville teased. "You're liable to catch flies."

"Shut up!" Draco snapped as he finally tore his gaze from Harry to glare at Neville. He then turned to look at his godfather. "I was not drooling after him."

"Why Draco," Snape smirked. "I never said you were drooling after Harry, but I do thank you for letting us know."

The others laughed at the look on Draco's face.

"What is going on?" a voice asked. The group turned and saw Lucius walking over to them.

"Mr. Malfoy," Harry nodded at the Malfoy Patriarch.

"Just having a bit of fun…" Fred smirked.

"…at your son's expense," George grinned.

"I take it your training exercise went well then?" Lucius asked; he had gotten the shock of his life about five days ago when his Lord had called him to a meeting.
Lucius was sitting in his library going through some documents; or rather, he was trying to. His mind kept going over the Dark Lord and his plans, plans that included his son and his closest friend. He knew that Severus wouldn’t allow anything to happen to Draco if he could stop it, but he was still worried. They had been having meetings with the Dark Lord for weeks now, and it irritated the blond as he was usually included in things the Dark Lord. As reluctant as he was, Lucius had to admit that he was jealous.

He scowled as he looked down at the papers, not seeing the words on them. He was in the process of going to move them when his Mark flared; the Dark Lord was calling. He quickly got to his feet and hurried out the door, heading to the wing where the Lord was. When he got to the door, he knocked three times and waited for his Lord to bid him in.

"Enter."

He opened the door, walked in and stopped, astonished at the sight in front of him. Seated in the seats around the Dark Lord was his son and his friend, but that was not what shocked him. It was seeing the other occupants of the room and the ease in which they sat around the room. Nagini was slowly slithering over her master’s lap and climbing the backrest of his wingback chair as if nothing out of the ordinary was happening.

Lucius, though shocked at what he saw, prided himself on being an upper class aristocrat, his iron-clad self control, his Slytherin background and lifestyle and his accomplishments in the Political world, so therefore, he quickly devoid his face of all emotions, adopting a blank expression.

He turned to his Master and bowed. "My Lord."

"Lucius," Voldemort beckoned him to stand and take a seat in the only free chair before he continued. "I know you have been feeling a bit despondent due to my lack of correspondence to you. You are here for me to correct that."

"My Lord," Lucius started only to be stopped by the raising of Voldemort’s hand.

"Let me explain everything to you," Voldemort said, while gently stroking Nagini’s smooth scales. "During the first week in June, Severus came to me with some information, information that was very valuable. He told about a shift in tides in the war. The mishap at the Department of Mysteries seemed to have created a backlash bigger than what I expected."

Lucius was quiet as he listened, though his gaze kept straying to the others in the room.

"It seemed that the esteemed Headmaster," Voldemort said, "created more havoc than I ever could and shifted the tides to our favourite. The presence of Mr. Potter is the result of that shift."

When Lucius’ eyes drifted to Harry, he saw the dark smirk on his face and suppressed a shiver. His eyes widened as the implications of Voldemort’s words became clear.

"That’s right Lucius," Voldemort smirked. "Harry Potter has joined the Dark Side and he brought friends with him."

At the shocked look in Lucius’ eyes, the room’s occupants smirked.

"My Lord," Lucius was quite hesitant in what he was about to say, and it was seen by everyone else. "I am not undermining your actions or questioning you, but…"
"Speak Lucius," Voldemort said.

"Are you sure that they truly are spies and not here on the Old Man's orders?" Lucius asked just before he closed his eyes and waited for the Crucio he knew he would get. Seconds later when he realized he wasn’t writhing in pain on the ground, he opened his eyes and saw amusement on everyone's faces. Harry chuckling shocked him.

"I told you he would do that," Harry said as he turned to face the Dark Lord.

"Don’t make me Crucio you Potter," Voldemort hissed at him. Nagini slithered from her spot and headed for Harry.

“Sorry,” Harry said as he watched Nagini come to him.

Lucius watched astonished as a slightly heavier Nagini slither up on Harry's body before resting her head on his shoulder.

"I think the explanations should continue," Snape said. "Preferably before Lucius collapses from shock."

"I suppose Lucius that you expected me to Crucio you for your question?" Voldemort raised an eyebrow at his follower.

"Yes my Lord," Lucius nodded.

"No Lucius," Voldemort shook his head. "I shall however explain everything to you."

And so he did; he told him about the conversations that he had had with Harry and the ones Harry had with Snape. He also told him about what he had seen in Harry's mind when he had possessed at the Department of Mysteries. The others had chipped in here and there with the explanations for their own appearance.

Throughout the explanations, Lucius wondered just how many shocks his body could take as he found it hard to take in everything he was being told. By the time they were done, he could only stare at them in silence.

"Father?" Draco called out softly.

"I think we broke him," Fred laughed.

Lucius snapped out of his stupor at those words; he was a Malfoy and Malfoys prided themselves on their control over their emotions.

“Mimzy,” Lucius called and a female house elf appeared in the room.

“Yes master?” Mimzy bowed.

“Bring a pot of tea for everyone,” Lucius ordered, “and a bottle of firewhiskey as well.”

“Yes master,” Mimzy said before she popped out, only to reappear seconds later with what she had been asked to get.

“That will be all,” Lucius said and the elf popped out. “Tea?” he offered before he poured a glass for himself, pouring in some of the firewhiskey and drinking it. When he was done, he looked at the group.
"I must admit that this information is very enlightening," he said.

"Yes it is," Voldemort nodded.

"My Lord," Lucius spoke again. "I am hesitant to ask, but what of the Dark Mark? Will that not cause problems with Dumbledore?"

"It would've had repercussions," Voldemort smirked, "if I had marked them."

At Lucius’ look, the seven showed their left arms...they were bare.

"At this moment in time," Voldemort said. "The Mark is not needed to show their loyalty to me. I know it to be true. As it is, right now, it is much more beneficial for me if they remained unmarked."

"Of course my Lord," Lucius murmured. "I apologize for asking."

"There is no need for that Lucius," Voldemort said. "The reason you are here is simple. Severus and Remus are teaching them how to duel, among other things, and I would like you to assist the two of them."

"As you wish my Lord," Lucius replied.

End Flashback

"Yes it did," Remus nodded as he looked at the man; ever since the meeting a few days ago, he had felt a pull to the elder blond. The pull was faint, so he couldn't really identify it or why it was happening, only that it was happening. What had him curious was the fact that he also felt a pull to Draco and it was similar to the one that he felt for Harry; his wolf recognized Draco as its cub. Remus thought it was because Harry had chosen Draco. He was half right, but he didn't know that.

"Lucius," Harry turned to him. "May I speak with you?"

"Certainly," Lucius nodded and the two moved away from the group.

Draco narrowed his eyes as he watched them; he wasn't sure he liked the two of them alone together. He knew of his father's preference and knew with how powerful Harry was his father could easily be attracted to him.

"Don't worry Draco," Luna said. "His affections are entirely yours and yours alone."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Draco sneered and turned his head away, only to look back seconds later. He swallowed when he saw Harry smile at his father and had to stifle the mild panic and jealousy that rose in him when he saw Lucius lean down to say something to Harry. He turned his head when Harry turned to look at him.

Remus had to stifle his chuckles and turn his head so that Draco couldn't see the smile on his face; due to his wolf, he could hear everything that was being said between Harry and Lucius. 'It won't be long before Draco gives in...not with how determined Harry is.'

(Harry and Lucius)

"What is it?" Lucius asked when they stopped a distance away.
"It's about Draco," Harry said as he turned to face him.

"What about my son?" Lucius raised an eyebrow.

"I love him," Harry was straight and to the point. "And I have every intention of being with him. I'm not looking for your approval because frankly, I don't need it. Whether or not you like it, I will be with him as I plan on spending the rest of our lives together. No one, and that includes you, is going to stop that from happening."

"If that is true Potter," Lucius said, "then why are you telling me this?"

"I wanted to give you a heads up," Harry shrugged.

"And if I do not consent?" Lucius asked.

"Draco's happiness means everything to me," Harry's eyes narrowed as he looked up at the Malfoy Patriarch. "And I will not allow anyone to hurt him. I don't care if it's you, his mother or the Dark Lord himself; if anyone hurts him, they will answer to me and I will inflict the hurt back on them even worse than they did to him."

Lucius stared at Harry; he was in awe at the young man before him, not only because of the magnitude of his power, but also because of the protective aura that he saw and felt flare in him as he spoke about his son. He had no intentions of denying Harry anything as he knew that despite his actions, his son felt something for Harry as well and he knew that his Lord loved the fact that he had the Boy-Who-Lived on his side and he valued his life too much to do anything to mess with that.

"I have no intentions of stopping you," Lucius murmured. "Contrary to what my son is doing, I know he feels the same for you."

"I know," Harry grinned.

"As such," Lucius smiled. "You have my full blessing."

"Thank you," Harry nodded. "It makes things easier because I know Draco cares about your opinion a lot."

"Exactly what do you have in store for my son?" Lucius asked.

"He's in denial right now," Harry shrugged. "But that doesn't bother me; his control is breaking apart and he will be mine. I could say that it's best he stops fighting, but his fighting this is what makes it fun."

"I can see as much," Lucius nodded. "My son is very easily prone to jealousy."

"I know," Harry chuckled. "It's the one thing he cannot hide easily; even now, he's trying hard not to look over here."

"I suppose we should give him a show," Lucius grinned before he leaned down to speak in Harry's ear. "I propose you will have my son before the month is over."

"I agree," Harry nodded before he turned to look at Draco. He smiled when he saw that the blond had turned his head immediately. "I think we should go back before your son hexes you."

"I concur," Lucius smiled and the two walked back to the others. Harry went straight to Draco and
"Only you Drake," Harry leaned forward to whisper in his ear. "No one else but you."

Draco shivered as he felt Harry's breath caress his ear. He knew his jealousy was irrational, but he couldn't help it. Every day Harry had told him everything he wanted with him and Draco could admit to himself that he wanted the same things as well. He wanted to give in to him, but in all honesty, he liked the fact that Harry chased after him. He knew that anyone else would've probably given up already, but he also knew that Harry wouldn't. With a sigh, Draco decided to give in just for today and he relaxed his body enough that he was leaning back against Harry.

Harry smiled as he shifted his body so that Draco would be more comfortable.

"Don't think anything of this Potter," Draco said as he fixed his head on Harry's shoulder. "I'm just too tired to move away."

"Whatever you say Drake," Harry shook his head. The others smiled as they watched the two of them.

"I say we spend the rest of the day relaxing," George said.

"I agree," Fred quipped. Luna laughed, which caused the others to laugh as well. It was a good afternoon.

~…~

Over the course of the next week, the training increased as did the results. While the boys were nowhere near Harry's physique, which was understandable, as he had been doing it for the past five years, they still changed.

Draco still looked pretty much the same, except his body was more toned and from being in the sun so often, he had developed a slight tan, which made his skin look a lot more healthy than it normally was.

Fred and George looked a little different; the normal dark red hair was now about a shade lighter from being in the sunlight and like Draco, they had gotten a slight tan as well. Their already well-developed bodies were more muscular than Draco's.

Neville was the biggest change. His body filled out under the training, the exercises and the karate classes. He had been given a potion by Snape that had straightened his teeth out, and he had lost his baby fat in his face, showcasing a slight dimple in his left cheek that he hadn't realized he had. Like the other boys, he had gained a nice healthy tan as well. Not only had his body changed, but his confidence had grown as well.

Luna hadn't really changed much either. She was like the female version of Draco. The only difference was her hair. Harry had taken them to muggle London two days ago and she had decided to dye her platinum blond hair to brown with blond highlights, giving it a dirty blond look. The brown was a shade darker than Hermione's and it made her eyes pop even more.

The group had just returned inside from their usual run around the Pitch, when Snape came in.

"Make yourselves presentable," Snape's drawl cut off any greetings they were about to make. "You're about to be inducted."
"What?" Neville raised an eyebrow.

"The Dark Lord requests your presence at a meeting," Snape intoned. "It is mandatory."

"Our coming out party I presume?" Harry asked as he changed his clothes from the t-shirt and tracks into a pair of black slacks, a dark green shirt and a black sports coat. The others followed suit when they saw what he did.

Snape's eyes filled with pride as he watched them do it all without the use of words; he, Lucius and Harry had worked around the clock with them, Remus as well, to improve their wordless and wandless casting and the lessons and patience had paid off. While they were no way near Severus', Lucius' or even Harry's level, they were above that of their schoolmates.

"We're ready," Luna smiled.

"Good," Snape nodded as he walked to the Floo with the others following him. "I suspect you remember the password without my having to remind either of you."

"Yes sir," Neville nodded along with the others.

"Very well then," Snape said before he allowed them to step through. When they came out on the other side, he led them out of the reception room and down the hallway. When he got to where the meeting was, he stopped and turned to them.

"It is best if you were to dress in these," He held out seven dark cloaks towards them. "And do not allow you face to be shown before the Dark Lord bids you to."

The seven nodded as they did as they were told. When they were done, Snape turned to the door and knocked three times.

"Enter."

~…~

Voldemort was sitting in his chair in the meeting room. Unlike what many probably thought, the chair was not a throne but rather a slightly bigger version of the wingback chair in his room. He had called a meeting with all of his followers to not only get updates, but to also introduce the newest members. He had the meeting in Malfoy Manor simply for the fact that he wasn't worried that the Ministry would come knocking. While Cornelius Fudge may dislike Lucius, he hated Dumbledore with a passion. And even if they did come, the room was cloaked with extensive protections spells.

Drawing himself from his thoughts, he watched as his followers came in one by one until only Severus and the seven were missing. He sat with Nagini on his lap, the snake hissing in pleasure as he rubbed her head. She was due in week or two and had become somewhat attention seeking…not that he minded.

When they door closed behind the last Death Eater, he held up a hand for silence; he got it instantly.

"I have some news to share with you," he said. "Before I commence, is there anything to report?"

"No my Lord," came the murmur.
"Lucius?" Voldemort turned to the blond. "Any news regarding the Ministry and what happened at
the end of May?"

Lucius bowed as he stepped forward before answering. "Other than what had appeared in the Daily
Prophet," he said, "the Minister seems willing to ignore anymore than that. He acknowledges that
your Lordship is back, but refuses to believe you are as strong as you were last time due to the fact
that the raids have considerably been less."

"Hmmm," Voldemort was quiet as he stroked Nagini's head. "Cornelius is a foolish man, but one
that could help. Very well, Lucius, I want you to keep him thinking like that. There are plans that I
have in motion and everything would run smoother if the both the Ministry and Dumbledore
remained in the dark." He chuckled slightly at the use of his words.

"As you wish my Lord," Lucius said as he bowed once more before stepping back.

"Now," Voldemort said as he removed Nagini from his lap, allowing her to rest in his seat as he
stood up. "The reason I called for this meeting is very simple; it is to introduce to you the newest
members of our Dark Family. However, as I have no need for their identities to be advertised to the
rest of the Wizarding World, you will each take an oath to prevent you from doing so. Be it by
Veritaserum or Legilimency, you will not be
able to divulge their identities or any revelations that may be made about them during this meeting or
any other ones."

The Death Eaters shifted as they thought on their Lord's words. They were curious as to whom these
new followers could be and so, they each gave their oath. Just as they were finished, three knocks
sounded on the door, Voldemort smirked as he knew who it was.

"Enter."

The door opened and Snape walked in, followed by seven people, each of whom was wearing a
dark cloak with the hood covering their faces. The group moved to the front as whispers broke out
between the Death Eaters. When they were a few feet from where Voldemort was standing, they
bowed.

"Thank you Severus," Voldemort said to his potions master.

"My Lord," Snape bowed once more before he moved to take his place next to Lucius.

"Tonight marks the beginning of the end for the Light and its master as we welcome these seven into
our folds," Voldemort said to his followers. "The defection of them has caused severe damage to the
Light, though they do not realize it as of yet."

Whispers broke out once more among the Death Eaters as they tried to figure out who the seven was.

"I think it is time to appease their curiosity," Voldemort turned to the seven. "Reveal yourselves."

One by one, the seven removed their hoods and the noise in the room increased when the Death
Eaters saw the platinum blond, the dirty blonde, the dark brunet, two redheads, one tawny haired and
a head full of jet black hair. When the seven turned around, some of the Death Eaters' mouths
dropped open in shock and the volume in the room increased.

"Silence," Voldemort hissed and the reaction was instant. "You may be in disbelief, but I assure you,
they are on my side."

"Are you sure that's wise my Lord?" A Death Eater shouted.
"Identify yourself," Voldemort narrowed his eyes when he saw who stepped forward. It was Gibbon.

"My Lord," Gibbon said as he bowed. "I'm not sure it's wise to have them here; we all know that Potter is under Dumbledore's thumb. Who's to say he's not doing this to spy?"

The other Death Eaters looked at Gibbon in shock; while they did have concerns, they were not stupid or suicidal enough to question their Lord.

"Do you think me so incompetent Gibbon," Voldemort's voice was low and tinged in anger, which had almost everyone cringing. "Do you think me such a fool that I would not know if there was a spy among them?"

"N-n-no my Lord," Gibbon said. "I just find it hard to believe."

"I told you," Harry smirked. "Maybe all he needs is proof."

"Potter," Voldemort hissed his displeasure at being interrupted. Harry conceded with a quick bow of his head.

"Crucio," Voldemort said and Gibbon collapsed to the floor screaming. Voldemort stepped up to him and growled. "You dare to question me! You dare to believe I would have commandeered them if I was not sure of where their loyalties would lie?"

The rage pouring off Voldemort had Harry and everyone else wincing; Harry because he was suddenly reminded of the link between the two of them, his scar was burning. With that in mind, he stepped forward.

"If I may?" Harry asked. He looked directly into Voldemort eyes and the dark inside of them had Voldemort smirking.

"As you wish," Voldemort said as he stepped back.

Harry looked down at Gibbon and smirked; the pure malice in the smirk had the Death Eaters flinching. "You seem to be under the misconception that I don't have what it takes. Maybe I should have you visit my relatives and see if that will change your mind."

Snape smirked when he heard that, as did Voldemort, as he recalled what Harry had done to his family.

"However," Harry said, "since I doubt that would have any effect to make you believe, I think you should have an up close and personal view of just what I can do."

Harry thought of what he wanted to do and his magic flared in answer. He smiled and the others shivered at the darkness in it. "You know, you can learn so many things from books. But you know what? You can also learn things from muggles. Muggles have such imagination. In fact, why don't I show just what I have learned and what the Muggles can create?"

Harry waved his hand, removing the dark cloak from Gibbon's body; he ignored the gasps that came from the Death Eaters at the sight of his wandless magic. He looked up into the roof and conjured a meat hook, before looking back at Gibbon. He levitated the body upwards, crossed Gibbon's wrists together before he moved the hook through his joined wrists. The scream that tore from Gibbon's throat made him smile.
Harry tilted his head to the side as he thought more on what he wanted to do; when he had attacked his family, he couldn't do much as he hadn't wanted the neighbours to know what was going on, but now, now he had free reign to stretch his magic. He recalled something he had found in the Manor Library.

Flashback

Harry and the others were in the library after a day of training. Snape had been merciless, but they didn't mind as it only made them better. He was walking back to where the others were sitting when he felt a pull. He stopped and turned in the direction, oblivious to the questioning looks from everyone else. He walked until he came to a stop in front of portrait. He stared at it for a few minutes, a puzzled frown on his face.

"Harry?" Neville called as he stood behind him. "Is something wrong?"

"I don't know Nev," Harry said. "I'm getting this weird feeling from this portrait. It feels as if there's something there."

"Blood magic really is a dynamic thing," Luna's voice sounded across the room. "Especially yours Harry."

Harry smiled before he raised his hand to the portrait. He didn't even wince when he felt the slight pull from his magic. The portrait glowed for a second before it slowly swung open.

"What the hell?" Draco said as he and the others, minus Luna, moved forward.

Harry stepped forward and when he did, lights came on and he, along with the others, let out a gasp; in front of them was a shelf filled with books.

"Why are these books separated from the rest of the Library?" Draco asked as he watched Harry walk into the room.

"I don't know," Remus shook his head as he picked up a book. "More than likely because they cannot be read."

"How do you figure?" Snape asked as he stopped next to him.

"Look," Remus said as he showed him the book. When he opened it, Snape saw what he was talking about; the book was written in a different language and it was one that was not familiar.

"This is amazing," Harry said. "Nev I think you'd like this one; it's on Herbology and the properties of plants."

"You can understand it?" George asked.

"Of course," Harry said as he gave the book to Neville.

Neville grabbed the book and flipped through it, but soon he looked back at the others confused. "Harry, I can't read this."

"What do you mean?" Harry asked as he looked through more books.

"I mean," Neville said. "I can't understand what it's saying."

"What?" Harry turned towards him.
"It's in a different language," Neville said as he handed the book back.

"They all are," Fred exclaimed as he grabbed a few.

"But then," Harry asked. "How come I can understand them?"

Snape had thoughtful look on his face. He looked from the book in his hands to Harry and back again. There was something tugging at his memory. Seconds later, his eyes narrowed.

"Harry," he held the book out. "What does this say?"

"It's a potions book," Harry said excitedly when he read the cover. He flipped through it. "Sev, you'd love this; it's filled with so many potions, even more than the books in the library at Hogwarts and the ones from Diagon Alley has."

"Can you read some of it for me," Snape said; he had a suspicion as to why Harry could understand the book when they couldn't.

"Sure," Harry nodded and he started to read. He read for about a minute before he realized that everyone was looking at him in awe. "What?"

"It is as I suspected," Snape's voice was filled with confusion and awe. "The books are written in Parseltongue."

"But," Harry looked at them. "Why would my family have Parseltongue written books in their library?"

"I can answer that," A voice called out. The group filed out of the room and saw Harrison in a portrait.

"Explain please," Harry said and his ancestor spent the rest of the day explaining the books and how they came to be in the library.

End flashback.

Mentally shaking himself out of his memory, Harry smirked. That day, the information that his ancestor had given to him about his family had shocked him more than anything else had. One thing, however, stood out from what his ancestor had told him; spells done in Parseltongue were a lot stronger than normal ones. He stepped back from Gibbon and held out his hand; in it was what appeared to be a whip.

"Do you know what this is?" he asked as he shifted from one hand to the next. "No, I suppose you don't. Muggles call it a Cat-O-Nine Whip. The reason is because of the many spikes on it."

The room stared at the whip in shock. They had never seen anything like it before.

"I see you're intrigued," Harry smirked. Without warning, he brought the whip across Gibbon's back. Gibbon's body jerked as he screamed out his pain.

Harry frowned. "Hmm," He said as he walked around the body. "No, that won't do, that won't do at all."

He walked around the body again before stopping in front of him. He looked thoughtful for a second before his expression cleared.
"I know," He clapped and the Death Eaters shivered again. He looked Gibbon in the eyes and hissed, *(Diffindo)*

Gibbon screamed as he felt the Cutting Curse on his body. His clothes fell away with each cut, falling to the floor beneath him.

"There," Harry said when he was done. "Now that's better."

He held up the whip and struck Gibbon's body once more, this time, the result was better. Blood flowed from his body in rivulets and Gibbon screamed even louder from the pain.

"Perfect," Harry said as he brought the whip down on Gibbon's body once more, this time across his chest. He repeated his swing over and over, sometimes even hitting Gibbon's legs and arms. When he was sure the body was torn up enough, he dropped the whip from his hands.

Harry looked down at the whip and held out his hand, transfiguring the whip into a bucket. The Death Eaters stared at him. He pulled a vial out of his pocket before throwing it into the bucket. He waved his hand over it, hissing out a spell that had Voldemort raising an eyebrow in approval. He grabbed the bucket and threw the contents over Gibbon's body. The scream that tore from his throat had the Death Eaters cringing in horror.

Bellatrix LeStrange was the only Death Eater not cringing away. She had been shocked when she saw who the new recruits were and like the others, had not believed that they were being true. For the first time, she was smart enough to keep the comments to herself. When Potter had offered to punish Gibbon, she had snorted, not thinking that the boy had it in him, but looking at him now, the joy in his eyes as he tortured Gibbon changed her mind instantly. She was looking forward to finding out just how far he could go.

"The contents in the bucket," Harry said, "are similar to Muggle vinegar or rubbing alcohol; (Neville and the others' eyes lit up in understanding, as Harry had explained the use of them before) for you lot, the simple explanation is that the potion that I threw on him, intensified the pain from his wounds."

The sadistic smile on Harry's face made the Death Eaters shiver in fear.

*(Adustum Caruncula)* Harry hissed as he pointed a finger on one of Gibbon's wounds; his screams began anew as he felt the fire burning his skin and some of the Death Eaters had to turn away to quell the urge to regurgitate what they had eaten at the smell of the burning flesh.

Once again, Voldemort found himself looking at Harry with new eyes. Despite what he had been told by and the boy himself of what he had done to his relatives, he hadn't expected him to adapt to torture so quickly. He spared a glance at the other six and saw that instead of looking hesitant or scared, they were looking on delight and awe. They were clearly enjoying themselves.

'The tides in the war have indeed shifted. Old Man, you will not realize until it's too late that the war has already been won by the Dark Side.'

Harry used the spell on several other wounds before he refilled the bucket and threw the contents over Gibbon's body once more. As the man screamed, he felt a slight pressure on his mind. He didn't react outwardly, but he allowed his magic to flare inward slightly and he recognized magic; it was Snape. A spell was whispered into his mind followed by a quick series of images to show what the spell could do. He smirked as Snape's presence left.
Harry watched in satisfaction and awe as the curse tore into Gibbon's body. New cuts appeared on his body and he smiled in delight. When he saw that Gibbon was close to passing out, he shook his head.

"Now, now Gibbon," Harry's smile was twisted. "I can't have you passing out before the fun is over."

{Pervigilo} he hissed out. When Gibbon's eyes snapped to his, he smirked.

"Now you will be awake through everything," he smiled and Gibbon cried as the words registered. Harry laughed as he turned to the others. "You guys wanna play?" he asked.

The six shared a look before they nodded at Fred and George. The maniacal grin on their faces and in their eyes, had the Death Eaters glad they weren't on the receiving end and for most, they felt as if they were looking at younger versions of the LeStrange brothers.

"Sure we…"
"…do mate…"
"…we even have…"
"…a spell in mind."

"Imitorari Flammoviscera," The twins said as one. When Gibbon began to scream, the gleam in their eyes intensified.

"The purpose of the spell," Fred said, "is to make the victim believe their internal organs are on fire."

"Deliciously wicked isn't it?" George grinned and the room's occupants shivered at it.

Neville sighed in aggravation as Gibbon continued to scream; the man's voice was grating on his nerves.

"Don't worry," Luna smiled at him. "His voice won't be a problem much longer. You'll make sure of it."

"Good," He nodded before he gave her a quick kiss and the two turned back to watch.

"Alright boys," Harry chuckled. "Let's wrap this up."

"Sure thing little brother," Fred grinned.

"Finite Incantatem," George cancelled the spell and the two took their spots once more with the others.

Watching Gibbon choke on his blood, Harry waved his hand. "Anapneo."

Instantly Gibbon took a few deep breaths of air, shuddering though they were, before he hung his head.

Harry focused on his magic and brought a fraction of it to the forefront; he blocked the noise of everyone else as he focused. {Occludictuss}

Gibbon's body jerked as he felt every wound on his body closing up. He sighed in relief, hoping that
the pain was over with. It was premature. With his head hung, he didn't see the dark smile on Harry's face, but the others did.

{Cremocarniss} Harry hissed and he smirked in dark satisfaction as Gibbon screamed once more when the spell washed over him, cauterizing every wound he had. When he was satisfied that every wound was cauterized, he cancelled the spell and stepped back.

"Nev?" he called back to his friend. When he came to stand next to him, he nodded towards Gibbon. "Finish it."

Neville nodded and moved forward to stand directly in front of the man. "You should not have spoken so about my brother. But no matter, you and everyone else here will learn that we are not to be messed with."

"Rictus," Neville said and Gibbon's mouth opened. He waved his hand and the man's tongue came out. "Never again will you say such things in my presence or anyone else's again. Diffindo minima."

Gibbon couldn't even scream as he felt the wound on his tongue; he would have trouble speaking from then on. Harry waved his hand, allowing the meat hook to disappear and the man collapsed to the floor. Neville sneered down at him.

"Pathetic," he said before he walked back over to stand next to Luna.

"I shall let you know this now," Harry said to the man and everyone else in the room. "The wounds that he has will never heal without scarring no matter what you do. It was placed there by my magic and my magic alone will remove it. Even what Nev did, that will never heal; Gibbon will forever be scarred."

“As tempting as I am sure that is Harry,” Snape interrupted him. “He does have a life and job that he must return to. The scars on his body will draw too much attention to him.”

“Spoilsport,” Harry grumbled good-naturedly before he looked back at Gibbon. He was silent for a second before he raised his hand. He hissed a spell and the wounds on Gibbons body healed over until they disappeared. He hissed another spell and smiled in satisfaction at the glow that covered Gibbon’s body as well as everyone else’s, with the exception of the Dark Lord.

“What did you just do?” Draco asked as he watched in fascination as the glow disappeared.

“I healed his wounds,” Harry explained. “But I also cast a spell that will allow everyone in here to see the wounds as if they’re still there. For him, whenever he sees his reflection, he will see the wounds as well.”

Harry then looked around at the Death Eaters and allowed his magic to flare. His smile was dark when he saw how they shivered in fear. "Allow this to be a warning to all of you; we are here willingly, but we will not take too kindly to any attacks from any of you."

He said nothing more before he walked back to stand with the rest.

"I do so hope that whatever issues you may have had," Voldemort spoke. "They are now resolved. Get him out of my sight. You are dismissed."

As the Death Eaters filed out, with the exception of Lucius, they gathered Gibbon's healed and unconscious body with them, Hedwig flashed into the room to land on Harry's shoulder.

"Hey girl," he cooed as he rubbed her head.
Hedwig trilled softly, the noise heard by Bellatrix as she was leaving with her husband and brother-in-law. Hedwig locked eyes with the witch, amber eyes gleaming as her powers moved through the witch and the two next to her. She broke the connection before trilling softly at Harry.

"I'll meet you guys back at the Manor," Harry said to the others.

"Alright Harry," Fred nodded and they left the room. Neville was about to leave, but Luna stopped him.

"You will be needed," she said.

"If my Lord permits me," Remus said, "I'd like to stay." His wolf had no intention of leaving its cub on its own.

"Very well," Voldemort nodded.

"Marvolo," Harry turned to Voldemort; a few days after their first meeting, they had met again and he had called the man by his middle name as he had no desire to call him Tom or Voldemort. "Could you please call the LeStranges back?"

"Bella, Rudolphus and Rabastan," Voldemort raised an eyebrow at Harry even as he did what he asked. "Stay for a moment."

The trio looked at each other before walking to him.

"My Lord," the three said as they knelt; because Lucius and Severus were more trusted than the others, they only had to bow to him while the others knelt.

"Rise," Voldemort commanded before he retook his seat. "While it would do good to talk about what just happened, it is not I that needed you."

"What does ickle Potter have to say?" Bella sneered. "Come to seek more vengeance for your godfather?"

"No," Harry shook his head. "It'd be stupid to fight you now, especially after what I just said. As you can see, I have a phoenix and she's not like regular phoenixes, but I won't go into that."

"What's going on?" Rabastan asked.

"My phoenix senses something off with the three of you," Harry said. "Something is blocking a part of your mind." He turned to Neville. "It's the same thing she sensed with you as well."

Neville turned wide eyes to Harry.

"I suspect the reason behind it," Harry continued. "Especially after what you told me Nev, and if I'm right, then it explains everything."

"Cub" Remus spoke up. "What are you talking about?"

"Nev," Harry said. "Explain your part first."

And so he did; Neville told them about his dreams and the way his grandmother had been acting towards him. When he was done, everyone stared at him.

"Harry," Snape looked at him. "The implications of what you are saying…"
"I know," Harry nodded.

"I assume you have a way to know for sure?" Snape raised an eyebrow.

"Yes," Harry nodded. "Hedwig; she can remove the blocks and restore the mind."

"Do it," Neville's voice was filled with determination.

"Are you sure?" Harry asked.

"Yes," Neville nodded.

"What is going on?" Rudolphus asked.

"Do it Hed," Harry said without answering the man.

Hedwig trilled, the musical tones carried her magic and allowed it to flare throughout the room. It relaxed the others and encompassed Bellatrix, Rudolphus, Rabastan and Neville. The four stood still as the magic washed over them. A bright light slowly spilled from them and fill the room. It let out a bang before it disappeared a few minutes later, leaving everyone blinking slowly. Hedwig let out a satisfied trill before she settled down on Harry's shoulder.

The occupants could only stare at the four in shock. Before anything could be said, the LeStranges turned as one to look at Neville and Bellatrix took a hesitant step forward.

"My son."

Chapter End Notes

_A/N:_ so, that's the new chapter; I hope you guys liked it. I had fun writing it. Honestly, I'm having fun writing the entire story. The LeStranges, especially Bella, are more than likely OOC, but I needed them to be that way.

_Spells:_

*Imitorari Flammoviscera*-act like inflamed internal organs; from Latin word *Imitorari*-imitate/act like and *Flammoviscera*—inflame internal organs; from Latin word *Flammo*-to inflame/set fire to and *viscera*-internal organs/entrails

*Pervigilo*-to remain awake

*Finite Incantatem*-stop/finish the incantation/spell

*Anapneo*-to clear blocked airway

*Adustum Caruncula*-singe a small piece of flesh; from Latin word *Adustum*-to singe/set fire to and *Caruncula*-a small piece of flesh

*Diffindo minimus*-slightest cutting curse or small cut

*Rictus*-open mouth
Revelations

Chapter by mykkila09

Chapter Notes

**A/N:** so, here is the new chapter; I hope you guys like it.

**Disclaimer:** Harry Potter and all its affiliates belong to JK Rowling, Bloomsbury/Scholastic and Warner Bros. Studios. No copyright or trademark infringement is intended and no money is being made from this.

**My disclaimer:** If I owned Harry Potter; Ginny would’ve died in the CoS, Harry would’ve broken free of Dumbledore’s manipulations and Molly’s overbearing, Sirius wouldn’t have died, Hermione never would’ve dated Ron, Harry would’ve ditched Ron in fourth year, and most importantly, there’d be lots and lots of Harry/Draco slash.

"Talking"

Thinking’

Letter or commentary/introduction

{Parsssel tongue}

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**Last time on RDA:**

*Hedwig trilled, the musical tones carried her magic and allowed it to flare throughout the room. It relaxed the others and encompassed Bellatrix, Rodolphus, Rabastan and Neville. The four stood still as the magic washed over them. A bright light slowly spilled from them and fill the room. It disappeared just minutes later, leaving everyone blinking slowly. Hedwig let out a satisfied trill before she settled down on Harry’s shoulder.*

*The occupants of the room could only stare at the four in shock. Before anything could be said, the LeStranges turned as one to look at Neville and Bellatrix took a hesitant step forward.*

"*My son.*"

To say the others were shocked was an understatement. It was so silent you could’ve heard a pin drop. Their gazes kept shifting between Neville and the LeStranges. Voldemort sat silently on his chair, observing the scene, his eyes narrowed in calculation.

Harry’s gaze ran over Bellatrix and the two beside her. Looking at her, with her curly dark hair, the resemblance between her and Sirius was uncanny. Her face no longer looked pale and gaunt, but rather had developed a healthy flush. Her cheekbones were no longer skinny and sunk in, but slightly full and the crazed look that was normally present in her light blue eyes had diminished significantly.

Rodolphus didn’t look much different except for the healthier look to his face and body. His face didn’t look haunted, his dark brown eyes were lighter and his body was more pronounced.
The same was for Rabastan as well. He wasn’t as muscled as his brother, much thinner, but his body had filled out healthier as well. His brown eyes held a hint of mischief and darkness in it.

Neville though was the shock. His looks had changed completely. He was still tall, but his hair, which was short before, now fell to his shoulders and it held the same curls that Bellatrix’s did. His eyes had turned from dark brown to light brown. His lips and smile were similar to Rodolphus’ as was his body structure. There was no doubt in anyone’s mind that Bella’s words were true.

"What?" Well…maybe one. Neville’s eyes were wide as he looked at Bellatrix; he didn’t know how he looked.

"My son." Tears filled Bella’s eyes as she looked at Neville. "My beautiful baby boy."

"Cory?" Rodolphus said as he too took a step forward. "My Cory?"

"I may have misheard," Lucius said, "but, did you just call him your son?"

"I did," Bellatrix said as she kept her eyes on Neville. "He is my son."

"Perhaps explanations are in order," Voldemort said. "Harry?"

"A while back," Harry started after looking at his friend and brother to see that he was still in shock. "Nev told me about this dream he had. We tried to figure out what it meant, but we couldn’t. Then Hedwig told me about the magic she felt in his mind and she admitted that she was the reason he had had the dream in the first place as she had used some of her magic on him.

"When she told me that, I suspected that maybe his dream wasn’t a dream but rather a memory. And with everything I knew about what happened to the Longbottoms, my suspicions rose on who the people in the dream were. Then Hedwig came in here and she told me she felt the same magic on the three LeStranges and that’s when I knew."

"Harry," Remus looked at him. "Are you saying that Neville is not a Longbottom but is actually a LeStrange?"

"Yes," Harry nodded. "Let Moony smell and you’ll see."

Remus nodded before he did as he was told. He sniffed the air, smelling the scent of his cub and the scent coming from Lucius before he focused on the LeStranges. He picked up on the familial scent between Rodolphus and Rabastan, the mated scent between Rodolphus and Bellatrix before he picked up on the new scent. He sniffed at Neville and found that he smelled similar like both Bella and Rodolphus.

"It’s true," Remus said.

"You’re my parents?" Neville looked between Bellatrix and Rodolphus. "But how? I don’t understand. You can’t be my parents. Frank and Alice Longbottom are my parents."

"No they’re not," Rabastan shook his head. He was still feeling a little woozy from the memory block that had been placed on him.

"Explain," Neville said.

"Frank and Alice were pregnant," Rodolphus said. "But they lost the baby. Bella was pregnant with our son. A month before he turned a year, he was kidnapped. We looked for him everywhere, but we couldn’t get any leads. But then, one day Pettigrew mentioned seeing a baby boy with the
Longbottoms. It confused him because he didn’t know they had kids.”

"That’s when we knew," Rabastan picked up, as it seemed that Bellatrix was too busy staring at Neville to answer. "A few days after that Halloween night when our Lord mysteriously vanished, we went after the Longbottoms, together with Barty. Because they were Aurors and in Dumbledore’s Order, it was probably that they had some inside information about what had really happened to our Lord. Secondly, we wanted to question them about the baby boy.

“We wanted to get our son back. They admitted everything when we got there, but they refused to give you up. They said people like us didn’t deserve to have kids when she couldn’t have any. They repeated what Dumbledore had publically declared, that our Lord vanished from the Potters house. He was gone, no bodies found but the Potters, their son alive by a miracle."

"We fought," Rodolphus continued. "You were crying through it all and Bella managed to get a hold of you. The moment she did, you quieted down as if you knew that your real mother was holding you. Bella then went and cast the Cruciatius Curse on Alice for taking you in the first place. And Ras and I did the same to Frank."

"We were about to leave," Bellatrix spoke instead. "But then Dumbledore showed up and said he couldn’t allow us to take to you. He threw a curse at me, not even caring that I had my baby in my arms. I did the only thing I could; I turned quickly and place you in the crib. The three of us tried to fight him off, but as strong as we were, we were no match for him."

"The last thing I remember," Rabastan said, "is hearing him saying a spell; after that, the only thing I could remember was that we were there to torture them. Suddenly several Aurors stormed into the house and arrested us."

"But how did that work?" Remus asked. "Did none of the other followers know you were pregnant?"

"No," Bellatrix shook her head. "It was a war; and our Lord had just gained a few followers, some of whom had to prove themselves to be trustworthy. And also because we had thought that allowing others to know would place the baby in danger from the light side and our Lord would stop us from helping him. So we kept it a secret."

"But somehow," Harry said, "the Old Fool found out."

"Yes," the three said as one.

"Neville?" Harry turned to look at his friend.

"I…I’m sorry," Neville said as he backed away. "I can’t…I just can’t….not now." With that, he turned, bowed quickly toward Voldemort and hurried out of the room. Harry looked at Hedwig and she disappeared after him.

"Well that went well," Harry chuckled.

"I wouldn’t worry," Luna said. "You will have your son back."

"That disgusting, low-life, meddlesome fool of a man! How dare he do this to me?! The bastard took my son from me," Bellatrix let out a screech of rage as her power rolled off her. She tried to take a few calming breaths but she couldn’t and she let out a growl as her eyes filled with anger when she thought once more on what happened. "Albus Dumbledore will regret the day he fucked with my family."
Her words were a vow and the glint in her eyes was determination mixed with madness.

In the Headmaster’s office in Hogwarts, Albus shivered as he once again felt the icy fingers of Death travel up and down his spine.

~…~

It’s been a few days since the LeStrange revelation and things were slightly strained. It was obvious that Bellatrix, Rodolphus and Rabastan were desperate to talk with Neville, but said teen was avoiding them. It was not that he didn’t want to talk to them, it was just everything had overwhelmed him and he needed time to think things through. After he had left the room, he had gone directly back to Potter Manor, where he spent the last few days brooding, working randomly in the Greenhouse.

Harry and Luna had explained everything to the others, who were shocked at the news. Draco was shocked because he realized that Neville was actually his cousin. Luna had told them that Neville would need time to sort through things, so they had agreed to leave him to himself until he was ready to talk.

Neville was working in the Greenhouse, trying to get his mind off what he had learned, but he couldn’t. His mind refused to concentrate on the task at hand. Instead, his thoughts kept drifting back to the LeStranges.

"Thinking too hard?" a voice interrupted him. He looked over and saw Harry and Luna standing at the door.

"Yeah," he sighed. "I just don’t know what to do, you know? I mean, I was just told that I’ve been lied to my entire life. The people who I thought were my parents were actually my kidnappers and the people who I thought were psychotic murderers are actually my parents."

"It is a lot to take in," Luna said as she walked over to her boyfriend. "But you don’t have to handle it alone. We’re here for you and you’re not the only confused on things everything either."

He turned to look at her before he turned to look at Harry.

"Bella and the others are just as confused as you," Harry said. "For the past fifteen years they believed that they didn’t have a son and then they found out that they did have a child and said child was raised by their enemies. They want to get to know you, but they’re not pushing you."

"He’s right," Luna smiled. "I daresay the Dark Lord is growing quite tiresome of Bella ruining his carpet."

"What?" Neville looked between the two of them.

"She’s been pacing a lot," Harry chuckled. "She’s worried you aren’t going to want to have anything to do with her."

"She is?" Neville’s eyes went wide in disbelief; he couldn’t picture the woman doing something so mundane and normal.

"Yeah," Luna and Harry nodded.

"Whatever questions or concerns you have," Luna said, "she, as well as your father and uncle, has them as well. You can talk with each other and get through this. You’ve wanted parents and now you have them."
"She’s right you know?" Harry said. "Just talk with them and if you’re still unsure, tell them that you want to take things slow."

"You’re right," Neville said after a moment of silence. "That’s all I’ve been thinking about, you know? I couldn’t get over that I am their child and that the Longbottoms and Dumbledore stole me. But then on the other hand, everything else makes sense; I mean, now I know why grand…I mean, Lady Longbottom, kept giving me those looks and snide remarks. She knew."

"I’d reckon so," Harry nodded. "Talk to them Nev; you have nothing to lose and a lot to gain."

"And Harry," Luna said. "I think it’s time Moony and Remus were one. That book you had should help wonders, especially with explaining a few feelings of his."

"I thought so too," Harry smiled at the girl he called his sister. "I was actually planning on talking to him after I talked to Nev here."

"I do believe he is at Malfoy Manor," Luna smiled at her brother. "So is everyone else."

"The twins?" Harry asked.

"Diagon Alley," Luna answered as the three walked towards the door of the Greenhouse. "They found a building that will suit their needs."

"Good," Harry nodded. "Hedwig?"

Said bird flashed into the room.

"Hi girl," Harry cooed at her while Neville and Luna moved to pet her. "Can you take us to Malfoy Manor? I need to talk with Remus and Nev needs to talk with Bella and the other two."

Hedwig trilled as she nipped Harry’s ear in affection.

"Thank you," Harry smiled at her. "Let’s go guys."

Neville and Luna grabbed Harry’s hand and the three flashed out. They startled Lucius and the others when they flashed into the room.

"Hello," Harry said. "Remus, can I talk to you for a second?"

"Sure cub," Remus nodded as he got up and the two left the room.

"Uhm," Neville said as he looked at the others. "I’m ready to talk now."

"Wonderful," Bellatrix smiled as did Rodolphus and Rabastan.

"You can use the study next to the foyer," Lucius offered up.

"Thank you," Neville nodded and the four of them walked out the door.

~…~

When they entered the study, Neville started pacing while the other three sat in the chairs.

"I don’t know where to start," he sighed as he dropped into the seat across from Bellatrix.
Neither do us," Rabastan gestured to the three of them. "We’ve been living with the memory that you didn’t exist and now we found out that you do exist and you were stolen from us."

"I just don’t get why they would do that," Neville said. "How could the leader of the Light, steal a child from its parents?"

"Dumbledore is manipulative," Rodolphus said. "Possibly more so than our Lord; he is also meddling and believes that everything he does is for the greater good."

"I know you’re probably hesitating because you’ve spent the past fifteen years fearing me," Bellatrix spoke and Neville looked at her. He was slightly shocked to see fear in her eyes; it was something he never thought he’d ever see on her.

"But is it possible to at least try and get to know each other?" Bellatrix continued. She was beyond pissed at Dumbledore and what he had done to her family. She had lost fifteen years with her son and had no way to get them back.

"I talked to Harry and Luna," Neville spoke. "And they explained things to me. They told me that I finally have a chance at having the parents I so desperately wanted. I’m not saying that it’s gonna be easy, but I’m willing to give it a try."

"Thank you," Rodolphus breathed.

"Can I ask what name you gave me?" Neville looked at them. "You called me Cory earlier, so I assume it’s a nickname."

"It is," Rabastan nodded. "Your name is Corvus Rudolpho LeStrange."

"But we called you Cory," Rodolphus smiled at his son.

"Cory, huh?" Neville had a thoughtful look on his face for a split second before he smiled. "I like it."

Bellatrix let out a squeal before she launched herself out of her seat and grabbed Neville in a hug.

"My little Cory," she giggled as she hugged him tight. Neville turned wide eyes to the other two and they shared a look before they joined in the hug.

"Our family is back together," Rodolphus smiled.

"No one will break us apart ever again," Rabastan said.

"If anyone tries," Bellatrix added and her voice held the maniacal tone that she was known for. "I will torture them."

"And I’ll help," Neville said and the three adults looked at him in shock. "Hey, I just got you guys back. No way will I let anyone tear us apart." He paused before he blinked slowly and smiled at them. "I’m getting used to this a lot faster than I thought."

"You are my son," Bellatrix laughed and so did the others.

~…~

"What do you want to talk about cub?" Remus asked Harry as the two walked through the Malfoy Garden.
"About Moony," Harry said. "And you."

"What about him and me?" Remus raised an eyebrow.

"I found a book in the library," Harry said. "It talked about werewolves and the transformation process. Did you know that the Wolfsbane Potion is poison to a werewolf?"

"What?" Remus stopped suddenly and looked at his godson. "What are you talking about? The Wolfsbane Potion helps with the transformations. It prevents Moony from going wild."

"Remus," Harry turned to look at him. "Moony is a wild animal. Werewolves are wild animals; just like wolves. The only thing that can tame a wolf, or in this case a werewolf, is its mate and its cubs."

"Harry," Remus said. "I have to take the potion. I refuse to allow myself to attack someone I care about."

"You won’t," Harry said. "Remus, Moony sees me as his cub, so he can’t and won’t hurt me. But you’re hurting yourself by taking the potion."

"How do you mean?" Remus asked with an eyebrow raised.

"Since I’ve met you," Harry started to explain. "You’ve said you hated your wolf side. You feared your transformations and the nights of the full moon. You also take a potion that suppresses the instinctual and wild side of the wolf. I’ve seen pictures of werewolves and they look nothing like Moony does."

"They’re healthier looking; they have a full coat, they actually have meat on their bones. They look similar to wolves only their bodies are bigger. That’s not how Moony looks. Remus, you have to stop hating the wolf inside of you. You have to accept that he is a part of you. I know that you were scared because the Wizarding World refused to accept you and decided to shun you and all that added to your hatred, but you truly have to let it go. Your hatred of the wolf kept you from me for most of my life. Accept the wolf Remy, please, accept it."

By the time he was finished, Harry’s expression had gone from determined to pleading.

Remus for his part was quiet as he listened to his cub. Everything that Harry had just said had hit home and had struck a chord inside of him. His thoughts went over his entire life and he realized that Harry spoke the truth; he did hate his wolf, or rather, he used to. It wasn’t until Sirius’ death that he had started listening to Moony more and more. Werewolves were dark creatures; he knew that. It was the reason Moony grew even closer to Harry, because he had sensed the darkness in him when Harry was thirteen. Even then, Remus had refused to listen because he still hated that part of him.

But now, Harry was giving him a chance at a better life.

‘Could I really do it? I’ve spent almost all of my life hating being what I am…I can’t just change, can I? And why not? Our cub did. Moony. It’s about time human. I’ve been waiting for this for a long time. I can’t believe it took our cub for you to finally see what I’ve been trying to tell you all these years. I’m sorry. It was hard for me to accept it. I was shunned everywhere I went, so of course I hated you. But now you don’t have to. Our cub accepts you…both parts of you, and you’re finally on the side that appreciates us. It is time to end this human. Let go of your past and embrace your future…our future."

Remus looked up and saw that Harry was watching him closely. "You’re right you know? I’ve spent so much time hating the wolf. I blamed him for not being able to be with you or have a good life."
"And now?" Harry asked.

"I don’t blame him anymore," Remus admitted. "And truth be told, I stopped hating him ever since Siri died. I actually listened to him and that’s why I started being suspicious of Dumbledore and now I know my suspicions were right. It wasn’t Moony that prevented me from being with you; it was all Dumbledore, but no more. I guess what I’m saying is, I’m willing to try and merge with Moony."

"I’m glad," Harry said and the smile on his face was full of relief. "I want you around Remus, and this is a way to ensure that."

Remus looked at him; in that moment, he wasn’t looking at the powerful, determined wizard that he was, but at the shy fifteen year old who was afraid of losing someone else.

"You have me convinced Harry," Remus pulled him into a hug. "I don’t want to lose you and I don’t want you to lose me either. What do I have to do?"

And so, Harry spent the rest of the afternoon talking with his godfather, explaining the process that he had found in the book. He did not notice Draco staring at him from a window above.

~…~

When Harry had left the room with Remus, Draco sighed before he got up and left as well. He turned in the opposite direction that they went to and headed to his room. He was unaware that his father had followed. He walked over to his window and looked down, spotting Harry and Remus talking in the gardens. His eyes travelled over Harry’s body, taking in the confidence that seemed to exude off him in waves. He watched the pleading expression on Harry’s face and the serious one on Remus’ and he wondered as to what the two were talking about. He looked away and turned around when he heard his door open.

"Father," he nodded before he turned his gaze back to the gardens and Harry.

"Draco," Lucius said as he closed the door behind him and walked further into the room. He walked over to the bed and took a seat on it. "Is something the matter?"

Draco was quiet as he thought on his father’s question. His eyes drifted back to Harry before he let out a sigh. He turned to his father and the open expression on his face had Lucius gasping softly. His son was letting himself be vulnerable by showing his emotions.

"Talk to me Draco," Lucius implored. To outsiders it might seem as if he and his son didn’t have that good of a relationship, but that couldn’t be further than the truth. He may portray the cold, aloof, impeccable persona in public, but in the privacy of his home, he was a good father to his son. Their relationship was one that was envied by Narcissa as Draco had taken more to him than his mother.

"Everything seems so confusing," Draco finally started after another moment of silence. "I don’t know what to feel. I like the fact that he’s after me so, but I can’t help but wonder why or rather how?"

"How what Draco?" Lucius raised a sculpted eyebrow. "Do you think that Mr. Potter’s attraction to you is sudden and because of his new allegiance to the Dark Lord or do you believe that that is the cause for your own attraction?"

"My attraction to him has nothing to do with his coming over to our side," Draco turned to look at his father. "I came to terms with my feelings for him since my third year. However, his feelings for..."
"My son," Lucius started. "I may not know Mr. Potter well, though I do hope that will change in the future, but from what I do know of him, is that when he puts his mind to something, he accomplishes it and his feelings on matters that are important to him are true. Answer me this, can you honestly say that Potter’s feelings or attraction is due only to his allegiance to the Lord?"

After a few minutes, Draco shook his head slowly. "I can’t say that."

"He cares for you Draco," Lucius said. "The allegiance to the Dark Lord has nothing to do with it. I rather believe if it comes down to it, he would abandon the Lord if you asked him to."

"What?" Draco raised shocked eyes to his father. "That’s preposterous."

"Is it?" Lucius drawled. "He as much gave me fair warning that he would destroy me if I ever did anything to hurt you; the same warning goes out to everyone, including our Lord."

"He told you that?" Draco’s cheeks flushed pink.

"I’ve seen the way he acts and looks at you Draco," Lucius continued. "It is more than lust; he looks at you with love and devotion."

When Draco heard that, he couldn’t stop the pleased look that came in his eyes or the surge of relief that coursed through his body.

"And therein lies the crux of the matter," Lucius said when he saw the look in his son’s eyes. "You were worried that it was just lust or a passing fancy."

"Yes," Draco admitted. "He could have anyone he wanted, and I couldn’t understand why he chose me."

"Be happy that he did choose you," Lucius said.

"I am," Draco assured his father.

"Then why do you insist on blocking his every attempt to be with you?" Lucius asked.

"I’m not blocking his attempts," Draco denied. "Harry and I are always at war with each other and this is no different. I get jealous if his attention is on anyone else except me. If I gave into him so quickly, it wouldn’t be right. I did have doubts, but you cleared them up for me. I now know how he truly feels for me, but father you have to understand. I’m not blocking him, but I’m not stopping him either because a part of me wants him to prove his feelings; a part of me wants him to show that he truly loves me and that I’m the only one he wants."

Lucius was quiet as he listened to his son. He could understand why Draco was feeling the way he was and he admitted to himself that he would have acted the same. He got up from the bed and went to stand next to his son. He looked out the window and his gaze was drawn to where Harry and Remus stood. Instead of staying on Harry, he found himself looking at Remus.

There was something about the wolf that drew him in. He was man enough to admit that it was something that he had felt since they were in school, but because of whom he was and who Remus was, along with family obligations, nothing could be done. With everything that had happened with Narcissa, he had to keep up his façade, which was to bury his feelings and do what was needed of
him. He had known that nothing could ever happen between them because they were on opposite sides of the war, but now, that wasn’t the case.

With Remus now on their side, his feelings were rising once more and he did not know if he could or wanted to stop them.

"Father?" Draco looked at his father questioningly. His father’s eyes held a longing in them and he followed his gaze to where Harry and Remus were. Understanding flitted through his eyes after a few minutes. "Perhaps we can both get what we want. After all, what a Malfoy wants, a Malfoy gets."

“Perhaps,” Lucius nodded in agreement to his son’s words. “However, there is still the matter of your mother to deal with.”

Draco looked at his father before looking away. He had not thought of his mother, not since a few days after the will reading.

Flashback

Narcissa was fuming as she made her way through the halls of the Manor. She was angry with her cousin for what he left to her and she was also angry at her son for what he got. She couldn’t believe Sirius had left so much money to Draco when they didn’t even know each other.

The will reading had been a few days ago and she hadn’t seen hide or hair of her son since. She had no idea where he was or what he was doing and her only consolation was that Lucius was having important meetings and hadn’t noticed the absence of his heir.

She was about to go past the stairs to the foyer when she heard the Floo acting up. She paused and waited, only to see her son walking out of the study.

“Mother,” Draco stopped when he saw his mother standing there.

“Draco,” Narcissa spoke between clenched teeth. “I would like to speak with you son.”

“Is it important?” Draco asked as he resumed walking. “There is someplace I have to be.” He was going back to Harry’s.

“Yes,” Narcissa inclined her head. “It is important.”

“Alright,” Draco nodded as he continued on to his room. He opened the door and stepped inside. His mother followed him, pushing the door close behind her, only it didn’t close completely.

Draco walked over to his closet and opened the doors; he started going through them, throwing specifics onto his bed as he spoke to his mother. “Well? What is it that you needed to speak with me about mother?”

“I don’t understand,” Narcissa spoke and the rage inside of her had her teeth clenching as she gripped her handkerchief between her hands until her knuckles turned white.

“Understand what?” Draco asked as he kept looking through his closet.

“I don’t understand why you received anything at all!” she hissed.

Draco stiffened as the words left his mother’s mouth and he slowly turned to face her, his eyes narrowed and his face closed down into an unreadable mask.
“What exactly is that supposed to mean mother?” his voice was devoid of emotion.

“What did Sirius mean when he said he knew your secret?” Narcissa ignored her son’s questions and asked another. “What are you hiding Draco and how is it that he knows?”

“My secret is mine alone,” Draco answered. “It has nothing to do with you. And as to why I received anything from Sirius, it ties into the secret, but from what I understood, it was because of the way I acted.”

“You’ve acted like a Malfoy,” Narcissa said. “And from my memory, Sirius hated the Malfoys.”

“I’m not surprised you have no idea,” Draco turned his back on his mother and turned back to his closet.

“Draco,” Narcissa’s voice took on a warning tone.

“No mother,” Draco’s voice overrode her’s. “The point on the matter is that Sirius left me something and it angers you that he left nothing for you. By your words alone, you cannot fathom an idea as to why he would do that and I am not willing to tell you.”

He closed his closest and grabbed his trunk to put his clothes in. He was just finishing up and about to close the trunk, when his mother stepped to him.

“Draco,” Narcissa looked at her son. “I am your mother and as such, I think I deserve to know what it is that Sirius knew about you.”

“My mother? My mother?” Draco turned hard eyes to look at her. “You haven’t been my mother since I was four, which happened to be the last time you allowed me to call you “mummy”. You’ve treated me like I was nothing. You’ve hated the fact I was close to father and instead of even trying, you distanced yourself from me.

“Now you want to know what it is that Sirius knew. No, you have no right to try and be a mother after all this time; just like you have no right to know what it is you want to know. I have nothing more to say to you.”

He turned away from her and grabbed his wand to shrink his trunk before putting it in his pocket. He turned to walk out when his mother grabbed his arm.

“Don’t turn away from me,” Narcissa hissed.

“I have nothing else to say to you,” Draco pulled his hand from her arm and turned to look at her.

“You are my son!” she snarled at him. “You do not turn away from me and you do not speak to me like that!”

“I have to go,” Draco said and he turned to walk away once more.

“I am not through talking with you yet Draco,” Narcissa said.

“What more is there to say?” Draco asked. “I don’t want to talk with you. I have nothing to say.”

“You will listen!”

“No,” Draco shook his head. “I’m almost sixteen. I do not have to listen to a thing you want to say.”
“I’m your mother!” Narcissa’s eyes glowed with anger.

“A cold-hearted bitch like you is not my mother,” Draco scoffed.

SMACK!

Draco’s head flew to the side from the force of the slap Narcissa just gave to him.

“Draco,” Narcissa’s hand flew to her mouth.

“What is going on here?” a silky voice drawled from the doorway.

Narcissa looked behind her and saw Lucius standing there.

“I was just leaving,” Draco said and he turned towards his door. “Father.”

End Flashback

“I do not think I have ever been as angry with your mother as I was that day,” Lucius said. “I may have been tough on you Draco, but I would never hit you.”

“I know father,” Draco nodded. “What do you plan to do about her?”

“I’ve been thinking about consulting my solicitor on separation options,” Lucius said.

“Why not just divorce her?” Draco raised an eyebrow at his father. “I know it is not usually done in the Wizarding World, but father, it is an option that you should consider. However, if you feel that it will do more harm than good, then I’m sure there must be some way our ancestors had of getting out of a marriage they no longer wanted.”

Lucius looked at his son in pride. His son sounded so mature and grown up and he looked it as well; his son was carrying on the Malfoy name very well.

“You are right of course,” Lucius nodded. “Even if I choose not to have a divorce, I can have Narcissa’s access to anything Malfoy-related denied. However, I do believe the divorce would be better; it might actually help me and in turn help our Lord.”

“How so?” Draco asked.

“I need to think things through,” Lucius said. “I will let you know what I have decided.”

“Alright,” Draco nodded.

“Do not despair Draco,” Lucius said to his son. “Things will work out for you.”

“As will you father,” Draco said.

Lucius nodded before he left the bedroom. Draco stared at the door for a second before he moved to look out the window again; he sighed when he saw that Harry and Remus had gone.

~…~

Snape was sitting in the library when the fireplace activated and flared green, letting him know someone was Flooing through. He knew it required a specific password to Floo to the library and
only a specific set of people knew it, so he focused his gaze on the book.

“Hello Snape.”

He looked up and saw the twins standing there.

“Good morning,” Snape replied. “Is everything alright?”

“Better than alright,” Fred grinned.

“We found a place for our business,” George continued.

“And we need to talk to our dark-haired little brother about it,” Fred finished.

“Harry I presume?” Snape asked.

“Yes,” Fred and George nodded.

“If I may be so bold,” Snape started.

“Your feelings on everything that has happened thus far,” Snape elaborated. “It’s been weeks since your defection and I was curious as to how you were truly feeling about everything. I must say I find it a little hard to believe your quick divergence of sides and the way you were calm with the torturing of Gibbons.”

“Most people look at us and see the jokesters that we portray,” George said as his face morphed into a serious expression. “But Harry didn’t. During his first year, after we had pulled a prank, he came to us.”

“He said he liked what we did,” Fred picked up. “said it took someone who could gain immense pleasure from causing pain and humiliation to someone else to do what we did; it was just the touch of darkness and he liked that. He also said that at the same time he admired the fact that we could keep a balance, that we did not take our pranks too far and that we carefully considered how to prank whom.”

Severus raised an eyebrow at this. His own past with the Marauders had left a very bad impression of Gryffindor pranksters in his mind. The Marauders had never known when to stop; they would mercilessly torture someone who already was lying on the ground, for no other reason that they could, that they usually were four to one.

That the first year Harry should have been able to see past the front of the twins, that he already differentiated between levels of pranks, was hard to fathom. Well, Severus thought, perhaps not so impossible, if he considered what he had learned about Harry’s real character this summer.

“At first we didn’t believe him,” George continued. “I mean, he was the Gryffindor Golden Boy, the Saviour of the Wizarding World and all that other crap that people labeled on him; so we decided to watch him, but he didn’t do anything, so we dismissed what he said. It wasn’t until third year, that he approached us again and that’s when we knew.”

“Knew what, pray tell?” Snape raised an eyebrow.

“That he was very dark,” Fred shrugged. “It confused us of course; the Boy-Who-Lived dark?”

“He took us aside and explained a few things to us,” George said. “We were touched that he told us,
so we kept his secrets and let him in on some of our plans.”

“After everything that happened with our parents and Dumbledore, we chose his side permanently,” Fred said with a sneer on the words parents and Dumbledore.

“And the torturing?” Snape asked.

“Like we said,” George grinned. “Pranks are designed for the humiliation of others, after that, it was only a step up.”

“We completely enjoyed what happened to Gibbons,” Fred grinned as well. “We don’t mind torturing. If the Dark Lord decided to use us as mercenaries or whatnot, we have no problems.”

“Interesting,” Snape drawled. “You do know he placed Harry under the Cruciatius curse?”

“Yes,” the twins lost their grins.

“Harry explained to us why it happened,” Fred continued. “Just because we don’t have the mark, doesn’t mean we still don’t answer to him. We chose to be on this side and that means that the Dark Lord is our boss.”

“We also know that Harry may be closer to him than any of us,” George said. “And we don’t mind that either. Harry told us he had been out of line and that the Dark Lord reminded him that he was the boss and we all answered to him, including Harry; but even then he said, the Dark Lord didn’t hold him under the curse for too long.”

“We understand our choices and the consequences of those choices,” Fred said. “But, we meant it when we said we would stand by Harry no matter what.”

Snape was quiet after Fred was finished, his mind running back over everything they said. After a moment of thinking, he looked at them.

“Very well then,” he nodded. “I only asked because I honestly was curious as to your thoughts and feelings on everything.”

“We know,” George nodded.

“And we understand,” Fred added. “Nothing is going to make us go back to those people. We’re dark, and that’s where we’re going to stay.”

“Good,” Snape nodded as he picked up the book he had put down when he had started talking to them. “I last saw Harry heading out to the gardens with Remus.”

“Thank you,” the twins said as one before they turned to walk out the library. Just after the door closed behind them, a figure moved from his hiding place in the shadows and came to stand next to Snape’s chair; it was Voldemort.

“It is good to get their true views on everything,” he mused.

“I thought so my Lord,” Snape nodded.

“Their loyalty to him is commendable,” Voldemort continued. “What little doubts I may have had about their loyalty to me has been amended.”

“I am glad to hear that my Lord,” Snape said. Being in his Lord’s presence was causing his body to react and he wasn’t sure if he wanted to stop it before the man found out or to allow him to find out.
“Severus,” Voldemort moved to stand in front of his follower.

“My Lord?” Snape looked up at his master before slowly moving to his feet, bringing him to stand mere feet away from Voldemort.

Voldemort said nothing as he reached out to touch Snape’s cheek. His palm cupped the cheek while his thumb grazed his lips. Snape lifted startled eyes to him and Voldemort smirked at the look in them; it was lust and another emotion.

“I find myself feeling things for you Severus,” Voldemort spoke and his voice was soft with a hint of a hypnotizing sound to it. “Things I have never felt for anyone else. You have been the only one that have ever made me feel guilt and it is an emotion I do not enjoy feeling.”

“I am sorry my Lord,” Snape murmured. His breathing was starting to pick up as he saw the lust in his master’s eyes; a lust that had awakened the answering desire in himself.

“Oh no,” Voldemort shook his head even as he placed an arm around Snape’s waist to draw him closer. He leaned down and pressed his nose to Snape’s neck, inhaling slightly, reveling in the scent of his potions master. He pulled back to look Snape in his eyes. “Your apology is not what I want.”

“What…what do you want?” Snape asked; his voice was slightly hesitant with a husky undertone.

“You,” Voldemort said before he did what he had wanted to do for a while; he kissed him. He tightened his arms around Snape as he pulled him flush against his body, reveling in the moan that he pulled from the man’s throat.

Snape couldn’t help the needy moan that escaped his lips as he felt Voldemort’s hands trail down his body to cup his ass through his robes. His hands clutched at his shoulder before he slowly raised them to wrap around the Dark Lord’s neck. He angled his head and opened his mouth when he felt the probing tongue against his lips. He whimpered at the feral growl that escaped the Dark Lord and tightened his arms around his neck while his lower body started a slow grind against his master.

Voldemort held Snape tight to him and moved until Snape was leaning against a bookshelf. He released his lips and trailed a path down Snape’s neck, making the man throw his head back in pure pleasure. His hand weren’t idle as they travelled down Snape’s body and with a flick, the robes were gone, leaving him with an easier access to the body he so desired. He slipped his hand in Snape’s pants, wrapping it around the hardened cock. He hissed in pleasure as he felt the pre-cum leaking out and his eyes widened when he felt Snape buck into his hand and more pre-cum leaked out. He raised his eyes to look at Snape and groaned when he saw how flushed with desire his face was.

“Did you like that?” he whispered against his lips. He hissed again and was rewarded with another buck and moan.

“My…(moan)…Lord,” Snape pleaded as trembled in unadulterated pleasure. “Please.”

[Pleasse what?] Voldemort hissed as he squeezed the cock in his hand before he started moving it up and down, stroking Snape.

“Oh Salazar,” Snape panted out as he rutted against his master; he couldn’t believe just how wanton he was acting, but he couldn’t help it. The feelings that were coursing through him were too strong and in all honesty, he had no real desire to stop what was happening. He snapped his head forward and captured his Lord’s lips in a heated kiss.
Voldemort smirked against Snape’s lips; it seemed he had found a trigger button for his pleasure. He allowed him to control the kiss as he slid his thumb across the slit in Snape’s cock, causing said man to thrust into his hands with an increased speed. He pulled away from the kiss and slid his lips up to Snape’s ear.

“You should see yourself; so responsive. I love the feel of your cock in my hand; the sounds that I pull from you are so delicious.”

Snape’s moans grew as he felt his balls tightening up and his cock grew even harder as it pulsed in his master’s hand. He could feel Voldemort’s cock against his thigh and it gave him a heady sense of pleasure to know he had caused that.

“Ss Severus,” Voldemort’s voice was husky as he spoke Snape’s name and though it was in English, it sounded as if it was in Parseltongue and it sent shivers through Snape’s body. “The thought of burying my cock in that hot ass of yours…(groans)…I can’t wait to feel you around my cock…just the thought of fucking you…the thought of that heat around me…tell me what you want.”

“I want…(pants)…I want to cum with you inside of me,” Snape moaned out; Voldemort’s words were causing his need to build even more. “I want to feel you…I want to feel your cock fucking me.”

Voldemort let out a desire-filled growl before yanking his hand from Snape’s cock, drawing a whimper from him of the loss. With a flick of his hand, he banished Snape’s pants and underwear along with his own. His need for the man in front of him was too great for him to wait, so he quickly cast three spells in succession; a Cleansing Charm, Lubrication spell and a Stretching spell before he lifted Snape into the air, pressing his back into the bookshelf and allowing him to wrap his legs around his waist.

“Are you sure?” he panted through gritted teeth as he tried to control his body’s desire to slam himself into Snape; it was uncharacteristic of him to show such reluctance with a partner, but he was hesitant to hurt the man that was coming to mean a great deal to him.

Snape raised his desire-darkened onyx eyes to stare into Voldemort’s own before he spoke. “Fuck me my Lord, make me yours.”

Voldemort snarled before he captured Snape’s in a harsh kiss. He pressed the tip of his cock against Snape’s entrance and was about to thrust in to give them what they both wanted, when the doors of the library flew open.

“Severus, do you—

Both Snape and Voldemort pulled from each other and looked towards the disturbance and they saw Yaxley standing there. Voldemort turned around and hissed {Crucio}, his eyes glowing with anger; so displeased was he, that he didn’t realize he had cast the curse in Parseltongue.

Yaxley fell to the floor screaming; the spell was in Parseltongue and so, the pain it caused was more intense than the ones the Dark Lord cast in English.

Voldemort kept the spell on him for a minute before he lifted it. While the man lay curled up, sobbing and shaking on the floor, he released Severus and allowed him to stand on his feet. Then he flicked his wrist to summon his trousers back to him, a wave of his hand in front of him and he was again dressed impeccable.
“What is the meaning for this interruption?” he was enraged at the interruption, especially since he could hear Severus trying to get his breathing under control.

“My Lord,” Yaxley panted out as his body twitched from the after effects of the curse. “I have information for you.”

Voldemort cursed as his eyes narrowed on Yaxley, making him pale even more. “I shall join you in Lucius’ receiving room. Leave.”

“Yes my Lord,” Yaxley nodded as he moved shakily to his feet. He bowed before walking back out the library, closing the door behind him.

Voldemort sighed as he turned back to Snape, who avoided his gaze with his head bowed, the lank black hair obscuring his face like a curtain. He watched as Snape summoned his trousers and underwear to him and he knew the moment was ruined.

“Perhaps you should go to him my Lord,” Snape murmured as he dressed himself in seconds with a wave of his wand. He kept his gaze from his Lord. He still couldn’t believe what had almost happened and a part of him was worried as to just what he was to the Dark Lord.

Voldemort’s red eyes darkened in renewed rage at Yaxley, not only because of the tempting skin that was disappearing, but because he could sense the directions of Snape’s thoughts. He closed the distance between the two of them and grabbed Snape’s chin to tilt his face up to his.

“I will go,” Voldemort said. “Only because I know the information he has to relay is very important. However, know this: this is not over. I finally have what I want in my grasp and nothing will prevent me from claiming it. You are mine Severus.”

Snape looked at him. His dark eyes were swirling with lust and what looked to be hope. He smiled slightly at his Lord before leaning forward to kiss him quickly. “I am yours, as I hope you are mine.” He knew his words were bold, but he couldn’t help to seek some form of reassurance that he wasn’t just a bed mate to the Dark Lord, but something more.

“Impertinent whelp,” Voldemort smirked.

“Only yours my Lord,” Snape shook his head.

Voldemort smirked and he kissed Snape once more before leaving the library. Just as he got to the doors, he stopped. “You’re worry is unneeded Severus, for there is no one else I desire.” With that, he walked out.

Snape couldn’t help the small, yet no less genuine, smile that crossed his face as he watched his Lord leave. He moved to the couch and sat down slowly, his mind going over everything that had just happened between him and the Dark Lord. The smile built on his lips as he recalled the Dark Lord’s words just before he left the library. He knew that for the rest of the day, he would be hard-pressed to lose the good feeling he had. He turned back to the book he had been reading before the twins came in, when another caught his eyes. It was one of the potion books from Harry’s library, a book that Harry had translated into English with a spell he had found.

He picked it up and opened it; his eyes widened when he read the page he opened on and he gathered the rest of the books before he hurried out of the library, intending to go back home to the potions lab.

~…~
Hermione sighed as she sat down on her bed, her back to the headboard. It had been weeks since the will reading and things had been difficult. The Weasleys and Dumbledore were pissed about the contents of the will and what they had received, as was she. She still couldn’t understand how Sirius could say she was similar to Pettigrew, especially since she hadn’t done anything to warrant it.

She had done what the Headmaster had asked and had sent a letter to Harry, but the letter had returned unopened. She had become frustrated and had tried again, but she got the same results. She knew he was angry with them for their letters earlier in the summer, but she still expected him to reply to her letter.

“For all he knew,” she huffed. “I could’ve been apologizing for what I said. He shouldn’t have ignored me.” She paused and sighed before shifting more on the bed. “But then I suppose I would’ve ignored me too if I had did that. I’ll just have to find some other way to talk to him and get him to do what we want. It shouldn’t be too hard after all.”

She let out another sigh before getting up. She got dressed in a pair of jeans and a tank top, grabbed her wand from her dresser and headed downstairs.

“How are you going to get there?” her mother asked as she walked out of the kitchen.

“I’ll call the Knight Bus,” Hermione shrugged.

“Alright,” her mother nodded. “I’ll let your father know when he comes back in.”

“Ok mum,” Hermione nodded. “I’m going to go now.”

“Bye honey,” her mother said before she walked back into the kitchen.

Hermione walked out the door and went down to the sidewalk. After making sure no one was looking, she held out her wand to summon the bus; seconds later, it showed up. The doors opened and both the driver and Stan turned towards her.

“Where to?”

“The Burrow,” she said as she got on. “Ottery St. Catchpole.”

“Eight sickles and hold on,” Stan said before the bus took off at its usual neck-breaking speed. Hermione quickly cast the Sticking Charm to keep her in her seat. Stan collected the fare, gave her a ticket and then went to the back of the bus. Before she knew it, the bus had wheezed past numerous fields and villages, chased a herd of bleating sheep across a down, jumped over the M5 – why there wasn’t a terrific traffic accident was truly a miracle – dipped into the River Otter for a second and was pulling up on the side of the dirt road leading to the Burrow. Hermione was quite glad that the rough ride was over so quickly. She said “Bye,” to the driver and got out.

She hurried up the walk, hearing Ron’s voice yelling. When she got there, she realized that he was talking with his mother, who was in the kitchen.

“Hello,” Hermione said when she was close enough for them to hear her.

“Hermione!” Ron whirled around when he heard her voice. “What are you doing here?”

“Is everything alright dear?” Mrs. Weasley called through the window.

“Everything’s fine Mrs. Weasley,” Hermione said. “I decided to come over as there was nothing
much to do at my house and also, I wanted to speak with Ron.”

“Alright,” Mrs. Weasley nodded. “Have you had lunch as yet?”

“No,” Hermione shook her head.

“Well when you’re finished with Ron,” Mrs. Weasley said. “I’ll have some lunch ready for you both.”

“Thanks mum,” Ron said.

“Thanks Mrs. Weasley,” Hermione smiled before she turned to Ron. “Is everything ok Ron?”

“Yeah,” he said. “Any luck with him?”

“No,” Hermione sighed. “My letters keep coming back; you’d think he’d be at least bit interested to know what his godfather left for him.”

“He’s always been selfish,” Ron scowled. “It’s not fair that we didn’t get anything after all that we did for him and all the times he almost got us killed.”

“I know,” Hermione said as she laid her hand on his arm, “but don’t worry; we’ll get our dues.”

“We better,” Ron nodded. The two had no idea just how right the statements were and if they had any inclination as to what the dues would be, they wouldn’t have wished for them.

~…~

After Harry had talked to Remus, he had given him the book and told him to read it, knowing that the full moon was coming up in a few days…three days before his birthday, actually. He had wanted Remus to understand what it was he had to do and he thought it would be perfect to actually try it out when he would be most affected by the moon.

Now, he was walking through the hallways looking for the Dark Lord, as there was something important he needed to talk to him about. He headed down to the wing where the Dark Lord was staying. When he got to the door, he knocked three times.

“Enter.”

He opened and walked in and saw the Dark Lord sitting in his chair, Yaxley kneeling in front of him.

“Marvolo,” he bowed. “If I could have a word with you?”

“Yaxley,” Voldemort turned to the man. “You are dismissed.”

“Yes My Lord,” Yaxley stood up shakily and bowed before leaving the room.

“Now Harry,” Voldemort turned back to the teen. “What is it you need to speak with me about?”

“The prophecy,” Harry said.

“What about it?” Voldemort sat up straighter and narrowed his eyes at Harry before he gestured to the chair. “Sit.”

“Thanks. I think Marvolo,” Harry continued as he took the offered seat, “that we do not have to
worry about either of us killing each other anytime soon, due to it.”

“Explain,” Voldemort said.

“The prophecy said that you vanquisher will be born as the seventh month dies, right?” Harry said. “What everyone failed to see was that no one had any way of being sure if it even referred to me.”

“How do you figure that?” Voldemort asked.

“The prophecy never gave a specific year,” Harry said. “It just so happened that two boys had been born that could fit it; if I recall, the prophecy was made after I was born, so they assumed that because I was born at the end of July, it meant I was the one to vanquish you.”

“Interesting,” Voldemort’s brows furrowed as he thought on what Harry had just said. “That is not all you have to tell me, is there?”

No,” Harry shook his head. “I’ve gone over the prophecy in my head and when I did, I figured out something.”

“What is it?”

“The prophecy is no longer in work,” Harry said.

“How?” Voldemort raised an eyebrow even as he leaned forward slightly.

“Earlier I said that we no longer have to worry about us killing each other,” Harry explained. “I was right; the reason being, the prophecy is already fulfilled.”

“What?” Voldemort could not keep the shock out of his voice.

“The prophecy said ‘…either must die at the hands of the other, for neither can live while the other survive…’; the way I see it, live and survive have two different meanings. You cast the killing curse on me, but I survived. Here we have the condition ‘die at the hand of the other’ described. The deadly curse was rebounded on you and you lost your powers, but didn’t die either. We both didn’t really die or live the next ten years, merely survived; you were a spirit drifting around Merlin knows where, I believe in Albania like Dumbledore said; while I was locked up at the Dursleys; hated, despised, neglected, starved, until I managed to instill fear in them.” Harry took a deep breath, looking somberly into Voldemort’s red eyes.

“Back in my second year, when I killed the Basilisk in the Chamber of Secrets, I met a young man, a Slytherin student named Tom,” Harry explained. “He told me that he was the past, present and future of you.”

“Impossible!” Voldemort stared at Harry, his face frozen in shock.

Harry continued, “He also said that he needed Ginny to die in order for him to live; in essence, he was merely surviving. I couldn’t live while the younger you survived, if that required my friends little sister murdered. Besides, he tried to kill me, so I killed him to survive myself.”

“The Chamber of Secrets?” Voldemort asked agitated. “You found it in your second year? It took me until my fifth year to manage that.”

“Yeah, the younger you mentioned that,” Harry nodded. “And like I said, I had to kill him and the Basilisk, which I truly didn’t want to do.”
Voldemort took a few deep breaths to reign in his confusion and mounting fury and then asked, “Do elaborate, Potter. Your story is completely inconceivable. You said that you met my younger self down there; you talked to him and then killed him and the Basilisk. Was my younger self really alive? Did you duel? Do you know why Tom was in the Chamber at all? How did he look? Was he corporal, could he touch you or this girl?”

Harry was wary of the anger burning in the eyes of the Dark Lord.

“Yes, I know, it sounds incredible, but it’s all true. See, during my second year, there were several attacks in the school, some muggleborns and a ghost got petrified. There was a message painted on a wall at Halloween, ‘The Chamber of Secrets has been opened. Enemies of the heir beware.’ Several times during that fall and winter I had heard a voice, a body less voice, saying cruel things, but nobody else could hear it, so I didn’t tell a teacher or Dumbledore about it,” said Harry.

Voldemort smirked. “Wise move, to keep that quiet. Did you tell your friends?”

Harry nodded, “Only Granger and Weasley, I told nobody else and they didn’t either. With more attacks, the students panicked, the teachers were helpless. There were rumours of course, about the legend of Slytherin’s Chamber of Secrets, a monster within and that the Chamber had been opened fifty years ago. We heard that from Draco Malfoy actually, but he said his dad refused to tell him more. We had thought that Draco was the heir, but he denied it vehemently. Said he didn’t know who it was; but that he would like to help the heir cleanse the school of the mudbloods.”

“Did he now? Interesting that Lucius didn’t tell him anything,” Voldemort mused. “Go on, Potter.”

“In December nearly everybody thought that I was the Heir of Slytherin and responsible for the attacks, because they found out I could talk to snakes. Those hypocritical idiots! One moment I was their Saviour, the Boy-Who-Lived, the next moment a deranged, murderous dark wizard, who attacked muggleborns!” Harry fumed.

Voldemort smirked.

“It took my friends and me until the end of May to figure it out,” Harry continued. “At first we thought that the monster was a giant spider, because diary Tom showed me a memory of him catching Hagrid fifty years ago.”

At this, Voldemort looked very interested. “Wait a moment, how did you come by my diary?”

“Oh, sorry, I didn’t mention that before? Well, end of January 1993 I found a little, thin black book, soaking wet, in Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom, that’s the first floor girl’s bathroom.”

Voldemort’s eyebrows rose up. “Indeed?”

“Yes, well I found this book, this journal of sorts, from 1942. On the first page was a name, T. M. Riddle. I took it because I hoped it could explain what was going on, that the previous owner had written something about the Chamber of Secrets. We thought this because fifty years ago the Chamber was opened the first time. But, the book seemed empty, the pages were blank.”

Harry smiled, and chuckled, “Ron remembered that name, T. M. Riddle; because he had had detention with Filch, polishing all those award shields and goblets in the trophy room. Ron said there was a T.M. Riddle award there, for special services to the school, fifty years ago. We speculated it might have something to do with the Chamber of Secrets. We discovered that Riddle had been Prefect and Head Boy.

“I didn’t discover until Valentine’s Day, that when the ink was absorbed into the pages, the diary
could write back. Well, not the diary itself, but the person trapped inside, Tom Riddle. He said he was a memory, preserved in his diary. He somehow pulled me into the diary and showed me his memories about talking to the headmaster, Professor Dippet. I was so intrigued. Tom looked so good, about sixteen, very tall, pale skin, jet-black hair and dark eyes, clothed in an elegant Slytherin school robe. He was a Prefect, calm, polite, charming, handsome. He looked similar to me, only older and much better. He had a similar childhood, at a bloody muggle orphanage. He did not want to go back there, a wish I really could understand.”

Voldemort’s eyes widened. “He told you that?”

Harry looked at Voldemort, blushing. “Yes, he kind of did, he let me see this memory. This is so wired, you are him, but so different. Anyway, after talking to Dippet, Tom left the office. Dippet had asked him the same question Dumbledore always asks me, if he ‘had to tell him anything.’”

Harry snorted and continued, “So memory Tom went down to the dungeons, hid and waited a very long time, until Hagrid showed up. He followed Hagrid to a cupboard door, where Hagrid let out the spider. Tom confronted him, said that it must end, that a girl had been killed, that the school would be closed if the culprit wasn’t found and that monsters didn’t make good pets. The spider ran away and I was thrown back out of the memory back into my dormitory. Whew. That diary was something, seriously wicked magic, Tom was so smart...” Harry blushed and smiled at Voldemort.

“You seem to have admired my younger self,” Voldemort commented.

“Yeah, I did at that time,” Harry answered and then said with a sad look, “I’m so sorry about what happened later, but I didn’t have a choice.”

“Killing the Basilisk and diary Tom, as you said? How did that happen? Where is the diary now?” Voldemort asked.

Harry sighed. “I’ll tell you in a moment, I’m getting there. So, after Valentine’s Day, I and my friends thought that the mystery was solved, that Hagrid was somehow responsible, although we did not want to believe this. I thought Tom was a friend, that he had told the truth. For a while, there were no more attacks. Then someone broke into my dorm and ransacked my things, everything was turned upside down. The diary was stolen, nothing else. Very strange. Sometime later, there was a new attack.

“A muggleborn, my former friend Granger and an older pureblood girl, a Ravenclaw Prefect, were petrified; now not only the muggleborns and halfbloods where in terror, but the purebloods too. They had thought themselves safe up to now. Fifty years ago, Hagrid was expelled, his wand broken; this time he was arrested by Minister Fudge and locked up in Azkaban as a scapegoat. They had no proof that Hagrid was responsible for the attacks, but it was so easy to blame him. At the same time Headmaster Dumbledore was suspended by the governors, led by Lucius Malfoy.”

Voldemort looked bemused, but still a bit impatiently. “Well, that is no surprise. But who stole the diary from you, did you find it again? What happened next?”

Harry sighed, again. “You know, the mood in the castle was really depressed. What should we do? Granger lay petrified on a hospital bed. Now, Hagrid had given Ron and me a last minute hint, to look for spiders. Foolish, stupid, brave Gryffindors, we did look for spiders. They seemed to flee from the castle. One night, we followed them into the Forbidden Forrest,” Harry’s voice trailed off.

“Oh no,” Voldemort groaned, “you two, twelve year old boys, did not wander around the Forbidden Forrest at night. Haven’t you learned anything from your first year, when I nearly managed to kill you?”
“Oh yes, we did,” Harry answered. “Well, you can perhaps imagine what happened. We found the spiders, all right, big, giant, hungry Acromantulas. They caught us and brought us into their lair. There we met Aragog, the largest, oldest Acromantula, he is that same spider Hagrid had in that cupboard fifty years ago. He talked to us and explained some things.”

Voldemort looked at Harry and pinched the bridge of his nose, then shook his head in wonder. “How is it you are still alive? You should have died in that forest, you should have died ten times over with all your near death escapades. Your incredible luck must be that power I know not…”

Harry chuckled, “Yes, that might be it. Anyway, Weasley and I escaped back to the castle, with new information. Hagrid was not the culprit, Aragog was not the monster from the Chamber of Secrets, but we still didn’t know who was responsible. We visited Granger again and inspected her more closely than before. Her hand clutched at a scrap of paper with notes from a book. After reading it everything made sense, we had enough clues now.

“There was a giant snake, a Basilisk moving inside the pipes in the walls. It could kill with a look, but all the people petrified had seen it not directly, but through a reflection like from water, a camera, a ghost or a mirror, like Granger. The entrance to the Chamber is in a bathroom of all places, the first floor girl’s bathroom, haunted by Moaning Myrtle. She was that student who was killed fifty years ago. But well, you do know all of this,” Harry said, looking intently at Voldemort, who raised an eyebrow.

“Well, what do you expect, my guilty conscience emerging? I do not regret my actions. Please, Myrtle was an irritating, snoopy mudblood nuisance, nothing more.”

“ Myrtle is so crass, but she did help us to put the clues together,” Harry muttered, lost in thought and looking to the side.

Voldemort made no comment, but waved his hand to indicate that Harry should continue.

“We were just about to approach the teachers and try to convince them that the monster was a Basilisk, when Ginny disappeared. There was a new message: ‘Her skeleton will rot in the Chamber forever’ or something like this. McGonagall said they now had to close the school after a student died and sent everybody to their dorms.” Harry pulled at his hair in agitation.

“You know, I was so desperate, I did not want to lose my only home, Hogwarts, and have to stay permanently at the Dursleys, if I could avoid it. Just the same as young Tom felt all those years ago, do you remember?”

Voldemort scowled, but nodded.

“So I, like the good little Gryffindor hero I was, or was pretending to be, decided to save Ginny myself. I went to Myrtle’s bathroom, opened the sink, and slid down to the Chamber with Weasley and Lockhart as backup. He was our DADA teacher, a total fraud, a big mouthed fool with nothing behind it. He had no idea what really was going on. We had to force him along, he wanted to run away, especially after we found a huge, dry snake skin. While we were searching for the entrance to the Chamber, Lockhart attacked us, the roof of the tunnel caved in, he lost his memory and I went on alone. Weasley and Lockhart stayed behind the rubble.”

Harry paused to catch his breath, this retelling of deeply buried events and emotions did strain him, his long forgotten fears and frustration bubbling up again. He was worried as to how Voldemort was going to react when he learned just how Harry had killed his younger self?

“Of course you went on alone, walking head on into mortal danger. What did you think you could
do, a child against a Basilisk? Didn’t you have any self-preservation?” Voldemort commented.

Harry shrugged and smiled. “Yes, that’s what I did, going in against all odds, typical Harry Potter. Granger it my ‘People saving thing’ in fifth year. The same pattern over and over again. Oh well, back then I really wanted to find Ginny and discover the Chamber, do what nobody else dared or was able to do, because I really wanted to stop the attacks so Hogwarts would stay open,” Harry huffed exasperated. “I didn’t want to play the hero for the sake of fame and glory, you know?”

Voldemort nodded again and leaned back, listening intently to Harry’s tale.

“I finally found the doors to the Chamber. They opened with the same word, just {Open}, very easy. There Ginny was lying on the wet floor, ice cold, barely alive. The diary lay beside her. Suddenly, there stood Tom. He looked just like in the memory, about sixteen, tall, handsome, pale skin, dark hair and eyes, clothed in a Slytherin school robe and uniform. He was more solid than any ghost I had seen before, a bit blurry, growing more corporal by the minute.”

“We talked. He told me all about Ginny. She had written in the diary for months, poured all her soul into it, told him of her crush on me and all of her stupid little girl’s troubles. Tom had listened patiently and somehow grown stronger, until he gained control of her over time. He said he poured a little bit of his soul into her, fed her a bit of his secrets,” Harry recounted the conversation.

Voldemort stared at him alarmed.

Harry spoke softly, lost in his memories, “Ginny had killed Hagrid’s roosters, opened the Chamber, set the Basilisk on people, and smeared the messages on the walls. Ginny had panicked and thrown the diary away. I found it. She stole it back, because she was so afraid Tom would tell me her secrets. Now Tom had forced her to go down into the Chamber, he was slowly draining her, so he could live again.

“That was quite a shock... Tom was not a friendly guy at all, not like he was in the diary; he was ruthless and had used an eleven year old girl to gain power and to attack the muggleborns. Well, I could understand that after fifty years trapped inside the diary, he wanted out again,” Harry muttered under his breath. “Who wouldn’t?”

He shook his head before continuing. “Tom pointed out how similar we were: Both halfbloods, orphans, raised by disgusting muggles. That Lord Voldemort was his past, present and future, his name an anagram of Tom Marvolo Riddle. He ranted about his muggle father, who abandoned his mother because she was a witch.

“Then he said something peculiar, that he had wanted to meet me for a long time, to ask about why I survived. How could a baby like me destroy the Dark Lord, the greatest dark wizard of all time? I had no clue. I told him what Dumbledore said, that I survived because of something my mother did, that she died for me, my common muggleborn mother,” Harry explained. “I foolishly said something about Dumbledore being the greatest wizard.”

Harry chuckled ruefully and brushed his mop of hair back, grinning sheepishly. At Voldemort’s incredulous look, a faint blush crept over his cheeks. “Yes, well I was only twelve, and since I was playing the part, I was quite the brave, stupid Gryffindor dunderhead; that was not very clever of me to defy Tom like this. My Slytherin side was underdeveloped back then.

“Suddenly Fawkes, Dumbledore’s phoenix, turned up. He brought me the Sorting Hat. Tom laughed at me and then got angry, he called the Basilisk forth in Parseltongue out of Salazar’s statue and set it upon me. I thought I was a goner.”
Harry shuddered, remembering his frantic scrambling away, eyes closed, the deadly giant serpent attacking him. “My only weapon was the Sorting Hat, with Gryffindors sword inside; then Fawkes attacked its head, blinding the Basilisk. Tom screamed in rage. With the sword I fought the Basilisk and killed it. It bit me in the arm during our fight. I fell down, in horrible pain from the venom; I was so weak, everything blurred, went cold and dark, I was sure I was dying. Then Fawkes flew over to me and cried on the wound, healing it.”

Voldemort stared at him, fascinated by the account.

Harry looked intently back at him. “Tom was astounded. He couldn’t believe it. He had thought he would win, that the Basilisk would easily kill me. He thought the venom was killing me for sure. When I struggled to sit up again, he said it was ok, only him and me to fight to the end. He pointed my wand at me. I saw it in his eyes, he still wanted me dead. He was ready to curse me. Fawkes swooped over and dropped the diary into my hands.

“I, I ... had no choice. It was him or me. I picked up the broken Basilisk fang that had stuck in my arm and – I stabbed the diary right through the middle. It seemed to burn the book, ink poured out. Tom screamed, so horrible. Gods. It was terrible. He started to write and twist, then he dissolved. Black ink poured out of the diary like rivers of blood. Then he was gone.” Harry concluded his tale, trembling, breathing fast. He had repressed the memories of how painful and terrible this ordeal had been.

“I killed him. I’m sorry, I had no choice, I had to fight for my life. “ Harry finished in a whisper, despair in his eyes that were locked with Voldemort’s, who was now glaring burning daggers at the young man.

“So, the diary isss dessstroyed?” Voldemort pressed out, his whole body taunt as a bow, his voice taking on a hissing quality.

“Yes, there was no magic left, it was pierced right through the covers from side to side and looked burned,” Harry answered.

“Where isss it now?” snapped the Dark Lord.

“Oh, I don’t know, I think in Dumbledore’s office... I’ll try to remember...”

“You ssshowed the diary to Dumbledore!?” Voldemort exclaimed, jumping up. “You told him what happened in the Chamber? About my younger ssself?” he asked urgently, grabbing Harry at the front of his robes, pulling the boy to his feet.

“Err, sorry, yes sir, I did?” Harry answered uneasily, worried by this uncharacteristic show of emotion from Voldemort. His scar burned, the man must be so furious.

Harry hurriedly explained, “After Tom was gone, Ginny woke up, we went back through the tunnels to Ron and Lockhart. Fawkes carried us all up to the bathroom again. We followed Fawkes to McGonagall’s office, where McGonagall and Dumbledore were waiting with the Weasley family. I had taken the Sorting Hat, the sword and the diary along and put everything on McGonagall’s desk; then Ron and I had to tell everyone what happened and how we figured out that the monster in the Chamber was a Basilisk.

“Dumbledore told the Weasley family that Ginny had been enchanted by Lord Voldemort. He told the whole room that your real name was Tom Riddle, that you were the most brilliant student Hogwarts has ever seen. Ginny confessed that she wrote in the diary and that it did write back. I think ... Dumbledore kept it after everybody was gone...” Harry trailed off quietly, shaking in fear,
because he could feel Voldemort’s rage ripping open his scar. His head ached fiercely.

Voldemort pushed Harry down to his knees with surprising strength and drew his wand with the other hand, towering over the teen, his face twisted in rage, his dark power swirling around him like a thunderstorm, pressing down on Harry.

Harry’s face scrunched up in pain, his scar split open, blood dripped over his forehead, tears pooling in his emerald eyes. He pressed his eyes and lips shut, awaiting the Crucio to start.

“Potter,” Voldemort viciously spat out the name. “You cost me something very dear, immensely valuable, and irreplaceable. Revealing this knowledge to Dumbledore and actually destroying my H...,” he cut himself off, hissing, \textit{[Crucio.]}

Terrible pain shot through Harry, his bones were on fire, and thousand knives pierced his body, every muscle cramped. He crumbled to the floor, curling up in the fetal position. He tried to relax, concentrating on his breathing to let the pain flow through him – the best tactic according to Severus to deal with this agony. Harry gnashed his teeth, biting through his lower lip, trying to keep his screams inside as long as he could. Fuck, this curse was pure hot pain, he didn’t think he would ever get used to it. And in Parseltongue it was worse than ever.

Voldemort stopped the curse abruptly. Harry was panting and trembling at his feet. He struggled to push himself up to kneel, trying not to show weakness in front of the Dark Lord.

Harry shuddered; he opened his eyes, blinked away the tears and stared up again at the tall serpentine man, his mouth suddenly dry, not daring to say anything. Merlin’s bloody balls, he didn’t know that old diary had been so dear to the Dark Lord. Why was it so valuable? No matter, better not to ask and tick him off again. Harry had always been brave, but he had seldom felt so near almost certain death before, well maybe that night in the graveyard...

Voldemort heaved a few deep breaths, visibly trying to gain control over his emotions and his turbulent magic again. He stared into Harry’s eyes, whispering \textit{“Legilimens.”}

Harry, feeling the forceful intrusion, lowered his shields at once. He felt him riffling through the memories at the forefront of Harry’s mind. Sharp pain throbbed at Harry’s temples. Slowly the swirling dark magic pulled back. Voldemort’s face smoothed again to his normal indifferent mask. His wand hand still trembled, the knuckles white from clenching the wand so hard, pointing it down at Harry’s heart.

After a minute of silence, Voldemort spoke: “Yes, you did not know better, you were a child. You did not keep this information from me on purpose. Therefore, I will be lenient with your punishment.” He pocketed his wand.

“Don’t talk to anybody else without my permission about what happened in the Chamber of Secrets, my former name, childhood or ancestry,” Voldemort spoke sternly. “Do not reveal the importance of my diary, not many people alive know of its existence. A shame it is too late now to obliviate everybody who was present that day in McGonagall’s office. Try to distract Dumbledore or other people if the subject should ever come up. Take note if any other Order members let slip that they have been informed about these events.”

Harry swallowed around the lump in his throat and asked quietly, “Please, sir, may I speak?”

Voldemort nodded.

“I don’t think so, my Lord,” explained Harry. “Nobody from the teachers or the Order asked me
after second year where the Chamber was or what actually happened. There were rumours around
the school of course, but Dumbledore kept everything under wraps. I would say the students of our
defence club from last year know that I killed the Basilisk. At our first meeting it came up, a student
named Terry Boot asked me if it was true; he said that he was waiting in Dumbledore´s office and
that a portrait told him that I had killed a Basilisk with Gryffindors sword.

“But this is not common knowledge at all, otherwise I think some teacher or reporter would have
said or written something; well it is not every day that a boy kills the king of snakes, isn´t it? Back in
second year, Dumbledore only talked to me a short while after the others had left McGonagall´s
office. I was so confused. I asked him if I would become like Tom, because I could speak
Parseltongue, and because the Sorting Hat wanted me in Slytherin, but I begged it to put me
anywhere else. Dumbledore said I wasn´t like Tom.”

At this, Voldemort blinked a few times in shock.

Harry smiled ruefully, “Yeah, I know, I should have been in Slytherin, well that´s a story for another
chat. After all the ruckus in second year, one would think that Dumbledore would have wanted to
visit the Chamber, but he never asked me for help or talked about this again to me.”

Harry shifted a bit into a more comfortable position and continued, “I think that if he had told for
example Professor Snape, then Severus would have asked me to bring him down to the Chamber as
soon as possible. After all, there is a valuable Basilisk corpse rotting down there. Severus would love
to harvest scales, skin, teeth and such for use as potions ingredients.”

Voldemort thought a moment about what Harry had revealed. “This is a good point, I will consider
telling Severus,” he agreed, then continued in a brisk tone, “Now, if you can manage it without
arousing suspicion, steal the diary from Dumbledore and bring it back to me. Be subtle. Should
Dumbledore ever talk to you about my youth or the diary, or hint that he is interested in any ... other
... old heirlooms or artefacts of mine, be careful and evasive. Try to ascertain if he knows anything
substantial or is only speculating. Report to me anything you discover as soon as possible. Do you
understand, Harry?”

“Yes, my Lord,” Harry answered earnestly, still slightly trembling from the aftershocks. It came
naturally to him to use my Lord in this situation, and not the familiar name Marvolo.

Voldemort looked down upon the young man, who now knelt gracefully with a straight back before
him, head bowed. Harry had taken his punishment well and not argued, pleaded for mercy or
otherwise disgraced himself. He was recovering quickly. That earned his respect.

“Harry, stand up and look at me,” Voldemort said.

“Yes, my Lord?” Harry answered, rising gracefully to his feet and tilting his head back, locking
emerald with ruby eyes. Voldemort slowly brought his hand up, Harry flinched nevertheless, but the
older man only waved his hand over Harry´s face, cleaning up the blood and healing the skin of the
scar and his bitten through lip at the same time with a tingle of gentle magic. Harry breathed out
slowly in relief.

“Tell me one more thing. Do you have any idea how my diary came into the hands of the Weasley
girl?” asked Voldemort.

Harry swallowed again. Oh, this promised a world of pain for somebody else for a change. He could
not lessen the blow, Voldemort would know at once if Harry lied.

“Lucius Malfoy. I am quite sure that Lucius dropped the little book into Ginny´s cauldron full of
second hand books on purpose. That was before the start of the school year, when we were all at Flourish and Botts, buying our school supplies,” Harry answered as short and precise as possible.

He took a step back and lowered his gaze submissively, because Voldemort looked enraged again and Harry’s scar twinge with renewed pain.

“I sssee, so it was dear Luciusss.... I thought as much,” hissed Voldemort, then quickly clamping down on his temper again. “I will question him later. Now Harry, let’s sit down again, you look quite shaken.”

Voldemort summoned a house elf and requested tea and sandwiches for Harry. Harry was glad to get something to drink; his throat was rather dry from talking so much, not to mention the bout of embarrassing screams during his short punishment.

After a few minutes of silence, the Dark Lord addressed Harry again in a calm voice, “You did well to be so open and honest with me. I thank you for your trust and loyalty. Now, you were talking about the prophecy before we became sidetracked. Do continue, please.”

Harry thought a moment about what he had explained so far and said, “Anyways, in my mind, the whole prophecy is null and void for all the reasons mentioned; it is already more than fulfilled. It said I had the power to vanquish you, not that I would really do it. It said that you would mark me. You did mark me with this scar, when you tried to kill me as a baby. We did kill each other in a way that Halloween, but we both survived.

“You got a corporal body back and you live again. I freed myself of the only ‘surviving’, not ‘living’ at the Dursleys and from the pressure of the Wizarding world to be their ‘saviour’, to sacrifice myself without ever really living for the ‘greater good’. We both agreed to stop attacking each other. Now we are actually both living at the same time, in the same place and we don’t have a problem with it. It is not true that we cannot exist at the same time, be both alive and well.

“It never said in the prophecy which Dark Lord would be required to vanquish. Down in the Chamber, memory Tom claimed to be you. He did ‘kill’ me, with the Basilisk. I ‘vanquished’ him,” at this point Harry again mimed quotation marks with his fingers. “I have already done what was needed of me without me or anyone else knowing it.”

Voldemort was quiet as he thought over everything Harry had just said. He had been interested in the prophecy from the moment he had heard of it. He had admitted to himself that the events leading to his near death, him marking Harry with the curse scar, just as the prophecy had foretold, never would have happened if he had not chosen to attack the Potters. Alas, he had.

Now, after he had gained Harry’s allegiance, he had been slightly worried about the prophecy and how it would work out, now that the two of them were on the same side. However, if he understood what Harry was saying, his worries were unfounded.

“I must admit I was slightly worried about it ever since we joined,” Voldemort said at last. “After Severus told me the entire contents due to you, I never really thought much on it. However, when I did, I never looked at it this way. I guess the Old Man never thought of it this way either.”

“I doubt it,” Harry chuckled. “He may be powerful and seemingly all knowing, but as smart as he is, he’s just as oblivious to certain things.”

“True,” Voldemort nodded. “That is one obstacle that has been removed in my path.”

“Yes,” Harry nodded. “If I may ask, what exactly did Yaxley do to cause you to use the Cruciatu...
“Curse on him?”

“How did you know I used the curse on him?” Voldemort raised an eyebrow.

“Through this,” Harry pointed to his scar. “I can tell what you’re feeling, when the emotions are really intense, like anger. Or extreme happiness, like that time in my fifth year, when you broke the LeStranges out of Azkaban. You noticed yourself a few minutes ago, how my scar reacted and that I was in severe pain. Whenever you’ve used the Curse in red hot fury on one of your followers, I’ve always felt it as a headache through our link.”

“I never knew that,” Voldemort murmured. “I never really became aware of our link until your fifth year. That’s when I started sending you those visions because I had needed to know what the prophecy contained.”

Harry was quiet as he remembered that previous school year; because of those visions, he had lost his godfather.

Sensing the directions of his thoughts, Voldemort looked at him. “I suppose you’re angry with me for the demise of your godfather,” he said.

“I was,” Harry shrugged. “You’re not fully to blame, but you still held a part in it; most of the blame went to Dumbledore. While I was upset he was gone, a part of me didn’t mind because his death meant I didn’t have to keep hiding who I was.”

“Explain,” Voldemort said.

“Sirius was my anchor to the light side,” Harry said, “because of him, I was willing to keep my dark side buried. When he died, it was my clutch being released. Without him to ground me, I felt no need to keep to the light.”

“I understand,” Voldemort nodded. “I do believe if I had been in the same situation, I would’ve, with no doubt, reacted the way you did.”

“I believe you would’ve,” Harry smirked.

“How goes things with young Mr. Malfoy?” Voldemort asked.

“Good,” Harry smiled and his eyes lit up with happiness. “They’re going really good. What about you and Severus? Are things moving along with the both of you?”

“Severus is mine,” Voldemort said. “And he knows it, so yes, things are moving along very well and if it wasn’t for Yaxley, things would’ve been even better.”

“What do you mean?” Harry raised an eyebrow. “What did he do?”

“He…interrupted a moment between Severus and me,” Voldemort said.

Harry was quiet and his brows furrowed in slight confusion. Seconds later, his brows cleared and he laughed. “No wonder you cursed him. So, just how far was your…moment?”

Voldemort didn’t say anything, but Harry could see a faint blush on the snake-like face.

“No wonder the Curse was so powerful,” Harry laughed as he shook his head. “It was in Parseltongue wasn’t it? If he had done the same to me, I would’ve done the same to him.”

“He’s lucky it wasn’t the killing curse,” Voldemort scowled and Harry laughed.
“So are you Severus official now or what?” Harry asked. “Or is he just a plaything for you?”

“I should curse you brat,” Voldemort narrowed his eyes at him.

“I know,” Harry nodded. “But, as crazy at it seems, I care about him and I don’t want him to get
hurt. I think after everything’s he’s been through, he deserves some happiness.”

“As I told Severus, I desire no one else but him,” Voldemort said as he sensed the sincerity and
honesty in Harry’s voice. “I’m a Dark Lord; I’m not supposed to feel guilt for cursing a follower, and
yet, I did. A few days before the attack all those years, he and I talked and he told me I should have a
plan in the event that Dumbledore might have planned something. I placed the Cruciatus Curse on
him. When I freed him from it, I was filled with an immense amount of guilt. I have never cursed him
with such force since that night and I never will again.”

“Do you think you could fall in love with him?” Harry asked; he was hesitant to ask the question, as
he wasn’t sure if he would be overstepping his boundaries. “You don’t have to answer if you don’t
want to; I don’t want to overstep any boundaries.”

“If it was anyone else,” Voldemort said. “They would’ve overstepped boundaries and would be
_Crucio’d_ for their impudence. However, I do know of the past between you and Severus and I do
know of how things have progressed between the two of since school has let out.”

“I think…I think I’m coming to see him as a father figure,” Harry said slowly. “Or maybe I already
have.”

“It would not surprise me,” Voldemort nodded.

“You know,” Harry chuckled. “If anyone had told me I’d be sitting here with you, talking like this,
I’d laugh in their face and probably attack them for saying it in the first place.”

“Agreed,” Voldemort said.

~…~

The next few days passed in relative calm. The twins and Harry had spent it going over the financial
details for the store while Snape worked in the lab and Remus read the book thoroughly. Neville, or
rather Cory as he preferred to be called now, spent the time getting to know his parents and uncle
and the Dark Lord spoke with his followers about their assignments.

Tonight was the night of the full moon and Remus was sitting in his room at Harry’s Manor. He had
finished the book that Harry had given him and in all honesty, he was terrified as to what he was
going to do, but he was willing to do it for Harry.

“You ok?” a voice sounded to his right. He knew who it was as he smelled them before he saw
them. “Remus?”

“I’m ok Harry,” Remus said as he looked up at him.

“Scared about tonight?” Harry asked as he walked over to him.

“A little,” Remus admitted. “But, I’m still going to try it.”

“Ok,” Harry nodded. “I’ll leave you alone to gather your thoughts and whatnot.”

“Alright,” Remus nodded as he stood up. “I’ll see you in the morning cub.”
“Night Remy,” Harry said as he pulled him into a hug.

“Night,” Remus said and he watched as Harry left the room. He sighed as he turned to look out the window. The moon was going to rise soon. “I hope this works.”

He left his room and headed outside. He didn’t want to be anywhere near if things went wrong. He walked past the Quidditch Pitch and headed into the woods. He got to the clearing in the middle and stopped. He looked up at the sky, watching as the moon rose in the sky. He could feel his fear rising in him.

**Don’t fight me. Don’t fight it. Accept it…accept me.**

He listened to the wolf inside of him and for the first time in his life, Remus didn’t fight his transformation; he accepted that it was a part of his life. A growl was released from his throat as he fell to his hands and knees. He felt the clothes tearing from his body as the moon worked her magic on him.

He could feel the change going through his body and he welcomed it. His wolf came forward and instead of allowing himself to be pushed to the back, he merged with it; the man and wolf were finally one.

When it was done, he whined low in his throat as he struggled to his hind legs. His movements were slightly wobbly, before they became stronger and soon, he was standing up right. He lifted his head to the moon and he showed his appreciation and thanks to her; he howled.

He turned his head as a scent wafted to his nose. It was a scent that was familiar to him. A feral grin came on his face and he bounded to where the scent was coming from. As he ran through the trees, he felt a sense of freedom and strength he had never felt before. The scent was getting closer and his pace increased. Before he knew it, he had broken through the woods and was bounding across the pitch. As he was going across, he could feel a pull; it was a strong one and he knew what it was, but the scent he was following was stronger.

He saw the house and stopped just before he reached it. He sniffed the air to pinpoint the scent and his head swivelled to an upper window. He crouched down before pushing off and jumping up the wall. To his luck, the window was open and he went through. The scent was even stronger and when he got his bearings, he saw the source lying on the bed. With a low whine he stalked forward and nuzzled the body.

“Wh-wh-what?” Harry opened his eyes slowly as he felt the push against his side. He was a bit groggy, but when he felt the nudge again, he looked to where it was and his eyes went wide as the sleepiness cleared. He sat up quickly and watched as the wolf moved away.

Harry fell to his knees in front of the wolf and tentatively reached out his hand. “Remus?”

The wolf growled softly as he stepped forward enough for Harry to touch.

“Remy,” Harry breathed even as he ran his hand through the fur. “You should see yourself. Your fur is thicker, darker and coarser. Your body is bigger, Remy, you look amazing. Look for yourself.”

He looked at the mirror on the wall and with a wave of his hand, he brought it to him and enlarged it before placing it in front of the wolf.

The wolf turned to the mirror and took in the reflection staring back at him. Instead of the normal, scrawny wolf, it was a healthier looking one; it had a fuller, thicker and darker coat, the wolf was
bigger, even on all fours, he reached Harry’s head, which would put him about Harry’s waist level if Harry stood up, which, incidentally, he did as he walked over to the wolf.

“Can you stand on your hind legs?” Harry asked. “I’m wondering just how much taller you are.”

The wolf did as was asked and he stood on his hind legs, coming to stand about a foot and a half above Harry’s head. Suddenly, arms wrapped around his body and he felt tears soaking his fur.

“Thank you Remy,” Harry whispered against the wolf’s chest. He pulled back before going back to his bed, suddenly yawning. He sat down on the bed and the wolf went down on all fours before walking over to Harry.

He used his nose and pushed him backwards until he was laying on the bed. Harry turned on his side and looked at the wolf. He yawned again.

“I love you Remy,” he whispered before his eyes closed and he fell asleep.

The wolf walked forward and licked his face before lying down on the floor. He would not go back out, though the pull that felt earlier was calling him; he would stay and watch over his cub.

The next morning, Harry woke up and quickly looked over. He smiled when he saw Remus lying next to his bed in only a pair of tattered pants.

“Remus,” he said softly. “Remus, wake up.”

Remus groaned as he slowly opened his eyes. “Harry?”

“It worked,” Harry’s eyes lit up in happiness as he moved to the floor to grab Remus in a hug. “It worked!”

Remus laughed as he tightened his arms around Harry. He could never remember before, but he remembered what happened last night. He remembered his transformation and the scent that he had caught; the scent of his cub. He remembered how being with Harry was more important than testing out his new form.

“Yes it did,” Remus replied as he pulled back from the hug.

“Now,” Harry smiled. “According to the book, you will be able to transform into the wolf anytime you want; kinda like being an animagus. You’re senses in your human form will be stronger than they were.”

“There’s also something else,” Remus said.

“What is it?” Harry asked.

“I can also feel my mate,” Remus said. At Harry’s look, he explained. “Last night, I felt a pull. It was the pull of my mate, which is something I didn’t feel before. Or rather, I felt it, but it was muted in a sense.”

“Why didn’t you go to it?” Harry asked.

“Because the scent and pull of my cub was stronger,” Remus said. “You were right; a cub is the most important thing to a wolf, or in my case, a werewolf.”

“So,” Harry said. “Do you have any idea who your mate is?”
“Yes,” Remus nodded. “It’s Lucius Malfoy; the pull I felt last night was similar to the one I’ve been getting whenever I’m around him. The difference is, the one last night is stronger.”

“Lucius Malfoy, huh?” Harry chuckled.

“I know,” Remus laughed. “We have our work cut out for us.”

The bedroom was filled with the laughter of the two of them.

~…~

A few days back:

As soon as Harry had left the room, the Dark Lord dropped his impassive mask. He paced around his study, nervous energy, anger and fear consuming him. He was very worried. Nagini was watching him and asked, [What dissstressesss you so much, massster?]

Voldemort glanced in her direction and answered preoccupied, [Hmm? Oh, it is about what Harry revealed to me. In his sseconnd year, he found the Chamber of Sssecretsss in Hogwartss; he killed the king of ssperpentss and dessstroyed a valuable artefact of mine.]

[What? That´sss terrible! Impossssible! How could a mere boy kill the mighty king of ssperpentssss?] Nagini exclaimed in shock.

[Yes, it sounds impossssible, unbelievable, but he did. I looked at hisss memoriesss. Foolisssh boy. He was incredibly lucky to ssurvvive. As a conssquence of Harry´sss adventure, Dumbledore may have gained knowledge about ssome dark magic I did in my youth. This could pose a threat to my immortality,] Voldemort explained to his familiar.

He continued to pace back and forth in front of the windows, rubbing his hands across his head, speaking more to himself then to Nagini.

[Why in SsalaZZZar´sss name did Luciusss dare to ssil my diary to the blood traitor chit? For what purpossse? Does he know what happened at Hogwartssss? He must know something; Harry mentioned that there were rumourssss; however, Luciusss hasss not mentioned anything to me. Traitorousss bastard. I told him to keep the diary ssafe. I ssould have checked as ssoon as I moved into Malfoy Manor. I trusssted Luciusss. I assumed that it was ssstill ssafe, hidden ssomewhere deep in a well-warded place.] muttered Voldemort, quite angry with Lucius and also himself.

He had been so sure that nobody ever would discover or touch his Horcruxes and now this mess!

[Massster that´sss a shame. Luciusss has been trustworthy so far. Did Luciusss or Harry know how much you valued that diary you sspeak of?] asked Nagini.

Voldemort spun around and answered, [Well Harry didn´tt know, how could he? However, Lucius should have known better, I explicitly told him to keep that book safe. It was not his place to touch it. I will question him later.]

‘This is a disaster,’ thought Voldemort. ‘Not so much that Potter destroyed the diary and killed the old Basilisk, which of course is very unfortunate. Much worse is that the old meddling heard how my diary interacted with the Weasley girl and Harry Potter.’

His brows furrowed as his thoughts went on. ‘Does he suspect it was more than only a small book with a memory charm? Yes, he told the Weasleys that Lord Voldemort had possessed their daughter
by means of the diary. Dumbledore could put the clues together. When he does, he will be searching for information on what my younger self learned about soul magic like a niffler searching for gold. After all, I found the initial hint in an old tome in the Restricted Section of the Hogwarts library.’

Voldemort went back to his chair and leaned against the armrest, looking at Nagini while contemplating what Dumbledore could possibly discover about the Horcruxes. He had covered his tracks well, hadn’t he?

Nagini slithered up onto the seat and backrest of the chair and flicked out her tongue, asking, [Massster, doesss anybody elssse know about your sssecret possessions? Could ssssomebody sssteal or dessstroy them?]

{Well, Harry said... never mind. Dumbledore does not know, he only suspects...} Voldemort answered. [I had entrusted two of my artifacts to inner circle members, to Bellatrix and Lucius; Lucius failed me. Bella was always faithful and loyal. I don’t think her vault was compromised; the goblins have a strict honour code and keep customer secrets confidential. My own vault was undisturbed during my absence.]

He stared ahead, lost in thought. ‘The locket should be quite safe, it is very well protected. The ring is another matter. If Dumbledore should find out where the muggle Riddle family once lived, he would come to Little Hangleton. If he snoops around the village, he might notice the wards around Riddle Manor and the old Gaunt shack; in this case he might recognize my magical signature, although I veiled it.’

Voldemort contemplated, absentmindedly caressing Nagini’s warm scaly skin. ‘This would arouse his suspicion and he would intensify his search. I shall do a safety check this evening. The tiara must be still in Hogwarts; I could send Harry to check, I don’t have to tell him what exactly it is... Who else would know anything –

Suddenly a new idea popped up in his mind, a very unwelcome idea. ‘Oh Salazar, if Dumbledore ever corners Slughorn, he could force out his memory about my question concerning more than one Horcrux!’

Voldemort clenched his hands around the backrest, he felt like hitting or casting the Cruciatus Curse on himself. How arrogant and stupid had he been, so sure of his superiority and immortality? Slughorn had feared him, under normal circumstances he would never disclose that he knew who Lord Voldemort once was or what they had talked about fifty years back at Hogwarts. But, he had been absent over ten years. Was it possible that Dumbledore had visited Slughorn after Harry’s second year and before it was public knowledge that he was back indeed? Alternatively, perhaps Dumbledore was searching for Slughorn just in this moment? Improbable, yes, but not altogether impossible.

Voldemort had sent Slughorn a letter some time ago, ordering him to support the Dark. Not as a Death Eater, oh no, the old man was useful in another way. Slughorn sat like a fat spider in the middle of a web of contacts. He was a master at manipulating people, creating opportunities for others. He would have been invaluable to the cause. Slughorn had not answered the letter... very unwise. One does not say no to a request of the Dark Lord.

[I sshould have killed Ssslughorn thirty yearsss ago... foolisssh loyalty, foolisssh sssentimentality. Well, thiss at leassst I can correct,] hissed Voldemort.

He smiled evilly, imagining different ways to kill his old Head of House and the shocked expression on Dumbledore’s face, when he heard of the murder. Should there be a gruesome public message, with a bloody, mutilated corpse, the dark mark hovering over Slughorn’s burning house? On the
other hand, would it not be better to do this stealthy, in secret; let Slughorn simply disappear without a trace?

{You need to get rid of sssomeone? Will he be my dinner, isss he tasssty?} Nagini asked, trying to cheer her master up a bit.

{What? Oh yesss Nagini, the man isss nice and fat, he lovesss to eat candy pineapple, but it will take a little while to hunt him down,} chuckled Voldemort. Yes, this was such a nice mental picture, Slughorn staring at him, pleading for his life, as Nagini pursued him, then coiled around him and crushed his ribs.

So sly and stealthy it would be instead of a public raid. This way Dumbledore might suspect his involvement, but would have no proof.

{Thank you Nagini, thisss helped me,} he spoke softly to the huge snake, bending down to pet her head.

He would question Slughorn of course before his death. If Slughorn hadn´t told Dumbledore anything, he would show mercy, kill him painlessly with the Avada Kedavra out of loyalty to Slytherin house; but if Slughorn had tattled to the Headmaster... then Nagini would have her fun. It was quite boring for a snake to feed on already dead prey after all...

Then Voldemort continued with his pacing and pondering. *Is there anything positive in this situation? Well, Dumbledore so far has not asked Severus about his Dark Arts knowledge concerning soul magic, has he? I must question Severus; he has not mentioned this topic in his report on the old meddler’s activities. Of course, Dumbledore loves to keep his secrets, maybe he doesn’t trust Severus enough?*

‘At least, Dumbledore cannot suspect what my Horcruxes look like or where any are hidden, apart from the ring, if he has watched those memories of Slughorn or found Little Hangleton. Nevertheless, I shall check on all them, and send someone reliable on a mission to find Slughorn. The old man retired when Severus took over his position; since last year, he has been constantly moving and could live anywhere now. Well, he loves his culture comforts and old contacts, he relishes in the feeling of knowing so many important people, and most likely, he has not left Britain. He should not be that hard to hunt down. Hopefully it is not too late. This could be a job for Harry and Hedwig.’

Having come to a decision, Voldemort strode to the door, which sprang open before he reached it, his magic pouring off him like a storm cloud. The house elves in the manor trembled in fear.

~…~

Snape sighed as he gave one final stir of the potion; all it needed was the final ingredient.

“Hedwig?” he called out and the phoenix flashed into the room, coming to land on his shoulder. “Hey girl.”

Hedwig trilled softly before rubbing her head against his.

“I was wondering if I could ask a favour from you,” Snape said.

Hedwig trilled and bobbed her head.

“I’m working on a potion,” Snape explained. “It will help the Dark Lord regain his youthful appearance. However, it requires a final ingredient and it is one that I do not have; but you do. If you
do not mind, all I require is two drops of phoenix tears.”

Hedwig trilled before rising off of Snape’s shoulder and hovering over the potion. She tilted her head to the side and allowed two teardrops to fall in. The potion glowed from its dark purple colour to a light green.

Hedwig trilled before moving back to Snape’s shoulder.

“Thank you,” Snape said as he reached up a hand to rub her head. All that was needed was to let the potion sit for thirty minutes. He spent the time cleaning up the mess he had made and putting away the ingredients he had used. When he was done, he turned back to the potion and saw that it was ready. He poured into two bottles, placing one in his robes and holding the other in front of him.

“Well,” he said to Hedwig who had moved from his shoulder to the table. “Bottoms up.”

He downed the potion in one gulp and placed the empty bottle on the table. It took a few minutes before the potion would and it was a tense few minutes for him. Soon, he felt it start working and he closed his eyes as he felt the effects.

Minutes later, he opened his eyes and looked at Hedwig. “Well? What do you think?”

She trilled excitedly, letting out waves of magic, which he felt drift over him. He transfigured one of the quills into a mirror and picked it up. He couldn’t contain the gasp that escaped his lips as he saw his reflection.

“It worked,” he breathed. He looked over at Hedwig. “Thank you girl.”

She trilled.

“Could you please take me to Malfoy Manor?” he asked. “I need to speak with the Dark Lord, so could you please take me to just outside his doors?”

She trilled before coming over to land on his shoulder and the two disappeared in a flash of fire.

The two appeared in the Manor, just outside of the Dark Lord’s chambers.

“Thank you Hedwig,” Snape murmured. She trilled before she flashed out. Snape took a deep breath before he knocked on the door three times.

“Enter.”

He opened the door and walked in. He saw that the Dark Lord was sitting in a chair next to the fire.

“My Lord,” Snape bowed.

Voldemort looked up and couldn’t stop the gasp from escaping his lips as he looked at his potions master. He stood up and walked over to him. “Severus?”

“Yes my Lord,” Snape nodded. “It’s me.”

“How is this possible?” Voldemort asked as his eyes travelled over the body.

“A potion my Lord,” Snape said. “One that I was working on. I found it in one of the books from Harry’s library. He found a spell to copy and translate the book into another language and he translated it into English and gave it to me. Inside, it contained a potion that would restore the youthful appearance of the drinker.”
“Severus,” Voldemort started.

“I wanted to give something to you,” Snape continued. “I spent the last few days working on it and finished it just over thirty minutes ago. However, as I was not completely sure it would work, I tested it on myself to ensure no harm could come to you.”

“You did that without knowing what could possibly happen?” Voldemort demanded from him.

“Yes my Lord,” Snape nodded. “You are our Lord and I was not about to give you a potion that would be detrimental to your health.”

“I see,” Voldemort nodded, though he couldn’t seem to keep his eyes off of Snape’s new face or body.

“I saved a vial for you in the case that it did work,” Snape said as he removed the bottle from his robes and held it out to his Lord.

“I trust you Severus,” Voldemort said as he took the bottle. He drank it and waited patiently. Soon, he felt the effects and as Snape did, his eyes closed. He opened them when he heard Snape gasp.

“My Lord,” Snape’s voice had turned husky as he took in the new appearance of the Dark Lord.
Consequences Part One

Chapter by mykkila09

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Harry Potter and all its affiliates belong to JK Rowling, Bloomsbury/Scholastic and Warner Bros. Studios. No copyright or trademark infringement is intended and no money is being made from this.

My disclaimer: If I owned Harry Potter; Ginny would’ve died in the CoS, Harry would’ve broken free of Dumbledore’s manipulations and Molly’s overbearing, Sirius wouldn’t have died, Hermione never would’ve dated Ron, Harry would’ve ditched Ron in fourth year, and most importantly, there’d be lots and lots of Harry/Draco slash.

"Talking"
‘Thinking’
Letter or commentary/introduction
{Parsssel tongue}

Last time on RDA:

"A potion my Lord," Snape said, "one that I was working on. I found it in one of the books from Harry's library. He found a spell to copy and translate the book into another language and he translated it into English and gave it to me. Inside, it contained a potion that would restore the youthful appearance of the drinker."

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"My Lord," Snape's voice had turned husky as he took in the new appearance of the Dark Lord.

(This scene happens on the same day and night as the first full moon)
Snape looked at the Dark Lord and couldn't stop his mouth from dropping open in shock or his eyes from travelling the entire body of the Dark Lord. Snape could feel the waves of power rolling through the room that told him the Dark Lord was very agitated, but he paid it no mind as his mind couldn't focus on anything but the Dark Lord's new looks.

He started at the top; he saw that where there was a bald head, Voldemort's head was now filled with thick, dark locks. His nose was no longer just a slit on his face, but was now an actual nose. His lips were now full and slightly bow-shaped. The most shocking about his face though, were his eyes. They were dark brown, almost black, but they had a ring of red around the irises.

Snape's eyes travelled from Voldemort's face down his body. His eyes took in the broad and fuller shoulders, his arms were no longer slim but muscled. From what he could see of the Dark Lord's chest, it was muscled as well. His eyes drifted back up to the Dark Lord's face and Snape couldn't help the tiny moan that escaped his lips when he saw the storm of lust in his master's eyes nor could he help it when he wet his lips with his tongue.

Voldemort stood still and allowed Snape to look his fill even as he did the same. His eyes travelled his follower's body and he felt an appreciation build inside at the new body. He had desired Snape before, but now, his desire had increased exponentially. He felt it rise inside of him and as Snape's eyes made their way back to his, he allowed his lust in its entirety show in his eyes. His magic was barely controlled due to the events of the last few days, and the ocean of lust that was rising between the two of them was threatening it. It shattered when he heard Snape moan and saw the tongue sneaked out to trail over his lips.

With a feral growl, Voldemort yanked Snape's body towards him and claimed his lips in a harsh kiss. As his lust spiralled out of control, so did his magic. Its power licked at his skin.

Snape moaned the moment Voldemort touched him. As his lips were claimed, his hands frantically tore at his Lord's clothes, desperate to touch his skin. His hand slipped into Voldemort's trousers and wrapped around his cock; it caused Voldemort to bite his lips and he moaned.

"My Lord," he moaned as he pulled his lips away. He threw his head back, allowing Voldemort to bite and suck at his neck. "Merlin."

"Marvolo," Voldemort said as he moved back to Snape's lips. "You'll be screaming that name soon enough." His hands moved over Snape's body, cupping his ass and lifting him in the air, allowing Snape to wrap his legs around him. He moved to the bed and cast a Locking and Silencing Charm at the door. He would have no interruptions.

Snape wrapped his arms around Voldemort's neck and kissed back feverishly. He tore at his master's clothes, needing them off. As if sensing it, Voldemort waved his hand and banished both of their clothes. The skin on skin contact pulled moans from both. Snape's legs widened automatically, and Voldemort settled between them.

"M-Marvolo," Snape moaned out as he grinded against him. His cock was rock hard and the feel of Voldemort's cock against his own was wreaking havoc on his body. Pre-cum was already leaking, slicking the two cocks and he knew he would not last long.

"Severus," Voldemort groaned as he rutted against him. The feelings and passion were so intense and he relished in it. He felt the leaking cock against his own and he couldn't wait. Casting a Cleansing, Lubrication and Stretching Charm, he grabbed Snape's legs in his hands before lining his cock at Snape's entrance. He looked at him and when he caught Snape's eyes, he pushed inside with
a few shallow thrusts.

"Oh fuck," Snape threw his head back when he felt the thrust. It hurt, he was so not used to this, but the pleasure would make up for the pain. He could feel Voldemort's balls resting against his ass and he clenched around the cock in him. "Fuck…feels…so…good."

"So hot…so fucking tight," Voldemort groaned as he felt Snape's muscles clench down on him. He pulled back until it was only the tip of his cock inside, before he slammed back in. "Sweet Salazar..." He couldn't stop himself even if he tried. His thrusts were hard and fast as he fucked Snape. "Touch me."

Snape's hands travelled over Voldemort's body before he stopped on his ass. He gripped the cheeks as he arched his back, pushing himself into Voldemort's erratic thrusts. "Harder my Lord…fuck me harder."

Voldemort snarled and grabbed Snape's leg, shifting them from his waist to his shoulders. The new angle sent him deeper and his cock slammed directly into Snape's prostate.

Snape's back arched as he gripped Voldemort's arms. "Right there…moan…you feel…gaspso…good…so…big. Faster…harder…fuck me my Lord."

Voldemort's grip on his legs tightened. As he fucked him, images flashed through his mind; Hogwarts at Little Hangleton…the cave where his locket was supposed to be…Cornelius' refusal…the rush of pleasure while slaughtering Vance and Bones...hovering high above the Thames in the middle of the night, the breathtaking view of the mighty river and the lights of the bridge illumination and industrial complexes far below him...the impressive crash as the bridge snapped in two...the screams and cars honking...he was flying over the river at top speed towards London, drunk on exhilarating power...

He snarled as he fucked Snape harder. His pace increased and it was hard and fast, bordering on painful, but neither minded. The pleasure coursing through their bodies overrode anything else. Voldemort's magic was thick in the air as it moved all around them, tingling on their skin, gushing through the room.

Snape could feel the explosion building inside of him as his balls tightened up and his cock swelled even more. His hand was shaky as it moved between their bodies to grab hold of his own cock. He moaned when he touched himself, and started fisting his cock.

Voldemort looked down at the moan and his eyes darkened even further when he saw what Snape was doing. "Touch yourself...fuck your hand while I fuck this hot, tight ass of yours."

"I…ugh…" Snape cut himself off as his thumb drifted over the slit in his cock.

Voldemort knew Snape was close, so he leaned down and kissed him before pulling back. He knew what he needed. (Ssso beautiful; the heat around my cock is sssso hot...like molten lava...fuck…you like thiss don’t you? Like my cock fucking thisss ssssweet asss of yoursss)

The moment his Lord started hissing, Snape knew he was gone. He had no idea what he was saying, but it was too much for him.

"Marvolo!" he screamed as his orgasm rushed though him. His body went taut as his back arched off the bed and he clenched down around Voldemort's cock as jets of cum burst from his cock and coated both their chests.

Voldemort couldn't help it; the tight heat around his cock got tighter and with one last thrust, he
yelled Snape's name as his own orgasm was pulled from him and he coated Snape's inner walls with his cum.

Snape's legs moved from his shoulders to his waist and Voldemort fell against him. He stayed there for a few seconds, before he rose a little and slowly pulled out. Snape shivered, and couldn't help the tiny moan of disappointment as he felt him leaving. When Voldemort was out, he fell on his back before turning his head to look at Snape.

"Were you hurt?" he asked. His body was cooling down and he felt his magic reigning in.

Snape shook his head as he looked at him. He had never before felt such pleasure and a light blush covered his cheeks.

Voldemort smiled when he saw it and reached out to pull Snape to him. "Sleep Severus."

Snape, slightly cautious at first, slowly relaxed against Voldemort's chest. Voldemort's arms tightened around him and the two gave themselves over to the call of Morpheus.

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Snape stirred and his brows furrowed as he slowly fought his way to wakefulness. Awake, but eyes closed, he shifted on the bed. He stretched groaning at the slight soreness in his lower back. He froze when he heard a soft chuckle and his eyes flew open, only to connect to the red-brown eyes of the Dark Lord.

"Despite the roughness and cold exterior you portray," Voldemort's voice held amusement, as did his eyes, as he looked at Snape. "You acted remarkably like a cat just now."

"My Lord," Snape started.

"Now, now Severus," Voldemort smiled and with his new human face, it was very captivating and Snape inhaled softly at it. "With everything that has passed between us last night, you need not be so formal, especially not in the privacy of my rooms. And I do distinctively remember telling you to call me something."

"Marvolo," Snape said softly as he shifted in the bed. He ignored the pain in his lower body and moved to sit against the headboard and the sheet fell to his waist.

"I suppose now would be the time you got dressed and we joined the others for breakfast," Voldemort murmured as his eyes moved over Snape's chest. "However, as I am quite possessive, I am in no mood to share you with anyone else as of yet, so we will have breakfast here. Tilly."

"Yes master?" the house elf popped into the room.

"We would like some breakfast," Voldemort spoke to the elf, though his eyes never left Snape.

"Yes master," the elf nodded before it popped out of the room. Minutes later, it popped back in with a tray.

"Dismissed," Voldemort said as the elf placed the tray on the table. When the elf popped out of the room, Voldemort got up from the chair and walked over to the table.

Snape summoned his boxers and transfigured them into a pair of comfortable slacks. He moved to his feet to put them on and winced at the persistent soreness he felt in his lower back and ass.
"Here," Voldemort held out a vial to him when he saw the wince that crossed Snape's face.

"Thank you," Snape murmured as he took the vial. He downed it in one go and breathed a sigh of relief when he felt the pain disappear. He summoned his wand and cast a breath freshening charm before he moved to Voldemort's side. The breakfast was split between the two of them and they sat down to eat. Voldemort spoke first, breaking the comfortable silence between the two of them.

"It seems to become a habit to find myself apologizing to you Severus," he said.

"Whatever for?" Snape raised an eyebrow.

"Last night," Voldemort said. "I may have been too harsh during our…activities."

Snape lowered his eyes for a second before he looked back up. He was thankful that when he spoke, his voice was steady. "You have nothing to apologize for. It was... enjoyable. If I'd thought it was too much, I would've asked you to stop. As I remember, I was quite encouraging."

"Yes you were," Voldemort smirked. "However, I will try in the future to not let myself go that way."

"I do not mind," Snape smiled. It was an expression that wasn't used often by him, but it made him appear even more youthful than he already looked. "If I may ask, what had you so agitated?"

"I received disturbing information," Voldemort said after a moment of silence. "It concerned something very valuable to me. There are other objects that are as valuable to me as it was and I needed to be sure no harm had befallen them."

"I understand," Snape nodded; by the way Voldemort spoke, he knew that whatever it was was a secret and he understood that his master would want to keep it to himself.

Voldemort looked at his lover. "What do you know about the Chamber of Secrets?"

"The Chamber of Secrets?" Snape had a look of confusion on his face.

Voldemort nodded.

"Not much," Snape admitted. "During Harry's second year, there was a lot of commotion at the school; students were being petrified and there was a message of some sort about a Chamber being reopened. I know that Harry was involved as he and the Weasley idiot son had decided to try and save the Weasley girl along with that fool Lockhart. Since no one ever really saw, I confess I didn't put any stock into those rumours about the Chamber."

"The Chamber is real Severus," Voldemort said. "I first found it during my fifth year at Hogwarts."

"So it is real," Snape murmured. "And the beast that is supposed to be its host?"

"A Basilisk," Voldemort said. "It was about 40 feet back then. I have no doubt that when Harry found the Chamber back in his second year, it was considerably larger."

"Harry faced a Basilisk and lived to tell the tale?" Snape was shocked.
"Not only did he face it Severus," Voldemort went on. "He fought it and won; Harry killed the Basilisk."

"He was only twelve!" Snape said; he truly couldn't imagine Harry facing such a monster. "If it was about 40 feet when you were there, I'd imagine it was 60 feet or more when he faced it."

"Admire him Severus," Voldemort said. "He fought Salazar's personal snake with only the help of a sword and a phoenix and he did not escape unscathed either; his arm was pierced by the snake's fang as he killed it through its mouth with the sword. And that was only after the phoenix, the Old Fool's personal bird, blinded it. When it was done, he cried over Harry's wound."

"I cannot believe it," Snape murmured.

"I was in quite the state of disbelief myself when he told me," Voldemort chuckled. "I think that is why he has been so lucky in everything he does; the boy has the venom of the deadliest snake as well as the tears of two phoenixes, one which is quite possibly the most powerful of all phoenixes, running through his veins."

"I never thought of it like that," Snape shook his head. "With the Basilisk's venom in his blood, he is immune to all snake bites."

"And since it was his blood I used to regain my body," Voldemort said. "So am I."

"It is too bad about the Basilisk," Snape sighed. "It's been more than three years since Harry faced it, by now the corpse has more than likely rotten away; the potions that I could have created from it."

"Actually Severus," Voldemort shook his head with an amused smile. "The corpse has not rotten away."

"How has it not?" Snape raised an eyebrow.

"The magic in the Chamber left the corpse perfectly preserved," Voldemort explained. "It is as if the snake died just recently. I've already spoken with Harry and he has agreed to take you to the Chamber when school opens."

Snape's eyes went wide with shock and pleasure. He concentrated on finishing breakfast, even as his thoughts drifted to the Basilisk corpse and the potions he could create.

"Severus?" Voldemort spoke, drawing Snape out of his musings.

"Yes Marvolo?" Snape turned to look when he heard his name.

"I have debated whether or not I should confide in you the events of the past few days that I was absent and what Harry and I were talking about," Voldemort explained.

Snape took a breath before he let it out. "I have never felt the way I feel about you about anyone else... not even Lily. It scares me to feel such strong emotions for you. I know that it will take us both time to completely trust each other and as such, I understand that you have secrets from before anything ever happened between us and I respect that."

"I know all that Severus," Voldemort said. "I trust you more than I trust any other follower. And it is why I decided to tell you what I am about to tell you."

"Thank you for trusting me enough to tell me this," Snape said softly as he looked into Voldemort's
"You're welcome," Voldemort murmured. "Now, as you know, after that Halloween attack, I disappeared for a while..."

And so, Voldemort told Snape everything he had spoken to Harry about. It was something he had truly debated with; in the end, he knew that if there was anyone he could trust to keep his secrets, it would be Severus. He also told him about what happened to the past few days. When he was done, they were both silent.

Snape stayed quiet as he thought on everything he has just been told. *He created Horcruxes; that's how he was able to come back... that's why the Dark Mark did not disappear.*

"Severus?" Voldemort called out.

"Give me a moment please," Snape said. "My word; I knew you were powerful, but even this is beyond what I thought you could do... what I thought anyone could do. He paused and looked at Voldemort. Do you know who took the locket?"

"I know who the last person to see it was," Voldemort said. "It was a Death Eater with the initials R.A.B."

Snape's brow furrowed. "Why does that sound so familiar?"

"It should be familiar," Voldemort said.

Snape didn't say anything. His thoughts were running over trying to figure out why the initials sounded so familiar. Seconds later, it came to him. "That's it!" he moved to his feet. "That's why it's so familiar. It has to be him."

Voldemort watched him pace.

"I went to school with Remus Lupin," Snape said. "I was also in the same year as James Potter and Sirius Black. I remember well that Sirius had a younger brother; Regulus Black. He was also in Slytherin, two years below me. He was very young when you marked him, same as I."

"You are right Severus," Voldemort's eyes gleamed with satisfaction at Snape's answer. "It is Regulus."

"I remember hearing about him being declared legally dead years ago," Snape said. "There were rumours amongst us that you had killed him personally for treachery..."

"He is dead, but I didn't kill him myself," Voldemort said. "After I figured out it was him who had taken my locket, I knew that he could not have left the Cave alive. With a simple spell I was able to determine that his body is now one of the *Inferi.*"

"That is a good thing Marvolo," Snape said. "He betrayed you."

"That is true," Voldemort nodded as he stood up as well and started pacing. "But now, I have no idea what has become of the locket."

"I think Harry or Draco can help you there," Snape said. When he saw the look on Voldemort's face, he explained further. "During the will reading, Draco became aware that he now owned Grimmauld Place. Not only was it the Headquarters for the Order of the Phoenix, it is also the Black's Ancestral Home. If Regulus did have an accomplice as you believe, then there is a very good possibility that he..."
had them take it there.

"That is true," Voldemort said. "Very well; I shall send Harry and Draco to Grimmauld Place to locate and retrieve the locket."

Voldemort cast a quick Tempus before he looked at Snape with a smirk. "It appears we have spent the morning talking. It is almost lunch."

"I did not realize," Snape smiled. "However, I suppose we've been so caught up in what we were doing, we never realized."

"I'm going to take a shower," Voldemort said as he headed to the bathroom. When he was a few feet away, he stopped. "Oh and Severus?"

"Yes Marvolo?" Snape looked up at him.

"I require your help in the shower," Voldemort turned to smirk at him.

"Of course," Snape smiled as he went after him.

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Lucius sighed as he sipped his tea. The last few days were tense and not very good for him. He let out another sigh as he remembered his meeting with the Dark Lord. It was one of the worst meetings they had ever held and he had never seen his Lord as angry as he was then.

Flashback

Lucius was sitting in his private study, reading through a tedious business report and sipping on a glass of Sherry; it was already late in the afternoon. The talk he had with his son was on his mind. He knew things with Narcissa were done with, but he also knew he needed to handle the situation carefully. He could not allow Narcissa to gain any ground; it was time she was out of their lives. His thoughts drifted to the one person he truly had feelings for: Remus Lupin. He had feelings for him as far back as their days at Hogwarts, but he had never been able to act upon them. But now, both he and his son finally had the chance to be with the one they really wanted to be with.

"It will be interesting to see how that Parkinson girl reacts to the news," Lucius chuckled to himself. He leaned back in his chair and was about to pick up his quill to make a note on the report when the door to his study opened. He flew to his feet and opened his mouth, ready to cut down whomever it was with a few choice words, only to stop when he recognized the Dark Lord.

His master had been absent all day; he left shortly after talking with Potter in a towering temper. Lucius looked only for a moment at his master, but he noticed that his whole appearance was dishevelled. The fine black trousers, robes and travelling cloak looked rumpled, there was dust and small splashes of mud on the expansive material, his boots were dirty. Very unusual. Did this have to do with Potter?

"My Lord," he bowed.

Voldemort's voice was tight with the effort to control his waves. "I received some shocking information... information which you kept from me."

"My Lord, I'm afraid I do not know that which you speak of," Lucius said, his voice held a small tremble to it. He could feel the power and anger rolling off the Dark Lord; it terrified him.
"I assure you Lucius," Voldemort drawled. "You do. Let me refresh your memory. Before I disappeared fifteen years ago, I entrusted you with something. In 1979, on your twenty-fifth Birthday, I gave you as present my trust to keep something of mine safe."

Lucius' eyes widened slightly as he realized what his master was talking about and he knew that he was in a lot of trouble.

"I see you have recognized just what it is I'm talking about," Voldemort sneered as he clenched his hands into fists.

"My Lord, I—"

"You what, Lucius?" Voldemort cut him off with a snarl. "I entrusted you with that diary and you allow it to fall in the hands of Dumbledore? Do you know just how important the diary was? It was a key to my coming back."

"I didn't know," Lucius said quietly. He never thought he'd regret doing anything, but now he regretted ever slipping the diary into the Weasley girl's cauldron.

"You disobeyed me Lucius," Voldemort said. "The damage you have done is inconceivable. You were never supposed to let it out of your sight and you did and now its power is destroyed and DUMBLEDORE HAS IT? DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT YOU HAVE DONE? At the end, Voldemort's voice had risen to a shout and was overflowing with anger.

"I'm—"

"Crucio," Voldemort snarled.

Lucius screamed as he fell to the floor; the pain that was coursing through his body felt like a thousand hot knives stabbing him all over his body. It was even worse than when he had been held under it back in May after failing to retrieve the prophecy. He was a Malfoy and he prided himself on his control, but he couldn't stop the screams no matter how much he wanted to.

Voldemort kept the curse on the man for a few more minutes before he lifted it.

"My Lord," Lucius panted, ignoring the blood that was seeping out of his nose. "Please... let me explain."

"This had better be good Lucius," Voldemort said.

"I truly am sorry for losing the diary," Lucius said trembling as he tried to get his body and breathing back under control. "I thought I was working for the cause, continuing your work..."

"Continuing my work?" Voldemort sneered. "How was that working for the cause, strengthening the dark side, to give my diary away to a blood traitor brat?"

"You once told me that the diary had the power to cleanse the school of the mudblood filth; that the Chamber of Secrets really existed and had been opened once before, around fifty years ago," Lucius explained. "My father had told me of the same events. He told me that a mudblood was killed and that Rubeus Hagrid was expelled because of his involvement. I wanted to use the diary to get rid of the mudblood students in Hogwarts, to get Arthur Weasley into serious trouble, strip Dumbledore of some of his power, tarnish his reputation, and diminish his supporters." By the time he was done, he had finally managed to kneel and look up at the man radiating anger and dark power above him.
"Arthur Weasley was working on a very muggle friendly Law. I placed the diary within the girl's cauldron when they were at Flourish and Blotts," Lucius continued, his breathing finally slowing down, "hoping that somehow it would make her release the beast that was supposed to be inside the Chamber of Secrets to hunt down the mudbloods in Hogwarts. I thought that if it was revealed that Arthur Weasley's daughter was the one that was creating the havoc within the school, the Law that he was trying to enforce would not go through.

"It created havoc all right; several students were petrified, Dumbledore and the teachers appeared helpless. Dumbledore managed to keep what happened in the school from the press, but the governors heard from me of course and other parents. Fudge was informed which placed Dumbledore and the governors were under pressure from the Minister of Magic to stop this. I convinced Fudge and the other governors that Dumbledore was incapable of dealing with the problem. They actually agreed to remove him from his position as headmaster in May 1993. On the same day, Fudge had Hagrid arrested, because of his reputation and involvement fifty years ago."

Voldemort was quiet as he listened to Lucius' explanation. He reluctantly admitted to himself that the blond's reasoning was valid, but it did not excuse the loss of the diary.

"I truly did not realize nor understand how important the diary was to your regaining of a body," Lucius continued though he was still trembling from the aftershocks. "Had I known, I never would've been so careless as to allow it within Dumbledore's reach."

"I understand your reasoning Lucius," Voldemort said after a moment of time and after reigning in his temper and magic. "It seems like you had hatched out a serious plan. That you did not just act on a whim or fancy. However, I am still very disappointed with you."

"I know my Lord," Lucius said as he bowed his head.

"Did you consider that this splendid idea of yours could have cost you a price you would not be willing to pay?" Voldemort said in a thoughtful voice.


"Draco's life," his master answered.

Lucius eyes widened in shock, his breath hitched in his throat, his already pale face paled to a shade of grey. Utmost panic welled up inside of him. His master would not kill Draco as punishment for losing the diary, or would he? Lucius felt his heart shatter and lost the feeble hold he had on the rest of his composure. He prostrated himself flat on the ground, demonstrating utmost submission, even kissing his masters filthy robe hem and dirty boot. Throwing his pride away, he desperately pleaded for the life of his heir, his only son.

"No, my Lord…not Draco!" Lucius pleaded. "Have mercy! Please spare him! Please, kill me instead! Not Draco, please, master I beg you, please have mercy!"

The Dark Lord watched the shocking display a moment, seeing the proud Malfoy Lord reduced to a state like countless others parents who had pleaded for the life of their child before Voldemort or his Death Eaters. Like an echo, he heard in his mind the words of Harry's mother: "No, not Harry! Take me instead!"

"Lucius, Lucius! Stop this at once. Stand up and look at me!" Voldemort barked to get the blond out of his panic. Lucius snapped his mouth shut at once and dragged himself resignedly to his feet.
Hesitantly he raised his chin to meet the burning gaze of his master, a tear trickling down his face.

Voldemort looked into the grey eyes and easily read the blonds turbulent emotions. His misunderstood remark caused the Malfoy Lord a thousand times more pain and anguish than the Cruciatus ever could. "You know very well, that when I have chosen a punishment, no begging can sway me. It is good to know that your first loyalty is to your family and not to me," Voldemort said cruelly, deftly toying with Lucius emotions.

Lucius let out a growl of despair, casting his eyes down. That was it. When he had thought that he might finally find happiness, get rid of Narcissa, and that Draco had found a worthy lover, everything was destroyed by his own fault.

"My Lord, if you decide to kill Draco for my mistake," Lucius' voice was soft as he spoke, "then please, kill me too. I fear I cannot continue to faithfully serve you. If this is my fate, so be it."

Voldemort smirked, but decided it was enough mental torture. Lucius had not betrayed him on purpose, he only made a grave miscalculation. The Malfoy Lord was a follower of great worth.

"No, Lucius, I did not mean that," Voldemort said. "I will not kill you or Draco, although it would be a fitting punishment. Your actions caused the destruction of something very precious to me, thereby giving Dumbledore a dangerous weapon against me. A life for a life would be a just compensation."

"My Lord, please..." Lucius started again, obviously still not comprehending what his Lord meant.

Voldemort raised up his hand and gripped the man's shoulder, which caused him to flinch in fright, sucking in another breath and biting his lip to keep an exclamation inside.

"Stop Lucius. Calm yourself. You misunderstood. I've already punished you with Crucio and I will punish you with something else," Voldemort said, "however, I will not kill you or your son because of this incident with the diary. I'm angry and disappointed, indeed. Now, if you had betrayed me, if you had given the diary on purpose to Dumbledore then that would be a transgression worthy of excruciating torture and death of yourself and every member of your family. You, Lucius, have made an error, you tried to hide this error from me, but you remain faithful. Do you understand?"

He released his grip and stepped back a pace, giving the man room to breathe and regain his composure. After taking a handkerchief out of a pocket to dab the blood and tears away, and brushing the tousled white-blond hair out of his face, Lucius straightened his back and finally looked warily at Voldemort with his usual arrogant, impassive Slytherin mask nearly back in place.

"Now Lucius, let's try this again as you have misunderstood me about Draco," Voldemort explained patiently. "I did not mean what you thought when I remarked that his life was in danger; what I meant was, your actions could have caused Draco's death."

Lucius was confused. "How had the Weasley girl opening the chamber endangered Draco? Please explain, my Lord. I thought the monster from the chamber would only target mudbloods?"

"That, dear Lucius is where you are in error. The monster was a Basilisk; a hungry, thousand year old Basilisk," Voldemort said. "It was pure luck that it did not catch Draco or another Slytherin student and simply ate them. It only petrified students. I myself don't really understand how that happened; we'll have to ask Potter one day to explain that in detail. You should thank Harry that he killed the Basilisk before something else happened."
Lucius stared at his Lord in shock. "There was a Basilisk under Hogwarts all these years? And Harry killed it in his second year? He was only twelve years old. I had thought that was just a rumour Dumbledore spread to enhance his hero's fame?"

The Dark Lord smiled a real smile this time. "Indeed, it is unbelievable, is it? Harry told me himself, just this morning and I looked at his memories. It is true."

"My Lord, I had no idea, please believe me. I would never have used your diary if I had known how valuable it was and that it would set loose a Basilisk upon Hogwarts," Lucius said. "You are right; it could have just as easily killed Slytherins students as Gryffindor or Hufflepuff mudbloods. Only you could really control it, I suppose. I am very sorry my Lord."

"Well, that's all in the past," Voldemort dismissed his words. "Now, give me your arm."

Lucius stepped closer; pushing back his sleeve, he exposed the dark mark. Voldemort touched the mark with his wand and sent out a summons. Lucius winced in pain, he felt that his Lord was still angry. He was glad that he was alive and had only been Crucio'd, although that had hurt like hell; he knew that the punishment could have been much worse. He was quite nervous what else his master had planned for him, despite the promise.

Voldemort let go of his followers arm and pocketed his wand again.

"There will be a meeting and several raids shortly, but you will not take part tonight or tomorrow Lucius. Things are set in motion, but you will not participate as you normally would as my right-hand-man," Voldemort spoke coldly to the blond, "This is your punishment for losing the diary. Stay out of my sight for the few next days until I am in a better mood. Perhaps you should talk to a few of your contacts tomorrow and the next days, ask about the mood in the Ministry of Magic, the general opinion toward Fudges position.

"You will know why, when you read the Prophet. Send a full afternoon tea and refreshments to the blue meeting room. Send a house elf to guide my followers there when they arrive." When he was done, he turned around and left the study, his black travelling cloak billowing behind him.

Lucius sighed in relief and hurried to carry out the orders at once.

End flashback

Lucius shook his head to clear away the memory. He finished the cup of tea before casting a quick Tempus; when he saw it was nearly time for lunch, he stood up and straightened his clothes. He walked out of his study, locking and warding the door behind him.

He entered the dining room and stood next to the table. Minutes later, Bellatrix, Rudolphus and Rabastan came in.

"Lucius," Bellatrix nodded to her brother-in-law.

"Bella," Lucius nodded back. "You seem to be in a good mood."

"I am," Bellatrix smiled and it was tinged just this side of crazy. "However, before is say anything, I will wait for the Dark Lord."

"So be it," Lucius nodded. "Where is Remus?"

"He is sleeping I think," Rabastan said. "Or I supposed he should. Last night was the first night of the full moon."
"I forgot about that," Lucius said.

"Forgot about what?" Remus asked as he walked into the room. He was feeling a lot better than he thought he would. After he had woken up in Harry’s room this morning, he had felt as if a weight had been lifted off of him. His cub was beyond happy over him accepting the wolf and so was he. With the realization of just who his mate was, he knew he would be in for a struggle.

"The full moon was last night," Lucius said as his eyes roamed over Remus' body, taking in the new changes. Remus looked a lot healthier than when he last saw him. His body seemed to be slightly more muscular, his hands looked clean, and his hair seemed more messed than it ever was, but the biggest difference was his eyes. They no longer held a haunted look in them; they were clear and brighter than they ever had been. His feelings for Remus were surging once more and he wasn’t sure he wanted to stop it.

Remus nodded. He stood across from Lucius and next to Rabastan. He couldn't help the small smile when he smelt the attraction and lust coming off of Lucius.

'Guess it will be easier than I thought to let him know he's my mate,' he thought to himself. Out loud, he continued. "The book that Harry gave me three days ago helped wonders."

"It shows," Rabastan said as he looked over Remus with an appreciative look.

"Thank you," Remus nodded. "Harry's happy as well."

"The others coming over today, are they not?" Bellatrix asked.

"Yes they are," Remus nodded. "They’re spending the morning going over a few spells and knowing them, they'll probably have a Quidditch match as well. After that, they'll be making their way over here."

"What of Severus?" Lucius asked. He was feeling jealous and anger at the looks Rabastan was giving to Remus.

"He was working on a potion the last three days," Remus answered; he hid his smirk, as he smelt the waves of jealousy that Lucius exuded. "I think it's just about finished."

"I wonder what it was," Rudolphus mused as he looked around the room. The door opened and Yaxley walked in, followed by Avery senior, LeStrange senior, Nott, Antonin Dolohov, Algeron Rockwood, Goyle, Crabbe, Walden McNair, Travers, Avery junior, Mulciber ThorfinnRowle, Alecto and Amycus Carrow, Selwynn, Jugson and Gibbon.

"Is the Dark Lord out yet?" Yaxley asked as he stood next to the table, quite close to the upper end.

"Since it is clear he is not sitting here," Lucius drawled. "Then it is obvious that he hasn't."

"Think you're funny Lucius?" Yaxley scowled.

"I'm just a riot of laughs," Lucius deadpanned.

Remus snorted while Bellatrix chuckled and Rabastan snickered.

"What is so amusing?" Voldemort asked as he and Snape walked into the room. When the group turned to look at them, their mouths dropped open in shock.

"M-my Lord?" McNair stammered out as he looked at the sight in front of him. "Is...is that you?"
"Who else would it be McNair?" Voldemort raised an eyebrow as he walked over to the table, Snape in tow.

Lucius looked over his long-time friend. "You look different...younger...no, healthier."

"Thank you Lucius," Snape scowled and his reply was sarcastic, "for pointing out how unhealthy I was since I was obviously not aware of it."

"You're welcome," Lucius nodded.

"So I take that that is the result of the potion you were working on?" Remus raised an eyebrow.

Snape nodded as he and Voldemort came to a stop next to the table. "I found it in one of the potions books that Harry gave to me. You yourself are looking much healthier Remus."

"Thank you," Remus nodded. "It seems I will no longer be in need of the Wolfsbane Potion."

"I gathered as much" Snape nodded, "when you did not request it."

"What happened?" Selwynn asked as he looked between the Dark Lord, Snape and Remus, his gaze resting on Snape.

"Selwynn," Voldemort said. "I suggest you shift your gaze elsewhere lest you find yourself without your sight. As to your question, it is not your business now is it?"

"No my Lord," Selwynn shook his head. "Sorry."

"Accepted," Voldemort said as he took his seat at the head of the table. "Severus." He gestured to the seat on his right. The others looked on in shock as they knew what that position meant. Snape hid a smirk as he sat down. Lucius looked at his master for guidance, and was relieved when he gestured to the seat on his left. Voldemort turned to the table. "You may sit." The others noticed this small exchange, accepted the shift in power and then set down according their usual ranking. When they did, he continued. "Before we start with the reports, I would prefer we eat. Tilly."

"Yes Master?" the elf said as it popped into the room.

"We would like some lunch," Voldemort said.

"Yes master," the elf bowed before it popped out the room. Minutes later, it popped back in and the table was filled with food.

"You are dismissed," Voldemort said.

"Yes master," Tilly said before she popped out.

"Now, the missions you were given; Bellatrix?" Voldemort said as he started in on his lunch, the others following.

"It is done my Lord," Bellatrix's smile at the Dark Lord erred on the dark a little. "We found him and punishments were delivered as you asked. He squealed like a pig in the end and begged us for his death, which we of course graciously delivered with the Entrails-Expelling Curse. We thought this a fitting curse because he spilt your secrets before the Wizengamont. I do believe it will create a slight uproar in the Ministry and Dumbledore might be sad to lose his headmaster colleague...what a shame." At the end, her words were laced with sarcasm and the others chuckled in glee, not only for the way she spoke but also about Karkaroff's fate. He had betrayed their Lord and it was no less than
"Very good," Voldemort nodded. "McNair, Dolohov?"

"The attack from the Giants went through splendidly," McNair bowed his head before he answered for his team. "They are willing to continue in your service."

"Where are the giants now?" Voldemort asked. "Did the transport via portkey work as usual?"

"The portkeys worked well, no problems at all. After the attack we send the giants to the Cumbrian Mountains, Copeland Forrest, there they can stay the next few weeks," McNair said. "We did not want to send them again to the Black Mountains area in Wales, they have hunted a lot of game in that area already and it could arouse the suspicion of the muggles if too much game or sheep closer to the villages vanish."

"Alright," Voldemort nodded, "Dolohov?"

Dolohov bowed and added, "The PC team was successful. We killed the extended family of the target and managed to gather names and addresses of eleven friends and colleagues who know about the Wizarding world. Five of these subjects have had unfortunate accidents yesterday and the rest is due today or tonight. Two subjects we have not yet tracked down, but we are optimistic to finish the job until tomorrow evening."

"Well done, PC team, this pleases me greatly," The Dark Lord turned his gaze to the other side of the table. "Yaxley?"

"My Lord, I have very good news," Yaxley related enthusiastically. "After Madam Bones' sudden and permanent indisposition, Pius Thicknesse was promoted yesterday evening to take over as Head of Magical Law Enforcement. Today he invited me to his office for a drink to discuss the recent events, and I managed to put him under the Imperious Curse!"

Hearing this, laughter and sniggers travelled up and down the table, even Voldemort smiled a frightful smile, chuckling in satisfaction and Rodolphus patted Yaxley on the shoulder, saying "Great!"

Voldemort nodded. He was about to say something else, but an owl came through with the Daily Prophet between its beak.

Lucius took the newspaper and sent the owl off. He opened it and smiled at the headline:

SPECIAL NOON EDITION

Signs of the Dark Lord’s Power?

Two days ago, former Headmaster of Durmstrung, Igor Karkaroff was found dead in a shack up north. Karkaroff was a Death Eater for He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named during the first war, but was set free after releasing the names of Death Eaters in He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Name’s command. The Minister is refusing to release any information surrounding Karkaroff’s death, but this reporter has to wonder if maybe Karkaroff was killed for his betrayal to the Dark Side by his former "friends", because according to one muggle source an unusual, undulating, dark greenish cloud was observed above the shack, this most likely was the Dark Mark.

In addition to Karkaroff’s death, confirmation has reached us about the Dementors that guarded Azkaban. As reported last month, they have abandoned their post and even turned onto the Aurors guarding Azkaban on the night of the recent outbreak of all previously incarcerated Death Eaters.
Now the experts say that they are breeding.

"That's what's causing the unusually chilly, misty weather conditions," said Bob Mockridge, from the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures.

Also three nights ago, a terrible catastrophe struck the muggle community. The Queen Elizabeth II Bridge was destroyed. According to eye witnesses, whose memories were recorded before the persons were Obliviated, it suddenly snapped cleanly in two, causing dozens of cars to plunge into the Thames, killing about a hundred muggles. The Queen Elizabeth II Bridge is the southbound element of the Dartford Crossing over the half mile wide river Thames, east of London. It was built alongside two earlier tunnels under the Thames, which now form the northbound element of the crossing. When it was opened in 1991, the bridge was Europe's largest cable-supported bridge.

Because muggles cannot Apparate, Floo, use portkeys or brooms, these streets and bridges are absolutely vital to their economy. The destruction of the bridge is blamed by the muggle authorities on muggle terrorist, because the bridge was built from newest materials only recently and the incident cannot be explained as an accident or material failure. Sadly, we have to acknowledge that it was wizard terrorists, most likely Death Eaters or perhaps even He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named himself that caused this horrific tragedy. This attack happened at midnight on the same night as the murders of Madam Bones and Madam Vance (as we have already reported in the past days). A coincidence?

And if that is not cause for worry, Giants and Death Eaters have been reported wreaking havoc in the West Countries the night before yesterday, in the Quantock Hills west of Bridgewater in Somerset. The Department of Magical Law Enforcement has confirmed that a whole mixed muggle and muggleborn family, has been murdered who lived there together in two houses in a small village called Goathurst. Including the grandparents, parents, children, the brother of the muggleborn witch, and his wife and child, there are now nine victims to be mourned. In Goathurst and Bridgewater extensive damage to muggle property and fourteen injured muggles are reported.

The Dark Mark was shining bright green in the sky above the destroyed homes. The Obliviator teams have a hard time eradicating the evidence and convincing the muggles that the injuries, deaths and damage to muggle property like homes and cars was caused by a hurricane. Yesterday there came the first reports that it was probably Inferi that attacked a muggle town, Hogsmeade and two other Wizarding homes during the night. These reports have now been confirmed by a spokesman from the Department of Magical Law Enforcement.

Auror Dawlish stated: "Sadly, the rumours about Inferi are true. There were three attacks by three different groups of Inferi. Each group was controlled by at least two Death Eaters. Unfortunately, the Aurors apparating in could not capture these Death Eaters, as they Disapparated instantly on arrival of the Auror forces, after sending the Dark Mark up into the sky and leaving the Inferi to themselves.

Our capable Auror forces were able to subdue the Inferi with the use of bright light and flame spells like Lumos Maxima, Incendio, Inflamare, Bluebell flames. We advise all wizards and witches to read up on Inferi in Magical Beasts and where to find them, revised edition, and to practice these spells, so that they can defend themselves should further attacks occur. Do not attempt to cast Fiendfyre, this is an extremely dark spell and very dangerous, the flames can quickly get out of control."

Auror Dawlish confirmed that the muggle town attacked was the town of Lowestoft, which is situated on the most easterly point in Great Britain and is the first town in Britain to greet the
morning sun. The muggle inhabitants and tourist were completely helpless against a group of Inferi that murdered or injured many. So far twenty-one deaths and over fifty injured people have been reported by muggle authorities. The other attacks were on wizards at Hogsmeade and on two family homes, the Weasleys and the Diggory’s, near Ottery St. Catchpole. Forty-two injured and two deaths altogether are reported. During the last month, our reporters have had the sad duty to report several people gone missing, all of them have been muggleborns or halfbloods and their siblings, spouses or parents.

While the Minister has acknowledged that You-Know-Who is back, he refuses to believe the madman is as powerful now as he was then, but if these are not signs of You-Know-Who’s power, then what are they?

Rita Skeeter, Senior Reporter.

Fudge Sacked, Wizengamont Chooses New Minister

This morning, the Wizengamont chose Rufus Scrimgeour as the new Minister. Fudge was dismissed after the attacks in the past few days. Fudge’s refusal to believe He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named still has power, has allowed for the attacks in the past few days to happen. Such tragic events as the murders of Ministry employees Bones and Vance, the attacks on Hogsmeade, Ottery St. Catchpole and the Muggle World could have been prevented. The public was outraged and demanded Fudge to be removed and the Wizengamont had no choice but to comply. This reporter hopes that Scrimgeour will be more competent than Fudge was.

Campbell Oakby, Senior Reporter.

New Head of Magical Law Enforcement

After Madam Bones’ tragic death (see Special Report on page 2) Pius Thicknesse was promoted yesterday evening to take over as Head of Magical Law Enforcement. We all wish him success in the fight against the Dark. This reporter asks you to support and help our brave Auror forces by reporting anything suspicious you might have noticed in the past week, especially any information that could help to track down the culprits responsible for the murders of esteemed Madam Bones and popular Madam Vance. Please do not hesitate to contact the MLE as soon as possible. Write or floo to MOM, MLE, Auror Headquarters, Special Task Force Head Office.

Davy Gudgeo, Junior Reporter.

"It seems my Lord," Lucius' silky voice was laced with amusement, "your actions have finally gained the attention of the Ministry. The rumour I told you yesterday about Fudge being sacked and Scrimgeour being the most likely candidate for Minister was true."

"How so?" Voldemort raised an eyebrow.

Lucius said nothing as he held out the paper for his Lord to take. Voldemort read it over before lowering it.

"Aware though they may be," Voldemort smirked, "Fudge’s incompetence will and has cost them and nothing will prevent my plans from going forward. I suppose had they believed, many things would’ve happened differently, but they have not."

"Will Scrimgeour make things difficult for us?" Rudolphus asked. "He’s a very experienced Auror, quite a cunning and ferocious one."
"I have no doubt," Voldemort said. "However, we shall have to see how he plays his hand."

~...~

He whimpered even as his back arched off the bed. He tugged his hands but they barely moved as the wrists were secured to the headboard with a Slytherin green silk scarf. His eyes, which had closed in pleasure, opened and looked down, only to lock with the Avada Kedavra green ones of his boyfriend.

"Harry," he moaned as he bit his lip. "Please."

"Please what?" Harry chuckled against Draco's skin.

"S-s-stop teasing," Draco moaned out.

Harry smiled as he moved on all fours above Draco. He looked into his eyes even as he dipped his head to lick and suck at his chest. He moved to Draco's left nipple and sucked on it.

"Harry... please..." Draco panted out; he lifted his legs to wrap them around Harry's waist, but Harry moved at the last minute and grabbed them in his hands.

Harry bit Draco's nipple and then sucked it before he moved to the other one and delivered the same torture. He moved up Draco's chest until he reached his neck where he kissed and sucked at his pulse point.

Draco turned his head to give Harry more access. "Baby..."

Harry smirked against his skin as he moved up to nip and suck at the blond's earlobe. He pulled back enough to whisper in his ear. "I want to fuck you so bad Drake... I want to feel your arse grip my cock in that scorching heat... I want to feel you clench around me as I make you cum over and over again."

"Fuck," Draco panted; Harry's words were feeding his desire and he hardened even more at them. The mental picture that they created had pre-cum leaking steadily.

Harry leaned up enough to capture Draco's lips in a kiss; tongues battled furiously as each tried to gain control. Draco whined in his throat when he tried to move his hips but found that he couldn't as Harry held them down.

Harry chuckled as he moved to kneel above Draco. With a wave of his hand, he banished his boxers, leaving himself gloriously naked above the wanton blond. He grabbed his cock in his hand and fisted himself as he looked down at Draco. "Do you want this?"

Draco moaned when he saw Harry's cock; he could feel his entrance clenching and unclenching at the thought of having it inside of him. "Harry... please fuck me..."

"Not yet," Harry whispered. "I want to suck that cock of yours first.‖ He held up three fingers and pressed them to Draco's mouth. “Suck.”

Locking eyes with Harry, Draco pulled the fingers into his mouth. He slipped his tongue between each one, sucking on them as if he was sucking on a cock. He watched as Harry's eyes darkened even further in arousal. He sucked the fingers, moaning as he did so.

"Enough," Harry growled as he pulled his fingers from Draco's mouth. He kissed him harshly before he pulled away. He kissed down Draco's body, stopping at his nipples to suck at them before
he continued. His
tongue dipped into Draco's bellybutton and the blond arched slightly as a moan escaped his lips.

"Harry...ugh... please..." Draco looked down at his lover.

Harry's mouth hovered over Draco's cock, as his wet fingers trailed a path down the blond's body, moving on his thighs before going around to his ass. The fingers teased his entrance and Draco let his legs open even further.

Whispering a Cleansing Charm, Harry slipped one finger pass the muscles the same time he took the head of the cock in his mouth. Draco screamed from the duel pleasure.

Sucking on Draco's cock, Harry hummed as his tongue traced the underside of the head even as he slipped another finger into Draco, slowly scissoring them to stretch him.

"Merlin...moan...Harry...pant...s-s-so good..." Draco mumbled as his back arched. He tried moving his hands, forgetting that they were still bound.

Harry bobbed his head and pumped his fingers into Draco. He worked another finger in and lifted his mouth from the cock. He traced the length of it with his tongue before sucking on the head alone.

"Oh God...fuck..." Draco's voice trailed off and he mumbled incoherently.

Harry continued the scissor motion with two fingers while the other sought out Draco's prostate. He knew he found it when Draco yelled loudly.

"Holy sodding hell," Draco yelled out as his eyes rolled to the back of his head.

Harry smiled as his mouth sunk down on the cock once more. He bobbed his head a few times as his fingers pumped into Draco, hitting his prostate each time. He raised his eyes to the blond's and saw the pure, raw pleasure on his face. He could feel the blond's muscles trembling and knew instinctively that he was close. His own cock was so hard it was to the point of being painful, but he wouldn't do anything about it just yet. He wanted his lover to cum.

He lifted his head until it was hovering over the head and he pulled his fingers out far enough so that only the tips of them remained inside. "Look at me."

Draco whined when he felt Harry's mouth leave his cock and his ass tried to clench down on the fingers he felt pulling out. At Harry's command, he looked down and locked eyes with him.

"Do you want this?" Harry asked; his voice was husky from lust and it sent shivers down Draco's body. "Should I give you what you want and make you cum?"

"Please," Draco whimpered, "anything...fuck me Harry...just fuck me...let me cum."

"You really want my cock don't you", Harry said even as his fingers started slowly moving in and out of Draco. "You want my cock in your ass so bad, you're begging for it. The heat around my fingers is incredible. I can only imagine how tight and hot it would feel around my cock."

"Then do it," Draco panted out. "Fuck me and find out. Your fingers feel so good, but they don't fill me like your cock could. I feel so empty...shove your cock in me...fuck me hard...fuck me fast..."

Harry growled before he took Draco's cock in his mouth once more at the same time he slammed his fingers back, instantly finding the pleasure button that made the blond even more wanton.
Draco keened as he spread his legs even further. He felt a tingle over his hands and found them released from the bind. Immediately, they flew to Harry's head, combing through the dark locks.

Harry moved until only the head of Draco's cock was in his mouth. He stilled the movements of his fingers and waited. When Draco looked down at him, he moved.

{Cum for me} he hissed at the same time he slammed his fingers into Draco's prostate.

Draco's back arched completely off the bed; the parseltongue against his tip and the attack on his sweet spot was too much for him and he screamed out his pleasure as his orgasm tore through him.

"Harry!" Draco screamed as he jerked out of his sleep, his body still shuddering from the effects of the dream orgasm. He looked down at his lap and saw the results. "Damnit!"

With a sigh, he picked up his wand from under his pillow and banished the mess before throwing back his covers and headed to the bathroom. An hour later, he walked out with a towel around his waist. He headed to his closet and picked out his clothes; a pair of track pants, a sleeveless Hogwarts shirt his Malfoy crest on the back and his Quidditch number below it. When he was finished dressing, he left his room and headed to the nearest Floo.

He had just passed an open door, when he was stopped.

"Draco," Narcissa called out. "I would like to speak with you."

He sighed before he turned and walked in.

"Close the door," Narcissa commanded softly.

Draco turned to do as she said. He paused for a bit and when he turned back, his face was blank and his eyes were devoid of all emotions.

"What is it I can help you with Narcissa?" Draco's voice was emotionless as his eyes. He refused to call her "mother".

"Why exactly are you dressed that way?" Narcissa ignored the use of her first name.

"Not that it is any of your concern," Draco said, "but I am going over to Harry's. We are continuing with our training and it requires the wearing of these clothes. Is that what you wanted to know or was there something more?"

"Why are you acting this way Dragon?" Narcissa asked as she moved to her feet to stand in front of her son. It hurt her to see how he was acting with her and even worse, Lucius was doing the same.

"You do not have the right to call me by that name," Draco's blank eyes flared with anger as they narrowed at her. "And as for the way I am acting, you only have yourself to blame. I told you once before Narcissa, it is too late to try and play the act. I have no need for a mother and even if I did, it would not be you."

Narcissa looked into her son's eyes, looking for something...anything that would show the boy he was before, but all she saw was a coldness staring back at her. Inexplicably, she felt anger rise in her.

"Do you know what your father is doing?" she asked as she felt her anger surge through her.
"No," Draco replied. "And even if I did, what makes you think I would tell you? My father's business is his own unless it directly involves me. What makes you think I would betray his trust to the likes of you?"

"So you have no idea that Lucius is seeking a way to sever ties with me and to remove me from the Malfoy name?" Narcissa was spitting mad when she had found out what her husband was doing.

"Oh is he?" Draco knew of course, his father had already given him forewarning, but he wouldn't tell her that. It seemed like his father was finally doing what was necessary to ensure he got his chance with Remus. "Well, I suppose if it must be done, then he shall do it. I can only surmise that he has found someone more...appealing to him."

His words cut through Narcissa and she clenched her hands into fists. "He will not get away with this."

"On the contrary Narcissa," Draco drawled, bearing a striking resemblance to Lucius. "He is Lord Malfoy; if he wants something done, he will find a way to do it and nothing and no one...especially you, will stop him." He looked her up and down before continuing. "I daresay our lives will be much more beneficial with you gone. Soon Narcissa, the blight that you have cast on the Malfoy name shall be removed and we will no longer have to put up with your...presence."

SMACK!

He should've expected it, he knew, but even that didn't lessen the harshness of the blow or the surprise that it had actually happened. His head jerked with the force of it.

"How dare you?" Narcissa was too far gone in her anger to realize the consequences of what exactly she had done.

"You would dare to put your hand on me after father gave you explicit instructions to never do so again?" Draco's voice was as icy as a winter's wind and his eyes were as cold. He looked every bit the Malfoy heir, the spitting image of Lucius and Narcissa's anger faded immediately to be replaced with worry.

"I'm sorry," Narcissa whispered out as the implications of what she had just done finally sunk in. Lucius would be furious.

"Your 'sorry' is not accepted," Draco replied coldly. "You were warned Narcissa and you shall pay for what you've done." He straightened up before he turned and walked out the door, leaving Narcissa staring after him in fear.

Draco didn't stopped when he walked out on Narcissa. He was too angry and all he could think about was getting to Harry's. He had gone directly to the library and had Flooed to Harry's place. When he came out on the other end, he brushed off the soot and walked out of the study. He heard noises coming from outside and headed in that direction.

~...~

The others were warming up as they waited for Harry and Draco. They had decided to get in a few more practices and then a little Quidditch match. Fred and George had been to Diagon Alley earlier and to their dislike, had run into their mother. The talk had left them irritated, so they had returned to the Manor, hoping to work off the stress.

"When's Draco coming by?" Cory asked. After the talking with the LeStranges, Neville had told the
others of his decision to go by his true name and they agreed to call him that.

"Probably soon," Fred said, maybe even before Harry gets back.

Harry had gone back to Privet Drive to check on things over. He knew that Dumbledore had Mrs. Figg watching the place, and he didn't want to give the old woman any reason to report something to the Old Man. He went back regularly to put in an appearance.

"He should be back soon," Luna said. "His Dragon needs calming down. Something or someone has stirred him."

The boys were about to ask what she meant when they heard footsteps behind them. They turned and saw Draco walking out; the look on his face left no doubt to his emotions and they were surprised things hadn't started breaking from his anger.

"Draco," George looked at him in concern. "You ok, mate?"

"I'm fine," Draco shook his head as he walked over to them. "I had to make an unexpected detour, that's all."

"Are you sure?" Cory asked as he turned fully towards him.

"Yeah," Draco nodded. "Don't worry about it; everything's going to work out for the better, though it will be sooner than was planned."

"Alright," Cory nodded and was about to turn back to the others when he caught sight of Draco's cheek. His eyes widened and he turned back to the blond.

"What the bloody hell happened to you?" Cory asked. On Draco's cheek was a bruise from where Narcissa had hit him. "Draco? Who the hell hit you?"

Draco cursed himself softly as in his anger; he had forgotten to put a Glamour Charm over his cheek.

"Draco," Fred's eyes narrowed as he took in the bruise on the blond's face. "Answer Cory's question."

"If you don't tell us," George said. "You're going to have to tell Harry."

"He is right, it doesn't matter if you do not tell us," Luna said. "Harry will learn of it and he will react... explosively."

He opened his mouth to answer, but was stopped when a noise sounded behind them. He kept his back turned while the others looked, but he knew who it was.

"Harry," Luna looked up at her brother from her place on the grass. "How did things go?"

"Good as usual," Harry laughed as he walked through the doors. He had had Hedwig flash him into the kitchen, thinking the others would still be there. "The only thing is, just as I was leaving, I got a letter from the Old Man."

"Slugs are messy creatures, are they not?" Luna said as Hedwig flew over and landed in her lap. She reached up to rub her breast as she continued. "However, the help of the wolf, the bat and the snake will help you determine which slug it is."
"Alright Luna," Harry smiled as he walked over to them. "Draco, when did you get here?"

"Just a few minutes ago," Draco answered, though he kept his head bowed. He knew what would happen when, not if, Harry saw his bruise.

"Alright," Harry smiled. "I guess we can start. What do you guys want to do first?"

The others didn't answer as they were still looking at Draco. Harry saw the look on their faces and a puzzled one came on his face. "Guys?"

"Ask Draco," Cory said even as his hands clenched into fists.

"Draco," Harry turned to the blond. "What's going on? Why are the others looking at you like that?"

Draco kept his head bowed for a few seconds before he slowly raised it to look Harry in the eyes. "They're looking at me because of this." He turned his face slightly so that Harry could see his cheek. When he did, he stiffened and he walked over to the blond. He grabbed his chin gently and turned it a bit more. It seemed as if the air itself has suddenly gone still as did the surrounding areas.

"Draco," Harry's voice went soft, but the others could still hear the barely controlled anger in it. "Who the fuck dared to put their hand on you?"

Draco looked into Harry's eyes and saw how they had darkened in rage. He shivered, not because he was afraid as he knew Harry would never hurt him, but at the fact that the anger was on behalf of him. He couldn't lie to him, and he didn't want to. He had warned Narcissa that she would pay.

"It was Narcissa," he said softly. "She was the one to strike me."

Harry's eyes glowed with his anger and the others could feel the shift in the air around them. The wind picked up and steadily grew stronger as it whipped around them and they heard the windows on the Manor rattling. Hedwig trilled from her spot in Luna's lap. She flew off to go to Harry, but before she could reach him, Harry disappeared with a loud crack.

"Shit!" Fred exclaimed. "Did Harry just Disapparate?"

"Yeah," George nodded staring at the spot Harry was in shock.

"One guess as to where he went," Cory said.

"Malfoy Manor," Luna answered as she got up. Hedwig moved to her shoulder. "We should go."

The others moved towards her and all five disappeared in a flash of fire.

~...~

Voldemort and his Death Eaters were sitting around at the table, talking things over when they heard the crack echo throughout the room.

"What was that?" Rabastan asked.

Voldemort's brow furrowed while Remus sniffed the air.

"Harry," both replied. The group looked at each other before pushing their chairs back to go and see what was wrong. Before they could even get to their feet, the doors to the Dining Room flew open and they looked
Harry stood there, eyes glowing with his power and a wind whipping around him, causing his hair to fly around. When he spoke, it was through clenched teeth and his voice was taut with fury. "Where...is...she?"

"Who is he talking about?" Avery asked.

"I have no idea," Snape shook his head, as did the others. Lucius however, narrowed his eyes as he looked at him. An idea was taking root at the back of his and he had the suspicion as to whom Harry was asking for.

"Harry," Voldemort moved away from the table and took a step in Harry's direction. He stopped when he felt a force pressing him back. His eyes narrowed and he tried again before the force pushed him back even more. He raised a hand and was ready to do anything to get him to calm down, when the others rushed through the room.

Draco saw an unknown, but slightly familiar, man raising his hand towards Harry, and all thoughts of decorum flew out of his mind. "Wait...don't!"

He hurried forward and stopped in front of Voldemort.

"Draco," Voldemort warned.

"Please," Draco turned his eyes towards him for a split second, confusion in their depths as to how the man knew his name, before he turned back to Harry. He walked forward seemingly not aware of the force pushing the others back.

"Draco," Lucius moved to stand next to his Lord. "It would be wise not to get too close to him."

"He will not be hurt Lucius," Snape said as he came forward; he remember the last time Harry's magic had gone out of control and how Draco had been the one to calm him down.


"I won't," Harry said. "She had no right and she has to pay for what she did."

Lucius stiffened and he realized his suspicions were correct. The others looked at each other before looking back at the two.

"What is going on here?" a female voice sounded. All eyes, with the exception of Harry, turned to look and they saw Narcissa standing there.

Cory and the others glared at her even as they moved to stand with the other followers. They were confused as to whom the two men were, but before they could say anything and anyone could answer Narcissa's question, Harry spoke.

"You..." his voice was soft as he clenched his hands into fists. "You would dare to hit him? You would dare to harm him?" he turned around and Narcissa took a step back in fear when she saw the rage in his eyes.

"That was the biggest mistake you could ever make," Harry said. The wind picked up, the windows rattled before they broke, and like they did at the Manor, the shards flew around in the air above them. The table...
Narcissa took another step back, or tried to, but found she couldn't; she was stuck in place. She stared into Harry's eyes before her hands flew to her throat and she started gasping for air. Her body rose off the floor and flew to the wall; Narcissa's eyes widened in fear. Just before impact, she stopped and was jerked back to the others. She was pulled directly in front of Harry and a glass shard flew to her neck, cutting into her skin.

"Give me one good reason as to why I shouldn't slit your throat?" Harry asked; his voice never lost its quiet quality and somehow, that made it even worse.

"P-p-please..." Narcissa whispered out. "I'm s-s-sorry."

"You know," Harry cocked his head to the side. "I don't think you are." He raised a closed fist and Narcissa's body rose slightly. He stretched out his arm and opened his fist and Narcissa's arms and legs flew out from her body so that she was spread eagle in the air. With a slight push of his hand, Narcissa's body flew through the Dining room doors and she landed with a thud.

Harry walked up to her. "As Head of the House of Black, I call to dissolve the marriage between Narcissa Malfoy née Black and Lucius Malfoy." A light surrounded Harry, Narcissa and Lucius. When it cleared, Harry continued. "As you are no longer a Malfoy, you have no bearings on anything Malfoy related and that includes Draco. This is your last warning Narcissa, stay away from Draco."

"Thank you," Lucius said to Harry. He had been trying to figure out a way to terminate his marriage and Harry had just done the job for him. "I warned you Narcissa. I told you that you'd regret it if you ever struck him again."

Harry stilled. "What?"

"This is not the first time she's hit me," Draco answered. "The last time was after Sirius' will reading. She was angry over the contents and when I refused to tell her what it was that Sirius knew about me, she became angry and struck me."

"I walked in after the fact and I warned her to never lay a hand on my son again," Lucius finished.

"I should kill you," Harry snarled at Narcissa, who whimpered and cowered away. "Narcissa Black, you no longer belong to the House of Black, you are herby disowned. So I speak it, so mote it be."

"My Lord?" Fred, Draco, George and Cory were shocked.

"Your comment is appreciated Luna," Voldemort nodded towards the girl before he turned to the boys. "It is me or is there another Dark Lord I do not know of?"
"You look different My Lord," Cory said as he took in Voldemort's new look.

"It is thanks to a potion made by Severus," Voldemort said as he gestured to Snape.

"Snape?" they turned shocked eyes to the man standing next to Lucius.

"I would advise you to close your mouths," Snape's cutting tone brought them out of their stupor, and they silently accepted that it was him; no one else could have that effect with just tone and words alone. "I was not aware we had mindless dunderheads present."

They ducked their heads sheepishly while the others laughed. Only Draco seemed not be joining them; he was still agitated as he wanted to get to Harry. Voldemort looked at him and understood.

"You may go and check on Harry," Voldemort said and Draco turned grateful eyes on him.

"Yes my Lord," the others nodded. They bowed as one to Voldemort and turned to follow after Harry.

"Draco?" Voldemort called out just as the teens reached the door.

"Yes my Lord?" Draco stopped and turned around.

"When you are finished with your training," Voldemort continued. "I would like to speak with you and Harry."

"Yes my Lord," Draco nodded, bowed once more and went after the others.

"If I may ask My Lord, what did Potter say to Narcissa?" McNair asked when the teens were gone.

"He cast a spell on her," Voldemort answered after a few minutes of silence. "Should she have any thoughts of revenge towards Draco, Lucius, himself or basically anyone he calls family, whatever act she chooses to act on, will be done to her."

Lucius looked down at his former wife and Harry's words came back to him.

'...if anyone hurts him, they will answer to me and I will inflict the hurt back on them even worse than they did to him...' 

Narcissa had brought it upon herself and he held no pity towards her.

"Tilly," Lucius called out.

"Yes Master?" Tilly popped into the room. She spotted her mistress and her eyes went even wider than they normally are.

"Remove this woman from the Manor," Lucius ordered the elf, "and her belongings as well."

"Yes Master," Tilly bowed before she popped away. She came back moments later with Narcissa's bags and went over to the blonde. After grabbing hold of her arm, she popped away, only to return minutes later. "It is done Master."

Lucius nodded before pulling out his wand. He muttered under his breath as he adjusted the wards to exclude and block Narcissa from ever returning. The group was still staring at the spot Narcissa laid.

"That was unexpected," Avery shuddered as though he could still feel Harry's magic pressing against
his skin. The last time that had happened was the night the Dark Lord had introduced the seven of them to his followers.

"It seems Lucius," Snape muttered, "you're problem concerning Narcissa has just been solved.

"I know," Lucius nodded.

"What problem?" Remus asked; his wolf was on high alert the moment he had smelled his cub... both of them and it became even more when Narcissa had shown up. He had smelt the deception coming off of her as well as fear and Moony was ready to attack her. After hearing that she had struck his cub, it had taken all of Remus' control to hold on to Moony. The last time that had happened was when Harry had told them what his home life was like.

"I was trying to find a way to end my marriage to her," Lucius answered as he turned to look at Remus. He held back the gasp that threatened to escape at the look in the man's eyes. Due to his wolf coming to the forefront, Remus' hazel eyes had turned amber... the color of wolf's eyes. Lucius shook his head and bit his lip when he saw the smirk on Remus' face.

"I was also trying to figure out a way to prevent her from gaining access to not only Draco," Lucius continued, "but also the Malfoy funds. Harry solved the problem by not only dissolving the marriage, but stopping Narcissa as well."

"He's something," Bellatrix murmured. Even since Harry had removed the block on her mind and returned not only her son, but her memories, she had changed. She wasn't as crazed as she used to be and was able to think more clearly.

"Yes he is," Voldemort agreed. "Let's resume what we were doing."

"Yes my Lord," echoed around the room.
Consequences Part Two

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Harry Potter and all its affiliates belong to JK Rowling, Bloomsbury/Scholastic and Warner Bros. Studios. No copyright or trademark infringement is intended and no money is being made from this.

My disclaimer: If I owned Harry Potter; Ginny would’ve died in the CoS, Harry would’ve broken free of Dumbledore’s manipulations and Molly’s overbearing, Sirius wouldn’t have died, Hermione never would’ve dated Ron, Harry would’ve ditched Ron in fourth year, and most importantly, there’d be lots and lots of Harry/Draco slash.

"Talking"
'Thinking'

**Letter or commentary/introduction and flashback**
{Parssseltongue}
\{Hedwig's Mental Speak\}
~…~ indicates scene change

Harry and the others arrived back at the Manor and he immediately let loose; they had landed in the Sitting Room, and he wandlessly threw the chairs and tables against the wall. A scream tore from his throat before he fell to his knees. Through it all, the others watched him.

"Harry," Draco moved the others and walked over to him. He knelt on the floor next to Harry and placed an arm around his shoulder.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Harry asked; his head was bowed and his voice was soft, but Draco heard the question.

"I never really thought about it," Draco answered. "I knew father would deal with her and I think a part of me knew how you'd react, and I didn't really want to ruin the day by telling you."

"I thought only Gryffindors thought like that," Harry muttered and Draco smiled because he knew Harry was moving past his anger.

"Slytherins do as well," he replied. "But we call it strategic thinking."

"Of course," Harry chuckled as he raised his head to look at the blond. His eyes caught the bruise and they darkened slightly. He reached out a hand and gently touched it.

"It's ok Harry," Draco murmured. "You've made sure she'll never get the chance to do it again."

"I'm angry she got a chance in the first place," Harry muttered before he sighed.

"Ok," George said suddenly as he clapped his hands together. "Now that the excitement's over with, let's get on with the training."

The others laughed, Harry included, and George smiled when he saw it as he had gotten what he had
"Harry?" Draco stopped just before they left the sitting room.

"Yeah?" Harry stopped as well, wondering what was wrong with the blond.

"No more running," Draco said as he turned around to look Harry in the eye.

Harry's brow furrowed for a few seconds in confusion before they cleared. A smile slowly built on his face and his eyes lit up. He walked forward, closing the distance between the two of them and grabbed Draco's hand, pulling him close. Draco's arms automatically went around Harry's neck, while Harry's settled on his waist.

"Yeah?" Harry smiled down at the blond and Draco felt his breath catch at the pure joy on Harry's face.

Draco bit his lip before a smile broke free, "Yeah."

"Good," Harry said before he leaned down and captured Draco's lips in a kiss. It wasn't like the kiss they had shared back at Harry's room at Privet Drive, no this one was very simple; no tongue or anything, but it was just as sweet. Minutes later, Harry ran his tongue along Draco's lips and Draco parted them immediately, allowing Harry's tongue inside.

Harry's grip on Draco's waist tightened slightly and so did Draco's grip around Harry's neck. Moans escaped both as their tongues fought for control, which Harry won, but Draco didn't mind. The heat and passion that rose from both, circled in the air around them as their magic reacted. Minutes later, both the magic and heated air cooled down as the intensity of the kiss eased. They pulled back slowly and rested their foreheads against each other, eyes still closed and their breaths caressing each other's lips.

"Mine," Harry whispered.

"Yours," Draco nodded, "As you are mine."

"Yours," Harry agreed. They kissed once more, before they separated and heading after the others.

"Oh Harry?" Draco said as they walked through the house.

"Yeah?" Harry looked sideways at him.

"The Dark Lord wants to see us after we're done with training," Draco said.

"Alright," Harry nodded. "Did he say what it was about?"

"No," Draco shook his head. "He just requested we meet him."

"Ok," Harry nodded, his brows slightly furrowed as he wondered what the meeting could be about. "After the training, we'll see what he wants and I have to speak with about this letter anyways."

~…~

Voldemort was sitting in his private rooms behind his desk, reading reports and making notes. Nagini was curled up in a huge cozy nest of blankets near the fireplace for warmth. The Gaunt ring was on the middle finger of his left hand (he can wear it; the curse only harms other people trying to put the ring on), and on his ring finger was a Slytherin signet ring. He was interrupted by a knock on the
door. "Enter," he called out.

Harry and Draco walked in and when they were a few feet from the desk, they bowed, "Good afternoon my Lord."

Voldemort looked up before gesturing for them to take a seat. They did and then waited quietly for a few minutes until he was finished with what he was doing.

After a few minutes, Voldemort put down his quill and looked at them. He noticed that every so often, Harry would stare at the ring on his hand as if riveted and fascinated.

"So, boys," he started. "Severus tells me that you have access to the old Black Family Townhouse?"

"Yes my Lord," Draco answered. "I am the new owner."

"My Godfather, Sirius Black, was the last male Black. He left Grimmauld Place to Draco in his will," Harry piped in. He was silent for a few seconds before he decided to ask about something that had been bugging him for several days. "Marvolo, please can I ask you a question before we move on?"

"You're doing that already," Voldemort said, slightly amused. "But yes, you may ask another one."

Harry shifted nervously in his seat, not sure how his curiosity would be received. He looked at the ring on the Dark Lord's hand again. He was aware that it was new, as he had never seen the Dark Lord wear such a ring before. It was made of rough gold, with a black stone with a triangle carved on the top. He knew that Voldemort always wore another ring on the ring finger of his left hand; a small silver signet ring with Slytherin's crest, similar to those signet rings Lucius and Draco wore, for sealing their letters with the Lord and Heir Malfoy's crest.

'Oh well, here goes nothing'. Harry formulated his question as polite as he could,

"Yeah, well, it's kind of personal," he started. "I mean, you don't have to explain and I understand that's not my business, but may I please ask what happened four days ago at noon and during the afternoon? You see, after talking to Remus, I returned to Potter Manor when suddenly, I felt like my head would split open and my scar started bleeding."

Voldemort's voice held concern even as his brows furrowed, "explain to me exactly how you were feeling."

"I got this murderous headache, it was a real migraine," Harry explained. "Your emotions spiked in a terrifying way. I felt terrible anger and also fe-, err, other emotions. It made me sick all afternoon; I even passed out at one point. Draco and the others were very concerned. Then, during the night, it got better. Sometimes I felt another stab, like flashes of emotion from you, but now it was very different, more glee, satisfaction."

"When reading the Prophet the next morning I noticed this corresponded exactly with the times of the Bones and Vance murders and the Thames Bridge collapsing...this experience was similar to what I felt during fifth year. For example, in January, when the LeStranges and the other prisoners broke out of Azkaban, I felt your extremely good mood that night; I woke up, laughing like mad, scaring Ron. The next morning I read in the Prophet what had caused you such happiness. And, at the Ministry of Magic, I felt your anger through my scar when you realized that the prophesy orb was broken, you know when Bella and I were fighting in the Atrium, right before you appeared and attacked me?"

Voldemort looked at Harry, his brows still furrowed in a frown. That Harry had felt the confusion,
fear and fury radiating from him on the day of the Horcrux hunt, despite the fact that they were separated by at least a hundred miles on that day, depending where this Potter Manor exactly was, was cause for concern. This connection between them was an anomaly. He had never heard that one person would get headaches like this if another one was angry, furious, upset or feeling gleeful. And what could explain that he could send Harry images in his dreams? In the Atrium he and Harry had been close together, but in January there were hundreds of miles between them.

Harry, along with Draco, was looking at Voldemort, fear in their eyes; Harry was terrified he'd be Crucio'd for asking the questions and mentioning the murders, while Draco was terrified for his boyfriend.

Voldemort looked at them and took in how Harry looked and held himself. He saw the fear in both of their eyes and the way Draco was hardly daring to breathe, eyes looking anywhere but at his master. Obviously both boys were expecting the worst, and still Harry dared to ask.

His thoughts drifted once again to Harry's words. He could feel effects of whatever emotion he was feeling if it was intense enough.

'Did that mean that Harry had felt something yesterday evening or this morning when Severus and I...?' he thought to himself and a blush threatened to rise in his face. It would be embarrassing if that was the case and he truly hoped it wasn't. Regardless, he would take time later to meditate and strengthen his Occlumency shields again.

He looked at the boys once more and noticed that once again, Harry's attention was drawn to the Gaunt ring on his finger. He couldn't understand Harry's fascination, as Draco had given one glance at it and then ignored it, just as all the other followers had reacted during the lunch meeting. A truly outrageous suspicion was forming in Voldemort's mind, but he would have to test that theory later, when hopefully the boys had returned with the locket.

"Your questions are a little presumptuous," Voldemort spoke finally. "However, I will answer you. What happened four days ago has a direct connection to why I wanted to see the two of you today."

"Is there something you have for us to do?" Harry asked as Draco was still a little shaken.

"There is actually," Voldemort nodded. "I have two missions for you and one of them is the reason I asked about the Black dwelling."

"We'll do everything in our power to help you Marvolo," Harry said. "What is it that you need us to do?"

"You first mission is to retrieve something for me," Voldemort said.

"If I may ask sir," Draco spoke up. "What is it you need us to retrieve?"

"A locket," Voldemort answered, "one that was stolen from me." He waved his hand and a box flew to him. He opened it and pulled out a golden locket. "My locket was swapped out for this one. This is the fake as mine is much heavier and has an ornate 'S' on the front."

"Do you think the locket is at Grimmauld Place?" Harry asked as he glanced at the locket in Voldemort's hands. "May I have a look please?"

Voldemort reached the locket over the table.

"Thank you," Harry said as he picked it up. He peered closely at it, frowning as he did so. "I remember seeing something very similar to this during the summer a year ago, when I was at
Grimmauld Place and Mrs. Weasley forced us to clean out the cabinets. They were full of dark artifacts and among them was a heavy golden locket with an 'S' on it. We tried opening it, but none of us could open the lid.

"I do hope that my locket is still in that house and I want you both to search for it and get it back to me," Voldemort said. "When you find it, don't try to open it as it could seriously harm you. However, you can touch it from the outside; it is not cursed like that."

"Yes sir," Draco nodded; he was curious about the locket, but knew better than to ask any questions. Harry looked at Voldemort; he locked eyes with the Dark Lord, allowing him to read the thought in his mind. 'What's the importance of the locket?'

Immediately images of their talk flooded his mind and Harry understood. He gave a subtle nod to let Voldemort know he did understand.

"Leave now," Voldemort said, "and return here when you are finished. If Hedwig takes you, do not have her flash inside this room."

"Yes my Lord/Yes Marvolo," came from both Draco and Harry.

"Good," Voldemort nodded, "dismissed."

The two bowed before they turned and walked out. They had reached the door, when Harry stopped.

"What is it?" Voldemort asked when he saw him.

"This came when I went back to my old place," Harry pulled out the letter and walked over to the Dark Lord, handing it to him. "It's from the Old Man, but I have no idea who he's talking about."

Voldemort took the letter, opened it and scanned it quickly. A frown marred his features for a second before he looked up at Harry. "I will speak with Severus and perhaps your wolf about it."

"Thank you," Harry nodded. "By the way, did Nagini have her babies?"

"Yes," Voldemort nodded, "but she is in protective mode right now, so no one is allowed near her. When she is ready to present them, she will come."

"Alright," Harry nodded. "We'll go now."

"Good luck," Voldemort said.

~...~

"Our first assignment," Draco looked over at his boyfriend and marveled at the fact that he could now call Harry that.

"Yep," Harry nodded. He looked at the blond and smiled at the wonder on his face. He leaned close and kissed him. Seconds later, he pulled away.

"What was that for?" Draco demanded, though he wasn't complaining.

"Felt like it," Harry shrugged with a smile. "Now come on, let's go. Hedwig?"

She flashed in and landed on Harry's shoulder.
"Can you take us to Grimmauld Place beautiful?" Draco asked.

Hedwig trilled even as her chest puffed slightly from the 'beautiful' comment. Draco stepped close and held on to Harry's arm and the trio flashed out.

~...~

An hour later, a knock sounded on the door to Voldemort's private chambers. He looked up before calling out for the person to enter. The door opened and Draco and Harry walked in.

"I assume the mission was a success?" Voldemort asked as the two bowed to him.

"Yes," both answered and Harry held out his hand, Slytherin's Locket in it. He stared at it as if it was the most precious thing in the world, utterly fascinated, turning it around with his fingers.

Voldemort moved from his seat and walked over to them. He reached out with his left hand, the one that held the Ring, to take the locket from Harry's hand, but Harry reacted and it was most peculiar.

He sucked in a breath, held tightly onto the locket before he stared at it again. Raising his gaze to Voldemort's eyes, the young man bit his lip. Finally, he relinquished his grip and allowing the older man to take it.

The moment their fingers touched over the locket, they both felt a slight shock, as if sparks of magic passed between them. They stared bewildered at each other for a moment, until Voldemort closed his fingers over the locket and quickly turned back to his desk to put it into the wooden box.

He felt a mystifying turmoil of emotions inside; excitement, happiness, glee, satisfaction, and a sudden yearning to be near Harry again and to hold onto Slytherin's Locket at the same time. His magic seemed to reach out to the young man, coursing through himself, the ring on his left hand, the locket and Harry. Harry's magic reacted similar, as if connecting and pulling them together. Then he noticed a hissing coming from the nest;

{Master and little master, are you well?} The large serpent hissed.

Harry reacted at once by staring over to her, hissing {Hello Nagini, all is well. We are together.}

Voldemort shuddered and wrenched his attention back to his surroundings; taking one last look at the locket, he closed the wooden box and then soothed Nagini, {indeed, all is well with us. Go to sleep again.}

The boy seemed equally confused. He shook his head as if to clear cobwebs from his mind, absentmindedly reaching up to rub his scar, and frowned. Draco glanced from the Dark Lord to Harry to Nagini and back with a worried and puzzled look.

The Dark Lord narrowed his eyes. What was going on? Harry's peculiar behaviour and his own emotional and magical reaction confirmed his former suspicions. He had devised a theory to explain the strange connection between them: It looked like he had another Horcrux, one that was created inadvertently that Halloween night he tried to kill Harry the first time. It would explain why he felt the sudden urge to protect Harry, to lock him up in a vault or a fortress to keep him safe, just like Nagini and the other Horcruxes. Well, he would think about this conundrum later; now there were more pressing matters to attend to.

"Did you encounter any problems?" Voldemort asked. "Where was the locket?"
"We had some trouble at first," Draco answered. "Kreacher was giving us a little problem, but we were able to get him to do what we wanted. I think giving him the fake locket made things easier."

"Kreacher? Who's that? Why did you give him the false locket? Describe exactly what you did and what happened!" the older man asked urgently.

"Yes my Lord," said Draco nervously, when Harry remained uncharacteristically quiet, his gaze again shifting between Voldemort's face, the ring on his hand, the box with the locket and Nagini. "Kreacher is the age old, half dead, house elf living in Grimmauld Place. I called him to me and we showed him the false locket, asking whether he had seen a similar one. The elf got very agitated, shook his head like mad, pulled at his ears, cried hysterically and mumbled unintelligible words all the time. I commanded him sternly as the new Black family head of house to bring me the other locket.

"He said something about he could not, it being against master Regulus' orders. Then he wailed and told us that the smaller locket we had brought along had belonged to his master Regulus. So Harry said he could keep master Regulus' locket. That helped; he stopped his wailing and crying. I told him again to fetch the other one, which he did, very reluctantly I must say. It was hidden in the kitchen under a nest of rags in a cupboard. I cast a mild cleansing charm on it. That's all that happened."

Draco did not understand why, but his report obviously pleased the Dark Lord, so his face and tense shoulders relaxed. The man looked far away for a moment, thinking about what he had heard.

"Did you ask that elf how the locket came to be at Grimmauld Place, or about his former master?" Voldemort asked Draco.

"No, my Lord, I did not," Draco answered promptly.

"Very good," Voldemort nodded. "I am very pleased with you." His eyes stared at the locket in the box for a few seconds before he looked back at the boys. "Now Harry, as to the letter that you received, with the help of Severus and Remus, we figured out who the letter was talking about."

"Who?" Harry shook his head again as if clearing a fog.

"Horace Slughorn," Voldemort answered. He had been shaken when he had realized who exactly Dumbledore was talking about. His fears were confirmed and he knew that he had to find Slughorn before Dumbledore did. He had planned to do this after his talk with Harry, but checking on his safeguards had been too important. He looked at both boys with narrowed eyes. "And he will be your second mission."

The two straightened up and looked at him.

"I will need to acquire more information before I send you out," Voldemort told them.

"Yes my Lord," both murmured.

"I will call for you when I have collected the information," Voldemort said. "You are dismissed until further notice."

The two bowed before leaving the room. They wouldn't be called until three days later on Harry's birthday.

~... ~
The Dark Lord gave Harry and Draco a file from a drawer in his desk, addressing the two young men standing before him in his study seriously.

"Here is all the relevant information about your first target. Read it at once and then get going. I want both of you back here before sundown, with that man alive and well enough for interrogation."

Harry raised a brow, reaching for the file and opened it; Draco stepped close, his hands on Harry's waist, and looked in over his shoulder as Harry skimmed through the information. The file was about a potions master named Horace Slughorn, a retired potions teacher from Hogwarts, former Head of House of Slytherin.

Several photos showed him at different ages with a group of Students. To Harry's surprise, he recognized the young Tom Riddle in one of them, from 1943. Biting his lip, he kept himself from commenting; he only briefly locked eyes with Voldemort and raised a brow for half a second before looking back at the file; after all, he had strict orders to keep the Dark Lords past and muggle name a secret.

In another photo titled 'Potions Master Horace Slughorn with 5th, 6th, and 7th year students 1977' he could identify the young Severus Snape, Regulus Black and his mum, Lily Evans. Draco was especially interested in those from the seventies, as he recognized his godfather and other Slytherins, like his aunt Bellatrix and in one from 1971 his parents.

Flicking through the file, Harry came upon a list with different dates and addresses all over Britain together with matching maps and even some house sketches. Harry frowned and sent a questioning glance to his Lord.

"Slughorn often uses muggle houses and changes his residence almost every week, because he is so afraid my Death Eaters will visit him again," the Dark Lord sneered.

At this remark, Harry and Draco sniggered, "Wonder why he thinks that."

"Perhaps," Voldemort smirked, "it was because he got a missive from me a while ago that required his cooperation. Dolohov and Nott visited him once, after they had tracked him down in Peterborough. He noticed them coming and Apparated away on the spot. Therefore, although this file contains his present location as far as we know, it may be outdated already. He was reported in Budleigh Baberton a few weeks ago, and then he was in Gloucester; after that he was in Peterborough and yesterday he was seen in Abbotsbury. Hedwig will help you find him. On some of the photos are his personal signatures, which are sufficient to use for a tracking spell."

The Dark Lord flicked his wand at a filing cabinet at the wall, something shot out of a drawer into his hand. He continued to brief the slender, black clad young men for their first 'real' mission.

"Prepare yourselves well and cover each other's backs. Try to use as little magic as possible as you shall be working in a muggle village," he told them. "Casting several powerful, dark combat spells might alert the Ministry that magic was used where it is not expected. Alternatively, someone like Dumbledore might recognize your magical signature Harry, if he finds out that Slughorn is missing."

Harry looked up startled, while Draco rolled his eyes at his boyfriend, exasperated that the dark haired seeker always forgot things like this, though he knew it was because Harry had grown up in the muggle world and not in a pureblood household. Voldemort hid a smile at the exchange.

"Disillusion yourselves before you leave here; when you arrive, allow Hedwig to check the layout and for possible traps first," Voldemort continued. "He will most likely have intruder charms or wards up to warn him if a wizard enters the house or Apparates nearby." He paused and looked at Harry. "You said Hedwig can transport you through any kind of wards. Despite that talent, if he has
an intruder alarm, it will probably go off nonetheless.

"This is a stealth mission; you must watch your prey and then strike quick as a viper. Do not give him time to reach for his wand. You have been trained in muggle hand-to-hand combat in addition to your magical combat training. If needs be, hit him over the head with a book or a lamp. I do not particularly care how you do it. Incapacitate and bind Slughorn, either use this portkey, or let Hedwig flash you out."

Voldemort held out two short pieces of silver chain to them, explaining them. "The activation word is," he waved his hand over the chains and the word appeared for a moment glowing blue in the air above it, reading 'Lock up'. Harry and Draco nodded and put the portkeys in their left front pockets.

"It is set with a three second countdown. This portkey will transport up to five humans to a cell down in the dungeons; Slughorn shall get cell number two. You can open the cell and dungeon doors from the inside with {Open up} Harry," he told them. "Do not forget to check him for extra wands, portkeys and the like before you leave him there. One of you will keep watch and the other shall report to me. Should I be busy or absent, tell Goyle that my guest has arrived." He stopped and looked at them, seeing the confused looks on their faces.

"Goyle is in charge of the dungeons," he explained. "Slughorn is not to be tortured or harmed by any other then myself; keep him safe and alive, but don't let him escape, is that clear?"

Draco and Harry nodded, confirming their understanding with "Yes, Marvolo," and "Yes, my Lord," although they shared an irritated glance; honestly they could not imagine that this mission would be very difficult. Catching an old, retired teacher?

Voldemort noticed their expressions, and sighed, "Ah, the impatience and arrogance of youth. Don't get cocky boys and don't underestimate Slughorn. From the photos in this file, he looks like an old, kind, fat, bald, harmless little man, but he was the Head of Slytherin for many decades for a reason. Slughorn is a potions master and a wizard competent at Charms, Transfiguration, Mind Magic and the Dark Arts; so I advise you to consider this."

Harry and Draco glanced at each other again and then nodded towards Voldemort. "Yes sir, we will take care," Harry assured him.

Voldemort stared down into Harry's eyes, fixing him with his crimson gaze, determined to impress the seriousness of the matter upon the young man. "Do not forget Dumbledore," he cautioned. "If you leave soon, you should reach Slughorn before Dumbledore shows up. However, he might have changed his plans. He might have visited him already, he is on his way just now, or he might come right after you have left. You are no match for him yet if it comes to a serious fight."

At this, Harry scowled indignantly, while Draco looked alarmed at the prospect that they could end up facing off against someone as powerful as the headmaster.

Voldemort smirked at the predictable reaction of the boys. "Harry, you are famous for squirming out of the tightest situations; indeed you are amazingly powerful and strong for a boy your age and have trained a lot the past weeks, otherwise I would not send you out on this mission. Nevertheless, you should know best how powerful, talented, cunning, and dangerous Dumbledore is. Remember our latest clash at the Ministry?"

Harry remembered very well. He opened his mouth, but closed it again. What was there to argue? Nothing at all.
Draco had only overheard his aunt Bellatrix telling his mother and father about the battle in the Atrium of the Ministry of Magic, but it had sounded most impressive. With a giant fiery serpent, a water hurricane, shredded ice and glass shooting through the air like deadly projectiles, transfigured statues from the fountain of magical brethren jumping in to fight for Dumbledore.

Voldemort did not want to admit a weakness, but he feared Dumbledore for a reason and he didn't want these two teenagers to end up injured, dead or in Azkaban over such a mission. To capture and interrogate Slughorn was important to him, yes, but not worth the revealing of Harry's true alliance to Dumbledore or the possible death of the Malfoy heir. On the other hand, he could understand that Harry and Draco wanted to prove their worth to him with this mission.

"Between themselves, Dumbledore and Slughorn have about two hundred years of magical experience and knowledge over you. You must avoid a confrontation with them together at all costs, you can only lose and you will lose a lot," Voldemort continued with his lecture. "I'd rather have you break off the mission, hide and come back without Slughorn, where you could try again later, than losing the both of you. Hedwig can perhaps flash you out in time, but if you are seen and recognized at this place, attacking Slughorn, Dumbledore will know you have gone dark. And that would ruin so many plans, wouldn't it? I shall be most displeased." The last statement was emphasized.

At this warning, the two young men shuddered. "Yes Sir, we will be careful," said Harry, with Draco adding, "We will not fail you, my Lord."

Voldemort looked once more into their eyes, and then he walked back to his desk and sat down, picking up another report to read. "Dismissed," he said, eyes never leaving the report.

Both youths bowed and then swiftly left the Dark Lord's study, the door closing softly behind them.

~...~

Draco and Harry walked to the foyer, where Hedwig was perched on the railing of the main staircase waiting for them.

Draco asked, "So where is this village again, Harry?"

Harry flipped through the pages of the file to look up the coordinates of the village. "Name's Abbotsbury. Here is a map of the region, South West of England. It's a tiny village on the coast of Dorset, quite a few miles east of this other place, Budleigh Baberton, where he stayed before. Harry showed the map to Hedwig, she trilled enthusiastically. No problem at all."

"Indeed, I know these places," said Draco. "Budleigh Baberton is a small town on the south coast of Devon, about15 miles south of Exeter. We have a small summerhouse farther to the west near a cove for holidays. Abbotsbury in Dorset is famous for the Swannery. So the old man likes seaside resorts?"

"Yeah, you lucky rich pure bloods, "Harry teased. "I have never been anywhere except to London, to Diagon and Knockturn, then of course Hogwarts, the Weasley's Burrow and that place of the Quidditch World cup."

He gestured to the file and asked Draco, "Do you want to read this some more?"

Draco responded, "Yes, let's see what information there is; better safe than sorry." He took the file from Harry and looked it over. "Look, we have the layout of the house to study it before approaching it. It's a stone house at the outer edge of the village, on the land side, not on the beach. Not a manor, much smaller. There is a lane coming down from the hills towards the village. No front
garden, but a back garden with another building, a shed or stable."

He stopped and looked at it again before continuing. "There're lots of plants growing around the house, also climbing wine, good, which could be a possible cover for us. There're two outside doors, front and back next to the kitchen. Downstairs are two bigger rooms, one smaller room and a kitchen, a small bathroom, upstairs three bedrooms and another bathroom."

Harry smiled at his boyfriend, amused at the way Draco read everything out. He couldn't help but to tease him. "You don't have to study this like it's for NEWTs." Draco flushed and Harry chuckled before he continued.

"Look, Hedwig can flash us to the address," he said. "When we get there, we hide and she checks to make sure we have the right house before she flashes us in. We stun or body-bind him and are back here in ten minutes. Mission accomplished."

Draco shook his head at his boyfriend's behaviour. "Considering you were supposed to be in Slytherin, you seriously need to learn more Slytherin self-preservation. There's still too much Gryffindor tendencies in your heart... we need to get them out."

Harry shoved his shoulder playfully, his tone indignant. "Hey! I'm at my best when I have to make split second decisions while in mortal peril! I've faced and fought many dangerous foes, like a Troll, Fluffy, Acromantulas, Basilisk, Dementors, Dragon, those Merpeople and Grindylows in the lake, Hagrid's giant blast ended Screwt, the Sphinx and not to forget the Dark Lord several times. Remember the Tri-Wizard Tournament?"

Draco rolled his eyes at this statement and said, "Yes Harry, you do have much more experience with mortal danger than me and I know that I have no real idea of several adventures of yours, I only heard the rumour in the school. However, the Dark Lord warned us for a reason and giving out warnings is something he seldom does.

"My father and Severus already explained to you it's mostly learning by doing for his Death Eaters. Our Lord has high expectations. The team leader is responsible for scouting out the target, preparing, training and briefing his team and the tactic. If someone fails their mission, they are either captured or killed by the Aurors or severely punished or sometimes even killed by the Dark Lord."

Harry was quiet as he listened to Draco talk.

"Father nearly couldn't walk a day after that fiasco at the Ministry of Magic; he was so weak and shaking all over from the Cruciatus. He was punished hard, because it was his fault as team leader that everything went to hell."

"No, that's unfair," Harry interrupted Draco with a shake of his head. "I wouldn't say that. Bellatrix was too eager, she wanted a fight; your father was the one who tried to calm everybody down and keep that prophesy orb safe and in one piece." Here, he paused before continuing. "Not that it worked, but that's really not Lucius' fault. I deliberately smashed the shelves at first to create a diversion to escape and later on I smashed the prophesy orb simply because I didn't want your father or Voldemort to get it. At the time I wasn't planning on joining this side, so..."

Draco shrugged with one shoulder. "Well, that's in the past, although father was quite angry with you for a while, but he got over it; later he granted that he was impressed how you, a fifteen-year-old school boy, handled the situation once you realized it was a trap. Of course, they would have eventually caught and killed you and your friends, if that Order of Dumbledore's hadn't shown up."

Harry was quiet once more as he listened to Draco's blunt assessment of the battle at the Ministry. It
was interesting to hear the point of view from him, what with him being a Death Eater's son. Snape had already told him what his rashness had caused, but it was still a bit unnerving to hear it laid out like that from his boyfriend.

"It would've been a tough battle," Harry spoke slowly. "Or maybe not, but Lucius and the Death Eaters wouldn't have killed me. I'm not saying this to sound arrogant, but it is the truth. My magic is powerful and it reacts when I'm in danger. It started when I was a kid, and despite the fact that I had to keep it under wraps the last five years at Hogwarts, it hasn't lessened in the slightest. Your father may know more spells than I do, but when it comes down to it my magic is more powerful because I basically have very little restraint over it. Whatever I want to happen, my magic causes it to."

Draco frowned, and thought over it before he nodded slowly. "I'll give you that. However, my point is the Dark Lord now cares about you; your alliance is of great political value to him. It is why he treats you so differently from other followers. He warned us to be careful and we should."

"I know Draco," Harry said. "He told us specifically if the mission is compromised, then we are to abandon it and try again. I may have been joking earlier, but I'm not stupid. I've spent the past five years and more hiding who I truly am. I may have been placed in Gryffindor, but I am a snake, otherwise, I never would've survived the years."

"I forgot about that," Draco said sheepishly. "I'm sorry."

"It's fine," Harry waved him off. Seeing that his boyfriend still looked repentant, he stepped closer to him and pulled him into his body for a hug. "It really is fine Draco."

Draco buried his face in Harry's chest and sighed as he looked up into the green eyes staring back at him. Only around him, and his father, could he drop the Malfoy mask and allow his emotions to be seen. "I'm just worried. This is our first mission and it is a very important one. The other Death Eaters would be envious if they knew the Dark Lord trusted us with something like this. They'd probably attack us and they will if we fail."

At the incredulous look in his boyfriend's eyes, he raised an eyebrow. "Have you not considered that? Some of the other Death Eaters resent you and they'd love to see the cocky Harry Potter and Lucius Malfoy's precious son get knocked down a peg or two. As long as we are strong, ambitious and successful in our missions, everything is fine and they must respect us. If we misstep, there are consequences. The Dark Lord cannot coddle or favour you or me, especially me, unduly in front of the other followers; otherwise, dissonance will brew in the ranks."

Harry looked thoughtful; he had not considered this and was amazed at Draco's insight in the inner workings of the Dark Order. 'Well, that must be the result of growing up in a dark pureblood household as the son of an inner circle member,' he thought to himself.

"I want to avoid our Lord's wrath and you can't tell me you'd enjoy it?" Draco continued.

Harry shook his head as he remembered the last time he faced Voldemort's wrath.

"His concern is valid. What if we flash to this address and land right in front of Dumbledore as he opens the door?" Draco said as he pulled back from Harry's embrace. It was nice, but they needed to focus. He walked away and started rummaging around in a cabinet that stood in an alcove underneath the staircase.

"Yes, but our Lord needn't have worried so much. We are both Seekers, quick and built for speed and like he said, we've trained really hard the past weeks," Harry said confidently, wondering what Draco was looking for. "What are you looking for?"
"Time for your costume, oh great and mighty Golden Boy," Draco turned around with a smirk. "In this cabinet are masks for us, try this one." He held out a silver mask to Harry while he held another.

Harry scowled even as he took the mask; he didn't like being called 'Golden Boy'. He placed the mask on and made a face at it. He hated the feel of the cold metal on his skin. The masks were charmed to stay on the face even through sudden or violent movements.

"Harry, you will have to get used to this. The masks are there because you know your face has to be hidden. My light blond hair is a dead giveaway too, that's why we are to wear these regular, Black Death Eaters robes and cowls that cover everything," Draco explained. "We will disillusion ourselves of course, but should Slughorn get a chance to fight back, or worst case, if Dumbledore suddenly turns up, a Finite Incantatem could reveal at least me, so it is safer to wear such disguises to begin with. Now, how do you plan to do this?"

Harry smiled and chuckled, "Well if I should run into Dumbledore by accident, I will simply tell him that I practice early for Halloween, you know trying out my brand new costume!"

Draco raised a perfect eyebrow at this ridiculous statement, even as a chuckle escaped him. "Indeed, they sell original Death Eater regalia at Madam Malkin's or Weasleys Wizard Wheezes nowadays; and you just happened to change your mind that you wanted to visit old professor Slughorn today because he liked your mum; you didn't want to frighten him at all; yes, you'll be very convincing." He had a hard time to keep a straight face saying this nonsense in a perfectly level voice of reason.

Harry sniggered, but quickly sobered again and thought for a moment about their job. He then consulted the description of the village and the house again.

"We will flash with Hedwig to the outskirts of Abbotsbury; let's say half a mile from the given address, up here in those wooded hills overlooking the village and the sea," said Harry pointing at the map. "Then we walk downhill and survey the area. Muggles won't notice us. If a muggle on foot or in a car comes by, we simply step very close to the roadside, stay still for a minute and blend in with the hedges on the roadside." He paused and looked at the blond. "You do know what a muggle car is, and that they can drive real fast, do you Draco?"

Draco nodded and Harry smiled briefly before continuing.

"Slughorn will most likely not get an apparition alarm, because we will simply not have apparated in. Hedwig will check upon not only the house, but if Dumbledore's there or not. Then she comes back to report, before hopefully without complications flashing us into the house, upstairs if Slughorn is downstairs or the other way around."

Draco took the file again and scanned the next page. He remarked, "According to this report, he has always used a standard intruder alarm or proximity ward while staying in other houses; they were set around the edge of the property, if there was a hedge or wall, and never more than one hundred meters in any direction."

"Yes, that's why I think we should simply walk down the lane until we are quite close to the house," Harry nodded. "There is no garden hedge, fence or wall creating a barrier to the street, so I hope he has set the wards on the front door and windows and not on the street. He more than likely has set wards to protect the garden entrance too."

Draco agreed, "Well, Hedwig should be able to tell you exactly in which room he is. As soon as we know and that he is alone, we flash in and attack."

Harry pondered over which simple, neutral magic spells to use for maximum effect; after all the Dark
Lord had told them to avoid dark curses if possible.

"I guess you or I will summon his wand before he has a chance to reach for it. I will cast *Petrificus Totalus*, you cast *Incarcerous* right after that, and then we'll grab him and portkey out," Harry spoke. "Should there be any trouble, such as him managing to raise his wand or a shield against us, I will attack him physically from the back and knock him out, while you distract him with some foolish wand waving and snide remarks from the front."

Harry chuckled at the image; he would always remember Snape's speech in his very first potions class.

"Just please be careful not to cast anything really nasty like *Sectumsempra* at him that could kill me when I am just about to jump on his back, will you?" Harry implored Draco theatrically, who rolled his eyes and taunted right back, drawling.

"As a pureblood, I am able to distinguish between charms, hexes, jinxes and curses, you do know that? Afraid to get another scar, scar head?"

"If I do, will you kiss it?" Harry teased and a flush worked its way up Draco's neck and face.

"Now is not the time Harry," Draco said as he tried to get rid of the flush.

Harry smiled and shook his head, enjoying the banter with the gorgeous, arrogant blond. "Alright, then we grab him just the same way and each other and use the portkey or Hedwig will flash us out, won't you girl?"

Hedwig's trilling reassured them.

Harry nibbled at his bottom lip while picturing the scene in his mind and the different ways it could play out. Then he pushed his dark hair out of his face with one hand and said, "If we have really bad luck, I don't know, like if we are separated while fighting with Slughorn, or someone comes to his aid, one of us must jump him and use the portkey to get him out of that house to the dungeon as fast as possible.

"Inside the cell, there is time enough to subdue Slughorn, although I would prefer it if we have him in a full body bind or stunned as soon as possible so he cannot try anything. The other one of us flashes out with Hedwig and comes back to the Manor this way. Hedwig will be in the house all the time, she is clever, and she could grab Slughorn alone and drop him in the dungeon cell if necessary."

Harry tried to imagine what could go wrong and continued, "If one of us should get stunned or knocked out otherwise, Hedwig will rescue him and the other escapes with the portkey, preferably with Slughorn in tow. In the worst case scenario, if we both should be knocked out, Hedwig has to flash back and forth to get all three of us out. What do you think?"

Draco considered all possibilities and nodded, "Indeed, we have a plan, and everything covered. No prisoner can get out of the dungeons on his own, Goyle keeps the outer dungeon door locked at all times. In addition, there is a ward on that door that only allows someone with the dark mark, or the Parseltongue override password, which the Dark Lord told you, through from the inside. A prisoner can leave the dungeon hall only when someone with the dark mark leads them by the arm or other physical contact. Does Hedwig know exactly where the dungeon cells are?"

Draco and Harry looked questioningly at Hedwig. She bobbed her head and trilled an amused note. What did they think she was, an incompetent flaming chicken?
They prepared to leave. Cowls and masks up, they checked each other that no telltale strands of hair were visible. Each had one dagger in a sheath on their belts and another hidden inside their black dragonhide boots. The wands were at the ready in their wand holsters, secured against the Summoning Charm while another lay hidden in their boots on the opposite side of the dagger. They had left their normal wands in a drawer in the cabinet under the staircase marked 'Wands' for safe keeping.

Both checked the front pocket of their robe with the chain portkey again. They cast the Disillusion charm on each other. When both were ready, Harry put his arms tightly around Draco's waist and Draco's arms went around Harry's neck while Hedwig jumped onto Harry's shoulder and dug her claws into his outer robe. Harry smirked down at his boyfriend, who was blushing furiously from the close proximity, but he said nothing and they pushed their feelings away, concentrating on the mission.

In an instant, all three vanished, reappearing invisible on a narrow lane between lush hedges. They noticed that they stood beside a copse of trees on a windswept hillside, with a breathtaking view of the rolling countryside and the glittering sea in the distance. The brisk wind chased white and grey clouds overhead. A loud, strange noise sounded far off.

"What's that?" Harry whispered into Draco's ear, surprised, but trying to be as quiet as possible, in case there were any muggles around the next bend in the lane.

"That's the honking of hundreds of swans from the Swannery," Draco whispered as he ignored the shiver that travelled through his body at Harry's voice and lips at his ear. He pulled out of the hug and turned Harry a bit, though he kept a hold of one of Harry's hand in his. "Do you see those trees over there, with the edge of surf and water glittering behind it? That's the lagoon of Chesil Bank and Fleet Nature Reserve."

"Thanks, I never heard such a noise before," said Harry. "Hedwig, please fly to the house where Slughorn is supposed to be and check if everything is ok, will you? Draco and I will walk down the lane; we should be there in eight minutes."

Hedwig took on the shape of an owl and soared into the sky towards the village.

The young man looked around them and started walking downhill. Draco continued to explain in a low voice, "Now at the end of July there are so many swans breeding there. The muggle caretakers herd them together for the yearly round up around this time, to weight and mark them. I must concede that the muggles take good care of the birds; I visited once a few years back with Father. There is also a lovely herb garden with some common potion ingredients and a duck decoy for catching ducks the muggle way."

Harry looked at him incredulously, but Draco couldn't see his expression because they were Disillusioned, so he whispered. "You and your dad visited here? A muggle place... where they breed birds? That's a little hard to believe."

Draco lifted his nose in the air and answered quietly, but haughtily, "The Malfoys are wizards, we are purebloods, but first and foremost we are Britons, well since 1066, when our ancestor came here from Normandy as a baron. We generally dislike and distrust muggles and we want to keep the magical world hidden and safe from them. That does not mean that we are ignorant or that we don't recognize that muggles have made some valuable contributions and inventions or that we cannot make money using the muggle economy.

"My family values beauty, art, history and tradition. Malfoys appreciate beauty and skill in a painting, in furniture, in decorations, in classical music or in nature, in plants or animals. Harry, you
have visited our manor and the grounds several times. Did you not take notice of the high level of artisanship everywhere? Like in the gardens, inside or outside, such as the flower beds and the sculptured hedges, the white peacocks?"

Continuing more enthusiastically, but still in a low voice, Draco said, "During the past summers, my father and I travelled around the UK and Europe. I've seen the British and Natural History Museums and St. Paul's in London, Stonehenge, Hadrian's Wall, Snowdonia, Bath, Oxford, and St. Ives in Cornwall. Notre Dame, the Louvre and Musée d'Orsay in Paris, the Bretagne and Normandy, Rome's Piazza Navona with the fountain of four rivers, the Colosseum, Forum Romanum, Pantheon, the Aqueducts, Catacombs, the Piazzas and Basilicas, Granadas hidden gardens and the Alhambra, to name a few examples of superior craftsmanship or fine arts to enjoy."

Draco tugged a bit on Harry's arm and turned him in the direction where the honking of the Swans originated and explained, "These swans there are beautiful, graceful, they are wild and free. The muggle caretakers do not keep them confined in pens like chicken all year round. They provide some rearing pens for the breeding swans in summer, were they put those swans that have trouble of some kind and feed them up, until they can take care of themselves again.

"These wild swans and ducks come here since thousands of years to lay their eggs and rear their cygnets. Since the end of the Ice Age, this lagoon exists; this is an area especially attractive to waterfowl. Of course, in former centuries, the muggles living at the monastery caught a large percentage of the waterfowl and killed them for food. Where did you think the swans came from that are mentioned as being served on the kings and nobles tables in the middle ages? Today this is a nature reserve. So yes, my father thought I would like to see the Swannery; it was a charming experience."

Harry didn't answer at first; he was busy collecting his jaw from the floor and reevaluating his opinion of the Malfoys and purebloods in general, again. He did not known much of the world or history of his homeland, having left muggle school at age eleven and the Dursleys had never taken him along anywhere except that one time to the zoo. In Hogwarts, they did not teach such general history of Britain or the planet earth. Or he had slept through it, should Binns ever have mentioned something different then Goblins rebellions. Obviously, purebloods educated their children in other subjects then dark arts curses or how to dance at a ball or which fork to use for which course at a formal dinner.

Finally, he managed to mumble, not really up to sarcasm, "Uhm, yes, thanks for the lesson, Professor Malfoy, I didn't know that. But, how did you avoid to, you know, how did you fit in?"

"You mean how we dressed to fit in with the other visitors?" Draco asked. When Harry nodded, he continued. "Well, father knows how to dress so that he appears like an affluent, important muggle executive. You do know that the Italian Armani family is wizards, doing businesses in both worlds? That father has connections to wizard controlled muggle companies that fill our vaults, not just solely wizard businesses?"

Harry sighed, again, no, he hadn't known this. What Draco had talked about in the last five minutes was so completely outside of his own experiences. From fourth year, the Quidditch World Cup and the Tri-Wizard Tournament, he remembered that there were wizards all over the world and that there were at least two other schools in Europe, Durmstrang and Beauxbatons. Perhaps Hermione had mentioned that there was a Salem institute in the U.S.?

He vowed to himself that he would learn more about the world than just fighting to survive! When he was finished with Hogwarts and the war was won, he would travel, visit new places, meet new people, and explore new possibilities! He had vaults full of gold, and he would have time to travel.
After all, he did not need to find a job to earn money like Ron, as soon as NEWTS were over.

How did one usually travel to other countries in Europe or to other continents, like Asia, America or Africa wizard style? Only with a portkey, like it was organized at the Quidditch World Cup? Alternatively, was there such a thing as an international floo network? How far could a person safely Apparate under normal circumstances?

What about foreign languages? As he had not continued in muggle secondary school, Harry had not learnt French, Spanish, Italian or German like a normal muggle student. Was there a translation charm to understand other people who did not speak English? By the way, just how had those students from Durmstrang and Beauxbatons managed during their stay at Hogwarts? He had never met them in class, because they were seventh years, while he was a fourth year. Victor and Fleur, the other champions, had spoken some English, he remembered, but with a heavy accent.

He made a mental list of questions for his teachers. Severus and Lucius would perhaps not faint from shock that 'Potter' expressed a sudden interest in other subjects besides Martial Arts, Dark Arts and DADA, since they got on much better this summer, but they would be surprised. Of course, Harry could ask the twins, Neville or Draco, although he was very ashamed and embarrassed about his lack of knowledge and that this kind of questions had never crossed his mind before. It didn't fit at all with his self-image of a strong, tough, dangerous, powerful persona. Knowledge was power, and like Voldemort had told him years ago, power was all that mattered, there was no good or evil, only power.

Something bothered him, so he asked, "Draco, you mentioned a lot of muggle places you visited. You sound as if you have some respect for their work, buildings and arts. I thought you hated and despised all muggles? In the past years, you always called Hermione a mudblood. How come you have so different opinions?"

Draco smiled, which Harry could not see of course; patting his boyfriend's shoulder, he answered. "Harry, you have revealed that you wore a mask, that you played a certain role the past years at Hogwarts. Don't you think I played a role as well? I can respect and admire certain aspects of muggle culture and at the same time dislike an insufferable know-it-all like Granger. At Hogwarts, it is all about politics, this is not simple student house rivalry.

"To insult the muggleborn students, especially of Gryffindor, is expected of me, as a Malfoy, a pureblood and a Slytherin. It is our way, the dark pureblood students way, to protest against Dumbledore's policy in general to allow the light wizards and muggleborns increasing influence in Hogwarts and the Wizarding world, while at the same time treating valued, age old wizard traditions like dirt. He upsets the balance of Magic, between light and dark. That's what this war is about, after all. And about those muggle places, well all those places I mentioned have a wizard part and ancient wizard history too. Many wizards today and in the past hide amongst the muggles in plain sight."

"OK," said Harry, "thank you. I think I understand better now. Now shush, we are almost there."

While they talked, they had walked towards the small village. Everything looked like it should be. They were glad that Nott or Dolohov, whoever had composed the file and kept watch on Slughorn, had provided them with a map that was so accurate. Behind the hedges were pastures, a few sheep and horses grazed peacefully. The weather was fine, windy, the sun coming out behind the clouds ever so often. The lane wound its way downhill towards Abbotsbury and they could now see the first houses and a car parked at the side of the road. Most of the houses were built out of roughly hew yellow, beige brownish or grayish stones, with brownish tiles on the roof.

Draco and Harry stopped in the shadow of a tree besides the last hedge. From here, they could see the house where Slughorn was supposed to live. The road was empty. Harry used his mind...
connection to call Hedwig and she appeared at once, settling down on Harry's shoulder.

"What did you find, Hedwig?" Harry asked.

\There is one human in the house; a short, round, bald man. He matches the photos of Slughorn. He is in the front living room, besides the hall, opposite from the kitchen, playing the piano\ reported Hedwig.

Harry repeated this to Draco, "She says that Slughorn is alone in the house, front living room."

"Well, let's go then!" Draco said and he released Harry's hand and moved his own back around Harry's neck, which caused Harry to immediately place his own hands around Draco's waist, returning the hug enthusiastically. Hedwig dug her claws into Harry's shoulder and Apparated all three of them without a sound inside Slughorn's temporarily home into a corner of the upstairs hall.

They waited with bated breath for an intruder alarm to go off, but it appeared luck was on their side as Hedwig's method of transport was not recognized as the same as a wizard's Apparation... everything remained quiet.

~...~

They moved like ghosts through the upper floor of the house, finding all of the rooms empty. Silently they crept down the stairs, wands at the ready. Their target was in the front living room and they could hear faint piano music. Draco recognized the piece as the Hymn of Joy from L. Beethoven. Suddenly they heard a Crack from the street at the same moment an alarm sounded all around them.

"Fuck," Harry breathed and he reached out to grab hold of Draco's hand, which immediately squeezed his.

"Shit," Draco echoed, even as he was mentally reprimanding himself for the bad language out of habit.

"Up again," Harry whispered as he leaned into his boyfriend before they hastily backed up until they were halfway up the staircase there they crouched down to watch. Hedwig had balanced herself on the top of the railing of the stairs, a few feet from them, listening intently.

Suddenly it was silent again in the house; the alarm had been cut off. Someone knocked on the door and they heard footsteps followed by the clicking of a lock; Slughorn obviously was at the front door. The sounds of voices drifted towards the crouching young men and the two shared a look; Dumbledore really was here to visit Slughorn. What bad luck.

~...~

"Horace, how are you?" Dumbledore questioned as he looked over at the man before looking around. "I must say you choose a lovely village to retire too." His greeting was enthusiastic and he was smiling like a Cheshire cat, while his light blue eyes sparkled at full blast. He wore no robes, possibly because he visited a muggle village in broad daylight, instead he wore an old fashioned, dark blue velvet muggle suit with a purple undershirt and orange pattern around the hems.

"Not so well, weak chest and Rheumatism too," Slughorn said. "You know, old age. Abbotsbury is a charming village, yes indeed." He paused before he continued. "Albus, please spare us the preambles. What exactly is it that you need? It must be very important for you to find me as I haven't made it easy for anyone to track me down."

"I want you to take up the post of the Potions teacher at Hogwarts," Dumbledore said.
"The answer's no," Slughorn shook his head. "No... N.O., do you understand?"

Draco, Harry and Hedwig were surprised to hear somebody speak like that to Dumbledore.

"You will not persuade me to return to Hogwarts. I'm an old man. I have earned the right to retire. And I happen to like to visit different seaside resorts, interesting places. Good-bye Albus, have a nice day. Go visit the Swannery, if you are here already," Slughorn answered curtly, trying to close the door.

"Horace, wait, listen to me, Harry Potter is at Hogwarts. Lily's son," Dumbledore tried another argument to sway Slughorn's opinion.

"Yes, I know Harry Potter is a student at Hogwarts, everybody knows that. Wish him good luck and success in school. He does not need me. Look for another potions master. A good day to you!" With a snap of his wand, Slughorn let the door slam shut in the frustrated headmasters face.

Then the short, fat wizard quickly swished his wand left and right, up and down, murmuring incantations under his breath, obviously locking and warding the door with the strongest spells he could manage. Grumbling angrily, he turned and went back into the living room, shutting the door behind him.

~... ~

After Dumbledore left, Harry and Draco waited for a minute. Everything was quiet. Harry mentally asked Hedwig, "Is Dumbledore gone? Where is he?"

Hedwig flashed out of the room; she headed to the roof, making sure she couldn't be seen and watched Dumbledore's progress. Seconds later, she flashed back in and spoke mentally to Harry. *Dumbledore walked up the street in the direction of the road crossing, before he stopped beside the bus stop. There, he left by Disapparation.*

Harry thanked her and gently tugged at Draco's hand, causing the blond to look at him. He inclined his head downwards to indicate that they could move again. "Come," he whispered. Both stayed very close together, as they could not really see each other well while disillusioned, this was better than bumping into each other by accident.

They tiptoed down the stairs and along the hall to the living room door. Each took a deep breath to quell their nervousness; both were quivering with excitement and anticipation. It was now or never.

Hedwig fluttered behind them and perched on a dark, wooden coat and hat stand. After making sure the Disillusion Charm was still in place, Harry reached out to grab Draco's arm again; he squeezed it reassuringly and leaned in whispering "OK, in, now!"

Draco pushed the living door open forcefully, and found the old, fat, man standing in a cluttered living room, in front of a piano, looking out of the window onto the street.

"Good morning professor Slughorn," Draco said conversationally.

The man's head turned around alarmed, coming to see who had disturbed him. He reached for his wand lying beside the armchair on the side table, but Draco had already cast a quick Accio on the man's wand to prevent just that. He deftly caught it, showing his seeker skill, and quickly stuffed the wand into his belt for safe keeping.

Slughorn was no fool; Harry would have to give him that. Although he could only see a shimmer of movement at the door and had heard a few words by a young male voice, he concluded correctly that
there were servants of the Dark Lord in his house.

Jumping around and backing up a step against the window, holding his hands up to show that he was unarmed, he gasped out, "Please, don't kill me. I'll do whatever you want. I'm a pureblood myself, I agree with the Dark Lord, I'm sorry I did not answer his missive at once, I'd be very happy to serve him now!"

"Perhaps you may be useful," Draco drawled, sounding perfectly calm and poise.

"Yes," Harry picked up, "we have a proposal for you."

"Do you indeed? Yes? What is it?" Slughorn asked quickly, ready to agree to anything that would prevent his death... shame it wouldn't help.

"Well," Harry said, while casting the full Body-Bind voicelessly, "we invite you for tea."

At the same time, Draco yelled, "Incarcerous!"

As the spells hit Slughorn, he fell like a log, but before he crashed onto the floor, Draco shot across the room and caught him. "Quick, the portkey!" he whispered, struggling to hold the fat little man.

Harry rushed to his side, pulling the chain out of his pocket with his left hand and pressing it against Slughorn's bare throat, while throwing his right arm around Slughorn's and Draco's shoulders, he pulled all of them close together. Draco shifted his grip to touch the silver chain too, and with a whispered 'Lock up', they were ripped away by a feeling like a hook at their navels, but not before hearing a sharp Crack, watching the door bang open against the wall and Dumbledore storming into the room, a red stunner flashing straight towards them. The same time Hedwig shrieked a mental warning to her young master...

\Watch out! Dumbledore is here!\~...

Harry and Draco returned to Malfoy Manor, flushed with success and high on adrenaline. They landed together with their victim in a jumbled heap on the floor in the badly lit dungeon cell, just as planned. Draco jumped up and managed to entangle himself first from the coils of arms and legs. He quickly cancelled the Disillusion Charm before turning to cast a diagnostic charm on Slughorn, who lay helpless and immobile on the floor, trussed up like a Christmas turkey, glaring daggers at the supposed Death Eater standing above him.

Draco bent down and searched the man's pockets. He found not much; a potion bottle was in an inside pocket of his jacket and he carried a small knife in another pocket. The crème silk handkerchief in the breast pocket of Slughorn's vest appeared harmless, but the detection spell showed that it was a transfigured wand! Draco snatched up the handkerchief and put it on the floor.

When he waved his wand over it with "Finite Incantatem", the transfiguration was cancelled instantly and a reddish brown, short wand lay in its place.

"Great Draco, that's cool; you'll have to teach me that spell to detect a hidden wand," remarked Harry, who had scrambled up by now and was visible again, brushing down his robes and checking for his weapons.

"Yes, later," Draco answered his heart still racing, while he summoned the wand from the floor and deftly caught it. "Merlin Harry, you do have the most luck possible. We just escaped in time! Did you see Dumbledore come back?"
Hedwig flashed into the cell at that moment and landed on Harry's shoulder, trilling excitedly. "Oh hey girl, good to have you back." He greeted his phoenix familiar, before he answered Draco.

"Yeah, he must have felt us in the house; somehow he got suspicious, so he returned, without setting of that intruder alarm when he apparated into the hall. Hedwig told me that he went down the street and apparated away. Clever old fox, I have to admit that." He stopped before he looked at Hedwig. "Hedwig, what did Dumbledore do?"

Hedwig trilled her answer, which of course only Harry understood, so he explained to Draco, "Hedwig says that Dumbledore looked around the living room and cast diagnostic spells, then walked through the house and briefly looked into all the other rooms, he did not find anything that interested him, so he Disapparated again."

Draco frowned, musing over what Dumbledore could have discovered, thinking out loud. "I suppose he will have picked up traces from our spells, he will know magic has been used in the living room. Luckily we only cast three spells altogether, and nothing dark or very powerful, just as planned. We must hope he cannot identify our magical signatures from this little amount of magic used. Well, it should help that we used other wands, because as Headmaster he will have records or samples about the feeling of our 'normal' magic in School. He has no reason to connect both of us to this abduction; he will think it was a random Death Eater."

Harry thought a moment if Dumbledore could identify them otherwise and asked, "Do you think he can he feel magical auras and recognize a person that way? I don't think so; otherwise he would have known for example that the Dark Lord's spirit possessed Quirrell in first year or that the Alistair Moody in fourth year was really Barty, a supposedly dead man."

Draco raised a brow in question. "Barty…who is Barty?"

"Didn't you know?" Harry asked, very surprised; he had thought these events of fourth year were common knowledge among the Death Eaters. Maybe Lucius hadn't told Draco, or perhaps the Dark Lord did not explain what happened in detail to his followers that came to the graveyard.

"The Moody that was our DADA teacher was in reality Barty Crouch junior, the son of Barty Crouch from the Ministry of Magic," Harry explained.


"Yes, it's quite a story. I'll explain more when we have some free time. Now I think we should look after our guest and tell the Dark Lord we are back," Harry said, turning towards Slughorn, who looked up at them with an expression of confusion, anger and fear.

Harry went over the last minutes in his head; did they give away who they were? Fuck, yes, right after landing in the cell, they had used each other's first names once and had talked about Dumbledore and magic at school, so he would know they were Hogwarts' students.

Did Slughorn already suspect that the young man in Black Death Eater robes and mask called Harry was probably Harry Potter? Oh what shock, the poor old man.

Harry sniggered and sent an evil smirk at their fat captive, who lay on the cold, dirty dungeon floor, stretched out stiffly in the full body-bind and tightly bound with strong ropes, unable to move a finger or to speak. It must be very uncomfortable and frightening. Harry suddenly was very glad he had decided to choose the dark side, that prisoner on the floor could have been him, if things hadn't changed so profoundly.
"Do you want to go or shall I?" he asked Draco.

Draco looked up from studying their captive. "I'd rather stay here, to admire the view, and keep him safe of course," he drawled with feigned aloofness, and walked nonchalantly over to the left side of the cell. He used his wand to levitate the stiff body of Slughorn onto the cot mounted to the wall on the right side and settled down on the opposite cot. He sat in a relaxed, confident pose with his wand dangling loosely in his hand, leaning against the wall, with one leg straight out and the other bent up, foot flat on the cot.

Harry chuckled, "OK, I'll be back soon." He turned to walk away, but quickly turned back and walked over to Draco. A quick wave of his hand cancelled the charm holding the mask in place, allowing him to move it enough to press a brief kiss to the blond's lips.

"Go," Draco said as he pulled back from the kiss.

Harry chuckled and walked towards the bars that separated the cell from the hallway. He had realized that Draco was afraid of Voldemort and therefore preferred not to be the messenger. With a softly hissed *Open up*, he opened the cell door, closing it tightly with a clang behind him. With a last look over his shoulder towards Draco and Slughorn, Harry marched down the dimly lit dungeon hallway, ignoring the ranting of a prisoner, who yelled for the person in charge. He chuckled darkly, and continued on his way.

When he reached the outer dungeon door, he again used the Parseltongue override password to open it. As soon as he stepped through, he found himself with a wand trust in his face and a fist grabbing the front of his robe.

"Halt! Who are you?" Mr. Goyle stared into his face, demanding gruffly. "You did not enter the dungeon from here."

"Easy, Mr. Goyle; it's me, Harry Potter," Harry finished removing his mask and smirked at the guard. "I delivered a special guest to cell number two with a portkey. Surely the Dark Lord informed you to expect another prisoner today?"

Goyle lowered his wand and backed off at once after recognizing Harry Potter. "Indeed, he mentioned that. Was it one prisoner or two? I noticed that there are two persons in that cell just now. Is everything alright?"

'Interesting,' thought Harry, 'so there are monitoring charms on the cellblocks.'

"There is one prisoner in cell number two, the other one in there at the moment is Draco Malfoy. He is guarding the prisoner until I have reported to the Dark Lord," Harry spoke out loud. "The prisoner is a Mr. Slughorn. Perhaps you know him? Anyways, he is not to be harmed or tortured; we have strict orders from our Lord to keep him in good condition. Do you understand?"

"Yes, alright Mr. Potter," answered Mr. Goyle. "Does he need anything right away, healing potion, water, food? Otherwise he will get his meal in the evening with the normal routine, well if he is still alive this evening, who knows..."

"Thank you, but no. I think it can wait until I have reported to our Lord," remarked Harry over his shoulder, already climbing up the stairs towards the first floor.

He knocked three times, and waited for the 'Enter' before he made his way inside. He saw that the man held an audience with a few Death Eaters and he bowed the moment he was in front of the
"I am sorry to disturb you my Lord," he said, "but I thought it imperative to tell you the mission was a success."

"What of my... guest?" Voldemort was pleased with the news and a cruel smirk came on his face, scaring his followers.

"Exactly where you wanted him," Harry answered. "He is being kept over by my partner and a guard."

"Very well," Voldemort nodded. "Was there any trouble?"

"Some my Lord," Harry answered truthfully. "He was there, but it mattered not. We were able to carry out your orders without fully compromising ourselves."

Voldemort understood the message and nodded at Harry. "You are dismissed as well as your partner. I am very pleased with the both of you."

"Thank you my Lord," Harry murmured before he bowed once more and left the room.

Voldemort turned back to his few followers. "This meeting will be cut short. I will call upon you at a later date to finish this discussion. You are dismissed."

"Yes my Lord," chorused throughout and the Death Eaters bowed before leaving.

Voldemort smirked as he gathered his robes, pulling them around him, before making his way out of his rooms, warding the door securely behind him, and continued to the dungeons. He nodded at Goyle, before he entered the cell which housed his prisoner. He closed the door behind him and looked over his former teacher.

"Hello Horace," Voldemort said, he smirked as he watched the old man's face pale as fear filled his eyes.
Declarations and Defections

Chapter Notes

Sorry this took so long to get out...I really am...so...enjoy...

Disclaimer: Harry Potter and all its affiliates belong to JK Rowling, Bloomsbury/Scholastic and Warner Bros. Studios. No copyright or trademark infringement is intended and no money is being made from this.

My disclaimer: If I owned Harry Potter; Ginny would’ve died in the CoS, Harry would’ve broken free of Dumbledore’s manipulations and Molly’s overbearing, Sirius wouldn’t have died, Hermione never would’ve dated Ron, Harry would’ve ditched Ron in fourth year, and most importantly, there’d be lots and lots of Harry/Draco slash.

"Talking"
'Thinking'
Letter or commentary/introduction
{Parsssel Tongue}

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Last time on RDA;

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"Hello Horace," he said and he smirked as he watched the man's face pale as fear filled his eyes.

After Harry had left Voldemort, he had fetched Draco from the dungeons and Hedwig had flashed the two back to the living room in Potter Manor.

"Can you believe it?" Draco turned to his boyfriend. "We just successfully completed our first mission."

"Technically it was our second," Harry smiled. "But I know what you mean. I think I'm still feeling a little adrenalin rush from the whole thing."

"You know," Draco stepped close to Harry and wrapped his arms around his neck, "your birthday's
"Hmmm," Harry smiled, "that's true. Did you have something in mind?"

"Well," Draco said as he kissed Harry. "I had this really excellent thought."

"Oh?" Harry asked as he sensually licked his bottom lip, smiling when he saw the blond's eyes darken. "And what was it?"

"It's your birthday present," Draco said between kisses, "and it involves me, your bed and no clothes."

"I like the sound of that," Harry groaned just before he captured Draco's lips in a kiss. He ran his hands over Draco's body, not only in passion but to reassure himself that the blond was ok. After they had gotten back, getting the message to Voldemort had been his top priority, so he hadn't time to check him over, but now he could and he was happy that his boyfriend was ok.

The kiss soon turned heated as Draco tightened his arms around Harry's neck. Harry's arms went from around Draco's waist down to his ass; he cupped them, lifting Draco off the floor, allowing the blond to wrap his legs around Harry's waist. He moved them until they came to the couch where he sat down, leaving Draco straddling him.

Draco ran his hands through his boyfriend's shoulder length dark locks as he angled his own head to deepen the kiss. Feeling Harry's erection below him, he pushed down, grinding his own hardening cock against Harry's. He moaned when Harry gripped his waist and pushed back.

Harry pulled his lips from Draco's to trail kisses down the jaw and the endless column of the blond's neck. He knew Draco was enjoying his ministrations from the sounds of pleasure he was letting out; he nipped and sucked on Draco's pulse point, drawing a loud moan from him. He then moved one of his hands under Draco's shirt, toying with the nipples; he rubbed and pinched them before moving his hand downward. A twitch of his fingers, which let out a tiny pulse of magic, and Draco's trousers were unbuttoned and unzipped, giving him the room to slip his hand inside and wrap it around the blond's hard length. Draco's arms tightened their hold on Harry's shoulder in response.

"Fuck," Draco hissed when he felt Harry's hand on his cock. He thought his dreams were amazing, but they couldn't compare to the real thing. The feel of Harry's hand on his cock was beyond that; pure pleasure rushed through his body as heat slowly built. "Harry…"

Harry smirked against Draco's neck as he stroked his cock; he twisted his hand at the head pulling a whimper from Draco even as the blond started thrusting into his hand.

"You look and feel so good," Harry whispered against Draco's neck and he increased his pace.

As he thrust into Harry's hand, Draco slipped his own down Harry's body. He palmed Harry's groin, before he impatiently fumbled with the buttons to open Harry's trousers. Eagerly, he slipped his hand inside, wrapping it around the straining member. He moaned at the first touch and Harry growled into his shoulder. Mimicking Harry's movement on his own prick, Draco tightened his fist around Harry's hard cock before stroking him. Each time his hand went to the base, he did a corkscrew motion twice before moving back up where he slipped his thumb across the slit.

Harry's head fell back the moment Draco started fisting him and he couldn't help but to thrust upwards into the blond's hand. His hand on Draco's cock slowed down, but he didn't stop. Feeling himself close, he stopped his hand and pulled Draco's from his, drawing a whimper and confused look from the blond. "Too close." He growled before he captured Draco's lips in another kiss. He
pulled back, and grabbed both cocks in his hands, pulling moans from both at the exquisite feeling.

Draco's head fell forward and he got his first look at Harry's cock and his eyes widened as his mouth watered at the sight; from a bed of dark curls, the same colour as his raven hair, his cock stood proud and erect. The head was slightly purple from how aroused Harry was and Draco guessed it to be eight inches long and just over two inches thick. He shifted on Harry's lap, feeling his entrance clench and release and it took all his control not to impale himself on the brunet's cock.

"I know what you want," Harry whispered as he moved his hands, driving them both crazy with lust, "because I want it too. I want to fuck you so bad. I want to be in you right now."

"Then do it," Draco whimpered as he moved his hips in time to Harry's hands; vaguely, he felt a sense of déjà vu and he tried to remember why, but all thoughts drove from his mind when Harry tightened his grip until all he could think of was the feel of his cock against Harry's and how it would feel to have it in him. "What's stopping you? Merlin I want you to fuck me…I want to feel you in me pounding my arse over and over."

Harry moaned as he bucked his own hips and sped up his motions. He wanted to do what Draco said, but still something stopped him. "I…I can't…oh Draco…fuck…"

"Why not?" Draco whimpered as he bucked even faster and harder against Harry. He could feel his balls get heavy and the trembling in his muscles let him know he was close. The pre-cum slicking between the two cocks let off a wet, incredibly erotic sound that had him gasping and writhing on Harry's lap.

Draco moved his head forward to nibble on Harry's ear before he pulled back to whisper. "Wouldn't it be nice? Imagine…fuck…how it would…so good…feel to sink into me? How hot…oh fuck…and tight…ohhh…I'd be around you…"

"Draco," Harry moaned out, even as he made another corkscrew motion with his hands, "please…oh fuck…so close…so fucking close…"

"Cum for me Harry," Draco groaned in his boyfriend's ear, "cum with me."

Harry moaned as he leaned down to captured Draco's lips in a kiss. He moved to his ear and whispered. I love you)

The parseltongue pushed Draco over the edge and with a cry of Harry's name, his orgasm tore through him and bursts of cum splattered his and Harry's chests.

Seeing the look on Draco's face and hearing his name cried out like that triggered Harry's orgasm and seconds later, he called out Draco's name as his cum mixed with the blond's over their chests.

Leaning down, Draco kissed Harry before resting his forehead against his boyfriend's, trying to control his breathing. The two looked into each other's eyes as they got their body under control.

Waving a hand, Harry cleaned them of the mess. Without taking their eyes off of each other, they fixed their clothes.

As he looked into his boyfriend's eyes, Harry raised a hand and cupped Draco's cheek, smiling when the blond leaned into it. "I love you."

Draco's eyes filled with pleasure at the words; he had heard from his father and everyone else how Harry felt about him, even Harry himself had all but told him, but hearing the actual words made it even more real. A smile lit up his face as he leaned to kiss Harry. "I love you too."
"Were you worried?" Harry asked; he had seen something in the blond's eyes when he had said the words.

"A little," Draco admitted as he shifted on Harry's lap. He leaned back a little to see him better.

"What about?" Harry asked as his brows furrowed.

"I wasn't sure, you know?" Draco said. "I mean, I knew how you felt, but it's still nice to hear the actual words." He paused before he took a deep breath. "Can I ask you something?"

"Anything," Harry said; he had seen the hesitation and he wondered what was going through Draco's mind.

"Why me?" Draco asked. "Why did you choose me?"

Harry was quiet as he looked at Draco; his question was a legitimate and he wasn't surprised by it nor was he offended. He knew that despite the tough guy facade that Draco wore, underneath, he was just as scared of rejection and getting hurt as anyone else.

Draco looked at Harry and a slight unease started to build in him; Harry was being really quiet and for so long that Draco was starting to think he had made a mistake in asking the question. He was about to say something when Harry started talking.

"Why I chose you?" Harry looked at him. "The first time I saw you, we were at Madam Malkin's, getting fitted for our robes. You were standing there; proud, well groomed, handsome, your blond hair slicked back...the first wizard I ever saw up close, Hagrid notwithstanding. You were so completely different from me. I was the muggle-raised orphan boy, feeling a bit overwhelmed by all that had happened that day; I was told just hours before by Hagrid that I was a wizard and then I came to Diagon Alley with him for the very first time. I mean, I was doing magic before, but I didn't know that that's what I was doing; all I knew was that I could make things happen. You were talking about what house you would be in and about what your parents were doing, that you wanted your own broom; you were so nervous, I saw that a mile away, but I didn't mind. The first thing that popped up was that you were trying to please and impress me.

"I thought you were cute and adorable and that confused me, because at the time, I thought that that wasn't something you were supposed to think about another boy. When you started sprouting off about Hagrid and other families, I wanted to agree with you, but I couldn't. Even at that age, I knew I had to put on a mask. When we got to school and you told me you could show me the way, believe me, I wanted to take your hand. I wanted to be your friend, but, again, I couldn't. I know that hurt you a lot and I felt so bad, but it needed to be done.

"My feelings for you changed around third year. At the time, I had no idea what brought it on, but looking back I think it was when Granger punched you. I felt so much anger at her; it took a lot of control not to hex her where she stood. I couldn't understand why I would have such a violent reaction to her doing that, and then I started to see you in a different light.

"I realized I liked you, but I wasn't sure if you liked me as well. I was going to ignore you, but every time I wanted to, you would always do something that would draw my attention back to you. After a while, it came to me that you liked me too; I mean, why else would you get so angry if I paid any attention to anyone else and why else would you work so hard to get my attention? Add in the fact that you didn't treat anyone else in school like that; I was the only one you seemed to go out of the way to attack."

Draco flushed as he remembered his own actions. Everything Harry just said was true; he did get
jealous when he saw Harry's attention on anyone else and he had hated the other two with a passion because they were close to him and he wasn't. He had spent the last five years obsessing over Harry, not even realizing until around fourth year that was what he was doing and he had come to realize that he didn't hate Harry as he had claimed, but the opposite. He shook his head to clear his mind and refocus on what they were talking about.

"You still haven't answered my question," Draco said.

"I know," Harry smiled. "The thing of it is Draco; I'm not sure myself why I chose you. All I know is that I love you. I love how you bite your lip to try and hide your smile when you find something really funny or something to smile at. I love how your eyes light up when you're happy or angry. I love the control you have over your emotions, but I love it when you lose control around me...when you let me see the real Draco Malfoy, as you did earlier on our mission. I love you Draco because I can be myself around you and you'd still accept me, I love you because you get me; I could be as shy and vulnerable or as bold and invincible around you and you wouldn't judge me...like I said, I can truly be myself around you. I love you for the way you make me feel." Harry paused as he shrugged. "I just love you; no big reasons, no deeper meaning. I just love you, only you."

Draco could only stare at Harry; he was not expecting that. He had expected Harry to say how he chose him because of his Malfoy name or his looks, but Harry hadn't commented on any of that and Draco felt a rush of relief and gratitude go through him for it and he felt lucky that it was him that Harry had chosen.

"I love you," Draco's eyes traced Harry's face before meeting his eyes once more. "I admit I wasn't sure why you chose me and what your reasons for it were, but hearing you...I'm so unbelievably happy right now. I've always been worried that people would only be with me because of either my name or my looks, but you didn't even say anything about any of that. I think I fell in love with you in fourth year during the tournament; when your name came out of the Goblet of Fire, I've never been more terrified in my life. I knew just by looking in your eyes that you didn't want to be in it; when the first task came around it took everything in me not to jump out of my seat. Seeing you battle that dragon and then seeing it break the chains securing it and chasing you..."

Draco paused as a shudder went through him as he recalled the terrifying sight. "I felt as if my blood had been frozen; the relief that came through me when I saw you flying back was so staggering, I collapsed back in my seat." Draco closed his eyes before he opened them once more to look at Harry. "When the third task came around, I was worried, but that worry turned to downright terror when I saw the look on the Old Coot's face. I knew something was wrong and I knew it had to do with you. Then you came back with Diggory's body and I could've sworn my heart stopped when I saw the both of you lying there; I thought you were dead. When you moved, all I felt was relief that it was you that was moving. I'm not sure what I would've done had it been you who had died."

"I'm sorry," Harry whispered when he saw the tears and fear in Draco's eyes. "You won't lose me Draco; I won't put you through that kind of pain. To be honest, when I was in that graveyard and when Marvolo possessed me back in June, all I could think about was you; actually, thinking about you and how much I loved you caused him to leave my mind."

"Merlin, I love you," Draco smiled. "And not because you're Harry Potter, but because you're Harry; you're the guy that is very protective and extremely loyal to his friends, the guy that stands up for what he believes in and who's stubborn as hell. I love you because you see me; you allow me to be myself around you. I don't have to be Malfoy, I can just be Draco and you'd still want me." He shrugged. "I love you because you love me for me."

Harry said nothing, instead, he kissed him. Draco kissed back immediately, slightly tightening his
arms around Harry's neck. The kiss went on for a few minutes before they slowly pulled away.

"I can't believe we just poured our hearts out to each other just seconds after bringing each other off," Draco huffed.

Harry laughed and seconds later, Draco joined him.

~...~

Cory shook his head as he walked back out the room; he had come in to get something to eat when he had heard Draco and Harry's voices. He was going to ask them to join them, but when he got near the room, he heard the noises. His face had gone red from embarrassment and he had decided to give them their privacy, so he had turned back and headed to the kitchen.

After some time had passed, he had decided to once again brave the living room. Hearing no sounds, he sighed in relief and was about to once again announce his presence when he heard Harry talking; he listened for a few minutes and hearing the nature of their talk, he once again decided to give them their privacy and he turned to go back to the others.

When he got outside, Fred turned towards him. "What's up?"

"Nothing," Cory said as he walked over to them. "Harry and Draco are back."

"Already?" George asked and he and his brother made to go inside.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," Luna spoke up, a smile playing on her lips.

"Why not?" Fred asked as he stopped. He looked at his brother before looking at Luna and then back at Cory. "Cory, why wouldn't we go inside?"

"Uhm," Cory flushed a little as he remembered the sounds. The twins were quiet and looked at the two with puzzled expressions before they cleared.

"Oohhh," Fred grinned. "Why the flush Cory?"

"No reason," Cory shook his head as he walked over to his girlfriend.

"It's only natural for them to release their stress and tension," Luna piped up with a smile. Her dirty blond hair was blowing in the wind and Cory reached out and captured a few strands, turning his head slightly so that the twins wouldn't see the blush on his cheeks.

The twins looked at each other before at the house before turning to look at Cory with a grin on their faces.

"You heard them..." Fred started.

"...releasing their tension?" George finished and he waggled his eyebrows.

"Shut up," Cory mumbled; he had nothing against what they were doing, he just hadn't wanted to hear it.

"Guys," Luna laughed at her boyfriend, "let him be."

"Alright," both twins held up their hands, grins on both faces.

"Say Cory," George said. "I don't remember if I ever asked or not, but isn't the Lady Longbottom
wondering about you?"

"No she isn't," Cory shook his head. "After the will reading, when Harry asked us to move in with
him, I told her about it. I told her I was going to live with Harry; I think that was the happiest I've
ever seen her. I mean, if it was anyone else, she would've had a problem, but since it is Harry Potter,
the Golden Boy and Saviour, she has no problem. She's at a spa in Prague and she hopes I'll learn
from Harry." He paused to smirk. "What I learn, she'll wish I hadn't."

"Too true," Luna nodded.

"You should go to Gringotts," Fred said.

"Why?" Cory turned confused eyes onto him.

"You're a LeStrange biologically, but you were blood adopted by the Longbottoms," Fred said.
"You should go just to ask them what that means for you."

"What what means for whom?" Harry asked as he and Draco walked out towards them. The others
turned to look at them; Cory blushed, the twins smirked and Luna smiled.

"What?" Draco asked.

"Oh nothing..." George started.

"...just wondering how much tension you released," Fred continued and Harry and Draco looked
confused for a second before they blushed as they picked up the meaning.

"...and Cory here just happened to hear said tension being released," George finished with a smirk.

Harry and Draco looked at Cory, who avoided their gaze for a second before looking back at the
two; this time, a smirk was on his face.

"You guys should really be more careful," Cory teased, "you never who could walk in on
your...tension release."

"Shut up," Draco muttered good-naturedly even as he tried to control the flush on his face.

"So," Harry cleared his throat. "What were you talking about?"

"We were telling Cory here that he should go to Gringotts to find out what it means for him," Fred
said, "I mean, he's a LeStrange by birth, but he was more than likely blood adopted by the
Longbottoms...how else would he look so much like them?"

"He's right Cory," Harry nodded. "Think about this way; if you were truly blood adopted, you
inherit everything from the Longbottoms. Can you imagine how Lady Augusta would feel to know
the LeStranges got everything from her family?"

A smirk crossed Cory's face as he thought on it. "May I use Hedwig to request a meeting?"

"Of course," Harry nodded. "Ask to meet with Ragnok."

"Ok," Cory nodded. "Let's relax or train first and then I'll do it."

"Sounds like a plan," Draco said.
"So guys," George asked as they turned to walk to the back where the pitch was. "How was the mission?"

"It was amazing," Harry said as he placed his arm around Draco's shoulder, drawing the blond closer to him. "It was a little tense at first..." as they walked, Harry and Draco told the others what their mission was, though not who it was, and how it went.

~...~

Albus Dumbledore was enraged. His magic lashed out as his anger spilled out. The portraits cowered in fear and Fawkes trilled angrily as he ducked to avoid being hit by a flying object. He looked towards his human and his eyes narrowed at him.

'How could this have happened?' he thought to himself as he paced his office. 'I almost had him! And now he is in the hands of Voldemort.' He snarled quietly when he remembered Slughorn's refusal to come and work for him. 'If that Potter brat had done as he was asked, I would have convinced Slughorn.'

"Does Tom suspect what I am doing?" He asked out loud. "Is that why he sent his minions after Horace?"

It was a farfetched idea, as he had informed no one of what he was researching when he left Hogwarts, but it was the only explanation he could think of. Somehow, Voldemort had been able to get to the Gaunt cottage a few minutes before he could. With the massive amount of attacks that had happened during the following nights in the Muggle and Wizarding World he suspected that Voldemort was enraged and upset by their encounter, so his suspicion was confirmed that something very valuable, most likely a Horcrux, had been hidden there. Before Apparating away, Voldemort had used a peculiar phrase; he had called out "You're too late, old man!" And then, with the brutal murders of Emmeline Vance and Amelia Bones on the very same evening, it was a personal message to Dumbledore to back off, or else...not that he would heed the message, of course.

"How?" Dumbledore asked himself. "How does he know this? I told no one of my plans or my research. Voldemort cannot be aware that I know of his Horcruxes; he must be destroyed. I have to find out if he made more Horcruxes than the diary and perhaps that Peverell ring or maybe that Slytherin locket Merope had around her neck when Ogden visited them." He stopped pacing and with a wave of his hand, he fixed his office; walking over to his desk, the Headmaster sat down, laced his fingers together and rested his chin on them, oblivious to the looks he was receiving from the portraits and the phoenix.

"He must be destroyed and Harry is the one to do it," Dumbledore frowned at that statement. "I am the most powerful being and yet, a mere child is the one supposed to defeat the Dark Lord?" it enraged him to no end; he had defeated Grindelwald and yet, the people were counting on someone else to defeat Voldemort; someone else would get the glory and fame.

"After everything I have done," Dumbledore muttered, "the fates have decided to mock me by choosing someone else." A smirk crossed his face. "No matter; I have ensured that the boy would remain faithful to me and he shall do whatever I ask. His muggle family truly helped in that area, leaving a pliable boy that I can form into the perfect weapon...and when he destroys Voldemort, I shall destroy him. The people are fickle-minded; they will be thankful and give me the praise and glory that I rightfully deserve when I tell them the boy had a connection to Voldemort and he was in danger of becoming the next Dark Lord...especially since he has a piece of Voldemort's soul inside of him." He chuckled and the darkness in it had the portraits shaking their heads in sorrow.

Phineas narrowed his eyes at Dumbledore before looking at Fawkes. He noticed that the phoenix
was intently concentrating on Dumbledore and he wondered as to why.

~...~

Fawkes looked at the human; he had known over the years that Dumbledore was not who he seemed, but even this was shocking to him. To hear that the old man had deliberately placed a child in a home that hated him so that he could have his perfect weapon, only for the child to be destroyed later on, so that he Dumbledore could regain the fame he had gained when he had destroyed Grindelwald...it was upsetting to say the least.

Fawkes knew Dumbledore had lost his grip on reality and by listening to the man's thoughts, he knew that whatever he had planned, it would be the downfall of not only him, but the current Wizarding World as a whole. The time for him, Fawkes to do something was coming, but for now, he would stay and gain whatever information he could before he made his move.

~...~

Remus was at Malfoy Manor talking with Snape; he had a scowl on his face and the reason for it was sitting across the room from him.

The second night of the full moon, which was three days ago, he had been joined on his run by another wolf. Moony had instinctively recognized the wolf as his Sire and Alpha, and only that had prevented him from attacking. The next morning when Remus had made his way back to the Manor, he had been shocked when he saw the Alpha wolf in his human form.

Flashback

Remus shook himself as he walked through the halls of Malfoy Manor; that was the first time in his life he had ever felt so free. The first night he hadn't focused on the run as he had wanted to be near his cub, but last night he had been able to give in to his wolf and it had been exhilarating. His run had been interrupted when Moony felt another wolf...his sire to be more precise and now, he was determined to find out what was going on.

He got to the Dining Room, and stopped in his tracks when he saw the extra man sitting next to Lucius. A growl escaped his lips and his eyes flashed amber.

"Get...away...from...my...mate," he growled out as he stalked across the room. Inside, Moony tried to tell him that this man was their Alpha, but even that was half-hearted as Moony didn't like the Alpha wolf sitting so close to his mate. So intent on Fenrir, Remus missed the shocked look on everyone's faces, including Lucius.

"Calm down pup," Fenrir growled out as he stood; he wasn't going to attack as he knew that this was one of his and he admired him for standing up to him in regards to his mate. He growled once more, and watched as Remus stopped and his wolf backed down.

Remus shook himself when he heard the growl; it was the growl of a Dominant...the growl of an Alpha...the growl of his sire. His eyes cleared and he looked over at Fenrir, who was smirking at him. He took in his appearance and said the first thing that came to mind.

"Why do you look like that?"

Fenrir smirked and explained.

End flashback
Remus' scowl deepened as he recalled the explanation given by the werewolf Alpha; the man had been wearing a glamour in his human form to make him more dangerous looking. His true human form was actually attractive; his hair fell to just below his shoulders and wasn't unkempt, but rather very well groomed, his face wasn't dirty or anything, but well cleaned, his eyes were a dark blue, but they seemed to flash to amber periodically; his body was more muscular than Remus', the only feature, or features, that made him different was the fact that even in his human form, he kept his fangs and his nails were so long they resembled claws.

"Still angry pup?" Fenrir asked with a smirk. "It has been two days since you've found out the truth."

Remus ignored him and focused on Lucius who walked into the room; he was also angry because he hadn't planned on Lucius finding out he was his mate the way he did. The blond had spent the two days either avoiding him or giving him looks.

"Good day," Lucius greeted as he walked into the room. His gaze drifted over everyone until they rested on Remus. "Remus."

"Lucius," Remus' scowl changed to a smile. "You're looking well."

"Thank you," Lucius nodded as he took the seat across from Remus. "Our Lord?"

"A meeting," Snape answered. "Harry and Draco finished their mission and our Lord is overseeing the results."

"I see," Lucius nodded, his eyes staying on Remus.

"Cub did a mission on his birthday," Remus shook his head.

"His birthday?" Lucius raised a blond eyebrow.

"Yes," Snape nodded. "Today is Harry's birthday; the Dark Lord questioned him about performing the mission, but he had no problems doing it. Quite supposedly, it is because of past experiences."

"Understood," Lucius nodded.

"So," Fenrir smirked. "My little grand-cub has his birthday today." He had been shocked when he was introduced to the newest members in the Dark Lord's ranks, but had gotten over it quickly; the main reason for that being he had not wanted to be subjected to another one of the Dark Lord's Cruciatius Curses after he had questioned him. He had of course been sceptical as he knew just how loyal not only Remus, but Harry was to Dumbledore; add in the Weasley twins, whose family was beyond deeply loyal to the Old Man and the Light Side...it was a shock to the Alpha wolf, but he had gotten used to it.

"He is not your grand-cub!" Remus growled, but Fenrir only chuckled.

"So Lucius," Snape smirked at his friend, "have you finished your avoidance tactics and sly looks or are you going to finally talk to the wolf about his comment?"

Lucius glared at Snape before glancing at Remus; he noticed that the man had a small smirk playing on his lips.

"Not that it is any of your business Severus," Lucius drawled. "But I had and have every intention of speaking with Remus."

"Hmmm," Snape mused. "What better time than now?"
"I think you're spending too much time with my cub," Remus smirked at Snape. And it was true; Snape had been requested by Voldemort to teach Occlumency to not only Harry but the other teens as well. Because of the potion he was working on at the time, Snape couldn't start the lessons and then Harry had the mission, but he had spent the last few days teaching Harry and the others. He knew of the mission that was given to Draco and Harry, as the Dark Lord had confided in him and during the lessons, he had impressed upon them to be careful and not let themselves get hurt.

"And I of course think you should be making progress with your mate and leave all remarks about me spending time with the brat out of it," Snape countered with a smirk.

"As always Severus," Remus smirked as he stood up. "You are right. Lucius, if I may speak with you a moment?"

"Of course," Lucius answered as he too moved to his feet; Snape was right, he had spent the last few days avoiding the wolf and that was unbecoming of a Malfoy. He had waited years to be with the man and now that he had a chance, he was going to take it. He no longer had to worry about Narcissa and he knew he should claim Remus before someone else decided they wanted him for themselves. Of course, he did not intend to let that happen and anyone that wanted Remus would have to go through him.

The two left the room, leaving Snape to smirk at them and Fenrir chuckling.

~...~

Lucius led them down the hallway and out the doors, coming to the entrance to the gardens. The two walked side by side in silence. They came to a stop at one of the benches and Lucius sat down, gesturing for Remus to do the same.

"You wanted to talk to me?" Lucius asked.

"Yes," Remus nodded. "It's about me referring to you as my mate."

"Oh?" Lucius raised an eyebrow.

"It is true," Remus said as he turned to look at the blond. "You are my mate; the sooner you accept that, the better it is for us."

"As if I had any intention of doing otherwise," Lucius smirked. "Foolish wolf, you were mine long before you came to realize I was yours and when a Malfoy owns something, they do not give it up."

"What do you mean?" Remus turned a confused look at the blond patriarch.

Lucius looked out at the expanse of the garden and sighed. "I've had feelings for you since our days in Hogwarts. They were never acted upon due to the fact that we were on different sides of the spectrum; you were a Gryffindor and I was a Slytherin. We both had our duties to uphold and I could not allow myself to stray from what was required of me.

"As such, it was wise for me to bury whatever affections I held towards you and do what I was supposed to do. I did not want to marry Narcissa; it was what my family and hers wanted. The only good thing from that farce of a marriage is my son. Draco is everything to me and I truly cannot imagine not having him in my life."

"You've wanted to be with me since school?" Remus was shocked. "All these years you've had feelings for me?"
"Yes," Lucius nodded; he felt as if a burden was released from his soul as he finally told Remus what was in his heart.

"I've felt the same," Remus said after a while, shocking Lucius. "I've had feelings for you since school as well, but I never said anything because I didn't think you'd feel the same way about me. I was the quiet Gryffindor and you were the Prince of Slytherin. I thought you could've done better."

"I never knew," Lucius said softly.

"I know," Remus nodded. "No one did; though I suspect Sirius had his suspicions. He used to give me odd looks whenever you were around and after meeting up again at Grimmauld Place, he would make comments."

"Well," Lucius reached out and grabbed Remus' hand, causing Remus to turn to him. "It seems we both have been given the chance to act on our feelings. I love you Remus, and I would be honoured to be your mate." Lucius held his breath as he looked into the amber eyes of the man he loved. He had bared his soul and confessed the secret in his heart; as irrational as it was a part of him was terrified Remus would choose not to be with him.

"I'm glad to hear that," Remus smiled as he reached up a hand to cup Lucius' cheek, "as I love you as well and I would want no other as my mate."

The smile that came across Lucius' face was nothing short of breathtaking and Remus found himself thankful he had been given the chance to be with the one he loved. Without the two knowing, they started leaning towards each other, bringing their faces closer with each passing second.

Remus looked up into Lucius' eyes and saw that he was anticipating what was about to happen just as much as he Remus was as well. The two kept their eyes open and on each other until the moment their lips touched when they closed them, relishing in the absolute sweetness of a kiss years in the making.

~...~

He sighed even as he raised a hand to wipe the sweat from his forehead. The weather in Egypt had been more sizzling than normal, making the place, and the people, hot and sweaty. He was glad to be inside his house over the noon break. His room with its white washed bare walls was still warm, but much cooler compared to the heat wavering outside in the dusty street between the yellowish walls of the crumbling old houses. His eyes narrowed when he glanced outside; it hurt to look into the too bright light of noon sun, which was burning down mercilessly from the steal blue sky spanning over the ancient village. He closed the wooden shutters in front of the window again to keep the heat during the day out.

Turning away from the window, he walked over to his bed and sat down on the edge. His eyes drifted to the letter lying innocently on the bedside, though the words were anything but innocent. William "Bill" Weasley frowned as he recalled the words in the letter he had gotten from his mother about two weeks ago. He had returned to Egypt temporarily for a special assignment, after working most of the last year at Gringotts in London. As a Curse Breaker, he travelled all over the place to excavations of old tombs and that made it hard sometimes for him to receive letters from family; he would usually receive a letter about something that happened a few days, sometimes weeks, prior and this was no different. After all, it took a post owl about five days to fly from England to Egypt and if he was working all day deep underground, like in a Pyramid or a tomb in the Valley of Kings, the owls could not locate him because of the wards and would search until he came back outside at the end of his shift.
He reached out and picked the letter up, scanning its contents once more. He had read it already, but hadn't done anything about the contents as he had been so busy with his job, however now he was on a break and could properly read it and determine what to do about it.

Hi Son,

How are you doing? I do hope you're fine and that you're eating well. I know this letter will take a while to reach you, but I wanted to keep you updated on what has been going on here in England. I'm sure by now you've heard of what has happened at the end of June; it is true. Sirius is dead. I was sorry to hear that, but in all honesty, I have to say that a part of me is not sorry. I do not think the man was a fit guardian to young Harry and now, Harry can be looked after properly; after all it is what I have wanted and Albus supports my view.

Speaking of Sirius, his will reading has occurred and I must say it did not go how it was expected. Albus promised us that we would receive monetary compensation for taking in Harry and Ginny would receive a marriage contract for the both of them. Sirius left nothing to us! He said I wasn't Harry's mother so I shouldn't have treated he or Harry the way I did. I have never been so disrespected! The man wasn't fit to raise kids let alone the Saviour of the Wizarding World!

Albus was angry as well. He had another will drafted for Sirius but it turns out the mutt had created a new one just before he died. The only people in our family to receive anything were the twins. Can you believe that? He gave money to those two!

I didn't have to take the boy in, but Albus assured me we would get paid for it and had things gone as planned, Ginny would've been Mrs. Potter, thus receiving everything that goes with that title. But we received nothing and the twins have refused to share their money with the family. How could they be so selfish? Instead, they want to open a joke shop. Of all the nerve! Ron did not get anything because according to Sirius, he hasn't been a good friend to Harry. I guess Ronald almost dying every time does not count. Not even Hermione received anything; he compared her to Peter Pettigrew.

Maybe you could talk to the twins. Maybe hearing from you will convince them to share the money; after all, we all deserve it. And maybe I can figure out a way to get the money we were promised. If I can't, then Ron can do it.

Anyways, Bill, I do hope you're ok. And please talk to the twins

Love mom.

Bill's hand tightened on the parchment before he slackened it, enough for the letter to fall to the floor. His eyes narrowed as he thought on his mother's words and he felt disgust flow through him.

"Maybe I will talk to the twins," Bill muttered, "but first, I'll talk to Charlie." With that thought in mind, he summoned a spare piece of parchment and wrote out a letter to his brother, announcing his desire to visit him in Romania on the way back to England.

~...~

Voldemort had a smirk on his face as he left the dungeons where Slughorn was residing. He had interrogated the man, ensuring that no one else knew of the inquiries that he, Voldemort, had made when he was still in school. Slughorn had been utterly terrified to be in his presence, falling over himself to please him without prompt. Slughorn had always been sharp and a good observer of people; he had taken keen notice of the words exchanged by the two young Death Eaters and put the clues together correctly. Now he was absolutely convinced that Voldemort would win, with Potter
on his side, and had frantically offered his services, his connections, to the Dark Lord in a truly
Slytherin show of self-preservation.

As he walked through the hallways he passed by one of the windows and paused when he noticed
that Remus and Lucius occupied the gardens. He watched the two men for a few minutes and a tiny
smirk came across his lips when he saw them share a kiss.

"Seems like having Harry on my side was truly a good thing after all," Voldemort mused to himself.
He watched the two for a few more minutes before he continued walking. He entered the Dining
Room and saw Snape sitting at the table with Fenrir. The two noticed him coming and moved to
their feet.

"My Lord," they bowed.

"Severus," Voldemort nodded. "Fenrir." He moved to the table to take his seat at the head before
gesturing for the two to reclaim their seats.

"My Lord," Snape started. "How did the boys do on their mission?"

"They were successful," Voldemort nodded to his potions master and spy before turning to the
Alpha werewolf. "Fenrir, what about your pack? Are they still willing to help in the upcoming war?"

"Yes My Lord," Fenrir nodded. "We have heard talk of two more packs and with your permission, I
was going to head towards them to recruit them as well."

"Very well," Voldemort nodded. "Take Remus with you; he can learn about other wolves and how
to deal with them."

"Yes my Lord," Fenrir said. He was going to say something else, but the door opened to reveal the
LeStranges, Avery, McNair, Remus and Lucius.

The seven bowed towards Voldemort and waited until he acknowledged them before taking their
seats. Lucius called for a house elf and dinner was served immediately.

"Anything to report?" Voldemort asked.

"No my Lord," Bellatrix answered. "So far, everything is going according to plan."

"Very good," Voldemort smiled. "Lucius, I would like to speak with you in private after dinner and
Severus, you as well."

"Yes My Lord," both replied.

"Remus," Voldemort turned to him. "You will be working with Fenrir on the recruitment of two
packs of wolves. I know the two of you have your differences, but I trust you will not let it deter you
from your job."

Remus knew better than to refuse or object to the Dark Lord's request, so he reluctantly nodded his
head in agreement, though inside, he bristled at working with the Alpha Wolf.

The rest of the dinner passed in relative silence as the group quietly discussed many plans. When it
was over, Voldemort dismissed the others for the rest of evening and led Snape and Lucius to his
private rooms.

The trio was quiet as they walked down the hallway, each slightly lost in their own thoughts; when
they got the doors to Voldemort's rooms, Snape and Lucius paused as Voldemort waved his hand, disabling the wards surrounding the room. Voldemort entered first and the two followed him, the door closing behind them as Voldemort re-enabled the wards.

Voldemort sat down in his chair and gestured for the two of them to take a seat, when they did, he spoke.
"As you know," he said, "the boys had their first real mission earlier today. Unlike Severus however, you Lucius did not know the details of what the mission entailed."

Lucius nodded; he knew that it was important, but he hadn't been told and finding out that Snape knew sent a pang through him as he remembered it was his own fault his Lord was not trusting him as he used to.

"The boys were sent to collect Horace Slughorn, your former potions teacher at Hogwarts," Voldemort said. At Lucius' slightly confused look at the name of the man, Voldemort smiled. "The measures in which I ensured I would be able to return after that fateful Halloween night fifteen years ago are known to only one person other than myself. Horace Slughorn however, had information regarding the method, information that I could not allow to fall into the hands of Dumbledore." He paused when he saw the look on Lucius' face. "He is still alive; Goyle has orders to keep him that way until I decide his fate."

"I understand my Lord," Lucius nodded.

"According to young Harry's letter from the Old Man," Voldemort continued, "he needed Harry with him to convince Slughorn to re-take his position as Potions Master, thus more than likely enabling Severus to claim the Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher position; however, now that Dumbledore failed in recruiting the man, Severus will remain as Potions Master, but that will leave the position for the Defence teacher open." He paused and looked directly at Lucius. "This is where you will come in."

"Whatever my Lord needs me to do," Lucius immediately offered.

Voldemort regarded him intently. "Indeed; you shall meet the Governors and you shall use your...influence over them to allow you to take up the Defence position. As capable as Severus is of protecting the kids and as they are of protecting themselves, I do not trust the Old Fool not to try anything, especially concerning Harry. Your presence there will hinder his plans and should protect the boy."

Lucius and Severus looked at him with identically raised eyebrows, knowing he wasn't finished.

Voldemort continued to speak with a smug smile, "Secondly, teaching Defence is an excellent base to re-educate the students, to aid in recruitment for us and at the same time to assess those upper years that are determined or brainwashed to fight on Dumbledore's side. You will gain great influence over the students. Because of the curse on the position, the Defence education has been severely disrupted over the last decades. After the succession of possessed incompetents, worthless charlatans or sadistic ministry sycophants, the majority of the students will instantly adore and trust any half way competent teacher, as Harry, Draco and Remus assured me."

"Defence is mandatory for all years, so you will have the chance to get to know all students from all the houses. Be strict, but fair to all of them; in fact, I mean also to Hufflepuff's, Gryffindors and any mudbloods. Those from light families will encounter you with biased distrust. Those from neutral families will wait and see. Nevertheless, a fair, former Slytherin teacher, rumoured to be a Dark wizard, perhaps even a Death Eater, that knows his subject well and finally teaches Defence to all that are willing to learn, can plant the seed among the students that maybe not everything is as black
and white as it seems from Dumbledore's propaganda. That to be dark, does not equal evil and light
does not equal good.

"Reintroduce them to the concept that Nature and Magic exist in balance; Dumbledore and his light
wizards have upset this balance. Their actions endanger us and all magical folk, because they
enhance the risk of exposure to the muggles. Ask your upper year students for instance, which spell
or counter curse could defend them against a projectile fired from a muggle gun? Which wards could
protect their homes against an attack by muggle armed forces? Use the halfbloods and mudbloods to
explain the mortal danger of such an attack to their peers, should the muggles ever discover us. They
will be shocked and suddenly understand why our world has to be kept secret to keep it safe. That
this is the exact opposite of what Dumbledore and his band of muggle loving fools believe and teach.

"With subtlety, you can introduce some true wizarding history, under cover of assigning essays, to
look into the history of certain defensive and offensive spells and curses for upper years. Most of the
Slytherin students and those Ravenclaw's from dark families will have learned our true history and
traditions at home, but we want to get the others interested. These students will ask you for a pass to
the restricted section of the library. Get them to think, to question their previous education, to
revalue their former beliefs. If they browse the library, they should still find something on the Dark
Arts, although you know Dumbledore has removed many valuable tomes from it to control the
knowledge available to the students. If a student asks you why they cannot find enough to sate their
curiosity, you could tell them to look up in a dictionary what Restricted means... and hint that it is
possible to order books per owl, and that there are indeed other bookstores besides Flourish and
Blotts , only a short walk away...

"With luck and your charisma, you can help Severus to recruit a number of followers or at least silent
supporters for us and encourage the rest to stay neutral with their families as a third option, instead of
fighting as pawns for Dumbledore. Harry, Draco and their friends will help. I know this mission is
difficult, but I am sure your skills on the political parquet enable you to pull this off."

"Brilliant," Snape breathed as he looked between the two. "With the Governors backing you,
Dumbledore will have no choice but to allow you to fill the position."

"I don't mean to question you my Lord," Lucius said with much reluctance, "but, how shall I achieve
this? Dumbledore will surely ask to see my arm and will use the Dark Mark as a reason for a refusal.
After all, I was already accused twice before to be a Death Eater."

Lucius, and Snape, watched his Lord for a reaction to the question; though Lucius was expecting a
negative one and feared immediate punishment. When his Lord only nodded and gestured for him to
go on, he continued to voice his doubts in a slightly stronger voice,

"Do you think the Governors, and the Ministry, have forgotten that? I managed to argue and bribe
my way out of prison the last time, but my position in the Ministry is not safe or as accepted as
before...especially now since Rufus Scrimgeour is the new Minister for Magic. Dumbledore will
argue that you sent me to Hogwarts to cause him problems. Although, he would be right on that,
wouldn't he?" Lucius ended with a small chuckle, finally relaxing when it appeared Voldemort was
still in a good mood and more open to a candid discussion as he was during dinner, instead of just
snapping out orders and demanding complete submission as he as he did before the Ministry fiasco.

"I thought of that," Voldemort smirked. "Firstly, you will remind the Governors of everything that
has happened during Dumbledore's reign for the past five years and inform them that it would be
better if they had someone of their own inside the school to observe him. You will stress that you are
worried over the sinking quality of education at Hogwarts and that you are willing to take a
sabbatical from your usual business obligations to personally help the school with your expertise for
a year, especially after the unjustified accusations against you after the Ministry debacle."

Lucius furrowed his brow and started to object again, but quieted immediately at the raised hand of his master.

"Secondly, We shall do a ritual that places your Dark Mark under a special Glamour Charm," Voldemort continued, "however, unlike the common charm, this one will not be easily removed and cannot be detected by ordinary means, and that Severus is where your skills will be needed."

"My Lord?" Snape sat up straighter.

"I will require a potion from you Severus, one that will take five days to brew," Voldemort explained. "The recipe is from Salazar Slytherin's personal potion manual; it is why you have not read of this potion anywhere before. Most of the ingredients have already been collected. I shall show you the instructions later; please look them over and check if this will work as planned or if you will have to enhance or develop it further. The original text is in Parseltongue of course, so I am quite sure I translated everything correctly; however, there are two ingredients where Salazar used names that are very distinct, imprecise. I think that the names for these ingredients have changed over time." He paused and sent a small smile to Snape. "But, you are the potions master, you will figure it out."

"Yes my Lord," Snape nodded. He was curious as to what potion he would be making and was thrilled to work on a potion developed by the great Salazar Slytherin himself. This was what he loved about potions; the thrill of the research, the improvement of old potions and discovering and creating new ones, not teaching unruly, ungrateful dunderheads at Hogwarts who couldn't complete a simple first year potions. Now he knew what Voldemort had been working, as he Snape, had noticed upon entry into the room, old looking scrolls, stacks of books and parchments filled with calculations and notes covering the desk.

"My Lord," Lucius started, "if you could please explain the ritual and the potion some more?"

"The ritual is based on a dark warding ritual of Slytherins I have used before in another context. Together with this potion, it consists of three parts," Voldemort said, "the potion, a spell in Parseltongue and a blood and life sacrifice. The procedure is uncomfortable, perhaps painful."

After a short pause, he fixed Lucius with an intense stare and continued. "Whether it is more or less painful that receiving the Dark Mark, I cannot tell, however, the results would be that no one will be able to remove the Charm, not even Dumbledore. Furthermore, it will be protected from detection by a small, but powerful, ward around the Mark, which means that the old one-eyed Auror with his magical eye, Mad Eye Moody, will not be able to see it either. The potion is a variant of the invisibility potion designed originally to only disguise a specific area of skin; the Dark Mark will still be on your arm, working exactly as before, but it shall be invisible."

"Amazing," both Snape and Lucius breathed. The two exchanged looks, excitement and awe moving through them. Both of them studied and revered the Dark Arts for a reason and the skill and cunning to successfully plan and calculate like this, the tweaking of a powerful ritual to better suit ones needs, was something they appreciated on a professional level.

"Indeed it is," Voldemort smiled. "That is all, you are dismissed. Severus, you may stay."

Snape nodded while Lucius got up; he bowed before turning to leave, the door closing behind him.

"How are the teens coming along with the Occlumency lessons?" Voldemort asked.
"Very well," Snape said. "I suspect that by the time they are ready to return to school, their minds will be well protected. Not even the Old Coot will be able to read them."

"Very good," Voldemort nodded. He looked at Snape for a few seconds before he moved to his feet. A smile on his face, he walked over to where Snape was sitting, pulling him out of his seat.

"I haven't had you in a few days," Voldemort breathed into Snape's neck. "Why is that?"

"We've both been busy Marvolo," Snape whispered back, tilting his neck as he felt Voldemort placing a kiss there. A moan escaped his lips as he felt a tidal wave of lust rise up in him. His arms moved up to wrap around Voldemort's neck and he pressed himself closer. He couldn't help but to grind against the hardened cock he felt, pulling a groan from the dark Lord.

Voldemort pulled back from Snape's neck to look into his eyes. The lust he saw swirling in the obsidian orbs drew him in and fed his own.

Snape looked up into Voldemort's eyes and he bit his lip to stop himself from begging Voldemort to fuck him. He had thought the first time a fluke, but the emotions coursing through him now told him it wasn't. Snape knew without a doubt, he could and was falling for the Dark Lord. He shook his head and looked at Voldemort again. He tightened his arms around his neck before leaning up.

"We can make up for it though," Snape murmured against Voldemort's lips before he captured them in a kiss. It was heated and full of the passion that both men were feeling. He licked Voldemort's lips, and the moment they opened, he thrust his tongue inside. The two battled fiercely, even as their hands roamed each other's body, removing their robes and opening buttons as they did so. Snape pulled back from the kiss to place kisses alongside Voldemort's neck; he sucked on his pulse point, causing the Dark Lord to release a guttural groan.

Voldemort's hands moved over his lover's body, reaching around his back to cup his ass, pressing Snape closer to him. His cock was rock hard and he hardened even more as he thought of burying himself inside his lover's tight, hot ass. He let out a snarl when he felt Snape's hand on his cock and he started walking them towards the bed. Placing Snape on the bed, he stood and looked down at him and the image had him groaning; his dark locks flared out around him, his shirt and trousers unbuttoned, Snape made a very wanton and tempting image.

Snape looked up at his lover, his dark eyes taking in everything. He didn't care if he was being vulgar or acting like a whore from Knockturn Alley, but he needed the Dark Lord; he needed to feel him inside him again, to feel the glorious cock as it fucked him over and over. He lifted his hand, ready to banish the rest of their clothes, when he was stopped.

"No," Voldemort spoke and his voice was rough with lust. "Don't, last time it was hurried; this time, I plan on taking my time with you...I plan on seeing and worshipping your body."

Snape's eyes darkened even more as he let his hand fall. Keeping his eyes locked to Voldemort's, he moved them down his body; he stopped at his nipples, pinching and twisting them before he moved down. He reached the top of his trousers and slipped his right hand down and over his bulge; he palmed it slightly rough as he watched Voldemort's eyes darken in lust and a shiver went through him from it. He unzipped his trousers, and pulled them down. With a wave of his hand, his trousers and black, silky boxers disappeared, freeing his cock to both gazes. Still watching his lover, Snape wrapped a fist around his cock and tugged slowly. He moved his hand up until he reached the head where he thumbed the slit, drawing more pre-cum before moving his hand back down.

"Stop," Voldemort growled out as he watched Snape; his own cock was leaking and his body was tense with the control he exerted not to pull Snape's hand away and bury his cock in the tight heat.
"Why?" Snape panted out; he was getting a heady sense of rush not only from the force of his desire but from the fact that he was the one doing this to the most feared wizard in the world. He was the only that would ever see the Dark Lord how he was; losing control...all because of him. It was a power only he had over the Dark Lord and the knowledge of it fed his desire. His back arched and his lips opened on a silent gasp as he slowly fucked his fist while his other hand travelled down to cup his balls before moving down to his entrance. He muttered the Cleansing Charm, too far gone in his pleasure to feel the slight twinge; wordlessly and wandlessly casting the Lubricating Charm on his fingers, he slowly slipped one inside, groaning at the feel.

Voldemort, without a thought, banished the rest of his clothes as he looked on at his lover. His hand immediately went to his cock, tugging and pulling at it in motion to Snape's hand. His magic crackled in the air as his lust spiralled out of control. His eyes were stuck on Snape's hands and what he was doing; he had never seen anything hotter in his life and he could feel a growl building in his throat. Pre-cum was steadily leaking from his cock, slickening his hand as he pumped himself. He watched as Snape slipped another finger inside and his cock hardened further and his eyes darkened further at the guttural moan that spilled out. He couldn't take it. His earlier vow forgotten, he let out a desire filled growl as he quickly moved to his lover.

Snape was slowly fucking himself, knowing exactly what he was doing to the Dark Lord. His body pushed backwards on his two fingers before pushing upwards, fucking his fist. He could feel his balls tightening up and knew he would soon reach completion, but he didn't want that. He wanted to feel Voldemort's cock in his ass, fucking him as he came. No sooner had the thought flitted through his mind did he feel Voldemort's hands pulling his own away from his own ass and his cock. His eyes flew open to meet the lust darkened ones of Voldemort and he moaned wantonly and spread his legs even further; Voldemort wasted no time.

"You have no idea what you do to me," Voldemort hissed out between gritted teeth. His body shook slightly with the force of his desire and the control he could feel snapping. He captured Snape's lips in a harsh and passionate kiss. He pulled back to nip at his neck before sliding his lips close to Snape's ear. *(Ssso hot...ssso wanton...I'm going to fuck you now Ssseverusss...)*

"My Lord," Snape shouted even as he thrashed on the bed. As always, the parseltongue got to him and his controlled shattered; he acted like an insatiable and wanton slut for his lover and he did not mind. "Fuck me...shove your cock in my ass...take me Marvolo...take me hard..."

Voldemort needed no other incentive; with a groan, he lubricated his aching member, grabbed Snape's legs, lined his cock up and shoved home.

"Fuck!" the word exploded from both men; Snape because he was filled so suddenly and Voldemort because of the tight, velvet-like heat around his cock.

"Marvolo," Snape groaned out even as he shifted his hips, "move."

"You're so fucking tight," Voldemort growled as he pulled out, leaving only the tip of his cock inside, before he slammed back in; the movement forced Snape to arch his back even as his muscles tightened around Voldemort's cock. "Fuck...so hot..." swearing was normally uncouth and beneath him, but tonight, it was appropriate. He had never felt anything like this before, not even with the lovers he had taken when he had first came into power all those years ago. None had ever made him lose his control and composure like Severus did...none ever would as he would never share his body or his lover with anyone else.

"Oh Salazar," Snape panted out. "So good...h-h-harder Marvolo...fuck me hard and fast..."

Voldemort nodded before increasing his pace; he shifted Snape's legs to shoulders, allowing him to
sink deeper into the tight, delicious heat he loved. The movement pulled a scream from Snape and he knew he had found his prostate. A feral grin stole across his face as he canted his hips, allowing his cock to ram directly into Snape's sweet spot, drawing and delighting in the wanton screams from his lover.

When he had felt Voldemort's cock hit his pleasure button, Snape couldn't stop the scream from escaping; his world exploded in pure, unadulterated pleasure. His back arched and his cock hardened even more as he tightened his muscles around Voldemort's cock. "D-d-don't...don't stop..."

"Never," Voldemort growled. He slipped a hand between their bodies and grabbed Snape's cock. He could feel his release coming and by the way Snape was moving, he knew he was close as well and he was determined to bring him off either before him or at the same time. Shifting Snape's legs back to his waist, he leaned down and kissed him. "Mine!"

"Yours!" Snape whispered back against his lips. He pushed back onto Voldemort's cock whenever he pushed forward, tightening his legs around his lover's waist. "Oohhh...so close...I'm gonna c-cum..."

"Cum for me Severus," Voldemort said before he pressed a quick kiss to his lips. He sped up his movements, almost brutal in his pace. He could feel his cock swell as he neared his release. He increased the movements of his hand on Snape's cock, making corkscrews every time he neared the head.

Snape arched his back as his head fell back to the pillow; his mouth opened in a silent scream as his orgasm tore through him. His muscles tightened on the cock inside him as jets of cum splattered both his and Voldemort's chest.

Voldemort roared when he felt the muscles clamped down almost viciously on his cock, pulling his release from him. With a few thrusts, he emptied himself inside of Snape.

The room was silent save for the harsh breathing as both men came down from their release.

Voldemort looked down at Snape before he bent down to kiss him tenderly, a stark contrast to his kisses minutes earlier. Minutes later, he pulled back, "Are you alright?"

"Never better," Snape smiled as he moved a hand to brush back the lock of hair that had fallen over Voldemort's face.

Voldemort smiled and pulled out slowly. He collapsed on his back and pulled Snape towards him, allowing his lover to rest his head on chest as he wrapped his arm around him. With a wave of his hand, they were cleaned up and covered; within minutes, they were deeply asleep, relaxing in the mutual feeling of warmth and safety.

~...~

The next three days were relatively quiet; the teens, minus the twins, had received their letters from school. They were now at Malfoy Manor, sitting out on the terrace overlooking the magnificent lush gardens with Snape, Remus, Lucius, the LeStranges and Voldemort. In the distance, they could see a pair of white peacocks picking underneath the white and yellow rose bushes bordering the hedge.

"Sev," Harry called out from his seat with Draco.

"Yes brat," Snape turned to Harry; the others chuckled as they knew that the word was no longer an insult, but rather a term of affection.
"I've been meaning to talk to you," Harry smiled. "You know we got our letters, right? Well, I saw that I got an E in potions and to be in your class, I needed an O. I have no doubt that we'll want to talk with each other, but I have no idea how that will work since I'm not in your class because it would raise too much suspicions if we suddenly started spending time together."

"I understand where you're coming from," Snape nodded as did the others. He laced his fingers together and placed his chin on them. "Hmmm...what to do?"

The group was quiet as they thought out the possibilities that could help Harry's situation. In the end, it was Luna who came up with the answer.

"It's rather amazing the way a lioness protects her cubs," Luna said from Cory's side, causing the others to look at her. "She would do anything to ensure they got what they wanted...including facing off with a venomous snake."

The others looked confused, but Harry watched her with a smile building on his face.

"What the devil is she speaking about?" Rastaban asked.

"Luna," Harry smiled at her. "You are a genius."

"Cub," Remus looked at him. "Would you explain what is going on to those of us in the dark?"

"It's simple really," it was Voldemort who answered. "Despite the fact she is a tabby cat; the woman was as fierce as her House's animal. She was that way when I was a student and I do not doubt that she is still that way."

"Our Lord is talking about Professor McGonagall," Harry chuckled. "Her animagus form is a tabby cat, but when she got started, she was like a lioness, especially when it came to protecting one of her house members."

"And I'm guessing Uncle Sev is the venomous snake," Draco piped up.

"Yes," Harry nodded.

"So what's the plan?" Cory asked. "I mean, what does McGonagall have to do with you being in Snape's class?"

"All I have to do is mention to her that I want to be an Auror, but I can't because I needed an O in potions," Harry said. "I'll just be really sad and mention how I wanted to follow in my dad's, and Sirius', footsteps and that I think I could improve on my potions if I got the chance."

"And knowing Minerva," Snape smirked. "She'll immediately jump on it; she'll rant and rave about you deserving a chance and she'll more than likely go to the Headmaster about it. Seeing a chance to make you see him as a "saviour", he'll agree with her, knowing we'll have problems, or so he thinks, and you will come to him to seek guidance."

"Brilliant," Draco smiled. He turned to his boyfriend and placed a quick kiss on his lips. "That is the ultimate Slytherin move."

"Well," Harry smiled. "I did tell you guys I was supposed to be in Slytherin."

"What?" the LeStranges, Fenrir and Lucius were shocked.

"You were supposed to be in Slytherin?" Lucius asked
"Yep," Harry nodded. "But I talked the hat into placing me in Gryffindor."

"Harry," Rudolphus said. "I don't think I've ever heard of anyone talking the hat out of placing them where they're supposed to go."

"Hmmm really?" Harry was amused. "I guess I'm unique."

"I myself was shocked when I was told," Voldemort shook his head. "The boy never ceases to surprise s and everyone else."

"Keeps them on their toes," Harry quipped and the others laughed.

Bellatrix was about to say something, but was interrupted by the arrival of the twins by Hedwig.

"Hey guys," Harry said when they walked over to them. Hedwig flew to his shoulder and nuzzled his cheek. "Hey girl."

"What's up?" Cory asked.

"My Lord," the twins bowed towards Voldemort before taking a seat.

"Just received two missives..." Fred started.

"...one from Charlie, the other from Bill," George continued.

"...apparently, mum wrote to them telling them about everything that's happened..."

"...including the will reading and she asked them to talk to us..."

"...they want to meet us, so we thought we'd tell you guys to get your thoughts on it."

The group was quiet for a few minutes. Harry looked up and shared a look with Luna, who had a small smile on her face. They kept eye contact for a few minutes before he looked over to Voldemort.

Feeling the gaze, Voldemort looked up and locked gazes; he was immediately pulled into Harry's mind.

[What is it Harry?]

[Think it would be beneficial to us if we arrange a meeting with them...Luna agrees]

[May I ask why?]

[I don't think they have the same values as their mother and I don't think they blindly follow the Old Coot either. At the will reading, Sirius felt the same. He had said he wasn't too sure, but I got the implication that he would've sooner trust those two than the Old Coot and Molly]

"I want you to reply to them," Voldemort spoke up. "Tell them you would like to meet them to discuss the contents of the letter. You will not go alone; you will take Harry and Severus with you and you will take an oath from both of them to not reveal anything you deem them worthy of knowing. Find out where their loyalties lie; when it is done, you will tell them you will contact them to speak further. Is that understood?"

"Yes my Lord," the twins nodded as one.
"How soon would you like the meeting to be arranged?" Fred asked.

"Hedwig?" Voldemort turned to the phoenix resting on Harry's shoulder. Said bird looked up at him. "I need you to deliver two letters to the eldest Weasley brothers, William and Charles."

Hedwig trilled before flying from Harry's shoulder to Voldemort. She landed on his knee and his hand came up to rest on her head.

"Wait for a reply from both," Voldemort said before he summoned a piece of parchment and quill. He handed it to the twins and allowed them write the letter. When they were done, they handed it back to Voldemort, who looked it over and duplicated it before he gave them to Hedwig.

She flew to Harry, rubbed her head against his cheek, before disappearing in a flash of fire.

"Alright," Harry nodded. "My Lord, is Nagini up for visitors?"

"Yes she is," Voldemort nodded. "She has been asking for you."

"Alright," Harry nodded before moving to his feet, the other teens following him. "I think I'll go and see her...if that is ok with you?"

"That is fine," Voldemort said. "There is nothing else to be done. Severus, I would like to speak with you." He got up, so did Snape, and the two headed to Voldemort's rooms. "Harry, I will alert Nagini to your request and send her down."

"Yes my Lord," Harry nodded and moved to the doors leading to the gardens. "I'll be in the gardens."

"Very well," Voldemort nodded before he left the room, Snape with him.

"So I take it Nagini had her babies?" Lucius raised an eyebrow. 

"It seems that way," Bellatrix nodded. 

"It seems a bit surreal doesn't it?" Rudolphus commented, his gaze drifting to where the teens were.

"What does?" Fenrir asked.

"The fact that they are here," Rudolphus explained. "I mean, not only do we have our son back, but our Lord gained new followers...and not just any new followers, ones that greatly influenced the outcome of this war and now, we might possibly be gaining two more."

"I know," Bellatrix nodded.

"The tides of war have shifted and are currently going strong in our favour," Remus said.

Murmurs of agreements came from the others. 

~...~

"Is there something wrong Marvolo?" Snape asked after the two were in Voldemort's rooms.

"One moment," Voldemort said. [Nagini]

[Yesss massster?] Nagini slithered out from her cosy nest in an open space next to the fireplace that Voldemort had created for her.
{Harry hasss been asssking for you and would like to sssee you} Voldemort told her, not missing the shiver that ran through Snape's body at his hissing.

{I have misssed my young massster} Nagini replied {I ssshall ssssee to him and he can meet my sssnakelingsss}

{He isss in the gardensss} Voldemort told her.

{Very well} Nagini answered as she moved to the door. {Have fun with your potionsss massster. You know, it isss quite a ssssurprissse that the roomsss haven't burned from the passsion that you expel}

"Nagini!" if Voldemort was one prone to blushing, he would be.

{And we sssshould be happy mortal men cannot get pregnant...though that would be a ssssight to sssee}

"Nagini!" Voldemort scolded the snake, knowing full well she was laughing at him. "Shouldn't you be meeting Harry?"

{I am leaving...don't fuck him too hard again}

Voldemort turned to curse at her, but she had already escaped through the door. He briefly wondered where she learned the word, but dismissed it and turned back to Snape. He walked over to his chair and sat down.

"Tilly," he called out.

"Yes master?" the house elf said as it popped in the room.

"A bottle of scotch and two glasses," Voldemort said as he gestured Snape to sit down.

"Yes master," Tilly said before it popped out, only to return seconds later with the contents.

Pouring into the two glasses, he handed one to Snape before taking a sip of his own.

"Severus," he started. "Ever since I gave Harry and Draco the assignment regarding the locket, I have been having suspicions, ones that have been confirmed over the last few days."

"What sort of suspicions?" Snape asked as he took a sip of the scotch and relaxed in his chair.

"Do you remember what we talked about some days ago?" Voldemort asked. "In reference to how I ensured my return?"

"Yes," Snape nodded.

Voldemort stood and paced a little. "When I spoke with Harry, he mentioned something to me, something that caused great concern."

"What is it?" Snape asked.

And so, Voldemort told him of the conversation with Harry and his suspicions; he also told of his and Harry's strange reaction to the ring, the locket and Nagini when they had been together in that same room. When he was done, Snape was looking at him with shock.

"When I figured it out, I felt the same shock," Voldemort told him.
"Marvolo," Snape spoke. "Are you saying that you inadvertently made Harry a Horcrux that night?"

"Yes," Voldemort nodded. "It is the only thing that makes sense; it explains why Harry can feel intense emotions through his scar, why we share dreams, why I could send him dreams and visions, why he reacted that way to the locket and why he was able see through Nagini's eyes the night she attacked that muggle loving fool Arthur Weasley in the hall in front of the Department of Mysteries. The connection between us has developed further this summer; we can sometimes hear each other's thoughts if focus and concentrate hard enough."

"I never suspected," Snape said and his brows furrowed as he thought on it. "I knew the connection between the two of you was rare and shocking, but even after we discussed your methods, did I suspect it was for that very reason."

"Neither did I Severus," Voldemort said; it was troubling him. He had thought he had only created six Horcruxes, seven if he included the soul still within himself, but with this information, it turned out it was seven or eight after all; although, now that the diary was destroyed, he was down to six safeguards once more.

"What are you going to do?" Snape inquired softly as he looked at his lover; he could feel the frustration coming off of him.

"That Severus is the question," Voldemort sighed. "I do not if I should remove the Horcrux from Harry or leave it undisturbed in his mind."

"If I may make a suggestion?" Snape spoke up.

"You may," Voldemort nodded.

"I believe it would be wise to remove the Horcrux from and either re-join it to you or place it in another object," Snape said. "My reason for saying this is simple; you are now aware that the Old Man is searching for the Horcruxes to destroy them, if he finds out that Harry is one, though I suspect he already knows, now that he knows you are aware of his plans, he will do everything in his power to use Harry. He will place him in harms' way once again as he has done in the past years. He will either kill him to destroy the Horcrux within, or he will try and use him as bait."

Voldemort was silent as he thought on Snape's words. He knew he made sense and he could understand where he was coming from.

"Your reasoning is sound and valid," Voldemort said at last. "However, I must confess I am concerned as to what will happen to Harry if I choose to remove the Horcrux."

"Are you worried about his abilities, more specifically, his Parseltongue?" Snape asked.

"Yes I am," Voldemort answered.

"You have no need for such concerns," Snape said. "If you did choose to remove the Horcrux, Harry will still retain his Parseltongue and other Slytherin attributes."

"Explain yourself," Voldemort narrowed his eyes at him.

"You know that we found Parseltongue books in a hidden section in the library at Potter Manor," Snape said. "What you do not is why they were hidden. We were confused about it, but Harry's ancestor, Harrison explained to us, he told us...

*Flashback*
Snape had a thoughtful look on his face. He looked from the book in his hands to Harry and back again. There was something tugging at his memory. Seconds later, his eyes narrowed.

"Harry," he held the book out towards the young man. "What does this say?"

"It's a potions book," Harry said excitedly when he read the cover. He flipped through it. "Sev, you'd love this; it's filled with so many potions, even more than the books in the library at Hogwarts and the ones from Diagon Alley has."

"Can you read some of it for me," Snape said; he had a suspicion as to why Harry could understand the book when they couldn't.

"Sure," Harry nodded and he started to read. He read for about a minute before he realized that everyone was looking at him in awe. "What?"

"It is as I suspected," Snape's voice was filled with confusion and awe. "The books are written in Parseltongue."

"But," Harry looked at them. "Why would my family have Parseltongue written books in their library?"

"I can answer that," A voice called out. The group filed out of the room and saw Harrison Potter in a portrait.

"Explain please," Harry said as he and the others took up seats around the portrait.

"It is common knowledge that the Potter line descended from Godric Gryffindor," Harrison said. "But what you don't know is that our line is also descended from Salazar Slytherin as well."

"What?" Harry, along with everyone else, was shocked. Not in a million years did he imagine that he was a descendent of Salazar Slytherin.

"Shocking, I know," Harrison smiled sympathetically. "But it is nonetheless the truth. Salazar's great grandson Alaric had a love affair in his youth with another young woman before he married. The affair resulted in a child, which had to be kept secret as Alaric was betrothed to someone else and it was an arranged marriage of great political value to his family. Because of the betrothal, he had no choice but to give his first born son away to his mother's family. The only thing Alaric got to do was to name his son; he named him Anteros.

"The child was given to a close friend of the mother's family to be raised. To protect both families, little Anteros was adopted under the name Caden Warren. Young Caden grew up not knowing his true parentage. Later, he got married and sired offspring under the Warren surname. The Potter line came about through our ancestor Ignotus Peverell. Ignotus was the many times great grandson of Godric Gryffindor." He paused. "I assume you know of The Tale of the Three Brothers?"

Harry looked confused while the others nodded.

"Well, that is a wizarding legend about three brothers that met Death and tried to cheat him," Harrison explained. "Death gave each of them an invaluable, magical artefact; an unbeatable wand, a ring that could bring back spirits of the dead and a cloak of Invisibility. Now, the Peverell brothers, Antioch, Cadmus and Ignotus are believed by some to be the subjects of this legend and indeed, without a doubt, they are the three brothers. Each possessed one of the artefacts, which together are known as the Deathly Hallows: Antioch held the unbeatable or Elder Wand, Cadmus
held the ring or Resurrection Stone and Ignotus held the Cloak of Invisibility."

Those who knew of the legend met his statement with raised eyebrows and sceptical looks; only Harry looked mildly curious and still confused.

"However," Harrison continued, "I do not think that Death gave them the items like it says in the tale, which is truly hearsay or fiction. Whether they acquired the extraordinary magical items on their travels in foreign countries, or if they perhaps created them themselves, nobody knows; they kept their origins secret until their death.

"Our family history and the legend only both confirm that apparently, Ignotus lived a long and fulfilling life, and, having decided to elude Death no longer, passed the cloak on to his own son. He joined Death and welcomed him as a brother. His lineage is the easiest of the three brothers' to trace, as the cloak would continue to be handed down from parent to child through the generations finally coming into your, Harry's, possession."

Harry, having finally grasped why the convoluted family history concerned him, exclaimed, "So that's where my dad's cloak came from!"

The others looked very impressed; while Harrison beamed at Harry and continued the lecture.

"Ignotus' grandson had several children, but only his daughter survived, who then married a Potter, thus the name Peverell became extinct; nevertheless the bloodline continued on in the Potter family. One of Caden's descendants, Elisabeth, met and fell in love with Artemis Potter, who was a descendant of Ignotus Peverell."

"As interesting as that is," Harry interrupted him, "could you please explain how the books came to be in the library?"

"Very well," Harrison nodded. "Parseltongue is hereditary, inborn ability, because it was always said that Slytherins line were Parselmouths. I suppose Caden could speak Parseltongue, as most likely did his descendants in the Warren line over the centuries. However, nothing was ever rumoured about the Warren family being dark or Parselmouths. He hid his ability, as did the others who inherited and discovered it, because none of them wanted to be labelled as a dark wizard like Slytherin."

"Additionally I suppose that most of his descendants, who are our ancestors, never discovered that they could speak Parseltongue. After all, garden snakes or vipers are quite rare in Britain, not a kind of animal that many people encounter often during their lives, not as let's say post owls, dogs or horses. And not many people have reason to conjure a snake with Serpensortia, do they?" Harrison explained enthusiastically. It was obvious to everybody that he loved to talk about the past.

Harry and the others shared glances and nodded.

"And? What happened to Elisabeth and Artemis Potter?" Harry asked impatiently.

"Since Elisabeth never met a snake up close as a child, she did not know she held the special ability. It wasn't until their youngest son, Geoffrey, had the ability that the truth came out. One day Geoffrey was playing outside their garden, next to a hedge. There he came upon a garden snake and being a small child, he innocently spoke to the animal. Imagine his surprise when it answered, it was astonished to meet a Two-Legs that could talk. Excited, he ran to his mother and babbled away about his new snake friend. Both parents were shocked and terrified. Artemis knew no one in his family line had that ability so he confronted his wife. When she was confused as well, they sought out their ancestry; it was then they found out Elisabeth was a direct descendent of Salazar Slytherin who
could talk to snakes.

"The Potter family for generations have been either neutral or firmly situated on the Light, same as the Warrens, so for this ability to show up, one which is considered dark, it was not welcomed at all. You could imagine the scorn that the family would've received if anyone knew, so, as it was, no one outside the family knew of the Parseltongue ability or that one of our own was actually descended from Salazar himself. The Warren line was not a descendant from Salazar, only those children that came from Caden. And because of Elisabeth's marriage to Artemis, the Potters held the ability as well. Like I said, because of the fact that our family was always neutral or on the Light side, no one outside the family could know about the ability. A few generations ago, a spell was cast on the family line to render the power dormant. However, every once in a while, it would awaken, thus skipping generations."

"Could my father could talk to snakes as well?" Harry asked.

"No he couldn't," Harrison nodded. "When James was born, his parents hoped the power would not be in him as it seemed to skip every once in a while and it wasn't."

Everyone was silent as they let the news sink in.

"So why Harry?" Draco asked.

"All indication showed that the power would've remained dormant in Harry as well," Harrison said. "However, that Halloween night fifteen years ago changed things. When Voldemort, who is also a descendant of Salazar, attacked Harry, my guess is, it forced Harry's own Slytherin bloodline powers to awaken. Being in the presence of another descendant, especially one that was direct and so powerful must have caused their powers to search each other out. When Voldemort sent the curse at Harry, Harry's own powers came fully awake and protected him; it also caused his other Slytherin abilities to awaken, including Parseltongue."

"What you're saying is," Cory said, "Harry didn't survive the Killing Curse because Lily sacrificed her life for him, but because he was fighting against another of his bloodline, which caused his powers to come to?"

"Merlin no," Harrison shook his head, "Lily loved Harry, I have no doubt about that, but do you know how many other mothers loved their children and sacrificed their lives for them and none survived the Killing Curse? If Lily did do something, it must have been some charm, some Dark Arts ritual using her own life as a willing sacrifice, something she had prepared well in advance. It is possible that she was so desperate to protect her family, her son, that she did this in secret without telling James, because as a light wizard, he would have objected. As powerful and gifted in charms as she was, Lily could not have managed this alone. I think Harry surviving the Killing Curse was a combination of the two; it was his mother's protection and his dormant power coming awake."

End flashback

Voldemort was not someone who was surprised easily and often, but in the past few weeks, no months, he had been shocked. First was learning of Harry's true nature, his turn against Dumbledore, his preference and then gaining the followers that he did, followed by finding out that one of said followers was actually the son of one of his most loyal followers. But this information surpassed everything else. To learn that Harry was the direct descendant of not one, but two bloodlines and that that, combined with Lily's sacrifice, explained why Harry survived all those years ago, astonished and intrigued him.

"Needless to say," Snape finished, "when Harry heard that the Old Man had once again lied to him
to try and control him, it strengthened his resolve to be the one to kill him."

"I cannot believe this," Voldemort's eyes narrowed as he thought over what he was just told.

"Neither could we," Snape said, "but Harrison showed us a hidden Family Tapestry and we were able to discern the truth for ourselves. So you see, even if you were to remove the Horcrux from Harry, he would still retain his abilities."

Voldemort became quiet as he thought over everything; from what he was just told about Harry's family to his decision regarding the Horcruxes. He was thankful for his lover as he allowed the silence to sort through everything.

Finally, after some time, he looked up at Snape. "I will remove the Horcrux from Harry, and I will do so before he goes back to school."

"Will you place it another object or will you take back within yourself?" Snape asked.

"I will replace it within me," Voldemort nodded slowly. "It would be best."

"How will that happen?" Snape asked. "I assume it shall be with an intense and painful ritual?"

"It shall," Voldemort said. He shifted his gaze for a split second before looking back at Snape. "For me to re-claim a Horcrux, I have to feel true remorse for the murder that created the Horcrux."

At Snape's calculating look, he smirked wryly. He looked off into space as if contemplating the past. "Yes Severus, I have to regret killing Lily Potter and attempting to kill her little boy, Harry. Nevertheless, from all the Horcrux murders I committed, I think these are the only two times I cast the killing curse that I could ever regret. I remember well that I didn't want to kill Lily, I asked her twice to step aside because you had pleaded for her life. I hesitated before cursing Harry, when he was standing there in his crib, clutching the rim, staring at me with those Avada bright green eyes. It was eerie. I felt something, a connection. I should have listened to my instincts and taken him along, to raise him, instead of attempting to kill him."

Voldemort looked up, shaking his head. "In contrast, I'm sure I will never feel any remorse for killing my worthless muggle father for the ring or that filthy muggle tramp I caught snooping about my mother's home for the locket."

Snape nodded, unable or rather, unwilling, to say anything.

"..."

"Cory," George asked. "When's your meeting with Gringotts?"

"In four days on the seventh," Cory answered. "I figured I'd go when we went to Diagon Alley to get our school stuff."

"Cool," Fred smiled. "That means you guys will be there for the opening of our store."

"It's finally ready?" Draco asked as he leaned against Harry.

"Yep," George nodded. "It will be up and running in time for it."

"It's too bad unwanted weasels will run amok," Luna said as she gazed around the garden. "Oh well, as easy as it is to rile tempers, snakes have more patience." She looked back at them and her gaze went slightly past Harry. "Why, hello Nagini."
"Nagini!" Harry turned to look down at the snake with a smile. 

{How are you?}

{I am fine sssnakeling} Nagini replied as she curled her body into coils at Harry's feet, her head coming up to rest on his lap. Her tongue flicked out as if tasting the air. {I sssee you are on your way to claiming your mate. Good, asss I wasss wondering when you would ssstart}

{Yesss I have ssstarted} Harry nodded with a smile. {How are your sssnakelingssss?}

{They are fine} Nagini said, and Harry could sense the smile and pride in her voice. {I ssshall have you meet them sssoon}

{Sssoundsss good} Harry hissed his reply and he could feel the shivers and tremors that moved through Draco's body; he smiled as he knew that his boyfriend was deeply affected whenever Harry spoke Parseltongue.

Nagini, sensing it, chuckled. {You are asss much a teassse asss Marvolo isss with hisss potionsss massster}

{Oh really?} Harry chuckled. {Care to give any juicy detailsss?}

{Now sssnakeling} Nagini shook her head. {You know I cannot sssqueal on my massster}

{You did lassst time} Harry laughed and the others looked at him in amusement, each wondering what the two were talking about.

{True} Nagini nodded. {Very well; jussst remember that you asssked. It isss a very good thing that both the potionsss massster and Marvolo are now young, they can keep up with each other'sss ardour}

{What?} Harry looked shocked and intrigued.

{Oh yesss} if Nagini was human, you would see the smirk on her face. {Much fucking went on between the two; firssst when the potionsss massster completed the potion and then again the night of your misssion}

{Nagini} Harry groaned {I did not need to know that!}

{You did asssk} Nagini hissed.

"I wish I didn't," Harry muttered in English.

"What," Draco swallowed a bit before he continued. "What was she saying?"

"Trust me," Harry looked at the blond. "You do not want to know."

"It sounded…" Fred started.

"…interesting," George finished. "I think I'd like to know."

"Same here," Fred grinned.

Nagini hissed something and Harry was about to reply when Hedwig flashed in.

"Hey girl," Harry greeted her.

She trilled as she landed on his lap; in her beak were two letters, he took them and gave them to the
twins.

"Charlie said he was available tomorrow at noon," Fred said as he finished the note.

"Bill said the same thing," George said. "He said he's coming into this with an open mind."

"Good," Harry nodded. "Did they say where they would like to meet?"

"Leaky Cauldron," Fred and George answered.

"Things would run smoother if you discussed things where you're most comfortable," Luna said. "I'm sure Bill and Charlie would appreciate the open air and a chance to play a game they haven't played since school."

The others started at her before smiling.

"Alright Luna," Harry smiled at his sister. "So, the twins will meet Bill and Charlie at the Leaky Cauldron and then Hedwig will bring them back to the Manor where Severus and I will be waiting."

"And if things go as planned," Draco said. "The Dark Lord will have two new followers."

"The tide is growing stronger," Luna commented with a smile, one that was shared by the others.

~…~

The next day, the twins got ready for the meeting with their brothers. Harry would be waiting at Potter Manor for them, as would Snape as he was working on the potion for Voldemort, which had one more day to go and then it would be ready.

"Alright," Fred said. "It's almost time to meet Bill and Charlie."

"Remember to keep your hoods up so that you're not easily recognized," Harry said.

"We know," George nodded, "don't want to tip anyone off too early in the game."

"Will you guys wear glamours opening day or will you leave it as is?" Draco asked.

"As is," Fred said. "We want our family to know just what we think about them."

"What's the name of the store?" Cory asked.

"That depends on Harry here," George said as he turned to him.

"Me?" Harry was shocked. "Why?"

"We want you to blood adopt us," Fred said to the shock of the others, minus Luna of course, who only smiled.

"What?" Harry looked between the two, thinking they were joking. When he saw the serious expression on their faces, he knew they weren't.

"Harry," George said. "We are ashamed and disgusted with what our family did to you…"

"…not only that," Fred picked up, "but you have had more faith in us than they ever did."

"Mum and dad never believed we'd ever amount to anything," George continued. "They always thought our pranks were a waste of time and that we were throwing our life away."
"But you didn't," Fred said. "You not only believed in us, you gave us money to help us get started."

"We meant what we said that day of the will reading," George said. "You are more of a brother to us than Ron was and we would always choose you over the rest of them."

"And what better way to stick it to them than to become Potters?" Fred finished.

"Are you sure about this?" Harry asked; he was touched that they wanted to do it.

"Yes," Both answered.

"What do I have to do?" Harry asked after a moment of silence.

Fred and George looked at each other before looking at Harry. The twins held hands and spoke as one; "We Frederick Sebastian and George Ulrich denounce the name Weasley and its Clan."

A light flowed through the room, covering the two for a few seconds before it disappeared. When it did, the twins stood there with smiles on their faces.

~...~

About one hundred miles southeast in Ottery St. Catchpole, Devon, Arthur Weasley straightened with a gasp as he felt the shift in the family magic and The Burrow wards, specifically in the number of Weasley family members keyed into the wards. Worried, he left the living room to check upon their Family Clock. At that moment, Molly bustled into the kitchen through the backdoor from the garden, a basket of fresh eggs in her hand.

"Arthur, is something wrong? I've got the strangest feeling just now," she called out to her husband.

"I don't know, yet. I felt a shift in our family magic and the wards, it concerns the twins," Arthur answered, walking into the kitchen. "Where is the Family Clock?"

"Wait a moment, here it is, behind the laundry basket," Molly answered, picking up the clock. When she looked closely at it, she paled dramatically and shrieked, "Arthur, look! The twins they are gone!"

~...~

"What do I do now?" Harry asked.

"You do the same that they did," Draco said. "Except, it will require blood as well; the easiest way would be to cut your hand and join with them."

Harry nodded as he trailed his wand over his left hand, whispering *Diffindo*. He carefully made a shallow cut in the palm of both hands. The twins quickly caught on to what he wanted and each made a corresponding cut into their palms. When they were ready, he held out his hands for the twins to take so that their blood could combine.

"I Harry James Potter-Black hereby accept and welcome to the Potters Clan the two formerly known as Frederick Sebastian and George Ulrich Weasley, through this blood bond they are now and forever known as Frederick Sebastian and George Ulrich Potter. So I speak it so mote it be."

A blinding light surrounded the three and a loud noise sounded through the room. The power washed through the house and down in the Potions lab, Snape gasped as he felt it. After casting a suspension charm on the potion to slow down the on-going reaction, he hurriedly made his way
upstairs, stalking to the library. When he got there, he stopped in the doorway, riveted by the display of magic inside.

When the light cleared away, Cory and Draco gasped at the sight. The three were still standing there, but it was their appearances that shocked them.

Harry still looked the same, but Fred and George had changed, though it wasn't much. Fred's hair had gone from Weasley red to the dark red that Lily Evans had, while George sported the Potter's jet black hair; both twins eye colour had changed from blue to sea-green, their faces had become slightly more angular, and their bodies slightly muscular. If anyone would see them now, they would not recognize them.

"Whoa," Harry said when he saw them. He conjured a mirror and held it up for them to see.

"Wicked," the twins breathed as they looked at their reflections.

"So I take it you did the blood bond ritual?" Snape asked sharply as he walked over to the two, taking the mesmerizing changes in their appearance.

"Yeah," Harry nodded, "they asked me too."

"Splendid," Luna smiled. "Now that that is done with, I think it's time you gained another sibling Harry."

"Luna-girl," Harry smiled at her. "I already think of you as my sister. We do not have to do the bond."

"Oh I know," Luna smiled. "I wasn't talking about that. I Luna Xenophilia Lovegood hereby acknowledge Harrison James Potter-Black, Frederick Sebastian Potter and George Ulrich Potter as my brothers from this moment forth through all eternity."

"We accept the acknowledgement," Harry, Fred and George replied as one. Like before, a light surrounded the four for a few seconds before it cleared away.

"Ok," Harry said. "Could someone explain everything that just happened to me?"

"You did this without knowing what exactly you were doing?" Snape's eyebrow shot up. "You ignoramus dimwit! When will you start to think before you act? I thought you had changed Potter!" most of the statement was snarled out as he was frustrated with Harry's relapse into brash, foolhardy Gryffindor behaviour.

"I followed my instincts," Harry replied defensively.

"Well," Draco cleared his throat, "with the blood bond, Fred and George are now your brothers; that means that the Weasley family has no right to them. So, the money that the twins make from their store, they do not have to give any to their former family. Also, nothing that the Weasley Patriarch can do will affect them as they are now Potters."

"For Ms. Lovegood," Snape explained in a brisk tone, "while she did not perform the blood bond, she has been acknowledged by the Potter house as a sibling. You claimed her and as such, she is now protected under the Potter Family law. No one can touch her without bringing down the House of Potter on them."

"Oh," Harry said. "Ok, that's fine with me."
"It's time," Luna said.

"Alright," Fred nodded while he held out his hand and summoned two robes, one for him and the other George.

"We'll see you guys in a bit," George said as he took the robe from his twin and put it on.

"Alright," Harry nodded.

The twins nodded at the others before they walked over to the Floo; picking up the powder, they called out their destination and stepped through.

"Did Remus leave yet?" Harry asked; he knew that he had a mission from Voldemort and he was supposed to leave today. He had said goodbye this morning, but he knew that Remus wouldn't leave without seeing his mate.

"How should I know? I am not his keeper," Snape glared, still slightly angry at Harry's actions, not matter how right his instincts were, but he decided to deign him with an answer. "I believe he wanted to be with Lucius before he departed with Fenrir."

"I thought as much," Harry nodded. "How is the potion coming along?"

"It will be finished by tomorrow, if I could concentrate on my work without foolish interruptions," Snape snapped. "The potion will be at a critical point soon." With that, he turned on his heel and left.

"Ok," Harry said, completely unfazed by Snape's behaviour as it was, after all, quite normal. "What do you guys want to do until they come back?"

"I'll stay in the library," Luna smiled. "There are many interesting books in here that I would love to continue reading."

"Have fun," Draco teased.

"I most assuredly will," Luna laughed as she moved to walk through the aisles.

"Ok," Harry nodded. "What do you two want to do?"

"I know what I want to do," Draco leered at his boyfriend.

"Pervert," Harry muttered with a smile and Cory laughed.

~…~

When the twins came through the Floo at the Leaky Cauldron, they made sure their hoods were up and hiding them. They scanned the pub, eyes stopping on the two redheads sitting in the back corner. Exchanging looks, the two made their way over to them.

Making sure not to knock into other tables, the twins arrived at their brothers' table quickly.

"Hello," both said as they slid in, taking a seat next to each brother.

"What the hell is going on?" Charlie was the first to speak. The dragon charmer had the typical Weasley red hair and blue eyes; he was shorter and stockier compared to Bill, Percy and Ron. He had a broad, good natured face, which was slightly weather beaten and very freckly. His arms looked strong and muscular and one of them had a long, shiny burn.
Bill was a good-looking young man; slim and tall with red hair, but his was longer than his brothers, held in at the back of his nape in a ponytail with a tie. He had a single fang earring in his right ear; he also had the blue eyes of their father.

"Not even a "hi" for us…" Fred started.

"…I'm hurt," George sniffed.

"Boys," Bill's voice held a warning tone. "Fine, hi, how are you? Now what the hell is going on?"

"We're fine," Fred answered. "More than fine I'd say…"

"…and not here," George said as he stood up followed by his twin. "These walls have eyes and ears."

"Follow us," Fred said as he and his brother headed towards the stairs.

The two oldest Weasley brothers exchanged looks before following after their younger siblings. They ignored the other patrons and moved up the stairs with a slight nod to Tom.

The four brothers were quiet as the climbed up and no one spoke until the twins opened a door. After checking to make sure it was empty, they gestured their brothers inside.

"Now will you tell us what the hell is going on?" Bill asked. "Like mum's letter and the attack on the Burrow."

The twins said nothing before casting spells to detect Listening and Watching Charms; finding none, they nodded before turning back to their brothers. They stepped towards and grabbed their arms and each other before George spoke.

"Hedwig," the name drew confused looks from the older brothers, whose eyes widened in disbelief when the phoenix flashed into the room. Before they could say anything, Hedwig landed on Fred's shoulder and the four flashed out.

~…~

After the twins had left, Harry, Draco and Cory had headed over to Malfoy Manor so that Harry could say goodbye to Remus.

The trio had spent a little time over there, before Harry headed back home. He went down to the lab, knocking softly and waiting for the impatient "Enter!", before he opened the door. Snape stood at the workstation behind the softly bubbling cauldron, gathering up utensils.

"Do you have some free time, sir? The twins will be here any moment with Bill and Charlie," he asked politely, wanting to appease Snape's volatile temperament after the earlier irritation.

Snape scowled, answering curtly, "Yes, now it needs to just simmer for two hours. I'll be up in a few minutes." He proceeded to clean up his workspace before he set out the ingredients for the next stage.

Harry quietly closed the door again; he was glad that Snape was in a better mood now than before. He walked back to the Living Room for the twins and the two Weasleys. He had just taken a seat when Hedwig flashed into the room.

"Fred, George," Charlie growled. "You have ten seconds to start explaining."

"Fred, George," Charlie growled. "You have ten seconds to start explaining."
Harry said, "Charlie, Bill, good to see you. Long-time no see!"

At the Tri-Wizard Tournament Charlie had been one of the dragon handlers for the first task and Bill had visited him with Molly just before the third task. Then he had met Bill again at Grimmauld Place.

"Who the hell are you?" Bill narrowed his eyes at the teen. He took in the messy, jet black, shoulder length hair that was pulled into a half ponytail, the bright green eyes and the scar on his forehead and his eyes widened slightly. "Harry Potter."

"Bingo," Harry nodded with a smile.

"Always knew Bill was a smart one," George grinned as he threw off his hood, shaking out his dark hair.

"Bloody hell," Charlie breathed. "What happened to you?"

"Same thing that happened to me I reckoned," Fred smiled as he too threw off his hood revealing his own changed appearance.

"Ahh," Snape said as he walked into the room. "I see our guests have arrived."

"Professor Snape?" Bill and Charlie exclaimed incredulously, astonished not only by the man's presence, but by his appearance as well.

"I think I need to sit down," Bill said; as a curse breaker he was used to seeing lots of different things, but this overshadowed everything.

"Yes," Snape sneered. "That would be agreeable as I have no doubt what we are about to disclose will shock you."

"Does it have to do with the twins' appearance?" Charlie asked.

"Yes," Harry nodded before narrowing his eyes at the two. "Before us explaining however, I would require a wizard's oath from the both you not to disclose anything that is said in this room today to anyone else not present without explicit permission from me, Severus, Fred and George."

Bill and Charlie exchanged looks.

"Is this really necessary?" asked Bill, looking from Harry to Snape. He still held deep respect for the potions master.

"Indeed it is," Snape answered, "otherwise, I wouldn't bother; if you do not agree, we cannot tell you anything, and now, that would be a terrible shame, wouldn't it?"

Bill and Charlie exchanged another telling look and then fixed the twins with their stare. The twins just smirked and winked. Sighing, they agreed and pulled out their wands to swear on their magic to keep everything they were about to be a secret.

Meanwhile, Snape walked over to stand next to Harry's chair, the twins following him.

"What you guys are about to be told will rocky the foundation of your beliefs," Harry spoke. "After we tell you what we have to, you will be given some time to think things over and draw your own conclusions. When you are done, we will tell you where we stand in terms of this war and what is expected of you."

"Ok," the two brothers looked at each other before looking back at the four.
"Now," Fred said, his voice uncharacteristically serious, drawing the brothers' attention even more. "We assume you have questions for us?"

"Yes," Bill nodded. "Why do you look like that?"

"We denounced the Weasley name," George answered, "we basically disowned ourselves and asked Harry to blood adopt us, which he did."

"Why?" Charlie asked, looking between each twin. "Why would you do that? Why would you turn your back on the family?"

"They are not our family!" Fred hissed, his sea-green eyes flashing dangerously.

"Calm down Potter," Snape said, his tone highly amused at not only calling Fred by his new surname, but by the looks on the Weasley brothers' faces. "Perhaps you should disclose why it is you now considers the Weasley Clan your former family."

And so, Fred and George told them everything; they told of the plans they heard between Mrs. Weasley and Dumbledore, the things they had noticed over the years…things that didn't add up and when they had become suspicious of the family. They told of the manipulation they had seen being done to Harry and their former mother's reactions to them and also, of Ron's subsequent friendship with Harry as well. When they were done, the two Weasley stared at the four in shock.

During the talk, Harry had summoned Minky and Tanna and had lunch brought into the room.

"Take your time to process what you were just told," Harry said, "because there is much more to come."

"Any questions about anything you were just told?" Snape asked as he raised an eyebrow.

"No," Charlie shook his head. "This can't be. You're lying, you have to be."

"What could we gain from lying?" George asked.

"But, if it makes you feel any better," Fred said. "I Frederick Sebastian Potter swear on my magic that everything that I just told was the truth to the best of my knowledge."

A light flashed through the room to signal the vow taking place. When it cleared, Fred looked at Charlie before pointing his wand at one of the vases.

"Reducto," he called out and the vase exploded. "Reparo." They watched as the vase repaired itself.

"Is that proof enough for you?" George asked as he folded his arms across his chest.

Bill and Charlie looked at each other before looking back at them.

"Here's something else to think about," Harry said. "When the muggleborn students first get their letters, a teacher is sent to their home to tell them about the Wizarding World and schooling; McGonagall visited the Grangers. So tell me this, if I was so important to this world, why would Dumbledore send Hagrid instead of a teacher?"

Bill and Charlie could say nothing to that, so they remained silent.

"When Hagrid took me to Diagon Alley," Harry continued. "He kept going on and on about how wonderful a man Dumbledore was and then he told me that there was not one wizard from Slytherin that haven't gone bad. Why would he mention that if it wasn't to dissuade me from going into that
house? Moving forward, he never told me how to get onto the platform…why?"

"Because he knew that mum would be there," Bill whispered, but it was heard by everyone.

"Bingo," Harry clapped. "According to the twins, that year was the first time your mother used the muggle way to get to Platform 9 ¾; she's always either used the Floo or Apparation, but that year, she used the muggle way and not only that, but why the hell was she screaming about 9 ¾ for everyone to hear her? When I asked a man about it, he looked at me like I was crazy…bastard was lucky I didn't hex his ass."

"She wouldn't have gone there unless someone told her to," Bill said; everything was coming clear to him now. Despite the oath, he heard the words that Fred spoke; he had said that it was the truth to the best of his knowledge, which meant that he could've been wrong; but to be presented with facts like this, it was hard-pressed not to believe him.

"I see the time you have moved on from the school has improved upon rather than diminish the intelligence that you have," Snape said.

"This is crazy," Charlie said. "You're talking crazy."

"Are we?" Fred raised an eyebrow. "Think about it Charlie; you know what mum is like. Hell, it's the reason you left home as soon as you could. Dumbledore's been manipulating Harry from day one and mum's been helping him…dad as well."

"You had that friend Bill," George spoke up. "The one that lost his parents? Michael I think it was."

"Yeah, why?" Bill asked, wondering where his brother…former brother, was going with it.

"Did mum ever knit him a sweater?" Fred asked. "She didn't, did she? Just like she's never knitted one for Lee or for any other of our friends and yet, she knitted one for Harry; now, considering she hadn't even met Harry, except for that brief moment at the Platform, why would she do that? Why would she knit him a sweater?"

"She wouldn't," Charlie muttered as he closed his eyes in resignation, "unless it was to make Harry want to seek out the family or to endear him to them."

"And he catches on," Snape drawled. "I do hope you are more proficient in your line of work than you are in using your cognitive abilities to determine truth from fiction."

Charlie winced before he levelled a glare at Snape, only to look away when Snape glared right back.

"What happened at the will reading?" Bill asked.

"Your family didn't get what they want," Harry answered. "Ronald truly thought he'd get something, especially after he told me he was no longer my friend." Harry snorted. "As if I cared about him and his friendship. Sirius was a lot of things, and one of them was observant. He noticed things weren't right with Ron and our "friendship" and he made sure Ron wouldn't receive anything at all."

"They were angry because apparently," George picked up, "Dumbledore had forged a will where Ron and the other traitors would receive majority of it, and not only that, but he also drew up a marriage contract for Ginerva and Harry."

"But Sirius must have suspected something," Fred said, "because just days before he died, he had a new will created where he didn't leave anything to them."
"This all sounds so surreal," Charlie shook his head.

"We know," Harry nodded, "but that doesn't mean it isn't the truth."

"You said there was more," Bill said. "What else is there?"

"I'll tell you about the last five years at Hogwarts," Harry said, "with inputs from Severus, Fred and George, and you tell me what you think."


"Alright," Harry nodded. "Let's start with first year."

He told them about the Sorcerer's Stone and the situations surrounding it; about how Hagrid removed such an important object from Gringotts on the same day he was collecting Harry, how they figured out exactly what was being guarded on the third floor, why they were given detention in the Forbidden Forest on the same night Voldemort was there, how they told McGonagall that the stone was in danger only to be dismissed like little kids. How easy it was for three first years to get past all the guards to get to the stone and how they were rewarded with hundreds of house points for breaking about a dozen school rules and placing their lives in danger. When they were done, Bill and Charlie looked at them in shock.

"I'm beginning to see what you mean," Charlie closed his eyes briefly.

"To think that Dumbledore set all that up," Bill said. "Why?"

"I assume it was to train and test Harry," Snape answered.

"He was only eleven," Charlie said.

"And you think that mattered to the Old Man?" Fred snorted.

"Think again," George added. "And if you think his first year was bad, wait until you hear about second year."

"That was when the mess with Ginny happened," Bill said.

"Yes," Harry nodded.

"What really happened?" Charlie asked.

And so he told them about the Chamber of Secrets; when he was done, he looked at them.

"How is that if three second years could figure out exactly where the Chamber was and what was in it," Harry asked, "that Dumbledore, the proclaimed greatest wizard, of all could not?"

"And not only that," Fred added, "but how did he not realize that Ginny had the diary considering the amount of dark magic that surrounded it?"

"The bastard placed our sister in danger just to what...to test you?" Bill moved to his feet. "To see how you would fare? And what would've happened if you hadn't figured it out? Ginny would've died."

"I assume so," Harry shrugged, "or maybe not considering he still needed her to be with me."

"How can you be so cavalier about this?" Charlie asked.
"Because I can be," Harry said. "Quite frankly, I didn't give a rat's arse about your sister back then and I still don't. The only reason I saved her was because it was expected of the Golden Boy. If I was being myself, I would've left her arse to rot down there."

"What do you mean if you were being yourself?" Bill asked, effectively stopping Charlie from yelling at Harry.

"You're smart Bill," Harry said. "I'm sure you can figure it out."

"Moving on," Snape said. "There is more information they should be aware of and we do not have time for petty interruptions."

"Petty?" Charlie shouted as he let his anger get the better of him; he heard what they were saying, but he still had a hard time believing that his family could be so callous. Add in Harry's nonchalant attitude to Ginny's life, was his boiling point.

"I would appreciate it Charlie," Harry spoke softly, but his tone showed his displeasure, "if you would not shout at either of us. We are not shouting the information at you, but rather presenting in a calm manner and it would be great if you could show the same courtesy."

Both Weasleys looked at Harry in shock; they could feel the power rolling off of him and in that moment, they became terrified.

"Good," Harry said when he saw that Charlie calmed down. "Now, onto third year; why would they give Granger, a third year student, a time turner to use only so that she could take more classes than normally possible? Did something similar ever happen when either of you two were students? I suppose not. That was also the year Sirius came into play. Nothing special happened that year that Dumbledore could have manipulated except for the fact that he told Granger and me to go back in time and save Sirius. With Sirius however, why did he spend twelve years in Azkaban without a trial when as Head of the Wizengamot, Dumbledore could've ordered one for him? Also, after that year, Dumbledore knew where Sirius was, if he wanted him free, all he had to do was contact Amelia Bones and allow her to question Sirius under Veritaserum...he did neither."

"This all sounds so wrong," Charlie shook his head.

"And now we're onto fourth year," Fred said, "and the Tri-Wizard tournament."

"Yes," Snape nodded, "That was the year that I truly saw how far the Headmaster was willing to go to keep his pawn in line."

"What do you mean?" Bill asked.

"Fourth should've been the one year I was safe," Harry said. "As far as I was concerned, with the tournament, I wouldn't be risking my life at all that year because Quidditch was cancelled; but that wasn't the case. Instead, I was entered into a tournament where I not only risked my life, but a student lost theirs."

"See," George picked up, "Dumbledore created an age line around the Goblet of Fire so that no underage student could enter and yet, Harry was. It was obvious that someone entered his name, but what shocked us was that Dumbledore allowed Harry to continue to participate in the tournament."

"The Goblet's contract was binding," Bill frowned. "Harry had to compete."

"No," Fred shook his head. "He didn't; if Harry had declared he had no intention of competing, they would've had to do the name picking over again, but because Harry decided to compete, which he
only did because nobody told him a way out of it, that was when it became magically binding."

"Simply put," Snape injected. "Harry's magical signature was no way near the Goblet. Did it not occur to you there were precautions situated that would prevent others from entering someone else? The age line was just one of many; they were created so that those who did not want to could not participate if they were not the ones to enter their names."

"Dumbledore knew all that," Harry said. "And yet he told me nothing; instead, he pushed me to participate in a tournament with others three years older than me."

"If what you guys are saying is true," Charlie said, "then that means that Dumbledore—"

"Is more evil than the Dark Lord," Fred finished. "At least with him, you know exactly what is going on, with Dumbledore, you don't."

Fred's comment had both Weasleys narrowing their eyes at him.

"Fred," Bill started, "what side of the war are you on?"

"Harry's," Fred said without hesitation, a slight smirk playing on his face.

"Harry?" Charlie asked. "Where do you stand in the war?"

Harry said nothing; he only smiled.

Bill looked at him in suspicion; his mind replayed the last few moments and one of Harry's comments came back to him;

'...I saved her was because it was expected of the Golden Boy...if I was being true to myself, I would've let her arse rot...'

"You're on his side, aren't you?" Bill asked as he looked at Harry with wide eyes. "You've joined the Dark Lord."

"Ding, ding, ding," Harry clapped. "And he gets it. I always knew you were smart; you had to be otherwise the goblins wouldn't have hired you."

"What?" Charlie looked at his brother before looking back at the trio. "All of you?"

"I told you," Fred smirked outright. "I am on Harry's side and that side happens to be the dark side."

"And before you think this is a recent thing," Harry said. "I was dark long before I joined Hogwarts; I just kept it hidden."

"Why are you telling us all this?" Bill asked.

"We wanted you to be aware of what was really going on," Fred said. He hoped they joined them as he knew their side would benefit from it.

"We want you on our side," George said. "You will have two days to think things over and at the end of those two days you will meet with our Lord."

"And if we don't?" Charlie asked.

"I think you're not as against the idea as you would like us to believe," Harry smiled. "If you were, you never would've sent that note to the twins and you never would've met with us today. Add to the
"Very Slytherin of you," Snape said in approval.

"Thank you," Harry grinned before turning back to the two Weasleys. "If you want, you could spend the two days here and talk things over. When you are done, call Minky and she will get in contact with me and I'll come get you guys."

"If we are finished," Snape said. "I must return to the lab." With that, he turned around and walked out the room.

"And I have a blond to go see," Harry said as he stood up.

"A blond?" Bill's brow furrowed.

"Ah, ah, ah," Harry shook his finger at him, "can't tell you everything without first knowing what side you're on."

"Well gents," Fred smiled.

"We'd love to stay and chat," George continued.

"...but we have to get back to our store," Fred said.

"...got to get everything ready for opening day," George finished.

"Store?" Opening day?" Charlie looked at the twins in confusion.

"Don't worry," Fred grinned. "Things will be much clearer in two days. Later boys."

The twins headed to the Floo and disappeared in it. Bill and Charlie turned back to Harry who was chuckling at them.

"I'll see you guys later. There's a Quidditch Pitch out back if you want to use that. Hedwig," He smiled and seconds later, Hedwig flashed back into the room and landed on Harry's shoulder. "Oh before I forget, here's one last thing to think about; everyone thought Sirius was the Secret Keeper for my parents and he was the one that betrayed them. Dumbledore was the one to cast the Fidelus Charm and bind Sirius as the secret keeper; he was also the same one to transfer the secret keeper from Sirius to Peter Pettigrew, the true betrayer of my parents. No one knew about that and yet Voldemort knew exactly to go after Pettigrew. Think about that." With that, the two disappeared in a flash of fire.

"What do you think bro?" Charlie turned to Bill.

"I really don't know," Bill sighed. "But everything they said makes sense...including that last bit."

"Let's go check out the pitch while we talk," Charlie suggested and the two headed out that way to have a long discussion.

~...~

The next day, the potion was finished and Snape bottled a vial before heading towards the Floo. He called out his destination and stepped it; seconds later, he stepped out in Lucius' private library.

Exiting the library, he made his way to Voldemort's wing; when he got to the door, he knocked three times and waited until he heard the "Enter" to go in.
"Severus?" Voldemort said when he saw who entered his rooms. He stood from his seat and walked to meet the potions master.

"Marvolo," Snape smiled as he came to a stop in front of the dark Lord. "It is complete."

"Truly?" Voldemort raised a pleased eyebrow.

"Yes," Snape nodded as he held out a vial towards his Lord and lover.

"Perfect," Voldemort near hissed as he looked at the potion before setting it down on a small side table. "Now, Lucius is needed as well as a sacrifice. Your arm Severus."

Snape bared his Dark Mark, suppressing a wince when Voldemort swiftly pressed his wand into the mark, concentrating to call only Goyle and Lucius to him. After a few seconds, he slipped his wand back into his sleeve and sat down in his comfortable wingback chair to wait.

"A sacrifice?" Snape asked as he took a seat on the adjoining couch.

"Yes, for the Mark concealment ritual," Voldemort explained. "Any blood and life sacrifice will work; we could even use a muggle. However, an innocent, young, virgin light wizard or witch, an unwilling victim, dying slowly and painfully, is preferable because this will further strengthen the Dark Magic. Lucius will ingest the potion after you have added three drops of the blood; it will take a minute to start working. With the blood from the victim, I will draw a fine chain of runes around the Dark Mark. For this, you will make a small cut on the victim, enough to bleed a bit, but we don't want them to die too quickly.

"On the side table over here is a suitable ritual dagger of etched black steel, clean, very nice and sharp; next to it is a pure white swan feather quill, a light symbol, for drawing the runes and a new vial for the blood. As soon as I am finished with the runes, kill the victim, but not instantly, so that rules out the Killing Curse. Nor do I want a large mess in here, so please no Entrails Expelling curse, beheading or severing a limb."

Snape filed away the details in his mind, nodding he asked, "So, what should I use? Anything special?"

Voldemort looked thoughtful for a moment, and then answered, "No, nothing special. You can choose, do whatever you think will work best; either deliver the fatal wound with the ritual dagger or if you prefer using your wand, cast a precise Sectumsempra or a strangulation hex perhaps. The timing is essential. This has to happen while I speak the warding incantation in Parseltongue three times and direct the power with my wand into the rune circle around the Mark. The blood and life energy will be transferred into the Mark, they will activate the invisibility potion, concentrate the ward around the Dark Mark and in consequence rendering it invisible and undetectable."

Snape was going to ask something else, but before he could, there were three knocks on the door.

"Enter," Voldemort called out as he moved back to take his seat.

Lucius and Goyle entered and when they were a few feet away, they bowed. "My Lord."

With a short "Take a seat", the Dark Lord acknowledged their presence.

"Goyle," Voldemort looked at his follower. "Last week, I told you to procure a suitable victim for a ritual. Report."

"Yes my Lord," Goyle nodded, "I spoke to Dolohov; Pest Control team recommended a family they
wanted to target anyway. He delivered two mudblood children; two brothers, Gryffindors, Colin and Dennis Creevey, a fifth-year and third-year. Colin took lots of photos at Hogwarts send home to show his father how everything looked like. I heard from my son several times that Colin followed Harry Potter everywhere, always pestering him for attention and taking pictures of everything and everyone. He continued like this over the last four years, the idiot also took photos of the Hogwarts Express and of Hogsmeade to show his muggle family and friends; a prime example of recklessly risking exposure of our world. Additionally both brothers participated in Dumbledore's Army, Potter's Defence club last year.

"Today Dolohov brought in another mudblood; he said one of his Snatchers got lucky. A little Hufflepuff girl, Rose Zeller; she's a second year. She didn't do anything special, caused not as much damage as the Creeveys, as far as I am aware. About her muggle family, well Dolohov said they are not English, they are Swiss and moved here a few years ago for work, that's the reason she got a Hogwarts invitation. I've kept all the kids downstairs, in good condition; they are only scared to death. Which one should I bring to you, Master?"

At the mention of the children's names, Severus and Lucius had perked up. The name Creevey garnered a scowl and identical dark looks; obviously, Draco had told his father the same information as Gregory had, but while the name Zeller only caused a blank, bored expression from Severus, Lucius raised a brow and asked in a low voice, "Zeller?"

Noticing this, Voldemort raised an identical eyebrow and asked Goyle, "Zellers family, were they killed already? Or did Dolohov only kidnap the child? And are you sure they are all virgins?"

While asking Goyle, he waved his wand at the file cabinet to summon the Zeller family file, which he sent into Lucius outstretched hand.

"Yes my Lord, they are virgins," Goyle nodded. "I checked and questioned them and Dolohov. He swears none of his team touched or raped them; they are all healthy and unhurt, well apart from a few scratches or bruises. The girl was kidnapped from the playground near her home. I am not sure if the parents already got a visit or not. The Creevey brothers he claimed right at the beginning of the raid on their home. They were stunned and portkeyed directly to the dungeons. All children have been securely locked up since arrival."

While listening, Voldemort had walked to his desk and quickly scribbled a note on a piece of parchment, calling for the house elf. "Tilly!"

A second later, Tilly appeared. "How can Tilly serve master?"

"Take this note and deliver it as fast as possible to Dolohov. Wait for his reply," Voldemort ordered her.

With a squeaked, "Yes, master," the elf popped out of the room at once.

"Very well Goyle, fetch the elder boy for the ritual," Voldemort said. "Keep the others alive for now, in the smallest cell; they may be of use later on. You are dismissed."

Goyle bowed once more before turning and leaving.

"The potion is complete Lucius," Voldemort turned to the Head of his Inner Circle. "We will conceal your mark today."

"My Lord," Lucius' grey eyes widened slightly, the only indication to the surprise and pleasure coursing through him.
"I will explain in detail what is going to happen," Voldemort said. "You'll consume the altered invisibility potion after Severus has added three drops of the victim's blood, allowing it to camouflage the mark from the inside. I will draw runes on your skin directly around the mark with the blood of our sacrifice. As soon as I am finished, Severus will start to kill the victim.

"I shall speak the incantation in Parseltongue three times and trace the runes with my wand, building up the power of the ward charm. Through the blood and life power of the dying sacrifice, the ward charm shall be bound to the area of the Dark Mark; the potential of the invisibility potion will be activated and concentrated inside the area of marked skin on your arm resulting in an undetectable, powerful glamour. I suppose it will be unpleasant or even painful, I expect your skin over the Dark Mark to itch and burn after an initial feeling of freezing cold."

Lucius and Severus nodded; this dark ritual was straightforward and not very complicated at all. Only the timing was of essence.

"And when the Mark is under the Glamour," Snape spoke. "Lucius will go to the Governors, persuading them to allow him to be the Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, thus allowing another of your operatives to be in Hogwarts."

"Yes," Voldemort smirked. "The Old Fool will be unable to do anything about Lucius' presence and it will hinder whatever plans he may have for Harry or the other teens. On top of that, Lucius will be in a prime position to re-educate and to evaluate the students, as we discussed last time."

"I cannot wait to see his reactions," Snape smiled, "as well as the others' reactions to Lucius' presence in Hogwarts. This year is shaping up to be quite exciting."

"Indeed it is," Voldemort nodded.

"Master," Tilly popped into the room. "Tilly was told to give this to you." The elf walked over to Voldemort and handed him a small piece of parchment.

"Thank you Tilly," Voldemort said as he looked at the note, before putting it into a pocket of his robe.

Lucius and Severus watched him and exchanged a telling glance, but did not ask for an explanation. It looked like their Lord was concerned about the fate of the foreign muggle family from Switzerland; perhaps he was worried about international consequences.

Lucius scanned the file and remembered that he had met Mr. Zeller last winter at a wizard controlled muggle company; he was the head of the research department. The man had conducted himself impeccable; he had not indicated that he knew anything of wizards in Britain or that his daughter visited any strange or unusual school. When during the obligatory small talk after the business meeting their exchange had briefly turned to their children and the British education system, both men had only said that their children attended exclusive private schools. He decided to address the matter later. Perhaps the older Zellers where still alive and well, then he could ask for mercy. It would be a shame to lose a muggle like Mr. Zeller, because his research had turned out to be extremely profitable for the Malfoys, after all Lucius was one of the wizard shareholders of that lucrative muggle company.

After Tilly popped out of the room, there was a knock on the door. After Voldemort had called, Enter, the door opened and Goyle strode into the room, levitating behind him the stiff form of Colin Creevey. The boy's arms were at his sides, legs stretched rigidly out. He was obviously under a Body Bind Curse, but awake, because his eyes moved rapidly, taking in what little he could see of his surroundings.
Voldemort waved his wand, conjuring a sturdy, medium sized table into the middle of the room. He gestured for Goyle to drop the body face and chest upside onto it and then dismissed him.

Snape silently cast Incarcerus, securely tying down the boy with ropes, should Goyle's Petrificus Totalus wear off before it was opportune.

"It is time," Voldemort said as he walked over to the table; he summoned the swan quill with a snap of his fingers, gesturing for Lucius to come and stand to his right side. Both dark wizards stood now next to Colin. As soon as the boy noticed them looming over him, his eyes widened in terror, he would surely have screamed and trashed around in fear if he only could move. A wet spot appeared suddenly on the front of his jeans.

Lucius wrinkled his nose at the sight and smell; he exchanged a glance with his master, again a prisoner had wet himself, like it had happened countless times before when they realized their inevitable fate. Nothing left of any bravery or courage in the face of certain death.

Picking up the ritual dagger and both vials, Snape stepped closer to the boy, his face a perfect unmoving mask. In a detached fashion, as if he were preparing potions ingredients, he took hold of Colin's right arm and turning the inside up, he made a cut into the soft skin near the wrist. Blood welled up instantly, most of which Snape deftly caught in the small, wide necked vial. The only sound was Colin's rapid breathing; the sole indication of his growing panic. Goyle had obviously thought it prudent to silence his captive well in advance.

Snape held up the other vial with the potion and carefully filled three drops of Colin's blood into it, after sloshing the liquid around counter clockwise, he held the potion out to Lucius.

Lucius took the potion from his Snape and swallowed the contents; both Voldemort and Snape watched him in anticipation. He held their gaze, his brows slightly furrowed before a gasp escaped him. He could feel the potion running through his body; it felt like ice, a very unpleasant feeling. He shuddered.

Voldemort stepped forward and uncovered Lucius' arm, bearing the Mark to their gazes. Then he took the vial with blood from Severus, dipped the quill into it and started writing runes meticulously around the Dark Mark, drawing one symbol carefully next to the other to create an unbroken chain of repeating runes that would anchor the warding charm and repel any attempts at detection and to also contain the power activating the invisibility potion.

He wrote Algis first for Protection, a shield and to channel energies appropriately. Algis Merkstave: Taboo, warning, turning away, that which repels. This he followed with Isa for Psychological blocks to thought or activity. This rune reinforced runes around it. Isa Merkstave: Treachery, illusion, deceit, betrayal, guile, stealth, ambush, plots.

Next, was Mannaz with the meaning of The Self; the individual or the human race, friends and enemies, social order, intelligence, forethought, create, skill, ability. Mannaz Reversed or Merkstave: Mortality, blindness, self-delusion, cunning, slyness, manipulation, craftiness, calculation.

The symbol sequence ended with Eiwaz for Strength, reliability, endurance, defence, protection; the driving force to acquire, providing motivation and a sense of purpose. Eiwaz Reversed or Merkstave: Confusion, destruction. This was his personal favourite, because Eiwaz was the symbol of EI, the Yew tree and reflected his power and purpose as the Dark Lord.

When he was finished, Voldemort banished the vial and the feather. Drawing his Yew wand, he took a deep breath, calling forth his dark power. Concentrating on the mark, he nodded to Severus
that he was about to begin the incantation.

Moving his wand clockwise over the runes, he send his magic into the symbols spelled out on Lucius pale skin, while chanting three times, \textit{\{Contain and protect the invisible snakes power inside us delivered through innocent life blood unwillingly given.\}}

Snape had already drawn his wand in preparation and was watching Voldemort intently. As soon as he noticed his Lords signal, he moved his wand in a slashing motion, sending out a streak of purple flames directly into the middle of Colin's chest. The boy's body moved violently from the force of the curse, only the conjured ropes held him down onto the table.

Snape clinically observed the effects of the curse that was known among the Death Eaters as \textit{Dolohov's Curse}, as he had invented it. Snape had become so proficient casting magic that he could cast it voicelessly, just like his own trademark curse, Sectumsempra. He'd chosen to use the \textit{Cont remrupture Internacurse}, because this curse caused severe, usually fatal injuries inside the body, without causing a gory mess on the outside, just like the Dark Lord had wished.

Colin's face turned red and then purple quickly, his eyes bulging out of their sockets as he apparently struggled for breath amidst terrible pain. Then his face turned paler again, the wheezing breaths sounded disgustingly wet, while his abdomen turned dark and swollen, because of all the blood and liquids pooling there, caused by the breaking of his ribs, the rupture of numerous blood vessels and internal organs. His whole body was suddenly trembling and shivering, his magic trying to heal the terrible damage, to no avail. The Body Bind broke, his mouth opened in a silent wail of agony, he tried to move desperately, but the ropes held him tightly bound, so he could only trash his head from side to side, screaming into nothingness.

Lucius felt the power building up, as soon as Voldemort started to hiss the incantation. A second later, he was not able to completely suppress a flinch when the purple light of the curse flashed from Severus wand into the boy so close to him. The freezing feeling rushed through his body towards his left forearm. His right hand flew over to grasp his left arm where the Mark was, but he stopped himself in time, clenching his fists. Lucius gritted his teeth and tried to bear the building pain but he couldn't stop the second gasp that left his lips, even more as he felt the potion working and the dark power of the ward strengthening with the second repetition of the charm. The mark tingled, itched, burned, the freezing feeling turning rapidly into warmth and then burning hot like fire, similar to the original branding.

As Voldemort was hissing the incantation for the third time, Lucius couldn't stop the groan from escaping his lips; his head was thrown back and his eyes closed as he felt the magic working on him. What seemed like hours, but was actually minutes, later, Voldemort stopped his hissing and stepped back from Lucius. Colin's struggles ceased, lungs collapsing, as his last desperate breath could not sustain his fading life any longer.

With the pressure relieved on his mind and body, Lucius fell to his knee; he took a few shuddering breaths before he moved back to his feet.

"How are you feeling?" Snape asked as he looked him over.

"Slightly off balance," Lucius replied as he looked at the two.

"Well?" Snape asked as he indicated Lucius' arm.

The blond looked down and gasped when he saw the smooth forearm.

"Perfect," Voldemort smirked. "Tomorrow Lucius, I want you to go to the Governor's and state your
"Yes my Lord," Lucius nodded. "Thank you my Lord, for this opportunity."

"Do not mess it up Lucius," Voldemort warned. "It is imperative that you are given entrance."

"I understand my Lord," Lucius said.

"Good," Voldemort nodded. "You are dismissed."

"My Lord," Lucius bowed. "Severus." With that, he turned to walk out the room; he paused, allowing Voldemort to lower the wards to allow him leave, which he did, closing the door behind him.

"Your plans are coming to fruition Marvolo," Snape murmured as he moved to stand next to his lover and lord.

"Yes they are," Voldemort turned to smile at him and he drew him in his arms. "Soon Dumbledore shall fall and the Wizarding World shall be ours."

"Splendid," Snape muttered before Voldemort drew him into a kiss. "Have you spoken to Harry as yet?"

"No," Voldemort shook his head. "I will have a meeting with the Inner Circle and the Weasley boys, and then I will speak with Harry."

"Very well," Snape nodded and that was the last thing that was spoken between the two for a while.

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The next day, on the sixth, things progressed. The teens had decided to go to Diagon Alley early tomorrow morning to avoid the majority of the students. Harry had written McGonagall after mentioning the idea to the others and true to his words, she had written back yesterday saying he was allowed to be in the Advanced Potions class.

Snape had sent in a letter indicating he was out of town and wouldn't be back until the week before school started. The teachers were surprised and had wondered about his ability to get everything ready in that week, but he had scathingly assured them he would.

Lucius had met with the Board of Governors earlier in the day and had arranged for a meeting with them along with Dumbledore, which would occur in exactly one week on the thirteenth.

Now, it was late afternoon, and the Inner Circle, along with the teens were sitting in Voldemort's private rooms. They were about to meet with the Weasley brothers to discuss their positions in the war. It had shocked them when Bill and Charlie had sent word saying that they had already made their decision.

"Hedwig," Voldemort's voice was soft, yet loud enough to be heard by everyone in the room.

The phoenix flashed into the room, first going to Harry's shoulder to rub his head in welcome, lightly tapping Draco in the process, before she flew over to land on the table in front of Voldemort. With the exception of the LeStranges, Lucius and Snape, the rest of the Inner Circle was in awe of the phoenix, as they were extremely rare creatures.

Voldemort ignored their surprised looks and mutterings, gently rubbing Hedwig on her breast. "Go
and collect our two guests from Potter Manor."

Hedwig trilled once before flashing out.

"Was that a phoenix?" Avery asked.

"Yes it was," Harry answered. "She's mine. Is that a problem?"

Remembering the night of the teens' induction, Avery, along with the rest of the Inner Circle, shook their heads. "Well, congratulations Mr. Potter."

Harry smirked.

"Good," Voldemort nodded; he was about to say more, but Hedwig flashed back into the room, with the two guests, depositing them near the entrance door.

Bill and Charlie looked around the room, blanching slightly when they noticed the occupants; their gazes drifted over to the teens sitting alongside the Death Eaters around the large table, and shock was evident when they recognized, Cory, Luna and Draco. They tried to identify the Dark Lord; however, none of the men present resembled a terrifying, pale, snakelike monster they had expected, according to Dumbledore's description.

"William, Charles, come here and sit down," Voldemort started, drawing the brothers' attention to him and gesturing towards two free chairs opposite him.

They walked gingerly over to the chairs and sat down, feeling very nervous and overwhelmed. They were lions in the snake pit, indeed! Harry and the other teens, excluding Draco, smiled encouragingly at them.

"You are here because it was revealed that your presence would be beneficial to my side. I hope that that is true," Voldemort continued. "You were spoken to on a few facts from Severus, the twins and Harry and I hope that you have seen the errors that were highlighted and you have made a decision."

Bill and Charlie exchanged looks before turning back to Voldemort.

"We have," Bill spoke first. "We've made our decision, but if you permit us, we would like to know something."

Voldemort looked at the two of them before shifting his gaze over to Snape, Harry and finally Luna; he stared at the girl for a few seconds, before he looked back to the two as Luna smiled and nodded.

"Very well," Voldemort nodded. "You may speak. What is it that you need to know?"

"Your stance on muggles and mudbloods," Charlie said after he took a few calming breaths.

"What?" McNair interrupted before Voldemort could respond. "How dare you question our Lord?"

"Quiet!" snapped Voldemort, threatening pain with a glare at the man.

McNair cringed, blanched and shut up at once.

"I gave them permission to ask a question and therefore take no offence," Voldemort waved McNair's words away. "Now, as to your question Charles, my stance on muggles and mudbloods has shifted from what Dumbledore and the Ministry make the public believe. I will not outline all of my plans to you at the moment, but know this; I will be more careful in my dealings with muggles in the
"My faithful followers, you will be surprised about what I have learned and the conclusions I have drawn for our future dealings with muggles, mudbloods and our enemies. This is a good opportunity to explain all this to you. I am sure much of my next words will sound strange or unbelievable to you. Next week we will have another meeting to discuss all this when you have had time to look at the evidence and to form your own opinions. This matter is of the utmost importance. Rest assured that I have had access to the newest findings of the Department of Mysteries and some information was provided by Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy to me."

Everyone looked at the two in question in curiosity before they turned their attention back to Voldemort.

"Let me first stress that I continue to believe that magical people are superior to muggles. I hate muggles, despicable creatures that they are. However, on the one hand they do have their uses and on the other hand they are very dangerous, as the Malfoys and Harry kept reminding me this morning," Voldemort continued with his explanation. "I had to rectify my plans. After seeing this new evidence and regaining my sanity, I see some issues differently than twenty years ago or even last year. What is endangering Magic, weakening Magic, are many different issues.

"We on the dark side wish to enforce the Statue of Secrecy, which is an international agreement between all wizarding nations. I want to keep the wizarding world, all magical people and beings as safe as possible from detection by muggles. Muggles are too numerous to conquer them all or to eradicate them from this planet. There are nearly six billions of them, compared with perhaps five hundred thousand wizards all over the world. Our Ministry of Magic does not have any reliable data there are only estimates.

"Muggles have made frightening progress concerning split second communication, surveillance, warfare and weapons compared to my youth. If the muggle scientists and military would discover us, they would attempt to study us, then to use us to fix their problems. If we would not cooperate, they would not leave us alone. If they discover that we are a serious threat, or if they fear that we would help their enemies, they would turn against us in the blink of an eye. A witch-hunt, an incredible blood bath would result and magical people and beings would be wiped out. We would fight of course, but it would be futile."

The Death Eaters, with the exception of Snape, Harry, Draco, Remus and Lucius, had shocked looks on their faces.

"Yes, this is the shocking truth, a concept very difficult to grasp for purebloods with little contact to the muggle world," Voldemort chuckled at their looks. "Today, Harry and Draco persuaded me to look at the facts and to remember my youth, that was during Grindelwald's rise to power and the great muggle war, called World War 2. I remembered that I witnessed firsthand what destruction muggle mass destruction weapons could cause in parts of muggle London during the Blitz. I remembered that Headmaster Dippet or his deputy, Dumbledore, did not take my concerns seriously at all. As long as no wizards or only a few of them and those dead were all halfbloods or mudbloods - lost their life, it also did not concern the Ministry of Magic.

"As it turns out, we, the magical community, were lucky. The wards on the Ministry and the Alleys were strengthened and they held. There was no direct hit by a muggle bomb on them. Since the end of that war, nothing has changed; no progress or reinforcement was made. The long-time of peace made the Ministry complacent. Of course, it is easy to intimidate, torture and murder a few random muggle civilians; we have done that enough in the past. But against their armed forces with today’s modern weapons we would be equally helpless. Muggles have made progress; their weapons today
are much stronger then 50, 60 years ago.

"Our current spells and shields do not work so well against most of their weapons. Transfiguration can help us, but would it be enough in a battle? We will have to research that in the future. Should the muggle scientists bend their considerable intelligence on the question of searching out magic, I am concerned that they would succeed. Until now, any strange occurrences observed by random muggles are explained away or obli-viated by the Ministry of Magic. If the muggle governments were to tell their people, especially the military and their scientists, yes, the strange appearances and happenings are real and caused by Magic, this information would spread very fast among millions or billions of muggles over television, telephones and something new called the Internet. The Oblivi-ate Teams of all wizarding nations combined would not be able to contain it."

Harry and the teens, along with Bill, Remus and Charlie, could see why the man had gained as much followers as he had. The way he spoke was mesmerizing and it drew you in, making you listen intently to what he was saying. It made you think that what he wanted, was what you wanted as well.

"Fudge has done everything to keep my return unacknowledged. If his Aurors and Hit wizards fail so against me, one strong dark wizard and his relatively small group of devoted followers, how would he or his successor cope with a massive surprise attack by muggle armed forces, their bombs and intelligent weapons? Not at all. The Ministry could not protect the magical population or itself. One muggle Neutrino Bomb detonated in the Atrium of the Ministry of Magic or in the middle of Diagon Alley would kill everybody in the building or the vicinity within seconds, while leaving the structure of the buildings intact.

"As the Dark Lord, I will and would try everything to protect the dark families of my followers, but that would be most difficult and not enough. We are simply too few. So, our only hope lies in keeping us a secret, of keeping our world hidden from the muggles. That is where I see the big crime of Dumbledore. He does not see this danger, the end of all magical folk."

He paused and looked towards the Weasley brothers. "People like your father, Arthur Weasley, think that muggles are funny, harmless people; that he has to protect the poor little lambs against the nasty dark wizards. He goes into the muggle world to study them, to collect empty batteries, for Merlin's sake! He should visit a muggle public library or a museum of science or get his television set to work and watch the news.

"Something else that concerns me is the fact the old rites are followed by fever and fewer pureblood families. The Weasleys are a prime example, again. Your parents have taught you nothing of how to celebrate Beltane, Midsummer, Samhein or Yule; they give you Easter Eggs and celebrate Christmas, two muggle church festivals of the Christian Church, the organization that prosecuted magic and burned witches at the stake over centuries.

"I strive to regain the balance in Magic, to redeem the Dark Arts, to stop the oppression of dark beings, to salvage what is left of the old traditions and rituals to teach them to the next generation. It is necessary for our survival to push back the overwhelming influence of light magic and the foolish muggle preferences of Dumbledore and his bunch of misguided blood traitors like your parents. You might have noticed that we usually do not attack randomly, over the past year there were mostly undercover actions and controlled raids. Yes, we still do target muggleborn and half-blood families that endanger the wizarding world by spreading the knowledge about our existence recklessly among their muggle friends, relatives and co-workers.

"Two weeks ago, I led a massive strike against several public muggle and wizard targets to show Fudge and Dumbledore that they should take me seriously. Well, Fudge was sacked a few days later.
There is on-going research at the Department of Mysteries about the possible origins of mudbloods. There are several theories; time will tell which is correct. One is that Mudbloods somehow stole magic from a witch or wizard. Harry and Severus have pointed out to me that at least in case of Lily Potter, Harry's mother, that was not the case; she simply was born with magic like any other half-blood or pureblood child.

"Severus was her neighbour growing up in a muggle town; he observed that Lily started to show accidental magic early on as a child just like himself and his pureblood wizarding cousins. There was no other wizarding family in the vicinity besides Severus and his mother and they were not negatively affected by Lily Evans. Lily grew up to be a talented witch, not particularly powerful, but gifted in Charms and Potions. This is proven without doubt by the occurrence of Halloween 1981: her death, Harry's survival and my temporarily defeat fifteen years ago."

Everybody listening gasped; it was unheard of that the Dark Lord would praise a mudblood this way.

Voldemort scowled and continued, "Lily did something before I came to Godric's Hollow; some undoubtedly dark ritual or charm, that protected her child through her willing life sacrifice. We that we use the Dark Arts understand about these powers. I must acknowledge that Lily Potter was indeed a capable, strong witch.

"Harry said her sister is as muggle as possible, she hates and abhors Magic. Lily's parents and grandparents were muggles as far as Severus knows, however they were happy for their daughter to be special, so they were different to the overwhelming majority of muggles that believe magic to be an evil power of the devil in their Christian religion."

He paused once more, and his jaw tightened as he recalled what Harry had revealed to him about his own childhood; it was similar to the way his own childhood was and it sparked anger if he thought on it. Getting control over his emotions, he continued;

"Harry experienced the exact opposite growing up; his aunt hated her sister, consequently hated Harry, and never told him anything about his family. It would be an interesting project for Harry to research his family tree, maybe he could find an ancestor that was magical to explain where his mum got her magic from. So it seems that it is possible that muggleborns are magical offspring of squibs or perhaps halfbloods that have married muggles in the past, a few generations back until the connections to their wizarding ancestors was forgotten. Nobody understands at this time how squib ancestors or perhaps forgotten or unknown half-blood ancestors (through rape or affairs for example) can suddenly produce a magical child again, but it obviously happens.

"Therefore, I have concluded that it is not feasible any more to murder all muggleborns simply because they are muggleborns. We are so few wizards; we need fresh blood, because the old pureblood lines begin to fail from too much inbreeding. They have fewer and fewer children born per generation over the last hundred years and the really powerful students at Hogwarts are becoming increasingly rare over the last decades, at the moment the most powerful student is Harry Potter and he is a half-blood. Again, it pains me to say this, but it is the truth.

"For the future, I would like to establish an earlier detection method of these muggleborn or perhaps unknown half-blood children living in the muggle world that show accidental magic, so that we might start their education a few years earlier. Of course, best would be to remove them from their muggle parents or guardians, especially if they are abusive because they are frightened of their own children because of accidental magic. Continued marriages of wizards of all kinds, purebloods, halfbloods, mudbloods, to muggles are not advisable as a rule. Although it is true, that in the first generation, these half-blood children are sometimes either on the same level as their parents or even
much stronger, much more magically powerful.

"A good example for this is Harry Potter or Severus Snape. Both are halfbloods with one parent from an old pureblood line. In muggle biological science, this effect is called Heterosis or hybrid vigor or out breeding enhancement; it is the increased function of any biological quality in a hybrid offspring. It is the occurrence of a genetically superior offspring from mixing the genes of its parents. If these halfbloods marry another witch or wizard, halfbloods or purebloods, they usually have moderately powerful children. Some are much more powerful than average, same as the first generation halfbloods. This is good, if Magic is enhanced, strengthened and continued in the following generations.

"But if these halfbloods and their children continue to marry muggles instead of other witches or wizards, their Magic weakens and it is the next few generations until it is nearly or completely lost. Sometimes, a new witch or wizard, a muggleborn is born. But they are seldom and rare and we have no logical explanation at this time, we cannot predict when a muggleborn will show up. There obviously are factors at work we do not understand, yet. That's one of the projects of the D.O.M. Why do muggleborns marry muggles instead of other muggleborns or halfbloods?

"This seems to have occurred in the past, because many muggleborns cannot find adequate work in our wizarding society, so they go back to their muggle society. Seven years of magical education at Hogwarts completely wasted and the risk of exposure is heightened if these muggleborns continue to use some magic at home or in front of relatives and friends. To change all that, we will have to overthrow the current government and at the same time seize control of Hogwarts, to change the educational system. A small step in this direction was undertaken today by Lucius; if all goes according to plans, he will become the new Defence teacher at Hogwarts."

The long lecture was met with stunned silence. The Death Eaters especially were shocked; they wanted to retire and think about everything their lord mentioned. To change his views on pureblood supremacy and their attempts on governing muggles so much, he must have seen tangible proof, incontrovertible evidence.

Bill and Charlie nodded while Draco, Harry, Snape and Lucius exchanged looks; they had only spoken to Voldemort earlier this morning before Lucius had left to speak with the Governors to arrange their meeting with the Headmaster.

"We thought over everything that the twins and the others told us," Bill started. "And it sickenes us to see the truth in what they were saying. But I guess it shouldn't surprise us; the reason I had taken the job at Gringotts was because I knew it would take me all over the world, thus limiting my mother's influence in my life."

"That's the same reason I took the job in Romania," Charlie continued. "Mum's a bit mental and it was the only way to escape her, but to hear about her actual actions...it was sobering."

"Your decision then?" Voldemort asked.

"We've decided to join your side," Bill said. "We don't agree with anything Dumbledore or our family did, and hearing your views on muggles and muggleborns helped greatly in our decision."

"And if my stance had not shifted?" Voldemort asked.

"Then we would've asked to remain neutral," Charlie answered.

Voldemort was quiet after that and everyone, with the exception of Luna, held their breaths in anticipation.
"You are aware that by joining my cause," Voldemort said at last, "you will face your family sooner or later?"

"Yes," both nodded. "We are prepared for that."

"Harry?" Voldemort turned to look at said teen. "Did Hedwig—?"

"Yes she did," Harry nodded with a smile. "They are yours; I suspect through Hedwig, they have been all along but stayed where they were due to circumstances."

"Very well," Voldemort nodded before turning back to Bill and Charlie. "I accept your decision."

Both men stood up, bowed and bared their left arms, ready to bear the mark.

"No," Voldemort shook his head, surprising them. "Like the teens, you will not be marked; your aide will be even more beneficial to me this way."

"Yes my Lord," Bill and Charlie said as one; they were surprised, but did not question it.

"The tides keep growing," Luna spoke up and the others chuckled in agreement and amusement.

"Now, I wish that you return to your normal lives; just keep your eyes open," Voldemort said. "Take notice for example, who is in the Order, if there are new members, what people talk about behind Dumbledore's back; if there are any others dissatisfied or critical of the Old Man. Information that Dumbledore tells you in any meetings that are held without including Severus, missions that he sends you or others on; you will compile a weekly report, which shall of course be disguised and charmed for my eyes only, and you will give that report to Severus inconspicuously after an Order meeting. Should you learn of anything extraordinary, like a planned raid on Malfoy Manor or acute danger to Severus or Harry for example, you can always send a missive through Hedwig. Simply call her name and concentrate on your urgent need to contact Harry. Do not use normal post owls."

Bill and Charlie nodded, that sounded reasonable and easy to accomplish.

"You are all dismissed," Voldemort said. "Harry, I would like you to stay behind."

"Yes my Lord," Harry nodded; he gave a quick kiss to Draco and walked back over to stand next to Snape. As the others left the room, they could hear the twins teasing Bill and Charlie about coming over to the dark side; both Harry and Snape chuckled as Voldemort's lips quirked slightly in amusement.

"I must apologize for this morning," Voldemort said once everyone was gone and the room was enclosed in its wards once more.

"For what?" Harry's brows furrowed.

"For losing my temper with you and Draco," Voldemort clarified.

"Oh," Harry said. "It's completely understandable. Is that what you wanted to talk to me about?"

"No, it is not," Voldemort sighed and looked over at Snape, who moved to lightly touch his lover's shoulder. "Harry, what do you know about Horcruxes?"

Chapter End Notes
A/N: so...did the smuts make up for the wait? What did everyone think of this chapter....let me know
Last time on RDA;

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"For what?" Harry's brows furrowed.

"Administering Crucio on both you and Draco," Voldemort clarified.

"Oh," Harry said. "Well, looking back now, it was completely understandable. Is that what you wanted to talk to me about?"

"No, it is not," Voldemort sighed and looked over at Snape, who moved to lightly touch his lover's shoulder. "Harry, what do you know about Horcruxes?"

Harry stared at them in confusion as his brows furrowed; the word did not ring any bells at all in his memory.
After Harry remained silent for another minute, Snape spoke up and his snarky tone held a teasing quality to it. "Maybe we have overtaxed his mental faculties with the question."

"You haven't," Harry flushed slightly and looked between the two. "Well, ok, maybe a little. Ok, so, as I have never even heard of the word Horcrux before, could you please explain to me what it is?"

Snape and Voldemort exchanged looks, before the Dark Lord glided over to the window; he looked out for a few seconds before shifting his gaze back to Harry.

"Dark magic, soul magic, a means to ensure immortality," he answered. "A Horcrux is a special object, into which a small part of a wizard's soul is transferred, to keep it safe and to tether, to anchor the wizard’s soul to this plane of existence, should the body of the wizard be killed."

"Holy-fucking-hell," Harry breathed; he was in shock. He couldn't believe what he had just been told. His mind turned the information over as he tried to fully understand it.

"That's...that's bloody brilliant and to be honest, slightly horrifying. I mean, to think that a wizard would go to such lengths...hang on..." His brows furrowed as he thought more on what he was told and what he knew. "Is that what you did? It is isn't it? That's how you survived all those years ago when you tried to kill me and the Curse rebounded."

Voldemort looked solemnly at Harry before he nodded. "You are correct."

"Cripes Marvolo," Harry ran a hand through his hair. He was silent for a few seconds before he looked at Voldemort. "So, what's the catch? I mean, it can't be easy or everybody else would try it. How exactly did you do it?"

Voldemort shook his head, "No, it's not easy. This is considered the darkest of dark, very advanced magic. The exact method is irrelevant at the moment."

"Where do you keep this Horcrux?" Harry was very curious, his mind bubbled with questions. When he got no immediate reply, he looked from Voldemort to Snape again; both looked solemn, cautious, concerned and were intensely studying him. Another idea formed in his mind.

"Wait...you said 'Horcruxes', which means that you made more than one. What do they look like?" Harry asked, studying the pale face of the tall, powerful wizard. "If you don't mind, my Lord?" while he was a bit unsure about whether or not he should ask so many questions, he couldn't help but to think that maybe they wanted him to piece together the hints to find an answer on his own.

Voldemort and Snape exchanged another telling glance and then concentrated their intense stares on him once more, which spoke volumes, like shouting 'Come on Potter, figure it out."

Harry saw the look and realized that he was right; they did want him to piece together the hints to get the answer. He looked to the side, subconsciously scratching his neck, going over everything in his mind he knew about Voldemort, or Tom Riddle.

"The diary!" he exclaimed suddenly as he turned back to them; his eyes gleamed with satisfaction and a smile showed on his lips, happy that he had figured it out. "The diary was a Horcrux! Tom was not only a memory, but also a part of you—"

He stopped himself before turning a thoughtful look at Voldemort. "That's why you were so pissed off, and why he talked and acted the way he did. Well, I never..." Harry trailed off.

Suddenly he looked up at Voldemort with some unease. Should he have spoken so plainly about the diary while there was someone else in the room? The Dark Lord had ordered him to keep quiet about
Tom and the diary. And what of Severus? Did he already know? As Voldemort had yet to frown or scowl, he took that to mean a good thing.

"Marvolo, I suppose since you allowed this discussion to begin in the first place that Severus already knows?" Harry asked.

Voldemort nodded. Harry let out a breath of relief, while Snape smirked at him. "I see you were telling the truth about hiding away some of your capable mental facilities under that mussed up black mop of yours."

Harry snorted, fighting to hide his smile; it was typical of Snape to deliver praise cloaked in mockery. "Now what else," Harry thought. 'Several Horcruxes, hmm, now what could be another one? How should I know, when he won't tell me how he made them? It's almost like with Dumbledore, not answering simple questions, letting me struggle to figure this out. Do all elder men get off on leading me along?"

Frustrated with their riddle game Harry huffed at them, raking his right hand once more through his unruly, black hair. "You're in the mood for guessing games today, aren't you, sirs? So there are some more Horcruxes beside the diary?"

Snape's scowl and a mild glare from Voldemort caused Harry to back track quickly, seems like he had spoken a bit too cheeky. "Sorry, I didn't mean any disrespect my Lord, sir, it's just that, I'm a bit frustrated."

When both men nodded and smirked at him, Harry sent his gaze around the room for an inspiration. In the corner besides the fireplace was still a cosy nest of blankets for Nagini and her little ones. Seeing this, Harry remembered that day of their first mission when he and Draco had been in this room together twice and the proverbial *Lumos* went off.

"Your locket, it's another one, it must be," he said. "That's why you wanted us to find it and why you were so angry two weeks ago. You discovered that it was missing. You told us that someone switched your locket for another one, which turned out to be Regulus Black's locket. Am I right?"

"Indeed, Harry," Voldemort answered. "So, what do you remember about that day when you and Draco brought back my locket? Do you remember how you felt?"

Harry tried to recall exactly how he had felt finding and delivering the locket. He scrunched up his face in thought, looking so cute, that he caused both elder men to chuckle quietly. It took a minute until the boy spoke again. "I was very confused…I felt so strange."

Biting his lower lip, he raised his emerald eyes to the crimson-brown ones that had not left his face the whole time and answered, feeling slightly awkward. "When we were in here the first time, I noticed that you had a new ring...that golden one with the black stone." he paused and his gaze automatically went to Voldemort's hands.

Noticing the ring, Harry nodded to himself. "I felt...strangely curious as I wanted to ask you to give me the ring to hold it and to look at it. Of course, I didn't dare to ask you and even though I understood that you had wanted us to go and search for your locket at once, I would've rather stayed here in your room. Yet, at the same time, I was excited to go with Draco on our first mission; I wanted to please you, make you proud, so I pushed the urge to stay here with you and Nagini away."

Harry stopped, clearing his throat to form the words to express his emotions. He might've been more
independent and assertive, but it was still a bit disconcerting to be talking like this with the Dark Lord. "At Grimmauld Place, when I took the locket from Draco, it felt as if...as if I had found something that I had lost." he huffed and smiled sheepishly. "Completely ridiculous, I know, because I had not seen the locket for a year and it was always yours, never mine. It reminded me...yes, I think it reminded me of the diary in my second year, I guess. After I found the diary in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom, I was so disappointed that the pages were all blank. I had hoped it would contain information on the Chamber of Secrets.

"Despite this disappointment, I often looked at the diary, turning over the empty pages when I was sitting on my bed behind the curtains in the evenings. It was only weeks later, on Valentine's Day, did I discover that the diary was not empty and could write back. The whole time, it felt as if it belonged to me, like something I had forgotten or lost years ago and found again. The locket felt similar."

He studied Voldemort while talking; did the man grow bored or impatient with his rambling? He saw that he didn't, but rather, he listened intently. Harry bit his lip and after a short pause to collect his thoughts again, he continued.

"Hedwig flashed us back here. We walked to your door, knocked and entered your room. I felt different compared to the other times I had been in here, like...like it must be to come home, a comfortable feeling and at the same time also exciting. Of course, I also felt happy that Draco and I had succeeded in the mission you gave us.

"As I came into your room, I reached in my pocket, to give the locket to you. It was as if I was in a daze; I didn't want to give it up...I wanted to keep it. It felt tingly and warm in my hand, so precious, as if a tiny heart was beating inside. I didn't understand, but I felt a strange yearning to keep it...but at the same time, I wanted to step closer to you, to hand it over to you. It was very strange, normally I'm never so conflicted and I have never felt a pulsing like that from other metal objects. And no offence Marvolo, but the only person I want to be really close to is Draco."

Voldemort again nodded encouragingly, while Snape kept impassive and quiet, so Harry continued, "When you reached out your hand to take the locket from me, our fingers touched. That threw me. The sudden sparks felt like a strong tingle or an electric shock or something coursing through my hand, my arm, my heart, everywhere. It felt as if my magic and your magic reacted somehow. Did you feel that too?"

"Yes, I did," Voldemort answered, completely serious.

Harry hadn't understood his own emotions or reactions then and he had thought that he had imagined things and so, he was now quite astonished to learn that the Dark Lord had felt the same. "I wanted to...forgive me, Marvolo, but..." Harry paused and was surprised to see that he had stepped closer to the tall man while talking; he had moved without realizing what his body did. He was so confused, again, he not only remembered how he felt that other day, but the strange tingling in his scar and the yearning to be as close as possible to the Dark Lord was back. He became aware that he was staring into the burning crimson-brown eyes above him as if he had a crush on Marvolo. What was going on? He felt embarrassed; his cheeks flushed red and he quickly took a step back, looking down and to the side. That's when he again noticed the ring on Voldemort's left hand.

To Harry's surprise Voldemort did not sound angry when he spoke, "It's alright, Harry. Go on; tell me honestly, how you felt that day and how you feel now. I know you're apprehensive and confused, but this is important for you to understand what has happened. I'll explain why later."

Harry thought his head felt like a fried tomato. He gulped for air before finishing what he had wanted to say before; this time, the words came out a bit stronger.
"I wanted to step closer to you, to keep a hold on the locket, and to touch your hand with the ring and to hug you," he paused, recalling the moment. "Then Nagini hissed and she asked about us; I answered without thinking, that we were alright. I wanted to go to her and hug her and at the same time be held in your arms, and, it's weird, but I want that even now…” he trailed off, unable to keep looking at the concerned face above him.

Despite the fact that Voldemort had given him permission to continue, Harry was still a bit apprehensive about speaking like that to the Dark Lord. Sure, he had been cheeky and bolder when he had first reach out to the man, but that was before he fully started working for the leader of the Dark side.

When no reaction or reprimand followed, Harry continued, "I know I have no business Marvolo and I hope I'm not overstepping my bounds. I know that you and Severus are together."

Voldemort stepped closer to him. Reaching out, he gently took hold of Harry's chin with two fingers and lifted his face up again. A spark seemed to ignite the moment he touched the boy. It didn't hurt, only tingled his nerves.

Harry's heart was racing a mile a minute; his breathing shallow. He started to tremble at the touch, at the sudden closeness, overwhelmed with the powerful dark aura of this man.

"Look at me, Harry," Voldemort commanded softly, when Harry did, he continued. "You did not overstep any bounds, as I did ask you to tell me how you were feeling and I do understand. You feel like you do about me, Nagini, the locket, and the ring for a reason. Can you guess why? Have you thought about your scar, why you got those strange headaches when I’m furious or those dreams or visions from me?"

Harry nervously licked his suddenly bone dry lips. He tried to think of what could explain it while he felt this own magic rising up in reaction to the powerhouse of dark magic in front him and around him. It felt as if the Dark Lord had enveloped him in a tingling, pulsating blanket, at the same time calming him and pulling at him like a strong heartbeat. His scar throbbed gently in the same rhythm; his chin tingled where the fingers held him.

He wanted...no, he needed to be closer to him. He shuffled closer, forcing himself to keep his hands still and down so he wouldn't reach up and embrace the man. They were so close they could feel each other's breath upon their faces, the heat of their bodies; their eyes were locked firmly with each other.

Suddenly a thought fought itself to the surface of Harry’s muddled mind. 'Horcrux'.

"Horcrux...Horcruxes?" He asked in a whisper. "The locket and the ring are both Horcruxes also? They contain parts of your soul?"

Voldemort hissed the answer, (Yesss, they are. And...) He raised an eyebrow.

Harry stared mesmerized into the crimson-brown pools of fire above him, struggling to breath, as a shock wave of sudden understanding crashed down on him.

"Nagini and I are...my scar...we're Horcruxes too? That's the reason why we want to be close to you? Why the diary, the locket and the ring attracted me so much? How is that possible?"

"Indeed," Voldemort answered him. "You're mine; that is why I want to have you close, why I want to protect you. At the same time, I feel the strongest urge to lock you all up in the highest tower or the deepest vault beneath Gringotts, secure behind a dozen mighty dragons, so that no harm may
come to you or Nagini or the other safeguards."

While saying these words, he embraced the astonished, shocked and overwhelmed young man and pulled him to his chest.

Harry felt the room swirling and his knees go a bit weak and he was glad for the support. Tentatively he raised his arms to return the embrace. It lasted only a moment, and then Voldemort took a hold of his shoulders and pushed him back a bit so that he could look in his face again. Harry glanced over to Snape, who was still standing impassively right next to them; was the potions master not angry or jealous that his lover was embracing Harry?

Snape watched them with a blank face, his emotions locked up for the past few minutes before his features softened and he favoured Harry with the look he bestowed on Draco; he could easily understand Harry's concerns and while he knew that anyone else would feel jealous, he knew that there was nothing romantic about the embrace.

Harry took a few deep breaths and shook his head to clear it before he looked back up at Voldemort, who had by now released his hold on the young man, allowing Harry to step back a pace. His mind went over Voldemort's words and he couldn't help but to stiffen. "With all due respect my Lord, I'm afraid I can't permit myself to be locked up. I'll be careful as to not get hurt; I'll keep your Horcrux safe and I will protect Nagini, always, but I refuse to be locked up." He paused, trying to control his rising anger. He had spent most of his childhood locked up and he refused to go through something like that again.

He sighed and looked at Voldemort. "How did this happen? How long have you known about this? I mean, you didn't know before this summer, did you? Otherwise, you wouldn't have tried to kill me in the past? I know the prophecy is a moot point now, but what did it mean concerning said prophecy? Does Dumbledore even know?"

When he had noticed Harry stiffen, Voldemort had stepped back slightly to better look at him. He was unnerved by it, but before he could comment, Harry had continued with his questions and he couldn't help but to chuckle, much to Harry's consternation. Both elder men shared a smirk that did nothing to reassure Harry.

"What?" he snapped, his anger spiking, once again, at his fate; it seemed that trouble always found him. Life was so unfair; you'd think that finally giving in to his dark side would make things easier. And why were they holding back laughter?

"Won't I get a say in this?" he asked, making sure to keep the anger and demanding note out of it.

"The thought is tempting," Voldemort smirked at Harry after winking at Snape. "Don't you think so Severus? No more trouble with the Boy Who Lived, if he is locked up miles under London, or even better, in a high, impenetrable tower like a princess in a fairy tale...with thorns growing all around it."

Harry gaped, forgetting his anger for a moment; he could not believe that the Dark Lord would taunt him this way.

Snape could not resist grinning evilly at the shocked face of the boy; now that they were on the same side and had spent so much time together, he truly enjoyed teasing him.

Both men were now chuckling at him, their eyes dancing full of mirth. How dare they? Harry’s anger spiked once again as he remembered his childhood; he had been locked up in the cupboard under the stairs or his shabby room enough years at Privet Drive, for his own good of course according to Dumbledore. He was furious! He would not allow anyone to do that again; he would
fight this, Dark Lord or not. Harry stepped back a few paces, drew himself up, squared his shoulders, raised his chin in defiance and clenched his teeth and his fists. His magic, already close to the surface, seemed to coil in his chest; ready to strike out it began to swirl around him.

Voldemort and Snape noticed that Harry was really upset by their jesting and instantly sobered up. Obviously, this topic of locking him up was a sore subject for the young man as he had never reacted this way in the past weeks. On the contrary, he was usually polite, accepted Voldemort’s authority and any reasonable punishment doled out. The one time he had even moved to be mutinous, was when he had punished the young Malfoy. Harry’s magic had reacted then and though he felt a small surge of pride that Harry was confident enough to stand up to him for the one he cared most about, he was still their master and so he had had to punish him as well. Most likely Harry reacted so defensive subconsciously, because of something, those blasted muggles or the headmaster did to him.

At first, he tried to reach the boy with their mind connection to quickly diffuse the situation. [Harry! It’s all right, calm down.]

No visible reaction, Harry was too angry and upset to listen.

Voldemort was careful to keep his distance, his hands slightly raised and visible, making no sudden movements, to prevent the boy from lashing out at them. A glance and subtle headshake stopped Severus from stepping closer or drawing his wand. Normally he would not allow this disrespect and defiance from any follower, but Harry was special. He did not want a fight with him over such a simple misunderstanding, although he was sure that he could subdue the boy, but he might lose his trust and loyalty; especially now, when discussing something as vital his safeguards. Which was very risky, but Harry needed to understand what he was, before he could tell him what he wanted to do about it.

So he spoke in a calm, smooth voice, making sure to keep what anger he was feeling, under the surface. "Harry, come on, calm down. Don't worry; I will not treat you like an object. I spoke only in jest."

The words got through to Harry's anger and he listened and acknowledged them, allowing his anger to dissipate.

As soon as the teen had calmed down a bit, he went to his chair and invited him with a gesture to take a seat on the couch. "Come Harry, Severus, let's sit down, there is much more to explain. Tilly!"

An instant later, the house elf popped into the room, while Snape and Harry walked over the couch and sat down.

"What can Tilly be doing for master?" the elf asked.

"Tilly, get us some tea and a selection of drinks," Voldemort ordered.

"Yes master," squeaked the house elf before vanishing. A few seconds later, she reappeared with a large tray full of tea and various drinks like butterbeer, red and white wine, sherry, brandy and firewhiskey, setting it upon the coffee table. After they had each taken something to calm their nerves, Voldemort turned to Harry and began to explain.

"You asked how one creates a Horcrux and how long did I know about your scar containing one," he started, "To be truthful, I did not understand the true nature of our connection until a few days ago when I observed your strange behaviour and my own emotions on the day you retrieved the locket.
"To understand, you have to know the steps to create such a soul container under normal circumstances. One has to prepare oneself with a dark ritual, and prepare a suitable object as receptacle, a vessel, well in advance. The next step is to murder someone. It has to be cold-blooded murder for this purpose. I am sure you are aware of the difference that to murder someone is not the same as killing someone in offence or defence in a duel or battle, like in a war situation."

Harry nodded, "Yes, Lucius mentioned that in his history lessons, when we talked about morals in the context of the differences between light, neutral and dark magic. I have killed, but not murdered anyone so far."

"Very well," Voldemort continued. "This murder splits the soul, another spell is necessary to rip the soul piece out of the wizard’s body, transfer it into the vessel and to securely seal it in."

"Oh, so that's why you called this darkest magic," Harry commented thoughtfully. "Did it hurt?"

"Yes, it did," Voldemort nodded. "Do you have any question?"

Harry thought for a moment. "Yes. Well, what you described would be the creation of a 'normal' Horcrux, like your locket or the ring, right? What about Nagini or me? And the diary, that was special, different, wasn't it?"

Voldemort shifted in his armchair and sighed. "Believe me Harry, I did not turn you into a Horcrux voluntarily, that was an accident, caused by the repelled Killing Curse fifteen years ago."

"So then," Harry shifted slightly in his seat. "What happened? I mean, if you didn't mean to, then how did I become a Horcrux?"

Voldemort took a sip of his brandy before he continued to explain. "I had planned creating another Horcrux that night. Your death, the death of my prophesized vanquisher, would have been the catalyst. However, when your mother sacrificed her life for you and your own heritage came out to play, the Killing Curse rebounded and struck me. Now, since I had already done the first part of creating the Horcrux, my soul was severed once more, but as the spell to secure the piece of soul into an object was not cast, the soul piece was drawn to, and went into, the only living body nearby...yours."

Harry remained quiet as he listened to Voldemort explained just how he came to be a Horcrux; he couldn't say anything...he didn't think there was anything to say...at first, but then, a thought came to him.

"But," he asked, "how is it that I didn't know? I mean, how can two souls occupy the same body...that's not possible is it?"

"If we have to go into technical details," Snape spoke up, "Marvolo's soul piece wasn't in your body per se, but rather somehow contained in your scar...a secluded part in your mind; that is why you were able to receive visions from him."

"Any why you were, are, able to feel really strong emotions from me," Voldemort added, "it is also why I was able to possess you so easily back in May."

"This is..." Harry sighed as he ran a hand through his hair. "I mean...this is...you're telling me I have a piece of your soul in my head."

"Yes," Voldemort nodded.

"I don't know what to think," Harry breathed. "It does explain everything."
"What are you thinking?" Snape asked.

"I don't know," Harry admitted, "I mean, I'm amazed at what you accomplished, but I'm a little worried. What does all this mean for me or us? Will your soul piece take control now that you're within distance? Did it have any influence over me throughout the past years?"

"I would think that if my soul was to take control over you," Voldemort explained, "then it would have done so already, and I do not think it had much influence over you. Maybe it enhanced your dark tendencies, your Slytherin side. As to what it means, Severus and I were talking and we think it's best to remove the soul fragment from your mind and reunite it with my own, quite mangled soul."

"Oh," commented Harry and he waited for more explanations.

Voldemort frowned, and then he suddenly rose and walked over to the window, staring out of it deep in thought, before he looked back at the two young dark haired men on the sofa; so alike, so different and yet, so important to him. He debated internally whether he should tell Harry the truth and how much of it. He was not good at understanding emotions or talking about his secrets at all. He never, ever had revealed this much information to anybody besides Severus, shown himself so vulnerable, so human, as he did today.

Perhaps he should leave it, simply try to possess the boy again and force his soul piece out and back into himself? But, what if it didn't work with brutal force? The possession at the Ministry had been incredibly painful for Harry; of course he had fought back like mad. If attacked now unexpectedly, he would strike back and never, ever trust him again.

Thinking back to the young man's defensive reaction to their jesting a few minutes ago and to the display of vicious, powerful magic when Harry turned against Gibbon or Narcissa, Voldemort decided that it was much more important to keep Harry's trust and cooperation. He could always ask Harry to allow him to obliviate the most sensitive Horcrux information after he regained his soul piece. He'd have to test Harry's Occlumency skills first...

Harry studied Voldemort's face, at least, the part that he could see at an angle, the deep frown on his brow. Glancing over to Snape, he noticed the dour man looked uncharacteristically concerned. Whatever the Dark Lord wanted to tell him must be big. By the way, just how did one get out such a Horcrux soul fragment without destroying the soul's container and reunite it with the master soul? Would Harry be hurt in the process? How dangerous was this?

He had never before thought about souls and what that concept meant at all. Splitting one's soul? It sounded fascinating, but like madness. Sudden apprehension coursed through him. It looked like Voldemort didn't want to talk anymore about these Horcruxes, but forced himself to go on when he straightened his shoulders, walked back to his chair and locked his red-brown orbs again with Harry's green ones.

"Harry, I don't like talking about this at all, but I feel you can only decide to help me if you have more information. You told us how much you despised being kept in the dark for your own good."

Voldemort sneered the last part.

Harry nodded emphatically and agreed, "Yes. I'd rather face whatever I must head on, actually knowing what's going on. Please explain. If I can help, I will."

Voldemort smiled ruefully. "I recently noticed that I do feel better when you, my Horcruxes are here, close to me. I never believed it would make any difference, but, it seems it does. I have come to terms with this revelation and my emotions over the last few days. I have thought about what this means concerning the prophecy. When I started upon this darkest path as a young man, all I cared
about was attaining more power and immortality. I started to voluntary mutilate my soul, because I believed the risks to be minimal and worth the gain. I believed that it would be a splendid idea to split my soul into several parts to attain immortality. I went further on this path than any mortal man before me."

Voldemort sighed again and ran his hand through his hair. After a glance at Snape, he locked eyes again with Harry. "Because I didn't know that I had inadvertently created a Horcrux in 1981, I turned Nagini into a Horcrux in the summer of 1994, thereby splitting my soul one more time."

Harry's eyebrows disappeared under his fringe and his mouth fell open; shocked and surprised, he couldn't help but to cry out. "You tore your soul up once more? But, how could you do that when you hadn't even regained a real body then? I suspect that creating these Horcruxes affected you in some way."

Voldemort nodded with a contrite look. "Yes, that was too much obviously. And yes, creating these Horcruxes affected me more than I was ready to admit until now. I didn't want to see it, to acknowledge it, but...not only did my looks change, but I did as well; I became unstable...I turned insane." Voldemort paused, and to Harry, he looked angry with himself, he was. "I nearly destroyed myself and all chances of the dark side. I nearly lost this war because of my obsession to become immortal, to kill you and to learn of the prophecy. I lost track of everything else."

He stretched out a hand to touch Harry, and the boy reached out and responded by clasping his hand in a firm grip, despite the initial slight shock upon their skin on skin contact. Harry had never seen the Dark Lord act like this and he gaped in astonishment at his next words which were spoken in a quiet yet incredibly intense voice.

"Harry, you, you have saved me, however inadvertently. You fulfilled the prophecy in an unforeseen, unique way. You helped to resurrect me just over a year ago, albeit not willingly. We both share the same blood now and tether each other to life. You are my Horcrux, and I am kind of yours. So that line of the prophecy could be true, that we can only die at the hand of the other. Through your decision to contact Severus and to come to me in June, we both live and not merely survive anymore. Over this summer, I have...changed. I have found my sanity, my purpose again. You have caused and witnessed this change firsthand, since I possessed you in May. Despite the possession and the pain I caused you, you came to me of your own, free will, to join me, not to kill me. It's very unfortunate that you had to lose your godfather in the process." Voldemort squeezed Harry’s hand, and then he released it and sat back.

Harry gaped at him, until he became aware of it – without a scathing commentary from Snape about him impersonating a bubbling fish, although he could almost hear a Snape-like voice sneering that in his mind - and closed his mouth with an audible snap.

Voldemort and Snape shared a look and smiled indulgingly, no wonder the boy was so shocked and overwhelmed.

"You told me about the opening of the Chamber of Secrets in your second year and the fate of my diary, thereby alerting me to a great danger, that my Horcruxes are not as safe as I believed. I would not have checked upon them or retrieved them on my own so soon, without your interference," Voldemort mused, leaning back to the side of his arm back chair, "and for this warning I am very grateful, Harry. When you return to Hogwarts, you will check upon one other, which I hid inside the castle a long time ago."

Harry smiled and nodded, "Um, OK."

"However, once I understood that my soul was inadvertently split into too many parts, and that you
carry another part of me inside your scar, I thought about getting this soul part back."

"How?" Harry sat up straighter and looked at the two men he respected.

Voldemort sighed again and raised his glass to take a sip, clearing his throat he spoke, "Well, I believe the Horcrux contained in your scar, is the only soul part I can get back without tremendous difficulties."

"Oh? How? Has anyone ever tried this?" asked Harry.

Voldemort looked over to his desk and stretching out his hand, he summoned a large volume, bound in faded black leather. Handing it over to Harry, he said, "Well, I do not know if anyone has ever succeeded. As far as I know, nobody has ever created more than one Horcrux at a time or used a living vessel. In this book I read as a teenager, *Secrets of the Darkest Art*, it says that there is a way to retrieve a Horcrux soul piece and rejoin it with the master soul. Look at page 370."

With a flick of his fingers, the pages rapidly turned open. Harry scanned the page. "Dangers of creating a Horcrux... ah, here: re-uniting your Soul. Oh, you have to feel remorse and regret the murder that created the Horcrux."

"Hmm," Voldemort nodded. "At the bottom is a footnote."

Harry read it and looked up into Voldemort´s eyes. "Do you really want to try? It will be excruciatingly painful; it says the pain can destroy the one attempting it. Are you even able to feel an emotion like regret or remorse? I thought you killed so many people over the years, it never bothered you anymore."

He had told Severus this already, and now he had to repeat it for Harry´s benefit. He looked off into space as if contemplating the past for a moment, and then he spoke in a low, halting voice.

"You have helped me to regain my sanity. I have rediscovered emotions in myself that I always despised. I considered feelings a weakness, to care for somebody a most foolish weakness. I was proud to be self-sufficient, to have allies or followers or enemies, but never friends. But now, now I begin to feel differently, because of you and Severus." He shared an intense look with Snape, before focusing again on the young man next to him and puffing out a breath, rubbing a hand over his face uncomfortably, before he said, "So yes Harry, I happen to regret killing your mother and attempting to kill you."

Harry drew in a short breath; he had thought he had come to terms with this topic long ago, but it seemed it still affected him.

After a short pause, Voldemort spoke in a more determined voice, "Normally, I simply don’t do that. I never questioned myself. I am Lord Voldemort, I do, what has to be done for the cause. However, after all that has happened, all what we discovered...I think, these are the only two times I cast the killing curse, which I could ever regret. I remember well that I didn't plan to kill Lily Evans."

"Why?" Harry asked, 'I've always wondered why you gave her the chance to step aside.'

"You—wait, how do you know that?" Voldemort was slightly confused.

"Whenever Dementors get near me," Harry bit his lip as he explained, "I hear my mum's voice as well as yours and then I see the green light of the Killing Curse. It's the only clear memory I have of her...of both my parents." Harry paused and looked away briefly before looking back. "I always hear James, my dad, first; he's shouting at mum, a warning I think, then I would hear you and you tell her to step aside, you called her a silly girl. But she doesn't; instead, she pleads for my life. She screams
my name, you laugh before crying out *Avada Kedavra* and then the memory ends with the rushing green light of the Killing Curse."

Voldemort and Snape stared at him with incredulous looks on their faces.

"What?" Snape's voice shook and his face took on a troubled look. "You remember that? You remember hearing Lily?"

Harry nodded solemnly, biting his lower lip as he struggled to keep his composure; that memory always affected him and he was sure it always would.

"Oh, I never...this is unbelievable," Voldemort exclaimed. "You were only fifteen months old!"

Harry shrugged with a casualness that he didn't truly feel. "I know."

Voldemort cleared his throat and continued with his explanation. "I did give her a choice, but it was only because of—"

"NO!" Snape cut him off abruptly, raising his hand as if to block Voldemort back, but the elder wizard continued as if he hadn't been interrupted.

"Severus. He had asked me to spare her," Voldemort finished.

Hearing this, Harry glanced at Snape astonished. Maybe Snape would explain this later. It obviously was something he’d rather kept private, to gauge from the scowl he threw at Voldemort.

"You don’t have to tell the boy everything!" Snape spat out.

Voldemort just shrugged one shoulder and addressed Harry again with a scowl of his own; pulling out his memories of that fateful night was like a sore tooth that really hurt. Harry though, listened with rapt intention, internally comparing this talk with how different Voldemort had spoken about his mother that night in the graveyard, full of contempt that a mudblood had bested him with love.

"I asked her to step aside. She did not, she pleaded for me to kill her instead and she screamed your name. I felt anger at her stubbornness and killed her, easily. I hesitated a moment before cursing you, Harry. You were standing there in your crib, clutching the rim, staring at me with those Avada bright green eyes. It was eerie. According to the prophecy, you had the power to vanquish me. I felt something, a connection between us, but I pushed that from my mind, so sure of my superiority." He paused, again, and rubbed his chin in contemplation for a moment, frowning as he examined his memories, trying to separate what had actually happened and what he had thought and felt in those critical seconds before the Killing Curse rebounded and excruciating pain ripped him away from his exploding body.

"I should have listened to my instincts and taken you along, to raise you as my apprentice, instead of attempting to kill you. I should not have acted as I did on limited information, knowing only the first lines of the prophecy. But, I convinced myself that killing you then, when you were just a weak toddler, was the right thing to do to protect myself from a potential threat in the future. After all, Dumbledore took this prophecy at face value and the Potters went into hiding upon his continued insistence.

"Wormtail was such a good spy. Ha! I laughed at myself, for hesitating and even considering sparing you. I cast the killing curse, as I had done hundreds of times before, watched the green light speed towards you and then - it all blew up in my face. The curse simply bounced of your head, like a ball! You screamed and a terrible explosion occurred, ripping me apart; I couldn’t believe it," he ended viciously and shaking his head at his own stupidity fifteen years ago.
Harry had held his breath as he heard for the first time in his life, a detailed account of that frightening scene he had relieved in his memories countless times when he had faced Dementors in his third year and in the summer before fifth year; again and again hearing his mother plead for his life and the cold voice laughing before intoning 'Avada Kedavra'.

Voldemort was lost in thought, looking down at his hands, which had played and twirled around with his wand unconsciously while he recounted this night of Fate. After a moment, he seemed to find his usual confidence again and slipped the wand back into his right sleeve.

He spoke, his voice now cold and full of contempt, "In contrast, I'm sure I will never feel any remorse or regret for killing my worthless muggle father for the ring or that filthy muggle tramp I caught snooping about my mother's old home, whose death I used for the locket Horcrux."

Harry stared at him and then lowered his eyes, seeing nothing, completely overwhelmed by what he had learned and relived in the past minutes.

Voldemort and Snape watched the young man intently, but stayed quiet; they wanted to give him space. How would Harry react?

Harry blinked and looked at the dark arts tome in his hands, feeling the old leather cover, its heavy weight in his hands and on his lap. He reread the paragraph about dangers and re-uniting ones soul. It said it was tremendously painful and could destroy the wizard, but it did not explain any method or ritual of how exactly to do this re-uniting of souls.

"There is no method described here. There is no mention of turning a person or an animal into a Horcrux. How...?" Harry choked on his confusion and fear and coughed. "You could die from the pain. I could probably die...?"

"Well, we will have to simply try; Severus and I discussed some possibilities and rituals. Normally, a Horcrux is an object, like the ring or locket. Because nobody has ever created a living Horcrux, the book does not mention it. I may be weak afterwards and you too, but Severus has brewed enough pain killers and pepper-up for us, don’t worry."

"So, you’re not sure if it will work at all? What will happen to me? Will I lose my ability to speak Parseltongue? What about our mind connection?"

"We believe that your Parseltongue ability will not be impaired, remember what the portrait of your ancestor Harrison Potter told us?" Severus answered.

Harry nodded. "Yeah, that’s right."

"The mind connection, I believe that will disappear," explained Voldemort. "Which is unfortunate as it could be an asset in a situation when enemies surround us and we could speak to each other in secret while fighting or it might distract us, it’s hard to tell. Because you told me that two weeks ago you were actually sick, incapacitated from the headache, when I was investigating where some of my safeguards where stored and I realized they were not safe anymore. Of course, I was furious, and you felt that anger through our connection. Without the Horcrux inside your head, you should not get any more headaches if I lose my temper or experience other strong emotions. And I will certainly welcome total privacy again in my mind."

Harry nodded; no more unexpected and inconvenient migraine attacks sounded very good! Second bonus, he did not want to peak in on them during any intimate encounters, especially after what Nagini had let slip. And the other way around too; Merlin, what a mortifying thought, to broadcast
his pleasure with Draco to his lord and Snape by proxy, should their mind connection continue or get
stronger over time. Occlumency seemed to help, but sometimes emotions or impressions from
Voldemort broke through his shields despite how good he was at Occlumency now.

Voldemort had never mentioned that he got dreams or emotional snapshots from Harry, but perhaps
he did and was only to polite or embarrassed to say anything?

"Hmm, ok than. What ideas do you have, Marvolo? Some complicated, gory ritual or other?" Harry
asked nervously.

"Well, as I said, there is no viable information in any Dark Arts tome we have access to, and
between the Malfoy´s, Severus´ and my personal collection that covers nearly every English or
Parseltongue soul magic or necromancer book or scroll in existence. Severus and I looked up several
curses or rituals that work to summon spirits or animate corpses or possess a still living body while
getting rid of the already occupying soul, and I also thought about my own experiences when I was
possessing animals and Quirrell, but they all had a major drawback."

Harry´s eyebrows rose and he send him a questioning look.

"In the end, all those curses or rituals would require or risk us to kill you in the process, and there
would be a high risk that my soul piece was killed too, so they are not an option we considered
feasible. I think we have to come up with something completely unique to our unique situation,
follow our emotions, our instincts, be close together, letting our magic out, be one..."

Harry shifted uncomfortably in his seat and looked from Voldemort to Severus and back again. His
mind raced over the sparse knowledge he had picked up about rituals in general over the years. What
did Voldemort mean? Did he come up with a new ritual where they became one?

The tension rose to an unbearable level, until Harry blurted out his fears, "What, do we have to strip
naked and fuck each other inside some bloody Pentagram or Heptagram on a new moon night or on
Halloween or another special date or what?"

Voldemort smirked at him. "Now, would that be so bad? You´re a very handsome young man. It
certainly wouldn´t be a great hardship for me."

Harry gaped, blushed furiously and spluttered in outrage before he remembered himself. When he
was composed, he spoke calmly. "Not that I don't think that you're attractive yourself Marvolo, but,
and no offence once again, I only want Draco; I'm his, he's mine, just as much as your Severus' and
Severus is yours."

Severus and Voldemort both held an otherwise blank face with an evil smirk for a few more seconds
and then dissolved into chuckles and laughter, again. Harry fumed and huffed. These two bastards!
They just loved to rile him up, and a part of him loved it; that the two stoic men could feel so relaxed
and comfortable in his presence and they trusted him enough to act like this felt good.

"Harry, calm down, I was only teasing you," Voldemort placated the young man. "Although, if a
ritual existed, with any chance of success that would require something like that, I would take you
without any qualms. This would not be about love or cheating on our partners. There is a lot of
power in a sexual union that one can tap into for magical purposes. However, you have not have
learned anything about this special branch of magic yet, it's not on the Hogwarts curriculum for sure.
Lucius and Severus trained you only in combat and duelling this summer with a bit of history,
traditions and politics. If you're interested, just ask Lucius or Severus, they can point out some useful
books, there is quite a collection of erotica and sex magic in the back of the library."
Hearing this, Harry's mind drifted off, and a dazed look along with a slightly goofy smile came on his face, as he thought on what the books could possibly contain and what he and Draco could do. He caught himself and flushed when he remembered he was still in the presence of Voldemort and Snape. His mind then registered the rest of Voldemort's comment, and he shuddered.

"Uhm…ewww…no thank you, erotic literature, or sex magic, is not something I'd ever like to discuss with Severus or Lucius." He shuddered again. It wasn't that he was uncomfortable about reading erotic literature or experimenting with sex magic together with Draco, what made it uncomfortable was talking about the topic with Lucius or Severus, both of who were like father figures-future father-in-law in Lucius’ case- to him.

Voldemort exchanged a glance with Severus, smirked and continued in a reasonable, matter of fact tone of voice, "Harry, we can be close without sex, like when I hugged you, remember how our magic sparked and reacted? Now, if you concentrate on your Occlumency, your mindscape, can you try to feel, to find my soul piece? It seems to be confined to the area of your scar, separated from your own soul and mind. Is there any manifestation in your mindscape, now that you know there is something different? What do your instincts tell you how to proceed?"

Harry nibbled at his bottom lip, brushing his hands over his face. He smiled ruefully. "Yeah, my famous instincts; usually they work fine and help me to survive, don't know though what use they'll be here. This is no troll or dragon to trick or duel to fight...

Suddenly he shifted, wriggled and snuggled behind Snape’s back, stretching out on the couch. Snape looked at him with a raised eyebrow without commentary, briefly squeezed his shoulder before he rose to his feet and sat down in another chair.

Covering his eyes with his hands, Harry tried to get his breathing and churning thoughts under control. He did his standard meditation breathing exercise, relaxed his tense muscles from fingers to his toes and made an effort to calm himself and to clear his mind. After ten minutes of tense quiet, with Severus and Voldemort waiting patiently, while they felt Harry’s magic alternately flaring up and settling down again, he lifted his head a bit and propped himself up on his elbow.

Determined, he locked eyes with Voldemort and spoke, "I'm feeling so strung up and raw just now. To think, mum and dad could be still alive, if you had not attacked us, or that you could have taken me along to raise me...I could have had a real home."

Harry's face darkened and he almost snarled out. "Then I would never have had to stay at the Dursleys." He could feel the old bitterness and rage rising and quickly pushed the memories of the childhood hell of Privet Drive away. He paused, and he thought on what a childhood raised by Voldemort or one of his Death Eaters could have been like. "But perhaps you would have been a very strict foster father, with very high expectations and your wand always ready to curse me as punishment. Don't know, what would have been better or worse...although I think after growing up like you did, you would not have treated me like the muggles did to us. Sorry, I feel so confused...

he stopped again and shook his head, and closed his eyes to better concentrate on his Occlumency.

"I think there is something in my mindscape, something that I haven't really noticed before. There is something hidden in a far corner; if it is your soul piece, then maybe you can find it and if you can touch it, then you can take it back, I guess."

Voldemort rose from his chair and moved over to the couch to sit down slowly besides Harry. The young man blinked, watching him nervously. The elder wizard turned toward him, so that Harry's right side was in contact with the side of his right leg and hip, both feeling the hard body and the warmth of the other man through their clothes. With his left hand, he took Harry’s right hand, briefly intertwining their fingers and rubbing his thumb in small circles over Harry’s wrist and pulse point.
The moment of skin on skin contact caused a strange, tingly feeling again. Harry flinched, gasping for breath, staring at him with wide eyes.

"It's alright Harry," Voldemort spoke in a gentle, calming, hypnotic voice. "Relax, calm down; I will enter your mind through *Legilimency* and seek my soul part out. Perhaps I will have to possess you, but it might work just as well with a combination of *Legilimency* and that mind connection we have already established between us."

"Calm down, drop your shields and get ready to accept me, to open up your mind. You have nothing to worry about, you are safe with us. Severus is going to keep watch over both of us and this room is well warded; nobody will disturb us."

Voldemort continued to soothe and reassure Harry with small, gentle, circular touches and calming words. He wanted Harry to become more comfortable with their close contact so that he could work on dropping his mental fortifications as well as keeping a reign on his volatile magic; he did not want it to lash out in self defence before he was able to establish a full mind and soul connection.

Harry searched Voldemort’s face for a moment, his heart hammering in his chest, and then he glanced over to Snape, who was hovering in the background, leaning against Voldemort's chair and watching them intently, wand at the ready to conjure up a shield, should their magic go haywire.

"Alright Harry, calm down, nothing is to happen yet. Severus will keep watch over us; you know he is strong and powerful. You can relax. You don’t have to fight today. Easy, Harry. Let go; yes, breathe, concentrate on your breathing, in...and...out. Easy, follow me; one, two, three, four...one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. And in again, yes, and out, slowly, five, six, seven, eight; easy...yes, that’s good, like I do," Voldemort’s voice repeated softly, calming the younger wizard and beginning to guide him through this difficult mind exercise, dropping the shields instead of building up mental defences. To succeed, they needed trust and calmness between them.

Harry listened to the alluring voice that was trying to calm him down, that was enticing him into lowering his defences. He tried to relax, to push back the instinctive reaction of fleeing or defending himself, of shifting away from someone as strong, powerful and dangerous as Voldemort. This instinct battled inside him with the urge to be closer, to reach up and pull the tall man down upon him; to lose himself in the powerful wash of comforting, compatible, intoxicating dark magic and the promise of strong arms and hands. His scar throbbed. His mind screamed No, but he realized his body welcomed the potential domination. Everything was so confusing.

Voldemort smiled reassuringly while he let go of Harry´s hand. Reaching up in a fluid motion, he slowly and gently pushed back the dark locks from Harry´s forehead. At the same time, he flicked his right wrist so the yew wand fell into his hand, careful to keep the tip well averted to the side of Harry’s face for now. Emerald eyes followed his movements warily; the young man lying on the couch beneath him trembled, obviously struggling with conflicting emotions and his strong fight or flight instinct.

Harry tried to follow the orders of the soothing voice, to deeply breathe in and slowly out, to relax, to let his defences drop, to allow Marvolo in. He realized that he had to consciously think of the dark wizard hovering above him as Marvolo and not as Lord Voldemort or he would panic. This was different then last time when Voldemort had looked into his eyes to read his mind, when he had told him about the Chamber of Secrets. He had shown him the memory, but he had stayed in control; he had kept all his defences up, presenting only a setting with a certain memory, but keeping the rest of his mind protected.

It was so difficult to let go, to open himself completely up to a man that was his former mortal enemy, even if his mind was convinced that he wanted to be on the Dark side, that he belonged here,
and that the Dark Lord was like the head of house of his new family. The leader of the Dark side and his master.

Suddenly an old fear broke through to the front of his mind. What if... what if he was tricked again? Nearly every time he had trusted somebody, he had been betrayed in the end. The Dursleys had starved and beaten down any naïve trust of the child Harry years ago; Dumbledore had manipulated him for years. Even his batty neighbour, Mrs. Figg turned out to be a squib, watching him for Dumbledore. The Weasleys and Granger did not become his friends on their own. Voldemort had sent him a vision that led to Sirius’ death in the end. How could Harry be sure that Voldemort and Snape didn’t do the same now, lull him in to use him, to manipulate him?

Snape was an excellent Occlumens, a double agent, a spy for both sides of the war. Both Voldemort and Dumbledore were sure that Snape was only loyal to them and spying on the other for them. He must be an absolute master of deception to pull this off for years. Why did Dumbledore trust Snape? Harry had always wondered and never gotten a sufficient answer.

And Voldemort – he had said that Harry was his, his Horcrux, that he wanted to protect Harry; but, not because he liked Harry or cared for him, for 'just Harry', but because Harry was his precious Horcrux, like Nagini, the ring and the locket. How could Harry be sure that - he shied away from the thought like a skittish Thestral colt, but it wouldn’t shut up – how could he be sure that Voldemort and Snape would not attack him when he let down his guard? In this position, he was so vulnerable and completely at their mercy. They could have planned to kill him the moment the soul piece was out of him and reunited with the master soul of Voldemort.

What was Harry’s value to Voldemort, if Harry was not a precious container for a soul piece of the Dark Lord anymore? An ally, yes, of great political value, yes, maybe that was enough. But what if Voldemort deceived him? Did he really feel regret for killing Lily and trying to kill Harry, or was this just another well played manipulation, the same as their friendly banter?

Harry panicked. Eyes wide, gasping for breath, heart hammering in his chest, he cried out, "No! Stop! Let me up!"

Suddenly pushing Voldemort's hands away, he scrambled of the couch over the backrest in a desperate move. He fell down on the other side, but jumped to his feet instantly, calling forth his magic, wand slapping into his hand, raising a shield up in front of him in the blink of an eye.

Voldemort and Snape stared at him and quickly glanced at each other, utterly surprised and bewildered. What was wrong now?

Snape straightened up beside the chair, wand already in hand, but lowered. Voldemort turned and rose to his feet, holding his wand besides his leg and down too, to appear non-aggressive. He sensed fear, doubt and panic radiating off the young man on the other side of the couch.


Harry looked from one man to the other, breathing heavily, adrenalin pumping through him. He bit his bottom lip nervously. "I want to trust you, but – but it became too much. I couldn't take it anymore. I – I want to trust you, but I am afraid that you will turn against me when I let my guard down. That you – that you will use me like everybody else did, and when you have what you want, you will kill me, stab me in the back with no warning."

"What! No!” cried Snape, looking aghast.

"Harry, I promise you are safe. I don’t plan to kill you and I won’t hurt you. Well, I might while
trying to get my soul piece out of you, but not intentionally anyway." Voldemort spoke, trying to convince the young man.

Harry shook his head and laughed a harsh bark of hysteria and cynicism. "Ha! I’m safe? Really? You two are the ultimate Slytherins, masters of survival, manipulation, lying and deceit. Dumbledore believes you, Snape, are completely loyal to him. And you, Marvolo? If you have your soul piece back, then I become worthless. Kill the spare you said. You ordered Wormtail to kill Cedric only because he was there, along with me in the graveyard. I can’t forget that. If you two attack me together when I’m weak or unconscious after the Horcrux removal, I don’t stand a chance. You said we must trust our instincts. Yeah well, my instincts are screaming warnings at me; that’s it. That’s wrong," Harry babbled, his overwhelming fear causing the words to pour out of his mouth uncensored.

"Oh, Harry..." Snape sighed, slipping his wand in his sleeve. "Harry, I’d never hurt you."

"Harry, you are under my protection, regardless if you are my Horcrux or not. You are never worthless," Voldemort assured him, while he too put his wand away, to show Harry that he meant what he said.

"Severus, Marvolo, I do want to believe you. But, how can I trust you in this situation? How can I trust that you won’t kill me Severus, if Marvolo orders you to do just that? Who would you chose? Your lord, master and lover, or me, a boy you have despised and hated for years. What did you say to Dumbledore that makes him so sure you are only playing the loyal Death Eater? That you are loyal to the light, to the headmaster?"

Snape stared at Harry, a shadow of anguish and bitter regret twisting his face. "I could not kill you, even if I wanted to, which I don’t. Marvolo only requests his soul piece back. That's all. He doesn't want to kill you."

"Why can’t you kill me, even if you wanted to? That doesn’t make sense," argued Harry. "What about Dumbledore? Tell me. It must be a hell of a secret."

"Harry, believe me, your fears are unwarranted. I shall always protect you," Snape tried to placate the young man without actually revealing his own secret.

"Severus, tell him. It's the only way he will trust you," whispered Voldemort to Snape, before he turned and continued to speak louder to Harry. "Harry, I understand your fears and misgivings. I found it incredibly hard myself to trust Severus, to trust you, to tell you about my best-guarded secret, my Horcruxes. Do you think that was easy?"

"No, Marvolo, of course not," answered Harry, relaxing his defensive posture a bit and already feeling ashamed that he had doubted the Dark Lord.

"Good, then will you believe me if I not only promise, but if I swear on my magic that you are under my protection regardless if you are my Horcrux or not and that I have no intention of killing you, as long as you are loyal to me. So swear I, Tom Marvolo Riddle, known as Lord Voldemort, so mote it be."

Harry stared at the elder man with an incredulous expression. "You would do that?"

"I believe I just did, Harry," Voldemort said

"I...wow. Thank you Marvolo, I...I didn’t think you would...I’m sorry I lost my nerves and freaked out like I did," Harry looked at the man in slight awe.
"It's alright Harry, completely understandable with your previous experiences. So, let's move on. Come back here and sit down. Please," Voldemort said, while sitting down on the couch again.

Harry took a deep breath and reined his magic back in, quickly slipping his wand up his sleeve as the others already did; now all three of them were unarmed. He walked around the couch and sat down again next to Voldemort. He looked uneasily up at the older man and then glanced over to Snape, who had remained standing, leaning against the side of the wingback chair, his arms crossed in front of himself, shoulders rounded, his head slightly bowed so that his long dark hair partly obscured his face; a pose Harry had seen countless times at Hogwarts.

"Severus?" Harry asked tentatively. "Why does Dumbledore trust you and why did you say you cannot kill me?"

The room was quiet for a minute. Snape seemed to struggle with himself, his face blank, eyes vacant, the thin lips pressed firmly together.

"Severus, just tell him. He will understand. If he can accept me, after all that I did..." Voldemort prodded the potions master again.

Snape jerkily pulled himself out of his troubled thoughts and moved to sit down in the wingback chair right next to the couch. He turned towards Harry, looking into his bright green eyes. These eyes, he could never deny them anything. But what would Harry think of him once he had spilled the beans? Would Harry hate him again; hurt him, kill him when his magic angrily lashed out at the man that was responsible for all of the lad’s troubles? Severus blinked, cleared his throat and struggled to find words to explain his deepest shame, regret, self-hate, the pain of torn up loyalties.

"Lily, your mother Lily; Dumbledore trust me because of Lily," he finally bit out.

Harry opened his mouth to comment, but Voldemort raised his hand and shushed him. "Wait, let him speak," he whispered.

"Harry, you are Lily´s son. I made a vow to Dumbledore, to spy for him on the Dark Lord and to always protect you, for Lily Evans."

Harry was astonished; there it was again, his mother’s name. Snape must have known her before; earlier Voldemort had revealed that Snape had asked him to spare Lily´s life that night. He asked quietly, "Why?" and added "Sir?" to express his respect for his teacher.

"Lily and I, we…we grew up together in the same muggle town. She was my friend, my only childhood friend. We were best friends at Hogwarts, until…until the end of fifth year. I believe you saw what happened in my pensive?" Snape’s voice shook.

Harry was shocked, his mum and Snape had been childhood friends? He gulped and nodded. "Yes sir, I’m so sorry I looked into your pensive. I had no right and I was shocked by what I saw. I apologize."

Snape brushed the apology away. "Doesn’t matter anymore, I did so much worse, later." After taking a fortifying breath, he ploughed on, locking his pitch black eyes with Harry´s emerald orbs. "You know I hated your father and his friends. I believe Lupin told you how he nearly killed me, because of Black, and the role your father played in this prank? Potter didn’t save my life because he had a problem with killing me, a slimy Slytherin student, only because his friends Black and Lupin would have gotten in serious trouble had Lupin torn me to shreds." The last part Snape growled out, the old anger and bitterness making his voice rough. "Lily didn’t want anything to do with me after fifth year, she didn’t want to hear my apology. She married James Potter. They were both in the
Order of the Phoenix, as you know."

Harry nodded, he remembered the old photo of the Order of the Phoenix and the stories Sirius and Remus had told him.

Snape continued after a moment of collecting his thoughts. "I hated the hypocrisy of Dumbledore and the light. I was always a dark wizard, don’t doubt that for a moment. After Hogwarts, I was able to study potions, because Lucius paid for the apprenticeship and my research to become a potions master myself. So I was indebted to Lucius and the Dark Lord, they opened up great opportunities for me. I gladly joined the Death Eaters and was proud to become the potions master of the Dark Lord. In 1980, I was sent to spy on Dumbledore. My lord wanted me to try to get the position of the potions teacher at Hogwarts, because Slughorn wanted to retire.

"Dumbledore had asked me to come to the Hogshead, were he would conduct an interview for the vacant teaching position. I – I waited down at the bar. There was another woman, thin and batty looking, with glasses, who claimed to be related to a Cassandra Trelawney and said she was going to speak to the great Albus Dumbledore. She was drinking down half a bottle of Sherry to bolster her courage. Then I watched as she went into the room upstairs, and I followed, to listen at the door." Snape stopped his narrative, and rubbed his face with his hands. He trembled.

Harry calmly interrupted him. "Severus, you already told me this. At the beginning of the summer when I sent you that letter asking to meet." He paused. "I know all this. I know that you overheard part of the prophecy and that you went and told Marvolo about it."

Voldemort stared at Harry. "And you are not angry with him? You do not want to take revenge on him for his actions in your parents' death?"

Harry shook his head. Voldemort and Snape watched him. "No, I don't. Severus and I already talked about this and worked things out. Marvolo, you killed my dad and mum, because Dumbledore believed in the sherry induced ramblings of that crazy, loony woman and sent my parents into hiding. He painted a bright red target on our heads. Even if Severus hadn't overheard the prophecy that day, I'm sure in some way or other the information would have reached you still.

"Dumbledore believed in it. He believed that I was the foretold saviour. For example, Wormtail would surely have heard something and told you Marvolo. You already told me that you were loyal to Voldemort from day one, and that despite that loyalty you still felt some guilt over my mother's death. That's why it was easy for you to follow through with the plan you and Marvolo had come up with for you to go to Dumbledore to plead your case so that the Old Coot would accept you." he grinned at the potions master before continuing. "You loved my mother, didn't you?"

Snape closed his eyes and nodded jerkily. To be honest, he had not remembered the conversation he had had with Harry at the beginning of the summer. If he had, he wouldn't have protested so vehemently when Voldemort started telling Harry about his actions all those years ago. He knew he shouldn't be surprised, but it still shocked him at how easily Harry understood him. When Harry spoke again, Snape's eyes snapped open again, what the young man said surprised him.

"Like I told you then, as much as I missed my parents, I got over not having them in my life," Harry shrugged. "Sure things would be different and I will always love them, but why cry over spilt milk? And besides, after all the deceit and lying that has happened in my life, I always valued that you didn't treat me as if I was special. You were honest in your dealings with me over the years, in your disdain, yes, you were unfair, but you never lied to me the way most others did. Even if I hadn't decided to reveal my true persona and I had found out this information anyways, I still would have believed that you regretted telling Marvolo about the prophecy because of my mum, not because of my father of course. Sirius could be still alive if I had trusted you and told you about my visions."
Harry laughed again, frustrated and grim, shaking his head. "Maybe if that had happened, then I would’ve heard earlier about this dratted, trice damned prophecy from you and that there was something like a Hall of Prophesies at the Department of Mysteries, I would have known why your master wanted for me to go down that corridor I always dreamed about. If you, Severus, had told me that there was a prophecy about me and that your lord also wanted to know, I would have said: Yes, I want to know too! We could have arranged something different. I could have tried to needle the truth out of Dumbledore. Or, I would have gone to the Ministry of my own during a Saturday night or maybe the summer holidays."

Harry turned to Voldemort, green fire blazing in his eyes. "Heck, I would have gladly accepted Severus or Lucius’ help to sneak out of Hogwarts or to escape from of my relatives without the Order noticing and to sneak into the Ministry. I would have gotten the damned prophecy all right, for both of us, anything to finally know why you were always after me! That’s what I’m really angry about, that Sirius did not have to die the way he did. Too many secrets kept from me. Arrgh!"

Harry couldn’t contain his anger anymore and jumped up to pace around the study, prowling like an angry lion, his magic causing the windows to rattle and his hair and clothes to whip around him. Snape and Voldemort exchanged telling looks and simply waited until the storm had passed.

Finally, the young man stopped his pacing, took a few deep breaths to calm down and turned towards them. "Ok, sorry about that, but I was just so angry."

"No, it isn’t Harry," said Voldemort. "Well, let’s resume what we started earlier. That is, if you believe you can now trust us enough to lower your shields and allow me into your mind this time?"

Harry nodded, "Yes, ok." He walked over again to the couch and sat down, then pulled his legs up and settled down besides Voldemort, his head resting on the armrest. He stretched out his right hand and clasped Voldemort’s left hand, briefly squeezing it. "OK, go on sir. I’ll try not to freak out again," he said with a lopsided smile.

The elder wizard started to calm Harry down again with repeating the breathing exercise and rubbing small circles on the back of his hand. As soon as the young man was more relaxed, he led him through dropping his mental defences.

"Yes, that’s good. Easy now Harry, trust me; I won’t hurt you. Severus is keeping watch over you and me. Imagine your defences. Your magic is powerful. Your walls are so strong, they are impenetrable, but you don’t need them for a while. Don’t worry, you are safe with me, with Severus. He’ll keep watch over us. You can trust us to keep you safe. Alright, Harry? Good, now, open up and let me in; only for a short while though. Imagine, these strong walls retreating into the ground."

"They are still strong, they can always protect you. You will pull the wall up later again, when we are finished. I will not hurt you. I will not tear your defences down, I will not damage them. I’ll just come in and look around. Take down your walls, Harry. You take them down, release them, you are in control. You can open up. Prepare to let me in, open up...easy Harry. Yes, that’s good, easy, let them go, open up to me. You are safe, Severus is keeping watch."

"Alright, Harry? Brace yourself. I’ll cast Legilimens in a moment. I’ll touch your scar while entering your mind; the physical touch should help to guide us. When I do this, I want you to open up and show me where my soul part is hiding and I’ll try to pull it back and reabsorb it. I’ll be as careful as possible, but it might still hurt," Voldemort assured the younger wizard. He pulled out his wand slowly and laid it besides Harry’s head on the cushion.

"I understand Marvolo. I won’t resist you. I’ve dropped all my shields as far as possible," Harry answered. "What you said and did really help a lot in calming me down, so thank you."
He smiled up at Voldemort. "If you wanted to change jobs, you could teach Mind Arts as you're really good at reassuring your student. Much better than certain other teachers," he glanced over at Snape, who only sneered in answer and snarled under his breath about obnoxious, impertinent, dunderheaded brats, which didn't really faze Harry anymore because there was no longer any malice behind the words.

He looked back at Voldemort. "So, I'll try to focus only on that dark spot in the corner of my mind." He took a few more calming breaths. "OK. I'm ready."

Voldemort nodded and carefully moved his left hand until his fingers touched Harry’s scar. Both felt a sudden shock, like a small electric surge course through them; Harry flinched a bit and both gasped. His scar tingled and throbbed, but it did not hurt - yet. Very different from the agony in the graveyard that Harry vividly remembered.

"Maybe because Marvolo tries to project calm and does not want to hurt me," he thought.

"Legilimens," Voldemort whispered, for Harry’s benefit, casting carefully with only a fraction of his power, pointing his wand at Harry’s temple and falling into the emerald green orbs staring up at him.

He slipped into Harry’s mind with ease and found himself standing in a small dark room, with a strangely uneven roof right above his head. A bit of light filtered in from behind his back.

Turning around, he curiously inspected this bizarre manifestation of Harry’s mindscape. Harry sat on the floor, his back resting against a board wall, arms curved around his bent knees, head resting on them, eyes closed. He was barefoot and wore simple dark muggle clothes, jeans and a T-Shirt.

The boy raised his head, green eyes sparking in the gloom, and gestured with his hand towards a cot beside him. The cot stood parallel to the back wall of the small room, at a right angle to the other wall against which the boy rested.

"Welcome, please sit down, Marvolo. Be careful, there isn’t much space in here," Harry greeted him.

"Thank you, Harry," replied Voldemort, settling his long frame upon the rickety cot with caution and looking around with a puzzled expression.

He was bewildered, what was this place? This experience was completely different from the last time he had intruded upon Harry’s thoughts. When Harry had narrated the events in the Chamber of Secrets, the fight against the Basilisk and how he destroyed diary Tom, he had shoved these memories to the forefront of his mind, so that Voldemort could watch for himself that Harry told the truth as he had experienced the situation. That mindscape had looked like the Chamber of Secrets, and Harry had pushed him out, as soon as he was finished watching Harry’s memories of that adventure.

This was something else entirely. After a moment, Voldemort’s eyes had adapted to the dim light, so he could discern more details. On the cot lay a bundle of rumpled blankets. Across from the cot was a door in the wall, light filtered in through the crack at the bottom and a tiny window near the top, shuttered with something thin, like mesh? The wall besides the small door was painted off white, there were a few pieces of paper tacked to it, looking like primitive pictures, childish drawings. Above the door were two words, messily scrawled with crayon: Harry's room.

Along the back of the room were a few rough boards fixed horizontally, filled with what looked like a collection of folded clothes, muggle toy soldiers, stones, feathers, ripped paper, muggle children’s books, broken muggle crayons and pencils, and other indiscernible junk, everything covered in dust.
The strange sloping roof reminded him of a stair upside down, and that was exactly what it looked like. The foot end of the cot he sat on stretched out underneath this sloping roof, one could only crouch there, because the roof came down so low.

Voldemort shuddered briefly in revulsion; he recognized this place from something Severus had mentioned last winter after another of those incredibly frustrating Occlumency lesson with the Potter brat'. This was the infamous cupboard under the stairs. Lucius had mentioned last year that Draco had once written him a letter about a rumour at Hogwarts that Harry Potter was raised by abusive muggles and had lived in a cupboard under the stairs for ten years. Of course, nobody had believed such ridiculous gossip. Severus and Lucius had been sure that the boy had grown up a pampered prince, just like his arrogant father. Obviously, that rumour was the truth.

"Harry, why are we here, in your cupboard under the stairs?" asked the Dark Lord.

Harry stretched out his legs and leaned back against the wall. "This was once my home, the only place where I was relatively safe from the Dursleys as a kid," he explained.

Voldemort raised a questioning eyebrow and waved his hand around to encompass the small, dingy room. "Safe? This looks more like a prison cell, not a nursery or a boy’s bedroom. Your relatives are truly disgusting muggles. How could they treat you like this?"

Harry shrugged. "Yes, they are awful wastes of space. They despise, hate and fear me. You see, when I was a small kid, before I could fight back with magic, they let me be if I was in here. Yes, they locked me in often for long periods as a punishment, which was incredibly boring, humiliating and dreadful. Aunt Petunia let me nearly starve a few times. " Harry shuddered while explaining; he hated the feelings of loneliness, hunger pains, thirst and desperation that bubbled up inside his chest from remembering the Dursleys torment long ago.

"But mostly when I was inside this cupboard, I could rest; they did not belittle me or force me to do chores or push me around or beat me up like it happened outside all the time. They never crawled inside; they did not bother if I kept things I found and hid in here, because they didn’t know. So, my cupboard was a prison and a safe place at the same time. Now, it is my innermost mindscape, a secure place to keep my memories sorted and hidden away.

"Anybody trying to snoop around in my mind will only see dust and junk, if I want that. Or, I can pull out certain memories and shove them to the front of my mind; I can create other rooms outside, around this one to show as if that was my true mindscape. Like the Gryffindor common room or the Chamber of Secrets for example; it all depends on who’s trying to catch a peek into my mind."

Voldemort nodded and looked oddly proud of his young protégé. "Ingenious. Well done, Harry. You showed me the Chamber of Secrets when we talked two weeks ago, and I never got any hint that that was only the antechamber of your mind, a kind of entrance hall, that you chose to open up for me. Of course, I did not search around at all, as I would have normally done, because you pushed your memories at me so quickly and I was so preoccupied with them. And I was very distracted, very angry at you for killing the Basilisk and diary Tom. Furious, that Dumbledore got his hands on my diary."

Voldemort took a deep breath and calmed himself again. He was impressed; Severus had never noticed that Harry was that well versed in Occlumency. The sly brat had presented his teacher with a perfect fake front, playing clueless and incompetent. The memories Harry wanted to keep private were hidden away inconspicuously, most likely between that junk on the boards, in some nooks, behind wall planks or underneath the bed.

He shifted to the side on the cot and inspected the things on the board closer. Now, where was his
soul piece? He tried to stretch out his magic, to scan the dust and the things lying around on the boards, the bed, the opposite corner, but he could not localize anything that felt like himself, and not like Harry.

Harry cleared his throat and pointed to the foot of the bed. "Marvolo, look there, behind the bed, in that far corner where the stairs meet the floor. There is a certain shadow, blacker and colder than the other shadows. It has always been there, I did not pay it any attention until a few minutes ago, after you told me to search for your soul piece. I think that shadow is it. I cannot touch it, it is behind a kind of wall of magic, or like under an invisibility cloak, which I seem to keep up unconsciously, because I never thought of it before today. Where do you think this barrier came from?"

Voldemort peered to where Harry had pointed. There was nothing; inky blackness concealed that far corner. Crouching down as far as he could on the cot, he stretched out his wand hand towards the shadows and concentrated again. It did not feel colder or different from the rest of the other space to him, but whatever it was evaded his touch and his sight. Suddenly his wand fell into his hand, and he thought Lumos, lighting up and illuminating the back of the cupboard. Shadows moved rapidly and fled in all directions. Still, there remained an area of darkest blackness. The bright wand light was not reflected, but was swallowed or absorbed by the shadows.

"Hmm, fascinating," Voldemort nodded, "I think your accidental magic created this right after my soul piece invaded your head through the curse scar. Your magic felt an intruder, tried to fight against it, but could not push it out of your head again and instead sealed it in to contain it. Can you concentrate and dissolve that barrier in front of that shadow? I could try to rip it apart with force, as if casting a spell. Sectumsempra, Confringo, Bombarda or Expulso would damage a real target, but that might hurt you or injure my soul piece, so we should first try that you take it down on your own, like your outer mental defence."

"OK," Harry answered. He got up from his place on the floor and crawled on hands and knees towards the foot end of the cot at the back of the cupboard, as close as possible to the shadowed corner. He knelt down, supporting his weight with his left hand against the boards and stretched out his right hand towards the inky blackness. Marvolo's Lumos spell illuminated the space above and around the lurking shadow, the man hovering right beside his head. Harry could hear his breath and see the glittering, intense ruby eyes fixed on the shadowed corner.

His probing fingertips felt colder air, as if there was snow lying right before him. Wishing for his wand, it materialized suddenly on his palm. Carefully he prodded it against the blackness. He was surprised to feel resistance, but not as firm as from a stone or wood wall. The enclosure his magic had created was now physical, but flexible. Until a moment ago, he had not been able to mentally touch it at all. So, there was some progress, good. He wanted to see behind the barrier now, wishing for Voldemort to just grab the shadow and take it away. Harry considered what spells to use. He knew from experience that if he imagined the effect of a spell, or wished for a certain reaction or an object, it would have a similar effect as in the real world. Fascinating, how this mind magic worked.

Hmm, it didn't feel like a solid stonewall, was it a kind of containment ward? They had not covered that jet in his studies; wards would be covered in Advanced Charms. Whatever it was, it felt cold. Maybe he could imagine it was like an ice structure? Perhaps simply melt it with warmth, dissolve it, or vanish it? On the other hand, could he try to open it up with Dissendium, like the statue of the humpbacked witch hiding the secret passage to Honeydukes?

What would happen when he did that? Would the soul piece felt threatened and attack him, would it try to wrestle control over his mind and body from him? Fear flickered through him. Oh, right, Marvolo was here with him, he would catch whatever was lurking behind the ward. Marvolo would not turn on him now, would he? No. Harry trusted the man, well somewhat after spending so much
time with him over the past months. He never trusted anybody completely. The thought flitted across his mind, how strange to feel safe because he was here inside his own mind with his former mortal enemy. Half a year ago, the idea that Voldemort could have free access to his mind and control him had terrified Harry.

First, he decided, he would try to simply vanish whatever this barrier was. "Evanesco!" he called out while waving his wand at the far corner as if he would wipe down a window or blackboard.

Nothing, no reaction whatsoever.

Harry narrowed his eyes, tapped his wand at the blackness and intoned clearly, "Dissendium."

The blackness rippled and stilled.

"Dissendium!" Harry spoke forcefully, pushing more power into the spell. The shadows shifted and rippled, but still the magical barrier held, swallowing all light and letting nothing through.

"Hmm, ok, I´ll try something different," he said, glancing over to Marvolo, who nodded, waiting patiently, but ready to act should the barrier come down.

"Tepidus ventus!" Harry called out, while picturing a frozen waterfall melting from a warm spring wind, water falling to the ground in a quickly expanding puddle. At once, his wand began to emit a rush of hot air. Harry had remembered this charm from last winter, when they had used it to dry off robes, or to melt snow. Would it work? He waved his wand up and down, to the right and left, brushing the hot air against the blackness as if he was using a muggle hair dryer, willing it to dissolve the barrier.

"Come on, you don´t need to protect me anymore. Marvolo wants only to take his soul piece back. Please, give in, let it out, please." Harry spoke to himself, willing his own magic to understand. It had created and maintained this barrier for nearly fifteen years, to protect him. He pushed all his power into the spell, heating the air, pushing gusts of warm, cozy wind at the blackness.

Voldemort and Harry watched with baited breath, as the shadows rippled and bent. Harry felt a sudden twinge in his scar. Then the cold blackness slowly shrank and appeared to seep down into the floor. The wand light rushed into the corner, illuminating something red hidden in the dark shadow, in the form of a small child huddled on the floor. A wailing, keening sound broke the silence. His scar throbbed again and now it really hurt.

Whatever it was, it suddenly moved, emitting a shrill, bone-chilling shriek. The red black shadow rushed forward towards the elder man. Voldemort dropped his wand just in time to catch the shadow, enclosing the shuddering, wriggling form into his arms, pressing it into his chest. He bit his lip and scrunched his eyes from the sudden burning pain ripping through him, his heart and chest hurt as if someone had stabbed him with a sword. Nevertheless, he didn´t relent his firm grip. He had to go through with this; this desperate entity was his, a part of him. Mine; the word echoed through him.

Remorse and regret, that was the key; he thought of that night at Godric's Hallow, immersed himself in that memory of Lily’s desperate pleading, protecting her baby until the last second. The rushing of deathly green light, ripping her soul from her body; of Harry staring on in surprise as his mother fell down to the floor, her green eyes empty; the green eyes of the boy, sparking with life and confusion.

Voldemort remembered the sudden agony of his own body exploding and being cast outside by the terrible force of the rebounded Avada Kedavra. Endless years followed as a disembodied spirit, lost, lonely, powerless and weak. Wandering through England and Europe, drifting around, possessing
small, disgusting animals like rats, sometimes a snake, but these small animals were all weak and
died quickly as their bodies could not endure the possession for long.

At the same time, Harry grew up here in this cupboard with despicable, cruel muggles, a hungry,
dirty, lonely child, neglected, abused, tormented only because he was a wizard child. Oh yes, he
could relate to the small child’s pain, he remembered his own childhood, until he mastered wandless
magic to pay his tormentors back.

All that suffering could have been avoided, if he hadn’t been so stupid and ruthlessly attacked the
Potters like he did. He should have been patient, waited and further researched the prophecy. He
could have arranged for Wormtail to kidnap Harry, to raise him and watch how the child turned
out. It had not been necessary to kill Lily and Harry at once. Suffocating, painful regret filled all his
mind and soul. The trembling and sobbing shadow child squirmed and burrowed further into his
chest, causing endless, burning white-hot pain.

Voldemort became aware of warmth, of strong arms around him, of murmured words of comfort
near his ear.

"Everything will be alright. Trust me."

Harry was embracing him, holding him together with the strange shuddering red shadow child.
Harry Potter held him, Harry Potter wanted to give him comfort, he wanted to help the very man
that had killed his parents. In that instant, Voldemort knew, Harry had forgiven him. He felt his
heart squeeze in searing agony and a hot lump choking him. He clenched his teeth and shut his eyes
against the overwhelming onslaught of emotions. He was not weak; he could and would endure this
torture because Harry had endured what he had put him through all those years.

The creepy shadow child suddenly wriggled into his chest with a final burst of stabbing, excruciating
pain. "Ahhh!" Voldemort screamed, before slumping down, blackness encroached on his senses, there was only the terrible pain in his chest, and nothing else existed anymore.

Harry knelt beside the cot and held the man in a tight grip; suddenly the repulsive, shuddering,
wriggling shadow child was gone and Marvolo was only a dead weight in his arms. Gently he
released the elder man and settled him onto the cot. Did he die, or was he only unconscious?

Quickly Harry felt for the neck, feeling relief as soon as his questing fingers found a faint pulse
throbbing under the cold skin. The man was drenched in cold sweat. Watching the face and chest
closely, Harry noticed a minuscule movement. Oh, good, so the Dark Lord was only knocked out by
the pain, which was not unexpected, according to that description in ‘Secrets of the Darkest Arts’ the
pain of reuniting a torn soul was excruciating.

What now? Harry blinked and sat back down on the floor, leaning against the cot, he felt dizzy and
exhausted. Quickly encroaching blackness tunneled his field of vision.

~...~

"Potter!"

"Potter, wake up!"

Someone gripped his shoulder and shook him.

"Harry! Wake up."

Oh, that was Snape´s voice. Harry blinked again and took stock of his body and his surroundings;
after all, he was so very used to this, waking up after accidents and near death experiences. Everything felt fine, well for him, he only had a slight headache and felt weak. Where was he? Oh, still lying on the couch. Carefully he pushed his hands against the fabric of the couch and raised himself to a sitting position. Whoa, he was still dizzy, better don’t move to much just yet. He opened his eyes.

"Alright there, Harry?" Snape was kneeling close to him besides the couch, with a potion vial in his hand and raking his scrutinizing gaze over the young man.

"I’m fine, just a headache and a bit dizzy," Harry answered.

"Here, drink this," Snape gave him a small vial. "It's a Headache potion."

"Thanks Snape, just what I need," Harry said, smiling at the potions master, before he gulped down the potion. "Do you have some pepper up or restorative draught? I’m quite tired."

"Better wait a moment, lie down again. If you don’t feel better in a few minutes, you can take some."

"Ok." Harry looked around. "Where is Marvolo? What happened? He fell unconscious from the pain in my mindscape while reabsorbing his soul piece. Is he alright?"

Snape rose to his feet and gestured to the side. Voldemort was lying asleep on a chaise lounge that Snape must have transfigured from Voldemort's own wingback chair.

"He is deeply asleep. I watched how he cast Legilimens. Both of you went completely still, staring at each other as if in a trance. His left hand was on your scar while the other held his wand. Suddenly he dropped the wand and snatched his hand back as if your scar had burned him. Your scar became all inflamed and red, it bled. Marvolo started to scream, clutching himself, scratching and clawing at his chest. You reached up as soon as he started screaming and embraced him while pulling him down on you. He curled up and seemed to be in horrible pain, and then fell down unconscious upon you. After that, you passed out as well. He looked as if he had been tortured, completely drenched in cold sweat."

"So it worked then," Harry breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank Merlin."

"Yes it did," Snape nodded; his gaze shifted to where Voldemort rested and he started when he heard the man moan.

"Severus," Voldemort shifted on the chaise lounge as he slowly opened his eyes.

"I'm here," Snape moved to his side and held out a potion. "Here; it's a painkiller."

"Thank you," Voldemort took the potion. After a moment, he asked, "Harry? Is he alright?"

"I'm fine," Harry moved into Voldemort's line of sight so that the man could see him. He noticed that Voldemort was staring at his forehead in wonder. "Is something wrong?"

"You scar," Voldemort cleared his throat and continued, "It's nearly gone, all faded."

Harry’s hand flew to touch where his scar was and his eyes widened when he just barely could feel the shape of the infamous lightning bolt on the now smooth skin of his forehead. "Yeah, that’s great!"

"Harry," Voldemort shifted to see the teen better. "I want to thank you for doing this. You did not have to and you chose to."
"It's ok Marvolo," Harry smiled, "I was happy to help."

"Because you did help me," Voldemort said, "I shall grant you a boon."

"A boon?" Harry's brow furrowed. "What is that?"

"A favour," Snape explained, "you can ask him of a favour and he shall grant it to you."

"Truly?" Harry looked at them with wide eyes. "I don't know what to say to that."

"Is there something you would like me to do for you?" Voldemort asked.

"Can I think about it?" Harry asked, "I don't want to waste the favour on something trivial; I want it to be something really important...something of value."

"Very Slytherin answer," Voldemort smiled, "very well, you can think of what you would like."

"Thank you my Lord," Harry bowed his head briefly.

"You are most welcome," Voldemort acknowledged his thanks.

"Is there anything else we need to go over?" Harry asked.

"No," Voldemort shook his head, "Not at the moment.

"Alright then," Harry nodded, "I'll head back home. And I know, breathe no word of this to anyone."

"You are wise," Voldemort chuckled. "Go home and rest Harry. We do not know what the effects of having the soul piece removed are and I would hate for you to be doing something serious only to taken down because we were not careful."

"Alright Marvolo," Harry nodded, "I will. And you get some rest as well."

"Impertinent brat," Voldemort glared slightly, though his tone was amused.

"I know," Harry grinned.

Hedwig flashed into the room. She looked at the three of them before trilling softly. "What have you three been up to?!

"Nothing much," Harry smiled.

Hedwig ruffled her feathers before softly thrilling; the sound moved through the room and the three found themselves feeling more relaxed and calmer.

"Thank you girl," Snape smiled. "Take him home and make sure he rests."

Hedwig nodded and she and Harry flashed out.

"It is done," Voldemort looked at his lover.

"Yes," Snape nodded, "Now come, despite the potion, you should still get some rest. We do not know what effects the sudden rejoining of your soul will have on you."

"Rest with me?" Voldemort asked as he allowed himself be pulled from the chaise longue and over
to the bed.

"Always," Snape replied and the two settled on the bed, with Voldemort curled around Snape, and drifted off to sleep.
Making an Entrance Part One

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Harry Potter and all its affiliates belong to JK Rowling, Bloomsbury/Scholastic and Warner Bros. Studios. No copyright or trademark infringement is intended and no money is being made from this.

My disclaimer: If I owned Harry Potter; Ginny would’ve died in the CoS, Harry would’ve broken free of Dumbledore’s manipulations and Molly’s overbearing, Sirius wouldn’t have died, Hermione never would’ve dated Ron, Harry would’ve ditched Ron in fourth year, and most importantly, there’d be lots and lots of Harry/Draco slash.

"Talking"
'Thinking'
\[Harry’s Mental Speak\]
|Hedwig’s mental speak|
- Sesshomaru’s mental speak-
Letter or commentary/introduction
{Parsssel tongue}

Last time on RDA;

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Being that Harry was meeting with the Dark Lord and Snape, Draco and the others made their way back to Potter Manor. Remus wasn’t with them as he and Fenrir had already left to go on the mission for Voldemort.
"I can't believe you guys and Remus are on Voldemort's side," Charlie said as he collapsed into a one-seat chair in the Living Room.

"Believe it." Draco smirked as he took a seat in the recliner.

"Well," Charlie corrected, "you I can understand as everyone basically knew about your father, but Luna and Neville—"

"Actually," Cory interrupted, "my name isn't Neville...it's Cory."

"Wait...what?" Bill looked at him. "What are you talking about? You're Neville Longbottom, son of Alice and Frank Longbottom."

"No," Cory shook his head with a grin, "I'm not."

"Oh man," Charlie groaned, "more secrets, and let me guess, somehow, Dumbledore is mixed up in it?"

"You'd be right Charlie," George grinned.

"Ok," Bill sighed before he smiled. "What is it? If you're not a Longbottom, then who do you belong to?"

"That'd be us," a voice sounded at the entrance to the room. The friends looked back and saw the LeStranges standing there; Bill and Charlie jumped in shock while the others laughed.

"Bloody demons of the underworld!?" Bill looked between the LeStranges and Cory, seeing the similarities.

"Not demons, my dear," Bellatrix giggled. "Just Dumbledore and his stupid manipulations."

"Whoa wait..." Charlie pointed at the trio and Cory. "Bellatrix is your mother?"

"Yep," Cory smiled. "And Rodolphus is dad; my real name is Corvus Rodolpho LeStrange, but everyone calls me Cory."

"And just how is Dumbledore involved?" Bill asked.

"Well," Rodolphus started and he told the two exactly how their son came to be known as a Longbottom. When he was done, the two were still staring in shock.

"You know," Bill shook his head. "I really shouldn't be surprised at what I learned; I mean, just when I thought Dumbledore couldn't get any worse, I find this out."

"Trust us," Rastaban snorted, "we were just as shocked. We spent the last fifteen years believing Cory to be dead, but he's been with the Longbottoms all along."

"Hey Bill?" Fred looked at the eldest Weasley.

"Yeah?" Bill looked at his former brother; it would take some time to get used to that fact.

"I thought there was something going on between you and Fleur Delacour?" Fred asked. "What happened? I mean, are you still together?"
"Yeah," Bill nodded. "She's in France right now with her family."

"What's going to happen with the two of you, now that you're on different sides of the war?" Draco asked.

"Oh man," Bill groaned, "I didn't think about that. I'll have to talk to her; I really care about her."

"Don't worry," Luna spoke up with a smile, "things will work out in the end...quite possibly sooner than you think as she will surprise you."

Bill and Charlie looked at her confused while the others smiled.

"Don't worry," George laughed, "Luna always says things like that."

"More often than not," Cory smiled, "Harry is the only one to understand her right away, while it takes the rest of us a short while to figure it out."

"And also the Dark Lord," Draco made his input, "and Severus as well seems to be able to grasp what she's saying immediately."

"We're used to it," Rastaban looked over at Charlie, his eyes taking in his whole appearance; there was something about the redhead that was drawing him in.

"Oh," Charlie nodded, "ok then."

"Hey Draco," Cory asked, "The Dark Lord mentioned that you and Harry helped changed his mind...how?"

"Well," Draco started, "when Harry and I were on our mission, he and I started talking about muggles and travelling. I told him about some of my travels across Britain and Europe together with my father and of some of the business dealings my family has had with muggles and I also told him of how muggles are, well for lack of a better word, needed. On the other hand, we talked about the concerns we purebloods have about muggles, how the muggleborns and some of the half-bloods endanger our world, which is the reason for the anti muggle stance of the dark side and the raids on muggles and muggleborns in the first war and what is done now by the Death Eaters.

"On that day Harry told me about his childhood in the muggle world and expressed his wish to see more of muggle and wizard Britain. So we travelled around a bit in the afternoons or evenings. We visited London and other places. We looked at several muggle museums like the British, the Science, the Museum of London, and the Royal Air Force Museum. We went to see movies, and looked up certain topics up in muggle libraries. The more we learned, the more new questions popped up. It was quick and easy to get around; because Hedwig can flash us everywhere we want in an instant, much better than flooing or using the Knight Bus." Draco sneered at the mere thought of using something as plebeian as the Knight Bus.

"Well, what we learned had shaken us up. We discovered, or in Harry´s case, rediscovered, some facts he had heard about as a child in the muggle world, but that were not properly explained to him then – or he simply forgot, after learning about the wizarding world. Now Harry and I understand why the Statute of Secrets was agreed upon by all wizarding nations on Earth. We were quite shocked to discover just how dangerous muggles could be, if they ever discovered that magic is real, that there is a hidden wizarding world right in front of their noses."

Bellatrix sneered at him. "Muggles, how can they be dangerous? They are so pathetic when tortured, they cannot defend themselves, and they have no magic!"
Draco sighed. "Yes, dear aunt, they can be dangerous. Not the single unarmed civilian muggle that you catch unawares in the dark of the night, but their scientists, their armed forces, their information technology is dangerous. It is true! Let me explain."

Bellatrix and the others listening exchanged doubtful looks, but nodded, interested to hear what Draco had to say. If Draco Malfoy and the Dark Lord had changed their opinion, something extraordinary must be going on.

"Over the last sixty years, muggle technology has made astonishing progress. It is a crime that this information is not brought to the attention of the average wizard. The old fashioned Muggle studies class at Hogwarts keeps us naive, dumb, and blind to the grave danger we are in. Why? Because Dumbledore and others believe muggles are our friends, that we should like them and live peacefully together, all sunshine and daisies!

"Did you know that muggles built spaceships and actually landed on the Moon? A spaceship with tree muggles onboard, called Apollo 11, actually landed and they walked around on the Moon on 20 July 1969. After that, several more similar missions to outer space and the Moon followed."

Draco’s audience gasped and shared incredulous looks with each other.

"Did you know that they created weapons that can pulverize whole cities or even countries in the blink of an eye?" Draco continued, "During the last great muggle war, around 1940 and 1941, London and many other cities in Britain were attacked and suffered considerable damage from muggle bombs, dropped from German military airplanes. Alone the air raid called The Blitz on London killed over 30 000 muggles. The wards sheltering Diagon Alley and the Ministry of Magic in London held, but just because we wizards were lucky. They suffered no direct hit. Nobody knows if these wards would have held of a direct attack with conventional muggle bombs or a V2 for example, that was a dangerous long distance German weapon.

"St. Mungo’s was somewhere else before that muggle war, and was relocated to its current place sometime later, heavily warded of course. This information was obviously deliberately kept secret or forgotten, well rather obliterated by our considerate Ministry of Magic, to not alarm the wizarding public. In August 1945, two nuclear bombs, built in America with help from German scientists, destroyed two large Japanese cities and ended the Great muggle war. Over 200 000 muggles were killed with just two Atomic bombs! In case you do not see where I’m coming from, let me explain it this way; Nuclear or Atomic bombes are very similar to the combined works of the _Confringo_ and _Expulso Curses_. They create a blistering heat wave, a blasting gust of wind and radiation all around that is lethal to all life forms. Since then, muggle scientists working for their armed forces have developed increasingly more dangerous missiles and also terrible short range combat weapons."

Draco looked a bit green in the face, remembering the pictures and short films he and Harry had seen about the great muggle war, called World War Two. His audience looked as if they were going to be sick too. So he changed the topic. "Did you know that they built Satellites? That is something like a flying watching device that orbits around the planet high up in the sky. The muggles are building a network of them, all around Earth. They can broadcast Television information around the world to all muggles in a heartbeat or take photos down upon the countryside or a city with great precision.

"That is not everything. All over the muggle world, in shops, banks or on streets, on the underground, at train stations and other public places they have started to set up devices called Video Cameras. These things constantly take pictures, like a stream of photographs, well, it’s more like a pensive recording. They record everything that happens during twenty-four hours a day. There are not very many of them yet, but the muggles are building and installing more and more of them every year.
"Until now, the Obliviator or Misinformation teams from the Ministry have managed to catch most of the leaks and stop the information about strange happenings being spread amongst muggles. But it is only a question of time until such a spying device in the sky or on a street or at Kings Cross for example records something that gives us away to the muggle governments, scientists and armed forces.

"Over that new thing called the Internet, which is something combining their telephone with computers, like instant floo-network-communication worldwide, such information can travel around the planet in minutes. It is unbelievable! Should muggles discover us—should they perceive us a threat or a danger to them—they will put all of their ingenuity in finding and killing us. The witch hunts of the past would be a piece of cake compared what would happen now."

Bill and Charlie exchanged looks; they had never thought Muggles could be so dangerous. They had spent years listening to their father talk about how fascinating and exciting they were, but to hear Draco explain things now, showed that they—or their father—didn’t truly know anything about Muggles. They had learned a bit when they had been inducted into the Dark Lord’s ranks, but what Draco was telling them now, gave them more insight.

"The Department of Mysteries is working on improving wards and so on, but it is a feeble balance, muggles have become too clever for their own good," Draco continued. "The wizarding world cannot risk to be found out. The average wizard on the street is not aware of the danger at all; so many people have become sloppy and careless. Or they think it is fun to prank the dumb muggles. Or like you, dear aunt, think it is fun to terrorize hapless muggles. The kind of raids the Dark Lord and his Death Eaters did back in the seventies, or the recent public attacks are dangerous to all magical folk.

"A few decades ago, muggles were quite oblivious. But with their newly developed technology, it is only a question of time until muggle scientists and their military discover us, if we aren’t more careful. When we spoke to the Dark Lord, we told him what we had learned. Believe me, he didn’t like it at all. We were both punished of course, or rather, I was punished for mentioning it and Harry was punished because of me being punished.

"Later, after the Dark Lord had calmed down and listened to our explanations, which included showing him some of our memories in his pensive, he admitted that Yaxley and my father brought him confidential reports from the Department of Mysteries. These reports shed a light on research done by the Unspeakables, with disturbingly similar results as what Harry and I discovered on our own by simply being curious and visiting a few muggle museums and libraries.

"And besides that, is the whole question of what are mudbloods and where do they come from? That too is a topic of research by the Unspeakables. It appears that muggleborns are not stealing magic off wizards as the old theory went, but that they might be descendants of half-bloods and squibs, only that the wizard connections have become obscured or forgotten for various reasons. Severus and Harry spoke with the Dark Lord about this topic too. So now you know why the Dark Lord changed his mind." Draco finished his lecture and leaned back. He took a glass of juice to dampen his throat after speaking for so long.

The teens, the LeStranges, Bill and Charlie sat there looking at Draco shocked speechless.

“Wow,” Charlie shook his head.

"What did you mean by punishments?” Bill asked, referring to an earlier statement as he was too overwhelmed to focus on everything else.

"Well,” Draco chuckled, "Harry really doesn't take too kindly to someone hurting me," the others
grinned when they remembered how Narcissa had suffered, "and he reacted to the Dark Lord punishing me." Draco couldn't help the smile as he remembered fondly how Harry had tried to defend him.

"Reacted how?" Charlie asked; he was intrigued by what Draco was telling him. To hear that Harry would stand against the Dark Lord...it was slightly mind boggling.

"His magic was going to lash out," Draco clarified in a slightly smug tone.

"At the Dark Lord?" Bill and Charlie were shocked; they couldn't imagine anyone actually fighting against the Dark Lord, especially after pledging to be on his side.

"Like Draco said," Fred chuckled, "Harry really doesn't take too kindly to someone hurting Draco."

"What did the Dark Lord do?" Bill asked.

"He did the only thing he could do," Draco said, "he cast the Cruciatus on Harry for a moment; it brought his magic back under control. Harry accepted his superiority, again, and submitted."

At the wide-eyed looks from the two, the others laughed.

"You guys have to understand that Harry," Cory started, "and us included, know that while Harry himself is very powerful, he still understands that he is working for the Dark Lord, who in all essentials is our boss, our master, even if we are not branded with the Dark Mark."

"The only thing is," George picked up, "Harry has already stated in no uncertain terms, that he will not allow anyone to hurt Draco...not even the Dark Lord. I'd imagine that if it was one of us, he'd more than likely have real effort restraining himself, but only if it was the Dark Lord that punished us. Harry accepts a reasonable punishment, but nothing more."

"If it's anyone else," Fred continued, "he wouldn't have control and it's even worse with Draco here, because Harry loves him. He would do anything to protect him."

"Even if it meant starting a conflict with the Dark Lord," Charlie surmised.

"Yes," the teens nodded.

"And I think," Bellatrix spoke up, "not condemning, speaking ill or mutinous of our Lord, but I think our Lord knows this and knows that if he were to attack any one of the teens without reason, he would lose important followers."

"Trixie's right," Rodolphus smiled at his wife before looking at his son. "Now that we have our son back, we would not be able to stand by and watch him be attacked by our Lord no matter how loyal we are to him and I daresay, Lucius is the same with Draco. It's a good thing that our Lord has regained not only his good looks, but also his sanity for whatever reason. Well, I believe Harry is behind this development."

"But," Charlie looked at said blond, "it was to my understanding that your father...well...your father —

"What? Hated me? Despised me?" Draco chuckled, "I suppose those are the rumours going around and if I do say so myself, I'm damn proud of my, and my father's, ability to act in public."

"It was all an act?" Bill asked.
"Yes," Draco nodded, "in fact..." and so, he told the two newcomers exactly how he and his father are in private and how much he really meant to the cold-hearted Lucius Malfoy.

~...~

Miles away in Ottery St. Catchpole, Devon, the atmosphere was anything but festive. Just a couple of days ago, Arthur and Molly Weasley had gotten a shock when the Family Clock and the Burrow Wards had informed them of the shift, more specifically of the removal of Fred and George.

Arthur and Molly were once again in the kitchen, and were joined by their two youngest, Ron and Ginny, along with Hermione, who had taken to visit the Weasley's everyday ever since the Inferi attack.

"Mum, dad," Ginny looked at her parents. "What does it mean? Does that mean there's something wrong with the twins?"

The kids had been told what exactly had happened a few hours after it did.

"I hope not," Arthur's sigh was weary. "But neither your mother nor I can get in touch with the twins to find out exactly what is going on."

"What could have caused their names to be removed?" Hermione asked.

"Only three things," Arthur answered, "the Patriarch of the family, in this case me, removes them from the House Wards and the Weasley Clan, sort of a disownment, their deaths and the third option would, they removed themselves."

"What?" Hermione, Ron and Ginny were shocked.

"No," Molly shook her head, "not my twins, they wouldn't have done this."

"But mum," Ginny spoke up softly, as though afraid to anger her mother, "at the Will reading, they all but stated they would side with Harry. What if that's what happened? I mean, you don't think they were so shocked and angry with us that they would do this, would you?"

"They wouldn't!" Hermione was shocked. "You guys are family, and Harry isn't."

"And yet they were willing to stand with him over us at the reading," Ginny countered. "Who says they didn't disown themselves?"

"They wouldn't actually do that, would they?" Hermione looked around at them.

"THAT BASTARD!" Ron got up from his chair so fast that it flew back. "It's all his fault! I can't believe this. First he almost gets us killed, then he does something so that we don't get money, he refuses to answer Hermione's letter and now he's turned the twins against us."

"Ron," Hermione started, "you can't honestly believe Harry had something to do with this?"

"And why not Hermione?" Ginny scowled at her.

"Well for one thing," Hermione started, "Harry wasn't even at the will reading and he didn't know about it so there's no way he could've done something and the twins don't seem like the ones to do something just because someone told them to do it. Not everything that happens is his fault."

"Oh yeah?" Ron turned to scowl at his girlfriend. "Remember the Burrow was attacked and it's because of him; it's because you-know-who believes we're close to him so he attacked us, so it is his..."
"Well, I suppose I agree with you there," Hermione conceded before turning to Arthur and Molly. "What do you think could've happened to cause this?"

"I think it's the last option," Arthur sighed, "I do believe the twins disowned themselves."

"Of all the--," Molly scowled. "Why would they do that?"

"You saw how they reacted at the will reading," Arthur responded, "they were ready to go against Ron for Harry; it wouldn't surprise me if they did do it because of that."

"So what are we going to do?" Ron asked, "the twins got all that money from the mutt and plus with their store opening soon...we'll never get money from them now."

"They wouldn't abandon their family like that," Hermione looked aghast; she couldn't fathom anyone just leaving their family like how the twins seemed to be doing. "I mean, not after everything you've done for them."

"They would do that," Ginny snorted, "it'd be just like them. So after all we did, we get nothing."

"Maybe not," Molly said before turning to Hermione. "Do you remember what Albus was hinting at that day in his office?"

"Yes," Hermione nodded.

"You have to make sure you succeed," Molly said, "we'll be going to Diagon Alley soon for your school supplies and we should see the Potter brat there, however, even if we don't, you will find him on the train and tell him you're sorry about the letter and you want to be friends. Then you will tell him about the will, but do it in such a way that he doesn't figure out what you're truly after."

"He's too stupid to figure it out," Ron snorted, "we'll be fine."

"Let's hope so," Arthur sighed, "that money would have come in handy; I'm glad to Merlin we were able to fight off the attack a while back."

Hermione looked around at the Weasleys; a part of her was starting to regret her actions towards Harry, considering how he had treated her from the get go. He had been her very first friend and it was through him she and Ron, and by extension the other Weasleys, had become friends; Ron had wanted nothing to do with her from the start, but because of Harry, he had changed his mind. She sighed and looked out the window; while that part of her was regretting her past actions, another part of her cared too much about being in the good graces of a Wizarding family to destroy it.

~...~

"How close are we to the two packs?" Remus questioned Fenrir as they took a rest stop.

"At the most, another day away," Fenrir answered as he looked around. "Their territory encloses this forest and both sides of the adjoining mountain ridge. They must be around here somewhere, but of course when they are hunting, they wander around quite a bit, following the deer. During winter, they stick to their camp site at that old farm near the forest’s border we checked yesterday, but during the summer months they enjoy roaming the forest, just as my pack does."

The day they had left(on the 4th), Fenrir had led Remus to his pack where he had fought a few of the other wolves who threatened him; though he was a new wolf, Remus held his own and came out on
top, proving to the wolves that he was worthy to be a part of their pack. It also helped that he was bigger than the other Beta.

"Are they close to each other?" Remus asked as he leaned against a tree trunk.

"Separated by that mountain ridge," Fenrir answered, "they know that the other pack is there, but they have a sort of truce going on."

"I see," Remus shifted against tree until he was comfortable.

"You know," Fenrir started conversationally, "I never thought I'd see the day when you accepted the wolf as a part of you rather than an affliction to hate and despise."

"Neither did I," Remus shook his head with a smile, "but Harry helped me."

"That boy works wonders, doesn't he?" Fenrir murmured as he thought on all he knew about Harry and what he had done.

"Yes he does," Remus nodded before he shifted once more; he was anxious to get to the wolf packs so that they could do what they were supposed to and go back home. He missed his blond.

"Ready pup?" Fenrir asked when he noticed the shifting.

"Yes," Remus knew that it would be futile to keep arguing with the other wolf over the name, so he held back the retort, it also helped that the wolf was his Alpha.

The two stood and each called their wolves to the forefront; soon enough, where two humans stood before, now were two wolves. The bigger of the two gave a slight growl to the smaller and they both took off into the woods. They ran until sundown before stopping once more. They changed back when they found a safe spot to do so.

"We'll rest here for the night," Fenrir said, "before we continue on to the packs; they're just over a few hours away, so we should make it there by midmorning if we leave at dawn."

"Sounds good to me," Remus nodded and the two settled down for the night.

~...~

It was now the seventh of August, which meant that the teens would be heading to Diagon Alley to purchase their school supplies. Harry's meeting with Voldemort and Snape was two days ago and true to his word, he had mostly rested those two days; he did not work out as hard as he did on other days. Draco had of course wondered why he was so tired and when Harry had told him that it was a result of the meeting and that as much as he'd like to, he couldn't tell, he had accepted it. He had noticed that Harry's famous scar had faded to a very fine silver lightning bolt and he had also sensed that Harry's magic had increased and knew that it had to do with whatever had happened in that meeting, which would probably explain why his boyfriend had been so tired. Not wanting to rouse any suspicions beforehand, Draco would travel with his father as always, while Harry, Luna and Cory would be going together.

They were all at Malfoy Manor getting ready to go; Fred and George had gone to Diagon Alley early that morning to do some last minute preparations. Charlie had gone back to Romania while Bill had headed down to France to see and talk with Fleur.

"Don't forget about Luna's warning guys," Harry looked at the others. "We don't want to give away our game plan before we get to school."
"And that means we have to avoid being seen together," Draco finished; he hated that idea, no matter how much he knew it was what they needed to do. Now that he and Harry were finally together, he wanted to be with him.

Harry reached out and pulled the blond into his arms, allowing Draco to rest his forehead on Harry's shoulder.

"I know," Harry smiled into Draco's hair, "I don't want to be away from you either, but we have to do this. With our changed appearances, Cory, Luna and I will be hard to recognize, but that isn't even a guarantee. I want to avoid the traitors as much as possible until school."

"I understand," Draco pulled back to look at his boyfriend, "I don't have to like it, but I do understand."

"Thank you," Harry smiled before claiming his lips in a kiss. It was short because of their audience, but neither minded. They pulled away and turned to look at the others. "I really wished Remus would've been back already."

"So do I," Lucius agreed, "but I know this is important to our Lord's advances and I shall bear. I waited years to be with him, I can wait a while longer."

"It's time," Snape said as he observed the group. "Remember your positions; you do not want to be revealed as of yet."

"We know," Cory nodded, "We won't mess up."

"Let's go," Harry nodded letting go of Draco. "Cory, Luna and I will have Hedwig take us directly to Ragnok's office and then we'll try and meet you at the twins or the Three Broomsticks."

"Sounds like a plan," Draco said and he kissed Harry once more before turning to the Floo, which has father had just activated. "Diagon Alley!" He disappeared in a flash of green flames.

"Be safe," Lucius told the three.

"We will," Cory nodded and watched as Lucius inclined his head in a nod before following his son.

"Hedwig," Harry called and the phoenix flashed into the room to land on Harry's shoulder. Harry turned to Snape. "What are you going to be doing today?"

"Another abysmal year is about to be embarked upon," Snape sneered, "as such, I must accumulate the lesson plans that will attempt to raise the intelligence of the dunderheads that roam the school."

"At least this year will be more interesting than last," Harry said.

"You are correct on that point," Snape nodded, "the presence of Lucius and the changes that encompassed the three of you do indeed make for an exciting year."

"Well," Cory smiled briefly, "we'll let you get to that."

"I do wish we could go with you," Rudolphus said as he, Bellatrix and Rastaban walked into the room.

"I know," Cory nodded, "so do I; but don't worry, there will be plenty of time in the future for us to be seen together."
"We should go," Luna spoke up as she walked over to Harry, followed by Cory.

"See you guys later," Harry said and the trio disappeared in a flash of fire.

~...~

Harry, Luna and Cory appeared in Ragnok's office, startling the other occupant, the goblin for the Longbottom vault, Peregrine.

"Lord Potter-Black," Ragnok stood from his desk and moved around to bow to Harry.

"Ragnok," Harry groaned, "What did I tell you about calling me that?"

"Forgive me Harry," Ragnok grinned, which looked a bit scary on the goblin. "My mind seems to have slipped."

"Yeah and I'm a fuzzy bunny," Harry snorted before holding out his hand for Ragnok to shake. "You're mind doesn't slip anymore than I am female."

Ragnok laughed. "Well said, young one." He turned to Luna and Cory. "Ahh, Ms. Lovegood, you so do look like your late mother and you, I see the truth has finally been revealed."

"Thank you," Luna smiled, tucking a strand of her dirty-blond hair behind her ear. It never failed to please her to hear someone tell her how much like her mother she looked; she considered it a great compliment.

"Yes it has," Cory nodded with a smile, "and all parties involved, with the exception of the one who instigated it, are very happy."

"I can see," Ragnok nodded before moving back to his seat.

Peregrine could only look on in shock; to see his boss, one who hated interactions with most wizards and humans, act so familiar with the three wizards was slightly disconcerting.

"Let us proceed shall we?" Ragnok gestured to the teens to take a seat and they did. "Now, we're here to the Longbottom holdings and what they have in store for Mr—"

"My client isn't here," Peregrine interrupted; although he was a goblin, he didn't originate from London. The Longbottoms had brought another goblin from a foreign country to manage their accounts here at London Gringotts.

"Actually," Cory turned to the goblin. "I am. My name was once upon time Neville Frank Longbottom, but I recently found out the truth about my parentage and I discovered that I am actually Corvus Rodolpho LeStrange."

Peregrine tried to look shocked, he truly did, but he didn't quite pull it off.

"And from the look on your face," Cory's eyes narrowed at the goblin. "I can see that this isn't shocking to you, which leads me to believe that you knew all along about Rodolphus and Bellatrix LeStrange being my true parents."

"It would not surprise me Peregrine," Ragnok turned to the goblin and spoke with a sneer, "to learn that you did know of the deception, wizard affairs mean nothing to goblins unless it is financial."

"So I am right," Cory nodded. "You did know of what had happened."
"Yes," Peregrine nodded, "what I don't understand is, why you're here and how you found out the truth."

"How I found out doesn't matter," Cory waved his words away. "What matters is why I'm here. I'm here because I want to know what will become of the Longbottom's vault and money. Since I was obviously adopted by them, everything they owned went to me, but now that I have reclaimed my rightful status and family, do I still have access to these vaults?"

Peregrine looked like he smelled something foul, Harry decided. The way the goblin's features seemed to shift with each word that Cory spoke made it clear that he didn't want to be there to answer any questions.

"Will I inherit the Longbottom's vault along with the LeStrange vault when I turn seventeen?" Cory finished; the thought of gaining everything from the Longbottoms sent a thrill of delight through him. To think that they had taken an innocent child from his parents and then for the Old Coot to do whatever he did to erase his memories, and not to mention, the verbal abuse he suffered under from the Lady Augusta Longbottom. It seemed like poetic justice for him, a LeStrange, to take everything from them the way they had taken everything from his parents.

"No," Peregrine denied; he knew of what happened all those years ago. In the goblin's mind, it was none of his business as long as he got paid and he was. Every month for the past fifteen years, he had been paid very well for his services and his continued silence; if the boy knew that the vaults and everything Longbottom was still his that would stop.

Hedwig trilled as she shifted on Harry's shoulder; she could sense the deceit coming from the man. She nipped Harry's ear to get his attention, and when his head tilted slightly, she informed him. *The lies!*

Harry turned to the goblin and narrowed his eyes.

"I think Peregrine," Luna turned to look at the goblin as well and spoke before Harry could. "It would be beneficial to your health if you do not lie. Phoenixes are such fickle creatures and a snake is even more deadly."

The goblin looked at her in confusion before his gaze drifted past her to Harry and the goblin couldn't help the slight shift back when he saw the malice in the green eyes.

"Are you sure Peregrine?" Harry questioned softly; the power could be heard in his voice.

"You wouldn't be lying to me, now would you?" Cory looked at him and his own eyes darkened with anger.

Ragnok stared at the proceedings with a smile slightly full of malice; he knew, of course, that the Longbottom fortune was still accessible to the boy, such a shame that the Longbottoms never counted on the fact that the truth would one day be revealed, so they had covered every loophole. The boy would still get everything, despite the fact that he had now acknowledged and claimed his LeStrange birthright. He hadn't say anything as he had wanted to see what move the goblin would make. He wasn't disappointed.

Peregrine looked around the room at each occupants; he took in the glee on Ragnok's face, the malice and power in Harry's, the anger in Cory's and the eerily calmness in Luna's as well as the guards at the door. He shifted once more and scowled, knowing he'd have to tell the truth lest he loose his life.
"I may have misspoken," Peregrine said, as he opened up the folders he had with him and looked through them. "It seems that due to the steps the Longbottoms had taken, you are still allowed access to everything."

"Excellent," Ragnok said as he took the folders from Peregrine. He looked them over before looking up at the teens. "All that is needed is your signature and everything shall be transferred out of the Longbottom vaults into the one opened by your parents for you the day you were born."

"Blood or ink?" Cory asked as he leaned forward.

"Blood would be more permanent," Luna said, "you really can't argue with it."

Cory smiled at his girlfriend before pricking his finger, letting a drop of blood hit the paper. When he was done, he leaned back in his seat and smirked. "The Longbottoms never expected their money and everything they valued would end up in the hands of a LeStrange."

"Karma is a bitch," Harry smiled, "they took everything from the LeStranges fifteen years ago and now the favour is being repaid."

"You are no longer needed Peregrine," Cory turned to the goblin. "But before you leave, I require a vow that you will not speak of what has happened here to anyone without my permission for if you do, your life shall be forfeit the moment the words dare to pass your lips; can't really have the Lady Longbottom figuring out anything is wrong before it's time for the bitch to know."

Peregrine scowled darkly and looked to refuse the vow when he saw Ragnok look to the guards who took a step closer, raising their weapons. Valuing his life, he turned back to the four, noticing that the teens had now moved to their feet.

"Very well," he growled out before the vow was made. A glow of light signalled the vow sealing and Peregrine left the office quickly.

Hedwig ruffled her feathers even as an amused trill escaped her. [that was fun...never knew a goblin could move so fast]

"Well now you do," Harry chuckled, drawing smiles from the others, who knew he was talking to Hedwig.

"It was such a pleasure doing business with you," Luna curtsied with a giggle and Cory wrapped an arm around her waist.

"Same here," Ragnok nodded, having enjoyed his time with the humans.

"We'd best be going," Harry said and the two teens moved to his side. "Oh and Ragnok? In regards to where my feet are planted in this war, I think you'll find Bill Weasley very trustworthy and very willing to cooperate."

"Our Lord is very pleased with his decision," Cory smirked.

Ragnok looked at Harry and Cory in slight confusion for a split second before it became clear to him and his eyes widened in disbelief and delight. "Are you saying that William Weasley is now—"

"Firmly situated on our side," Luna smiled, "Your curse breaker is quite the employee."

"What of certain marks?" Ragnok asked.
"None," Harry smiled, "Bill will be another spy and will pass on information to Severus Snape if Severus is unable to get the information himself; in the event that Bill is unable to pass the information to Sev, then he will pass it on to either you or he will contact Hedwig, who will then pass it on to me."

"Very well," Ragnok nodded. "May your vaults be overflowing and may your life be enriching."

“And may your business deals always be profitable and your weapons stay sharp,” Cory replied.

Ragnok grinned and Luna curtsied while the boys bowed—Harry very carefully with Hedwig on his shoulder—before the three teens smiled and disappeared in a flash of phoenix fire.

~...~

Draco and Lucius walked through Diagon Alley, ignoring the looks they were receiving. Even without the rumours that Lucius was the right hand man of the Dark Lord, they still would be stared at simply for the fact that both Malfoy men walked through the streets with an air of superiority, power and control; walking side by side, the two made a striking picture.

"Are you collecting your books first Draco?" Lucius looked at his son. "Or will you proceed directly to Madam Malkin’s?"

"Madam Malkin’s," Draco answered, "I have no intention of walking through the streets with those books. I think they shall be the last thing I collect."

"Where are Harry and the others meeting you?" Lucius nodded before asking.

"We’ll meet up at the twins’ store," Draco smirked, "but we won’t be acknowledging our relationship until we get to school. For now though, it would be positively enticing to see the look on the Weasel’s face when he witnesses the changed interaction between Harry and I."

"Excellent," Lucius smirked as well and the resemblance between father and son was even more pronounced.

"When will Remus be back?" Draco asked as the two made their way over to Madam Malkin’s.

"I am not sure," Lucius replied, "I imagine it would take a few days to get to where they are going and the left the day before the two newcomers were welcomed, which would be around three days ago."

"Understandable," Draco nodded as he opened the door to the shop. They ended their conversation, not wanting anyone to eavesdrop. The store was half-filled with students, both old and new; the new students stared at the two blond men in awe while the returning students steered clear of them. Draco couldn’t help but to chuckle.

After being fitted for robes, the duo then made their way out the store to continue on with their shopping. They went to all the necessary stores (the Apothecary, etc) before ending up at Flourish and Blotts. There, they spotted the mudblood Hermione Granger together with the Weasleys and Draco couldn’t help the smirk that he sent their way as he collected his books. He knew that this year would be exciting and he couldn’t wait.

~...~

"Do you think we’ll see Harry today?" Ginny asked Hermione as the two got ready to go to Diagon Alley.
"Definitely," Hermione smiled, "Harry may think we don't want to be friends with him or he with us, but it's the twins; he'll be at their store sometime today and then we can do what we're supposed to."

"Good," Ginny nodded, "because I'm tired of this; we should be together already. I didn't do all the things I did just for fun...well, maybe, but my point is, I did them so that I could have the experience for him. He's such an innocent that he'll be putty in my hands."

"What all have you done exactly?" Hermione turned to the youngest Weasley. She had heard the rumours of course, but she hadn't believed them, but now, listening to Ginny, she knew that there was at least some truth to what was being said about the redhead.

"Wouldn't you like to know?" Ginny smiled mischievously. "Let's just say Harry won't complain about me not knowing what to do."

"Ginny!" Hermione was scandalized. "I can't believe I'm hearing this."

"Oh stop being such a prude Hermione," Ginny rolled her eyes; really, the girl acted as if she never even heard of sex.

Hermione's eyes narrowed in offense, but before she could reply, Mrs. Weasley's voice rang out up the stairs.

"Girls, let's go!"

"Coming Mrs. Weasley!" Hermione yelled back before turning back to the redhead. "We're finishing this conversation later."

"No we're not," Ginny snapped and her expression darkened. "This chat is over." She walked to the door. "Maybe if you did something once in a while for Ron, you wouldn't be so uptight." With that, the redhead left the rooming, leaving Hermione steaming behind her.

"I can't believe her," Hermione hissed as her hands clenched into fists.

"Can't believe what?" Ron asked as he stood in the doorway.

"Your sister," Hermione growled out before closing her eyes to take few deep, calming breaths. "You know what? Forget about it, let's go. Your mom already yelled for us."

"Can you believe the twins are actually opening up a store?" Ron asked as the two walked down the stairs. "I hope we get discounts."

"I wouldn't count on it Ron," Hermione sighed as the two cleared the stairs and walked into the kitchen where Molly, Arthur and Ginny were.

"Are you two ready?" Molly asked.

"Yes," Hermione nodded and they moved to the fireplace where Arthur activated the Floo.

"You go first Hermione," Molly nodded.

Hermione grabbed the Floo powder and stepped into the fireplace. "Diagon Alley!"

"Ron, you next," Molly instructed.

Ron went, followed by Ginny, Molly and then Arthur. When they stepped out of the fireplace in the pub that was the entrance to Diagon Alley, they brushed, or charmed in Hermione and Molly’s case,
off the extra soot before heading to their destinations. They went to Flourish and Blotts first, where Ron and Hermione saw Draco and his father.

"It's the ferret," Ron snarled under his breath to Hermione. "I bet the git is happy about the money. I still can't believe Sirius left him money and gave him Grimmauld Place."

"I know," Hermione nodded even as her brows furrowed. "I do wonder though, what it is that Malfoy is hiding and how Sirius came to know what it was."

"Oh who bloody well cares," Ron scowled. "Look at him, thinks he's something."

"What is he smirking at?" Hermione asked when she saw the smirk on Draco's face before he left with his father.

"Forget him," Ron said, "let's just get our books before going to Madam Malkin's."

"I still need to get a new potions kit," Hermione murmured, "I want to be prepared for this year as I have a feeling Snape is going to be more—"

"More of a greasy-haired git?" Ron injected. "I'm glad my grades weren't enough to get in his class. I wouldn't have been able to stand another year under bloody Snape."

"If you and Harry had made more of an effort," Hermione said as they walked to where Ginny, Molly and Arthur were waiting, "you'd both be in potions along with me instead of having a free period."

"Yeah," Ron nodded, "but neither one of us will be in that class, you'll be the only one. Maybe I can talk some sense into Harry then; he'll be so relieved to get our friendship back he'll believe what I tell him and forgive us."

"I hope so," Hermione smiled, "although, he was rather quick to forgive you back in fourth year after you let him know you were sorry."

Ron smiled at her quite smugly but said nothing as they joined his sister and parents. When they left the store, they headed over to Madam Malkin's for their robes.

As they were strolling through Diagon Alley, they passed by Ollivander’s wand shop. At the beginning of the summer, the Daily Prophet had a small article that the shop was found completely empty, locked up and no signs of a struggle and that Mr. Ollivander had vanished overnight. Nobody had seen him since then. The population was asked – as always when something mysterious happened this summer - to give any information they might have to the DMLE Auror office.

Ginny noticed that there was a new sign on the door, below the peeling gold letters above the door that read Ollivander, fine wand makers since 382 B.C. The shop's display consisted as always of a solitary wand lying on a faded purple cushion in the dusty window.

"Look, there is a new name on the door." Ginny pointed to the sign and read out the name. "Hendrik Askani. Wandmaker Journeyman. Former Apprentice of Master Wandmaker Gregorovitch."

The group stopped and gathered around the entrance to the wand shop.

"So there is a new wandmaker", Ron said. "His name sounds foreign, where do you reckon where the bloke comes from?"

"Perhaps from Germany," answered Hermione. "Askani I don’t recognise, could be German or
perhaps Italian, but Hendrik is definitely German, Danish or Swedish. He has completed an apprenticeship with Master Gregorovitch. Wasn’t he the wandmaker that made Viktor’s wand?"

"Viktor? As in, Viktor Krum?" asked Ron.

"Yes, that Viktor," answered Hermione, a tiny smile on her face as she remembered the Bulgarian seeker from fourth year.

"Ohhh, that Viktor!" Ginny cried out and pretended to faint because the famous Quidditch star was mentioned.

Hermione flushed a bit and rolled her eyes, while Ron glowered. He didn’t worship Viktor Krum so much anymore, because of his jealousies, after Krum had shown interest in Hermione during fourth year.

Mrs. Weasley commented, "It's hard to believe that someone actually kidnapped Ollivander. I hope he is still alive."

Hermione said, "It's nice to see the Ministry doing something right by bringing in someone else to make the wands until Ollivander is found, otherwise, a lot of students would be without wands this coming year."

Mrs. Wesley nodded. "Yes, so lucky for the new first years that they found someone to take over Ollivander’s wand shop until he comes back. Can you imagine how it would be for the poor dears to get a Hogwarts invitation and then to come here and to find the shop closed?"

“Thank Merlin it won’t come to that,” Mr. Weasley murmured. “Come on; let’s continue with our shopping.”

Soon enough, they were done with their school shopping and were ready to go to the twins' opening. They briefly went back to the Burrow to drop their stuff off before heading back to Diagon Alley.

~...~

Fred and George stood in front of their store, robes on with hoods up and covering their heads; they didn't want anyone to know anything about their appearances as yet until their former family was there and it was time for the store to open.

The two looked through the crowds and when they saw who they were waiting for, they exchanged smiles.

"Ready bro?" Fred asked.

"Always," George grinned before lifting his wand into the air as Fred did the same. Sparks flew out and fireworks exploded in the air.

"Welcome all," Fred shouted above the excitement, a silent Sonorus making his voice heard. "To the grand opening of the best of the best, our store."

The crowd cheered and the two looked at each other before turning back to them.

"We Fred," Fred threw off his hood and robes, his dark hair gleaming in the light, his sea-green eyes flashing with delight and triumph at the stunned look on the Weasleys' faces.

"And George," George's appearance made the Weasleys pale further, "would like to welcome you to
the store that has everything; from dungbombs to fireworks to miniature games of events that took place at Hogwarts. We welcome you to...

"...P3's Wizarding Wonders," both Fred and George waved their wands, revealing the store to the crowd, drawing loud cheers and an increased excitement from them. Their gazes found the Weasleys and they smirked at them.

~...~

"Oh my God," Hermione's hand flew to her mouth when she saw the changed appearance in Fred. "I can't believe it."

"What the hell?" Ginny scowled darkly as she took in the sight.

"Merlin," Ron breathed out when he saw George remove his hood and robe; the appearances in the twins were shocking. From their hair colour to the body, it left Ron with a sick feeling of disorientation and most of all, jealousy.

"Arthur!" Molly grabbed her husband's arm in a tight grip as she gazed at the twins; now she understood what really happened. The red of Fred's hair was darker than the Weasley red, it reminded her of only one other person to ever have that shade of red; Lily Evans-Potter. And if she thought that was shocking, it was nothing compared to seeing the jet black hair of George, the same shade that the Potter men were famous for. Fred and George had not only severed their bonds as Weasleys, but they had become Potters.

Arthur for his part could only stare; the excitement and noise level of the crowd didn't register in his mind as he took in the appearance of his former children. He said former because he knew then and there the reason for the shift in the Burrow Wards and the Family Clock; Fred and George hadn't died, they had disowned themselves from the Weasleys and had joined the Potter family.

~...~

Draco stood next to his father in the crowd and where he was standing, he had the perfect view of the Weasley family. The looks on their faces when they saw the twins sent glee and satisfaction through him.

He felt a hand on the small of his back the same time he saw Cory and Luna step beside him. Knowing it was Harry behind him, he shifted his stance so that his back was pressed against Harry's chest. When Harry's hand drifted down to his waist, he moved to lace their fingers together.

"I take it was exactly as they planned?" Harry asked and his breath teased Draco's neck, sending a shiver of delight through the blond.

"Exactly," Draco turned his head slightly to look at his boyfriend before turning back to the crowd. "I thought we'd have to keep our relationship private until school?"

"I remembered something," Harry grinned, "they won't recognize me like this, so we're safe. It'll shock them though, when they realize at school that the stranger with you now and Harry Potter are one and the same."

"Brilliant," Draco smiled.

"I wish we'd got here in time to see their reactions," Cory smiled, "but the expressions on their faces now are still good."
"Don't worry," Luna smiled and while the smile seemed innocent and childlike, if you knew her well enough, you'd know that the smile was one full of malice and there was a hard glint in her eyes. "They will show their hands once again and we should be wary on our journey back to Hogwarts."

Lucius looked at the girl with appraising eyes before he nodded; he, like the others, had understood the message behind her words. The youngest Weasleys and Hermione would cause a scene and they (Cory, Luna, Harry and Draco) would have to make sure they avoided the three on the train if they wanted to enter the school how they planned.

"I take it things were enlightening at the meeting?" Lucius questioned.

"Very," Cory nodded, "mother and father will be proud to know we have gained everything. It would seem that past pre-emptive actions have worked in our favour."

"Very well," Lucius nodded, "I shall ensure that the message is conveyed. Draco, I bid you good day; I shall see you back at the Manor."

"Yes father," Draco inclined his head in a slight nod before passing off his purchases to the elder Malfoy, who took them, shrunk them, and placed them in his pocket before disappearing through the crowds.

Draco's gaze followed his father before turned back to watching the Weasleys; he saw that the crowd had started to enter the store and saw that the Weasleys and the mudblood were between them.

"Let's wait until most of these people have left before we go in," Harry murmured.

"Alright," Cory and Luna said before they shifted closer to Harry and Draco, allowing people to pass.

"Did you finish your school shopping?" Draco asked even as his gaze drifted over the crowd and a sneer flitted across his face.

"No," Harry shook his head, "We came straight here from the meeting. I suppose we could do that now with everyone at the twins."

"Let's," Cory nodded and he grabbed Luna's hand in his and turned in the crowd. Draco turned too and Harry paused to look over at Fred and George nodding to Flourish and Blotts; when he got two nods in reply, he turned along with his friends.

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"And now," George smirked as he watched Harry and the others disappear in the remaining crowd, "for the fun part."

"You know they're going to demand answers," Fred grinned, "and that Ronald will be spouting off his jealous tendencies."

"Really?" George had an innocent expression on his face that didn't fool his twin at all.

"Let the fun begin," the twins said as one before they chuckled darkly; they would enjoy their moment.

They turned back to watch as Molly led the others through the remaining few people and up to them.

"Frederick and George Weasley," Molly fumed as she came to a stop in front of the boys, her hands
on her hips, "I demand to know what is going on. What have you done to yourself?"

"Excuse me madam," Fred smiled at her, "but you obviously have me confused with someone else. You see, I am not this Frederick Weasley whom you are looking for, in fact, I am not a Weasley at all."

"You're not you say?" George turned to look at his twin, his eyes wide in mock shock, the delight shining clearly through them. "Well, what do you know? Neither am I."

"Really?" Fred turned to him, "but if you're not a Weasley, then who could you possibly be?"

"Didn't you know?" George asked, eyes dancing in delight at the indignant spluttering from the Weasley matriarch. "I'm a Potter; George Ulrich Potter to be exact."

"That can't be!" Fred gasped and a hand flew to his chest. He barely suppressed the chuckles when he heard the shocked gasps from the others.

"And why ever not my kind sir?" George asked.

"Because I am a Potter," Fred declared, "Frederick Sebastian Potter at your service."

"Frederick you say?" George tapped his chin in a thoughtful manner. "I knew a man by that name; he was my twin."

"Well," Fred looked thoughtful, delighting in the outrage that grew on the Weasleys and Granger's faces. "I am a Potter and we do look alike. Hey, maybe I am your twin."

"Would you two stop this nonsense?" Molly near screeched, effectively stopping George from replying.

As one, the two turned to Molly and the expression on their faces had her and the others taking a slight step back.

"You are not our mother," Fred hissed, his sea-green eyes darkening in his anger, "in case you have missed it, we're no longer Weasleys and we will no longer associate with the lot of you nor will we put up with such an overbearing, controlling, excuse of a mother like you. You have no authority over us. We are no longer your concern..."

"...and as such," George continued, his own eyes darkening as well, his tone filled with malice, "we would appreciate it if you would keep your bloody mouths shut and stay out of our way."

"You can't do this," Ron snarled.

"Oh really?" Fred smirked and it was such a dark smirk, that Ron felt fear dance through his body.

"I assure you," George grinned and it was just as dark as Fred's smirk. "We can and we have."

"So you gave up your family for him?" Molly was beyond angry. "I gave birth to you, I took care of you and this is how you repay me? By abandoning your family and joining the one who has caused us nothing but grief. Our home was attacked and I'm sure it was because of him and yet you turned your back on us. HOW DARE YOU?!"

The last part was loud enough to draw the attention of several shoppers in the streets.

"How dare we?" Fred stepped closer to Molly, not wanting his words overheard by anyone but them. "You treated us like we were fools, you trivialized our abilities, made it seem like we were
good for nothing but pranks, that we were a waste of space..."

"You made our lives hell with your constant belittling," George picked up, "always looking down your nose at us, never believing we would ever succeed. But now, look at how things are..."

"We have succeeded," Fred grinned, "without help from you, though even if you had offered, we never would've taken it; we have flourished. We no longer have to wear masks...we can finally be true to ourselves."

"And with the backing of someone very close and dear to us," George finished, "things will be running much smoother. Now, as we will never turn away customers, you can enter our store or you can go back to the lowly drivel you call a house. Either way, we don't really give a fuck."

With that, the twins turned to walk into their store, leaving five shell-shocked people staring after them.

~...~

While Fred and George were telling off their former family, the quartet was busy in Flourish and Blotts.

"Hey Harry," Cory turned to his friend, "Don't you have these books at home anyways?"

"More than likely," Harry shrugged, "Although, I'd bet the ones in the library are far more advanced than those on the school's curriculum. You think we should leave these books and just use the ones from home?"

"Why not?" Cory grinned. "It's not like we're going to be hiding who we truly are anymore. We'll show everyone, especially Granger, just how serious we are; with the books home, we can get a much better and deeper understanding of the same material that will be taught at school and probably beyond."

"So I bought all my books for nothing?" Draco huffed and crossed his arms across his chest.

"Dray," Luna giggled, the sound bringing smiles to her male companions. "Don't be like that. You should hang on to them; there will be some snakes out there with no way of moving through the jungle that is Hogwarts."

Draco looked at Luna and nodded, letting her know he understood her message; a few upcoming Slytherin students will not be as well off as most Slytherin students. They would be in need of books.

"I agree with you Cory," Harry smirked, "and I think we'll do just that."

"Where to now?" Draco asked.

"I need a new familiar," Harry said and the teens turned to leave.

"You know Hedwig won't like that," Cory chuckled; after she had dropped them off, Hedwig had disappeared back to Potter Manor. According to Harry, she knew that it would be detrimental to their plans if anyone were to see her before they got to school.

"She is quite possessive, isn't she?" Harry laughed, "But it's ok; she knows I'm doing this and she's fine...just as long as it's not another bird."

"So what are you going to be getting?" Draco asked as they made their way to the store. Cory
opened the door and the quartet walked in.

"I won't get a snake," Harry told them, "I think Nagini's going to give me one of her babies, so I'll choose something different."

"Look around," Luna smiled at him. "I know you'll find the perfect choice for you. I think we all will."

"I swear," Draco looked at her, "you scare me sometimes."

Harry, Luna and Cory started laughing and Draco crossed his arms with a pout.

"Ahh," Harry grabbed Draco's hand to pull the blond to him. "Don't pout."

"I'll pout if I want to," Draco sniffed, though his lips twitched with a smile when Harry kissed him. "Let's look around."

They walked through the store, stopping at cages to look at the animals before moving on. As the time passed on, Harry felt like none of the animals was the one he was looking and his frustration grew. Luna had told him that he would find his animal and he trusted her, and it was because of that he hadn't left as yet. He was just about to go back to the front of the store when he stopped. He felt a pull and he turned to where it was coming from. He saw a cage sitting in the back of the store in the darkened corner and he started towards it.

"Harry?" Draco tried to get Harry's attention, but the brunet paid him no mind.

"It's alright," Luna smiled. "He found him, and ours as well."

"Ours?" Cory looked at his girlfriend.

"Yes," Luna nodded as she followed Harry.

The shop owner, seeing where the teens were walking to, hurried towards them.

"I don't think you should get too close lad," the owner warned; with the scar barely visible and Harry not wearing glasses, the shop owner didn't recognize him as Harry Potter.

Harry ignored him and came to a stop in front of the cage. He looked down and what he saw made his breath catch in his throat; curled up around each other were two puppies and two kittens. One of the kittens was cream-coloured with black lines around its paws, a small black nose and what was probably the most eye catching thing about it was that it had twin tails and each tail had two black lines around the tips; the other kitten was the same, except the colours were switched. The two pups though, were the reason Harry's breath had catch. They both fur so white they looked silver; one of the pups had a silver crescent moon on its forehead and the other had a circle. As if sensing they were being stared at, animals opened their eyes and raised their heads to look at them.

The two pups had eyes that were as golden as the sun and yet, the pup with the crescent moon seemed to be looking at them coldly while the other pup growled, its eyes flashing; the two kittens yawned and stepped closer to the two pups.

As Harry looked at each of the animals, he could feel the magic reaching out to his and he could feel a faint trace in his mind; he focused on it and saw that it lead him to the pup with the crescent moon, who seemed to be staring at him in cold indifference, something he never thought an animal could do. He allowed his magic to answer to the one from the pup and he felt the bond snap into place.
Harry heard the voice of the pup in his head.

"Young man," the owner was a bit nervous. "I have other animals here that you can look at. I cannot allow you to purchase those ones. They are dangerous; every owner that has ever bought has returned them."

"Why?" Harry asked as he reached out to open the cage.

"Because," the owner stepped closer. "They have attacked their owners. The pup with the crescent moon is the most dangerous. He can poison by just breathing on you or scratching you; the other pup can use his own blood as weapon. The two pups have three forms whereas the kittens have two."

"What are their names?" Draco asked.

"The crescent moon pup is called Sesshomaru," the owner said, "the circle pup is called Yasha and the two nekos are Kilala and Kirara and in their giant form, they can fly."

Harry watched as the pup named Sesshomaru, the one that had bonded to him, leapt out of the cage to settle on his shoulders.

"Sesshomaru huh?" Harry reached up to pet the pup.

-It means Killing Perfection- Sesshomaru's voice echoed in his mind

\It suits you\ Harry replied back with a grin.

"Merlin," the owner breathed, "you'd be the first person he's ever done that to, lad."

"What is he?" Harry asked as he raised his arms to better look at her.

"He's Japanese," the owner said, "They all are."

"How much?" Harry asked.

"Are you sure none of you want other animals?" the man offered once more as he started walking to the other cages in the store. "We have a wide variety."

"That would be pretty stupid," Draco sneered, "being as how we have bonded with them."

"All of you?" the man looked at them and started at the fact that each teen now had an animal sitting on their shoulder.

"We'll take them," Harry turned to look at the man, not knowing he made a striking and formidable pose with Sesshomaru on his shoulder. "We'll also need everything for them; from beds, to cages and collars."

"They're so beautiful," Draco smiled before he laughed softly; Yasha had jumped from his shoulders to his arms and was now licking his chin.

"How much for everything?" Harry asked, already reaching into his pocket.

"Nothing," the owner shook his head. "I meant it; you can have them and everything for free. The fact that they came to you of their own accord and bonded; you were the wizards meant to have them."
"Thank you," Cory nodded and turned to leave with Luna, Harry and Draco following.

The man nodded and went to help a few customers. When he came back to his counter a few minutes later, a pouch of galleons was sitting on the counter along with a slip of paper that the two kitten and puppy paws on it. The man smiled and took it up.

~...~

When the quartet left the store, they looked at each other.

"Fred and George?" Cory asked.

"Why not?" Harry grinned, "I'm sure we can avoid the Weasels just perfectly."

"As I live and breathe," a voice behind them spoke, "Draco Malfoy."

The four turned and saw a young man, not much older than them, standing there. He had dark brown hair, dark eyes and a slightly muscled body. The boy was smiling at them as he walked closer, oblivious to the dark scowl on Harry's face; very bad decision on his part.

"Henri Laurent," Draco nodded even as he imperceptibly shifted away from Henri and towards Harry; he knew without looking that his boyfriend was tense and that the wrong move would set him off. He just hoped Henri had enough sense to recognize danger.

At the name, Harry tensed further and his eyes darkened as his magic woke; this was the guy that had been his boyfriend's first.

"What are you doing in London Henri?" Draco asked, "More specifically, what are you doing here?"

"I wanted a change of scenery," Henri smiled and he took in the blond's appearance; Draco had changed since the last time he saw him. His body had been lean before, now, it was lean and muscled; his hair was a bit longer, but it was his eyes that held Henri's attention. While before they seemed cold, guarded and closed off, now, they sparked with happiness, with a joy, a freedom, that Henri knew wasn't present before. It intrigued him and he knew he had to be with him again.

"I believe," Cory looked over Henri, "it is polite to introduce yourself rather than to dominate conversation as if you're an old friend."

"Oh I am sorry," Henri nodded, "My name is Henri Laurent. I come from France and I am an, how you say, an old friend, of Draco. And who are you?"

"Luna Lovegood," Luna spoke up and her eyes had adopted the spaced out look she wore before she joined up with Harry and the others. "This is Cory, you know Draco this is—"

"I'm Draco's boyfriend," Harry cut her off, glaring at Henri.

"You're dating Draco?" Henri's gaze shifted from Draco to Harry, unable to believe that this was what he just heard.

"Yes," Harry answered curtly; he could feel anger moving through him, as well as they need curse the guy.

"Was there something you needed Henri?" Draco asked as he placed a hand on Harry's arm to calm him down. He knew his boyfriend; he almost killed Narcissa and that was because she had
slapped him, and he could only imagine what Harry would do if Henri tried anything. He also knew it was deliberate that Harry hadn't said his name.

"I'm relocating to London," Henri turned his gaze to Draco, dismissing Harry. He was oblivious to the darkening of Harry's eyes or the growls coming from the two pups. "It is for a job and I thought of you and re-establishing our previous...acquaintance."

"Over your dead body," Harry went calm; to think that this fool would try to entice Draco specifically after he told him the blond was taken. His blood was boiling and his magic rose, ready to do his will.

Sensing danger, the people in the alley started staring at the five and Draco wrapped an arm around Harry's waist, curling into his boyfriend's side. He turned his face to Harry's neck and gently kissed him.

"Calm down," Draco whispered, "I don't want you going to Azkaban for murder."

Despite the fact that Henri could feel the malevolent aura, he didn't think anything of it. He just thought the guy was being a little possessive and what he knew of the Malfoys, especially Draco, was someone who did not like that. It wasn't the first time he had seduced an old flame from their boyfriends and he knew he could do it with Draco; the blond had enjoyed their time as much as he had.

"If I were you," Luna spoke as she petted Kilala. "I would leave; he really is quite possessive of Draco. I have no doubt that you thought Draco would come back to even though you were told he was taken, but you are obviously mistaken."

"If you value your life," Cory's eyes narrowed; he could feel Harry's magic spiking and a wind was starting to pick up. The guy really had no idea the damage he was about to unleash on himself. "I suggest you leave...now."

Henri looked at the four and finally seemed to notice the danger that everyone else did. His gaze rested on Harry and he took a step back; the cold rage in those darkened green eyes terrified and it was made even more formidable when he saw the same look in the golden eyes of the pup on his shoulder. He had been so sure he would be able to take Draco away from the guy, but looking into the eyes of said guy, he saw a look that was daring him to do so.

Harry clenched his fists tightly; he was trying to control the urge to hex the bastard until he was unrecognizable. Draco was his and no one else's.

Realizing that his boyfriend was not calming down, Draco shifted Yasha in his arm and moved his other arm from around Harry's waist to throw it around his neck, mindful of Sesshomaru. He grabbed his boyfriend by the neck, pulled him down and captured his lips in a harsh and intense kiss.

"Leave," Luna's eyes turned cold and Henri gasped. "Now!"

Needing no other incentive, Henri turned and quickly walked, ran, away, not looking back once.

"I'm sorry," Harry said as he pulled back from the kiss to rest his forehead against the blond's.

"Don't be," Draco grinned, "I have to admit it was very arousing watching you go jealous and macho on the guy."

"Yeah?" Harry grinned and nipped Draco's lips. "I'm glad you liked it; I just hate the thought of anyone touching you or having you. Add to the fact that he was your first..."
"I'm not mad," Draco smiled, "if our positions were reversed and an old flame of yours showed up, you'd be visiting me in Azkaban."

"Well thank Merlin it didn't come to that," Luna giggled, "Come on; let's go see Fred and George."

"Sounds like a plan," Cory smiled, "you guys do know that if you tell them about this, and they run into him anytime, they won't have any control?"

"Yes," Harry nodded, "but it's not my fault if Fred and George asked what we did today and I mentioned him."

"Evil," Draco laughed and grabbed Harry's hand in his free one. "You're pure evil."

"You love me still," Harry said and the quartet laughed, ignoring the looks from everyone else.

~...~

"Hey Panse," a dark-skinned guy turned to the girl beside him.

"Yeah Blaise?" Pansy, who had chin length, dark hair, turned to her friend.

"Isn't that Draco?" Blaise gestured to the blond walking past the store, Harry, Cory and Luna in tow.

Pansy turned to where he was looking and recognized the Malfoy blond hair. "Yes, that is him. But, who are those three teens with him?"

"I don't recognize them," Blaise frowned, "but, maybe we should speak with Draco."

"I agree," Pansy nodded even as her eyes narrowed at how close Draco was to the shoulder length, dark haired teen.

The two paid for their purchases and left the store. They walked behind the quartet and when they got close, Pansy called out.

"Draco!"

The quartet stopped and turned around and Pansy and Blaise started at the three with their blond friend; they recognized Luna, and they saw a familiarity in both Cory and Harry, but they couldn't place where they knew them from.

"Pansy," Draco nodded, "Blaise. How are you?"


"Zabini," Harry growled, "Ogle my boyfriend again and you will lose your sight."

Blaise ignored the guy and reached out a hand to touch Draco, but before he could reach his destination, his wrist was suddenly in a vice-like grip. Blaise turned to the person, ready to tell them off when his eyes caught the dangerous gleam in the green eyes that seemed to darken.

"Who the hell are you?" Pansy glared at Harry, only to pause when her eyes met the darkened emeralds. *There's only one person I know with green eyes like that.* Her eyes widened slightly in disbelief and shock. "Potter?!"

When he heard the name, Blaise paled as he finally recognized just who the deadly green eyes belonged to.
"Harry is a little," Draco smirked, "possessive and he really doesn't appreciate someone touching
what's his."

"Harry?" Pansy echoed, "Draco, what's going on? Why did Potter call you his boyfriend, why are
you calling him Harry and why is he looking at Blaise like he's measuring him for a coffin?"

"You're very smart Pansy," Cory grinned, "I'm sure you can figure it out."

"You're dating him?!" Pansy narrowed her eyes and looked between the two; Harry still had yet to
release Blaise from his grip.

"I did say that," Draco drawled before turning to his boyfriend. "I know you want to kill him, but
please refrain from doing so. Blaise is one of my best friend and I'd hate to lose him."

Harry said nothing, but he did release Blaise's wrist slowly and it was only then that Blaise realized
that the pup on Harry's shoulder and the one in Draco's arm were looking at him in cold rage, the
look that was in Harry's eyes right now and they seemed to look at him as if he was prey.

Blaise took a step back from the four.

"Draco," Pansy started sweetly, making Blaise wince and surprisingly, the four didn't even seem to
notice the false sweetness to her voice. "When exactly did you start dating Harry Potter and why are
you hanging out with Lovegood of all people and who is the boy?"

"Well," Draco smirked, "Harry and I started dating this summer, Luna and I became friends because
she's Harry's friend and this is Cory, he's also another friend and Luna's boyfriend."

"Draco," Blaise started hesitantly, "What of your father? If what you're saying is true, then he can't
be too happy about this relationship...especially considering who he works for."

"Blaise," Draco's eyes narrowed, "Need I remind you that we are in a public domain, and such
topics should be discussed within private quarters, despite the fact that Harry cast a Silencing Charm
the moment you guys came to us."

Both Blaise and Pansy looked chagrined at his words; they were Slytherins, so they should've
known better than to start discussing sensitive topics in the open without even casting their own
Silencing Charms.

"You're right," Pansy nodded. "I apologize."

"We've just completed our shopping and were about to venture into Fred and George's shop," Cory
spoke up, "would you care to join us?"

"The Weasleys?" Blaise looked aghast. "Why ever would you go there Draco? They're blood
traitors."

"Zabini," Harry smiled at him and Blaise swallowed, it wasn't a nice smile. "You've insulted me
from the moment you got here; first you ogled my boyfriend, which I technically can't fault you for
since Draco is eye catching, but then you disregarded my warning and tried to touch him in a purely
suggestive manner and now, now you've resorted to insulting Fred and George in my presence.
Now, Draco's best friend or not, I will not tolerate it. Do you understand me?"

Harry's magic flared a bit as he spoke and Blaise trembled slightly in the force of the power.

"Yes," Blaise nodded; he always knew Potter was powerful, but even this display was beyond his
wildest imagination.

"Luna, is it?" Pansy turned to the blonde. "I do love what you have done to your hair."

"I love yours as well," Luna smiled, "Let's talk, shall we? Come along boys." The two girls linked arms and headed off towards Fred and George's store.

The boys looked at each before following after them. Blaise made sure he was situated as far away from Harry as he could get and Cory chuckled at him when he saw what the dark skinned guy did.

"Don't worry," Cory smiled at him, "Harry won't hurt you; you are Draco's friend after all and making Draco happy is important to Harry."

"Glad to hear that," Blaise murmured, "Just the same though, I think I'll keep you and Draco between us until he's beyond his homicidal thoughts towards me."

Cory laughed and nodded.

~...~

Fred and George grinned at the sight of their store filled with so much people. They had never dreamed that people would love it so; they hoped, but it was still mind numbing to see it actually happen.

They saw that the Weasleys, Granger included, had entered the shop and was now looking around; they could spot the jealousy on the faces of Ron and Ginny and their smiles widened.

"I reckon they're wishing they didn't treat us like shit now," Fred smirked at his twin.

"You'd be right," George grinned and his grin turned into a smirk when he saw just who came into the store next. "Time for mayhem."

Fred looked to where he was watching and the twins looked at each other before moving through the crowds towards the door.

"Hey guys," George smiled, "Glad to see you could finally make it."

"You guys have outdone yourselves," Harry laughed as he looked around; he shifted Sesshomaru from his shoulders into his arms.

"Mate," Fred looked down at the pup. "What do you have there?"

"It seems they all have them Forge," George looked at the animals in the other three arms.

"Familiars," Luna smiled, "This is Kilala, Cory has Kirara, Harry has Sesshomaru and Draco has Yasha. They're Japanese."

"Cool," Fred grinned as he reached out to pet Kilala.

"And who are you two?" George looked at Blaise and Pansy.

"Blaise Zabini," Blaise answered politely, remembering Harry's warning.

"Pansy Parkinson," Pansy smiled at the twins. "This is a very nice establishment you have here."

Before either twin could answer, they were interrupted by the arrival of Ron, Hermione and Ginny.
"What the bloody hell are you doing here ferret?" Ron snarled, completely missing the way Harry's eyes narrowed and his body tensed.

"I always knew you were daft Weasel," Draco sneered, "but I had no idea you that daft. I'm customer just like everyone else."

"You don't belong here," Ginny scowled, before her eyes shifted to Harry. Though she didn't recognize him, she noticed just how gorgeous he was and an appreciative gleam came in her eyes as she gave him a once over.

"Oh?" Draco turned to her, "and just who is going to remove me from the store?" his eyes narrowed when he saw the way she was looking at Harry, and it was his boyfriend’s turn to place a hand on his arm to prevent from hexing her.

"How did you get those?" Hermione's eyes widened when she saw the animals in their hands. "You're not supposed to have them."

"What are they?" Ginny asked.

"Oh please," Cory interrupted just as Hermione opened her mouth. "Spare us the lecture and book report Granger. We didn't ask for one and frankly, none of us here care to listen to the drivel you're going so spit."

Hermione looked so scandalized that the twins, Harry, Luna and the Slytherins couldn't help but to laugh.

"How dare you talk to her that way?!" Ron growled and reached for his wand.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you Ronald," Luna spoke up, drawing the three's attention to her.

"Luna?!" Ginny was shocked. "What are you doing hanging out with Malfoy, Parkinson and Zabini?"

"I really don't see how that is any of your business Ginerva," Luna replied as she looked around. "You've never once interested yourself in anything I do, so why start now? It's a bit too late to play the part of the concerned friend."

"Well said Luna girl," Harry smiled and this time, the three's attention were on him.

"Who are you?" Hermione's eyes narrowed as she looked at Harry; she took in the raven-black, shoulder length wavy hair, the muscled body and the bright green eyes. "You look very familiar, like I've seen you before."

"I assure you," Harry smirked as he petted Sesshomaru, "we've never met. I'd never lower myself to mingle with gutter trash."

Hermione bristled in hurt and outrage while the others laughed. Before she could respond, Harry turned to Fred, blatantly dismissing her. "Want to show us around?"

"Sure mate," Fred grinned. "Let's go."

"Come on Cory," George clapped said guy on the back. "I know we have things here that you'd like." He turned to Pansy and Blaise. "You two can join if you want."
"We will," Pansy and Blaise answered as one.

The group turned to leave, leaving Hermione, Ron and Ginny staring after them. The trio gaped when they saw Draco step closer to the dark haired boy and slip his arm around his waist.

"You're a pouf?" Ron's voice held disgust.

The group stopped and turned to stare at him. Hermione and Ginny both took a step back from the glares they got from the group; even the animals in their hands seemed to be glaring at them.

"What's it to you?" Draco's tone was icy and Ron couldn't help the flinch when he saw the cold rage in his grey eyes.

"Choose your next words wisely Weasel," Harry warned. "You'd hate to have them be your last."

"Are you threatening him?" Ginny narrowed her eyes at him.

"It's a not a threat," Harry smiled, "it's a promise. Let's go guys; I think we've wasted enough time on them."

"Weasel, Mudblood, Cow," Cory nodded to the three before turning and walking away. The others followed, not even bothering to hide their laughter.

~...~

Harry and the other teens stayed in the store until closing; during the time, they had endure looks from the Trio, but the glares the three got from them, prevented them from coming closer. Once, Molly had dared to venture to them, laying into Luna for hanging around two unknown, to her, boys and the three Slytherins, but she had been stopped in her tracks at the death glare in Luna's normally complacent and vacant sky blue eyes. She hadn't dared come near them since then.

Harry smirked because he could feel the stares from Hermione and every time he looked at her, her brows would be furrowed and he knew she was trying to figure out where she knew both him and Cory from. He would wink or scowl at her periodically, leaving the girl flustered.

When the last person had left, Pansy turned to Draco. "So, are you going to explain just what the hell is going on?"

"Pansy," Draco started.

"Don't 'Pansy' me," Pansy scowled. "You're hardly heard from almost the entire summer, and then we do see each other, you're friends with Lovegood, met some new kid and dating Harry Potter. I think I'm justified to react this way."

"Be that as it may," Harry looked at her. "Justified or not, I won't allow you to speak to Draco like that. Did it never once occurred to you that there was a very good reason no contact was initiated by Draco? And since we're on that level, communication is a two way street and before you start ripping into Draco, perhaps you'd like to explain just why it is he received no owls from you?"

Pansy, properly chastised, shifted her eyes from both boys.

"I understand you guys have questions," Draco said, "and you're right, I should've kept in contact, but like Harry said, I had a very good reason for not doing so."

"And that reason would be?" Blaise asked.
"Why don't we take this back home?" George suggested.

"Sounds like a sound plan to me," Fred smiled before drawing and waving his hand; he quickly muttered spells under his breath, skillfully locking the store as well as warding it. His smile turned to a grin when he saw the shocked expressions on the two Slytherins faces. "I thought you Slytherin lot were supposed to be good at keeping your expressions from being open? From the moment you got here, we've been able to read them."

"Can you blame us?" Blaise said dryly. "We've been a bit knocked off course."

"We should go," Harry said. "Hedwig."

"Why are you calling your owl?" Pansy asked. Her eyes widened and her mouth fell open when the white phoenix flashed into the store.

"Flies darling," Cory laughed.

\[Read their auras for me please girl\] Harry told Hedwig through their mental connection.

\[They are on the same side as you\] Hedwig trilled in confirmation as she settled on Harry's shoulder. She tilted her head and looked down at the pup in his arms, trilling softly. \[Is this the one you chose?\]

"Yes," Harry smiled as he rubbed Sesshomaru's head. "I'll introduce you guys properly when we get home."

\[Ok; have them gather round\] Hedwig trilled once more as she rubbed her head against his.

"He can understand what she's saying?" Blaise looked at Harry in shock. "I never heard of anyone that could understand a phoenix."

"Harry's special," Draco grinned.

"Gather round," Harry said. "We're going home."

Draco stepped close and wrapped his arm around Harry's waist while Luna did the same on the other side; Cory held on to Luna while Pansy held on to Draco and Blaise held on to her; Fred and George each placed a hand on Harry's shoulder. The group disappeared in a flash of fire.

~…~

When they reappeared in the living room in Potter Manor, Hedwig flew from Harry's shoulder to her perch while everyone found seats around the room.

“Now that we’re here,” Pansy looked at the others, “could someone explain just what is going on?”

“Ok,” Harry nodded. “But before we do that, you will have to take a vow of secrecy to never reveal anything you’re about to be told until you’re given permission to do so. Is that understood?”

Blaise and Pansy looked at each other.

“Yes.” Both answered at once.

Harry nodded and pulled out his wand, but before he could do anything, Snape walked into the room.
“I see you are back,” Snape greeted. “I trust your endeavours were successful?”

“Very,” Fred and George grinned while the others, excluding Pansy and Blaise who were staring at their Head of House in confusion—they didn’t recognize him—laughed.

“Did you have any doubts Severus?” Harry smirked.

“Severus?” Blaise and Pansy had confusion written on their faces before it cleared away and understanding dawned.

“Professor Snape!!” they both exclaimed and Snape turned to them.

“Ms. Parkinson, Mr. Zabini,” Snape walked over to them. “Your summer has been well?”

“Yes sir,” Blaise nodded, his eyes not leaving his teacher. “Professor, why exactly are you here?”

“And what happened to you?” Pansy added.

Snape turned to Harry and the others. “What information have you divulged to them?”

“Just that Drake and I are together,” Harry answered. “We were about to have them swear a Vow of Secrecy when you walked in.”

“Proceed,” Snape inclined his head as he took a seat.

Harry turned back to the two Slytherins and all three stood up. The words were the same as the ones Bill and Charlie had spoken and when the light, that signalled the Vow taking place, cleared, the three sat back down.

“So,” Blaise was the first to speak. “What is going on? How is that Draco and Harry are a couple? And why do all of you look like that...especially you professor.” He couldn’t get over the changes he saw in the teens or his professor.

“Everything you’ve ever known about us,” Cory started and he gestured to him, Harry, Luna and the twins, “is a lie. With the exception of Luna, each of us has had our lives manipulated by Dumbledore.”

“What do you mean? Pansy asked.

“Well,” Harry started and he filled the two teens in on what had been going on in the past five years at Hogwarts. He didn’t tell them anything concrete about his past as he did not fully trust them, despite the Vow that they had taken. When he was done, like Bill and Charlie, they stared in shock.

“I always knew the Old Fool was dangerous,” Pansy said. “I never realized exactly how dangerous he was though.”

“And what about you?” Blaise turned to Cory. “How did Dumbledore mess up your life?”

Cory’s eyes sparked with anger, as they always did whenever he thought on what Dumbledore did, but just as he opened his mouth to answer, his parents and walked into the room.

“You’re back,” Bellatrix smiled. “How was your shopping?”

“It was fun,” Luna smiled at the woman. “We got familiars.”

Pansy and Blaise stared in shock.
“Really?” Rastaban looked at the teens and the animals they had.

“What the fuck is going on?” Blaise gestured frantically. “Why are you so nice to them?”

“She’s my mother,” Cory answered.

“I wasn’t aware the LeStranges had a son,” Pansy raised an eyebrow.

“They do,” Draco smiled, “and you know him.”

“No we don’t,” Blaise shook his head as he looked at Cory. “I’ve never seen you before in my life.”

“Oh you have,” Cory chuckled. “You just knew me by a different name.” At their looks, he clarified. “You knew me as Neville Longbottom.”

“What?” the two Slytherins eyes widened in disbelief and they looked at everyone, wondering if this was a joke.

“Let me fill you in,” Cory smiled and then, he went on to explain exactly how deep Dumbledore’s manipulations ran.

“You ok over there?” George asked when Cory was finished; it was funny to him to see Slytherins so shaken up.

“Yes,” Pansy nodded. “Just a bit shocked.” She turned to Cory. “So, you were really Neville Longbottom, but you’re actually Cory LeStrange?”

“Yes,” Rodolphus nodded. “Trust me when I say, we were just as shocked when we found out the truth.”

“So tell me P-Harry,” Blaise looked at said guy. “Just how many of the Dark Lord’s followers do you have being here?”

“Well,” Harry’s brows furrowed. “Severus lives here and he spends most of his time in the potions labs; I asked Bellatrix, Rodolphus and Rastaban to permanently live here seeing as how they spent most of their time here anyways and they can’t use their ancestral home. They took me up on the offer because it meant they’d be closer to Cory; and then, you have the Pest Control meeting here a few times a week with the LeStranges.”

Pansy and Blaise each raised an eyebrow and exchanged a questioning glance.

“What happened to your manor?” Blaise addressed his question to the LeStranges.

Rodolphus answered with a dark scowl. “Well, what do you supposed happened back in 1981 after the Dark Lord disappeared and we were sentence to life imprisonment in Azkaban?”

Blaise mouthed an “Ohhh” of sudden understanding.

“Indeed “ohhh”,” Bellatrix sneered. “The DMLE raided our manor, searching for evidence against us. They destroyed most of the interior and confiscated our property. They killed both house elves because they tried to stop them. The Aurors burned the house to the ground and now, there is nothing left but a ruin; we checked last year as soon as we had been broken out of Azkaban.”

Fred, George, Pansy, Blaise, and even Luna, looked shocked while Severus, Harry, Draco and Cory had already known.
“You said Pest Control?” Pansy asked when she had gotten over her shock. “What exactly is that?”

“It’s a group of Death Eaters,” Draco explained. “They’re led by Antonin Dolohov, you know him, right?”

The teens, with the exception of Harry, nodded; they all had met the elder Death Eater at least once before or had heard of him from their parents.

“This team is responsible for the disappearance of certain muggleborns, halfbloods and muggles that were a threat to the Statue of Secrecy,” Harry continued. “I mean, people like the Creevy brothers of Gryffindor for example; they are two muggleborns that recklessly took photos of everything—from the Hogwarts express to Hogsmeade—and shown them proudly at their home. They told their father and other relatives and friends about the existence of the magical world; the idiots even boasted about going to a special school and knowing the Boy-Who-Lived.”

Harry’s face had darkened. He still got quite angry when he remembered what a nuisance Colin Creevy had been from the first day of his first year; always following him around, asking stupid questions and taking pictures at the most inopportune moments and to top it all off, he had to have sold some to the Daily Prophet.

Cory, Fred and George scowled and sneered too; they remembered very well how much of that behaviour had bothered and frustrated Harry, who hated all the attention because of his fame.

Pansy and Blaise nodded again while Pansy commented. “So that’s how our reports have been of use; now I understand.”

Cory furrowed his brows as he looked at the two Slytherins. “What do you mean?”

Pansy looked a bit put out and then she explained. “Well, for about twenty years, all the younger Death Eaters or children in Slytherin have always watched the other students, especially the muggleborns. We have observed them, listened to rumour and gossip and then, we made regular reports of anything noteworthy to our parents which we wrote in a certain code. Before I started Hogwarts, my mum told to find out who of the new first years were muggleborns or halfbloods living in the muggle world.

“She told me to keep my ears open about what they talked about; mainly, if and what they told their family or any muggle friends about where they went to school, or if they managed to keep Hogwarts a secret as they should. The seventh years pay special attention to any talk of muggleborns or halfbloods having a muggle boy-or girl—friend, and if they planned to marry a muggle. Disgusting.”

Cory looked astonished and shocked; he had been a rather clueless Gryffindor before this summer and he hadn’t thought of this before. Fred and George exchanged one of their usual telling looks but didn’t comment audibly. Luna seemed unfazed as ever.

Cory turned suddenly to Harry. “Uhm, Harry, you mentioned the Creevy brothers. Do you know, well, do you know what became of them? After all, they are in Gryffindor...” he trailed off.

Harry exchanged a telling look with Snape, raising a questioning eyebrow. He knew about the fate of the Creevys, but he wasn’t sure if he should tell the whole group. Maybe this was a bit too close to comfort for someone like Cory; after all, he had been Neville Longbottom—a rather pathetic and sheltered Gryffindor—before this year. Harry himself was much more used to darkness, pain, torture, death and killing from his hard life up to now.
Snape nodded to Harry, giving his permission to tell the other teens; in the end, nothing good could come from coddling them. They all needed to learn to fight and kill a human in order to be of use as soldiers for the Dark Lord. Any revolution caused a certain amount of bloodshed; revolutions just weren’t possible with only flowers and singing about love.

Harry’s face was set in a hard, blank mask and his eyes had narrowed a bit. “There was a raid on their family home; their father was executed after interrogation and the boys kidnapped. Extended family and a few friends were tracked down after a while and disposed of. Colin was killed recently, his death used to power a ritual; Dennis is still alive. The Dark Lord has no further use for him and he gave him to me. I plan to use Dennis for curse practice in the next few days and then later, kill him. After all, training with dummies has its limits.”

There was an audible gulp from the two Slytherins, Cory and the others were used to this side of Harry as they had been there when he had tortured Gibbons, but even they still gulped—except Draco who shivered a bit in delight—at the darkness in Harry’s voice. They had known or heard that Harry had turned dark, and that he was powerful, but had disregarded what that really meant. Most of the time, Harry was easygoing and friendly, unless of course, he became jealously possessive of Draco, like earlier in Diagon Alley.

Bellatrix beamed at Harry in pride and tackled him in a surprise hug—making Draco, who was sitting next to his boyfriend, jump from his seat—as she cackled happily. “He has come a long way, hasn’t he? No ickle baby Potter anymore! I’ll love to teach you all about the fine art of torture!”

Harry grinned and his eyes sparkled as he returned the hug after a moment.

Snape, Rodolphus and Rastaban looked on with amused smirks; Blaise and Pansy watched the most infamous, dangerous female Death Eater hug the former Saviour of the Light in astonishment while the twins, Draco, Cory and Luna were already used to Bellatrix’s antics.

Harry managed to get Bellatrix off of him after a while so that he could continue his explanation to Blaise and Pansy. “You asked about what Pest Control does. Hunting muggleborns is one part of their assignments; they also target certain Wizarding folk of the Light side that are a threat to the Dark Lord’s plans.”

“Yes, or we handle traitors,” Bellatrix added. “Like Karkarov.”

“I read about him in the Daily Prophet a few weeks ago,” Blaise remarked.

“Exactly,” nodded Bellatrix. “That was fun...” she trailed off with a reminiscent gaze.

“They also do research on Muggles and how muggles could endanger wizards,” Draco continued. “Muggles have made frightening progress when it comes to worldwide communication, surveillance and weapons of close range combat or large scale mass destruction. You and most other wizards have no idea of this danger because the Daily Prophet never reports anything about what is really going on in the muggle world and the Muggle Studies class at Hogwarts is a joke. It’s keeping wizards content and naive in the belief that muggles are helpless and harmless. This obviously happens for political reasons, because Dumbledore wants it that! For example, remember how last year we spent the weeks looking at diagrams and talking about a toaster works?”

Draco shook his head in disbelief.

Blaise looked contemplative and then nodded. “Yes, that’s true; we did talk about muggle household artefacts like a toaster, a coffee machine or a cold box. I took that class because it is a requirement for most jobs at the Ministry, but I don’t think we learned that much useful stuff.” He paused. “Exactly
what kind of research does this PC team do and where?”

Harry smiled grimly and answered him. “They research muggle modern day weapons, technology and so forth and how they could affect us; how wizards can defend themselves and keep their homes safe, should the muggles ever figure out how to detect magic and attack us. There is a large ballroom—very well warded and shielded now—that I allow the PC team to use to do their research.”

“Hmmm, ok,” Pansy smiled. “What else did you do here all summer?”

“Summer school,” Harry, and the other teens, laughed. “When the ballroom is free, we teens use it to train ourselves in hexes, shields, curses and their counters on practice dummies, just like we did in the DA last year, only this time, we’ve added Dark Arts and Sev, Lucius, Rodolphus, Rastaban and last but not least, the one and only Bellatrix as teachers.” At her name, Harry winked at the witch and did a salute to which she did an elaborate mock curtsey in answer causing everyone to smile and chuckle.

“They also started to learn the basics of Martial Arts which a muggle fighting technique that uses your body or a weapon such as sticks, staffs, daggers, sabres or swords, to defend yourself or to knock out your opponent. The reason we studied it is because it could come in handy if we’re ever in a situation where we lose our wand in a duel or if magic doesn’t work in an area. It takes years of training to be really good, to be a master, same as wizard duelling, but at least now, we have an idea of how it looks, how it works and how to use it.”

Blaise and Pansy looked at the teens in awe, causing them to chuckle.

“Come on guys,” Harry smiled, “you know that I was always good at DADA in school. Truth is, I had to learn it early on my own or I wouldn’t have survived up to now. Every year since I started Hogwarts, the manipulative old bastard placed me in several dangerous life or death situations. But just because I’m really good, I still have a long way to go to become the best. Take Drake for example; he already knows some fencing and the basics of Dark Arts because Lucius started teaching him as a young boy, but Cory, Luna and I started from scratch and I’ve only fought with a sword once before.” He paused and could barely suppress the shudder as he remembered fighting the Basilisk and then the pain of the Cruciatius after he had told Voldemort of it a few weeks back.

Cory perked up, remembering the first meeting of the DA in Hogsmeade last year. “That was when you killed that Basilisk in second year, wasn’t it? When you used the sword of Gryffindor?”

“Yes,” Harry answered tersely; he wasn’t angry at his friend, he just didn’t feel like revisiting the details of what happened. The others saw the way his face closed off and though they were curious, they acknowledged that it was his choice if he wanted them to know what really happened.

After a moment, Draco got them back on track by finishing the report of their summer activities. “If one of the Death Eaters had time, they joined us; it was to not only spice things up, but to keep themselves in shape. Why do you think Aunt Bella, her husband and Ras look healthier rather than how they should look after such a lengthy stay at Azkaban? It was very interesting, often demanding and exhausting, but it was all good fun.”
“Whoa,” Blaise sighed, “I knew the Dark Lord was powerful, but I had no idea of how he ran his operations or everything that you guys accomplished.”

“This is a lot of information,” Pansy looked at the group.

“I trust it will not be a problem for either of you?” Snape’s voice was dangerously soft and it held the insinuation that should they have a problem, they would be obliviated and sent on their way.

Blaise and Pansy shared looks, before Blaise spoke. “I admit, this information is a bit overwhelming and unsettling—especially everything that Dumbledore did—however, you trust us enough to tell us and I appreciate it.”

“In other words,” Pansy continued, “we’re glad we were told the truth and your secret is safe with us.”

“Good,” Harry nodded. “Draco really cares about the two of you and I’d hate to have to hurt you if you had decided to hurt him by not being able to accept that we’re going to be working on the same side now.”

“You know,” Pansy smirked at Harry, “I think I always suspected you weren’t as pure as everyone thought. Welcome to the Dark Side Potter.”

“Harry,” Harry smiled. “And thank you. It’s a fun place to be.”

“We know,” Blaise grinned. “You know Harry, you’d make a fabulous Slytherin; the way you hid your true persona throughout these years without anyone—especially us Slytherins as we pride ourselves on watching everyone—being none the wiser.”

“Well,” Fred grinned. “The hat did say he would make a good Slytherin.”

“What?” Pansy and Blaise wondered just how many shocks they could go through in one sitting.

“You know,” George smirked, “Come to think of it, it did the same to us.”

Now, everyone turned to look at the twins.

“Didn’t know that, did you?” Fred laughed. “Oh yes, like Harry over there, the Sorting Hat wanted to put us in Slytherin...”

“...said we had the drive and ambition to go after what we want,” George continued. “The only reason it placed us in Gryffindor and not Slytherin was because...”

“...even though we were sneaky and underhanded,” Fred picked up, “the things we had done and what we aimed to do; only a Gryffindor would dare to be so brave or foolish.”

“Unbelievable,” Snape’s complexion had paled a little. “To think, I was this close to having not only you two, but Harry in my house as well.”

“Slytherin would have won the House Cup all these years,” Harry laughed, “if all three of us were in Slytherin and on the team.”

“The things you could’ve done,” Snape shook his head, “thank Merlin for small favours. If you three had been sorted into Slytherin, where you no doubt would have developed your abilities even further, the school would not have survived.”

Everyone laughed at that. After that, the talk shifted onto more pleasant matters; Blaise and Pansy
had expressed their appreciation for the new looks of the teens, often teasing the boys, delighting in the flushed cheeks. All in all, as far as everyone was concerned, the day—and night—couldn’t have gone better.
In With the New, Out With the Old

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Last time on RDA:

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On the day after the visit to Diagon Alley, and speaking with Pansy and Blaise, Harry decided to speak to the Dark Lord about his boon. After lunch, he went to his bedroom and scribbled a short letter.

Marvolo,

When are you free, today or tomorrow? I’d like to speak with you about the favour, please.

Harry

He rolled up the parchment and sealed it; then, he tapped it with his wand and cast a simple Parseltongue locking charm on it. Voldemort had suggested establishing this routine for security reasons, regardless if they sent a letter with owl post or Hedwig. If it was routine, a habit, then there was less danger to forget it later when Harry was back at Hogwarts, when it was really necessary to keep their communication private. Finished with this task, he called, "Hedwig." A moment later, the white phoenix flashed into his bedroom.

"Hedwig, please deliver this letter to Lord Voldemort, but don’t flash into his study, you know he doesn’t like that. You can give it to Lucius or one of the house elves as usual. Wait around a bit, maybe he will give you an answer right away, or he’ll send an owl later, I don’t know."

Hedwig took the letter and was gone in a bright flash. Harry decided to wait a bit in the privacy of his bedroom. Although he had lived in Potter Manor nearly all summer, he still enjoyed the fact that it was his bedroom, that he finally had a place of his own and what a gorgeous place it was! After his miserable childhood at Privet Drive, he would never take this comfort and feeling of security for granted. Sighing contently, he stretched out on the coverlet of his bed and drifted off into a pleasant daydream about languorously exploring Draco’s body.

After ten minutes, the phoenix appeared again, startling Harry out of his pleasurable haze as she landed on the headboard all of a sudden.
"Huh, that was fast, thanks Hedwig," Harry sat up and adjusted himself, before petting her soft feathers.

Hedwig thrilled and dropped a small role of parchment into his hand, with no visible seal or address, which instantly unfurled when he hissed {Open}.

Today, four o’clock, MM, back garden terrace.

LV

When he was finished, Harry cast an *Incendio* to burn the letter. Since the meeting wasn't until this afternoon, he still had some free time, so he decided to spend it with his friends. They had had an outdoor training session earlier with Rastaban and Severus, joined by Blaise and Pansy who were impressed, and everyone was outside relaxing; he decided to join them until his meeting. After mentally calling Sesshoumaru, who appeared at his side instantly, the young wizard and his familiars walked through the manor to the garden.

~...~

At a quarter to four, Hedwig flashed Harry right inside the tall dark green hedge and wrought iron gates of Malfoy manor. He took a deep breath of the afternoon summer air, it was pleasantly warm here, a bit warmer compared to Potter Manor in Wales, but not stifling hot.

He preferred this mode of transport to using the floo network, because he was out in the fresh air and did not arrive covered in soot or stumbling out of some fireplace like a drunken imbecile. With practice, he had learned to exit a fireplace somewhat better compared to his second year, that was true, but still he lacked the grace some other wizards showed. Harry had never seen Draco, Lucius or Severus stumble around or fall to the floor when arriving at a fireplace, they always landed with perfect grace and with only a few grains of sooth or even completely clean. When Harry had grumbled about this no doubt age-old pureblood secret, they always smirked at him, but refused to explain.

Hedwig soared up into the sky to stretch her wings a bit. This part of Wiltshire was beautiful, wide open spaces, and not densely populated, so she could enjoy swooping around an hour, chasing smaller birds and out flying raptors like hawks or falcons just for the fun of flying. He had left Sesshoumaru back at Potter Manor with Draco and the others.

Harry walked down the driveway towards the manor house and veered off to the left, walking over the lawn through the fragrant gardens headed to the back of the house and the garden terrace. He marvelled again at the difference between this garden and Petunia´s idea of the perfect gardens, where he had slaved countless hours in burning heat or freezing rain to pick weeds or repaint the fence as a child. This manor garden was well kept too of course, there was also a lawn, flowerbeds, bushes just like at his relatives house. But the Malfoys’ garden was much larger, interspaced with well springs, classical statues or little nooks with a convenient bench enclosed by hedges or bushes. They also had evergreen hedges growing in a spiral maze form on one side, not dangerous and sinister looking like the huge, scary maze from the Tri-Wizard Tournament, but peaceful, serene, to gently walk around at leisure or in meditation. Everything looked more natural, more alive here, there was luxuriant flowing growth, and more plant variation compared to Privet Drive.

Suddenly a house-elf popped in front of him, one hand raised towards him.

"Sir, stop. What is sir guest doing here? Sir must speak to master. Manor door is back there,” it commanded.
Harry came to an abrupt stop, he hadn’t met this particular house-elf before; it looked rather young. The elf was clad in a nice, crispy white tea towel with the Malfoy crest on its breast; it looked him up and down critically. Harry was amused; the little bugger obviously took his duty seriously to not only serve his family well, but to protect them also.

"Hello, my name is Harry Potter. I have an appointment with your master's guest today, the Dark Lord, on the garden terrace. I’m keyed into the wards of the manor, so there should not have been an alarm.” Harry explained to the elf in a friendly tone.

The elf stared at him for a moment with huge eyes, then bowed low and started to apologize. "Ooooh, sir is Harry Potter sir. Sorry, sir. Welcome to Malfoy manor. I is Belby. I is a new elf. Belby heard of Harry Potter sir. Sorry, sir. Master said he improved wards. Master ordered Belby to watch for spies in hedge or garden. Master told Belby to always greet guests at gate. Belby felt the wards breached, but wards not give normal alarm. Belby was worried. Harry Potter Sir wants to speak to master’s Lord, sir?"

Harry smiled and nodded at the excited and dedicated little elf. At least this one did not seem to have Dobby's crazy tendencies of Potter hero worship or of punishing itself needlessly. It was good to know that Lucius had improved the security around the manor, not that it had been lacking before, but one could never be too careful nowadays.

"Oh yes Harry Potter sir, go on, this way, master’s master is near the roses." Belby pointed him in the right direction, before popping away.

Harry reached the terrace right on time. Coming around the last low hedge bordering the garden path, he noticed Voldemort lounging in a blue wickerwork chair besides a yellow rose bush, looking surprisingly peaceful and relaxed as he read a book. There was no one else present.

Harry coughed before ascending the few stairs to the flagged stone platform to announce his presence and walked closer. With a slight bow, he greeted the Dark Lord, "Good afternoon, Marvolo. How are you?"

Voldemort looked up; closing his book, he banished it back to his suite. "Harry, right on time; I’m fine, thank you," he acknowledged the young man.

Rising from his seat, the Dark Lord gestured towards the garden. "Come, let’s take a walk and tell me about you. Any unusual reactions?” He inquired while stepping down the stairs. He casually twirled his wand to cast Muffliato and a silencing charm bubble around them, to hide their conversation to any hidden listeners.

Falling easy in stride alongside Voldemort, crossing the path and ambling over the soft carpet of lush green grass that composed the Malfoys' lawn, Harry smiled and replied exultantly, "I’m OK. I feel better overall, as if a weight I always carried around has been lifted. My magic seems to be getting stronger; there is more power behind my spells when I cast them as I usually do. I’ve had to tone it down in training today. And the reading, you know, memorizing information from textbooks – it seems easier, I read faster and remember more compared to the last weeks."

Harry sniggered, "Snape was astonished when he quizzed me this morning about something he had me read yesterday. I didn’t think it would make this much of a difference, but it does. Snape thinks it ’s because now there is a part of my magic that is suddenly free, that was always working in the past on containing and shielding it."

Voldemort smirked at Harry’s exuberance and the way the young man kept his secrets confidential,
constantly avoiding the 'H.' word, should there be someone listening despite his precautions. "This pleases me; it's the best possible outcome of our endeavour. What about your scar, did you feel anything the past two days?"

Harry shook his head; he stopped and turned to Voldemort. He pushed his fringe away and beamed up at the older man. "No sir, everything is ok. No pain. The scar stayed like it was after-ah-you know."

Voldemort had turned to Harry and stepped close, to better inspect the famous scar on the young man’s forehead. He slowly raised his right hand and reached out towards the fine silver lightning bolt, which to him looked similar to either the rune Sowilo or in Anglo-Saxon Sigel, the power of the sun, or to Eiwahz, in Anglo-Saxon Yr, the symbol for the Yew tree.

"Tell me how it feels," Voldemort commanded gently.

"Ok," Harry breathed out, tensing slightly in anticipation as emerald orbs locked with the dark brown, crimson-rimmed orbs above him.

Voldemort firmly took hold of Harry’s right shoulder with his left hand and then carefully touched Harry’s scar with the fingertip of his right index finger. Nothing happened; the contact felt perfectly normal, just like the warm skin of an attractive young man. He could feel the power thrumming in Harry, but there was no negative reaction. No spark or shock, no strange tingling. He quirked an eye-brow and moved his hand over Harry’s forehead through the dark hair to the back of his head, holding the young man in a controlling—but not painful—grip for a moment.

Harry’s eyes widened in reaction to the dominating gesture; he felt no shock or pain, only Voldemort’s magic—delicious, alluring, dark power—but he refused to give in to the attraction and to lean into the touch.

"All right?" Voldemort questioned.

"Yeah, I’m ok," Harry flushed in slight embarrassment, but he continued on. "No throbbing or stinging, no headaches or migraines anymore. And thank Merlin I feel more normal around you sir. I- I don’t completely lose my head anymore this close to you. Thanks for convincing me to do it."

{You're welcome. What about ssspeaking Parsssel, have you tried?} The elder wizard hissed suddenly, while releasing the younger and resuming their walk through the garden heading towards the spiral hedge maze.

Harry slipped his hands into his pockets as he walked beside Voldemort; his face lit up again as another huge smile came on his face. Turning to Voldemort, he started hissing teasingly, {Yesss, of coursssse! I musssst sstill be a ssspeaker to help to teach Nagini’s sssnaklingsss the waysss of the world. Can’t leave it all to the elder generation, after all. They have to learn all about pranksss too, not only about ssscaring people to death.}

Voldemort actually laughed at Harry’s words; he too felt better today—rested and calmer—despite his very vivid dreams full of snapshots from Harry’s past, no doubt a reaction to the soul union.

After strolling through the maze in companionable silence for a few minutes, turning to the correct path out of habit, Voldemort asked, "So, tell me, what you have decided to ask from me? I must admit, I’m quite curious what you will chose. Money, fame and power you have in abundance; we have already discussed the people you care about, so I’m sure you won’t ask anything like that, as most other followers would, isn’t it so?"
Harry looked over at the Dark Lord, gouging his reaction and nodded. "You’d be right Marvolo; there is something I’d really like to do. I want to kidnap, torture and kill somebody. But the person it concerns is working at the Ministry. She was a senior Undersecretary to Fudge, but I don’t know if she lost this position when Fudge was sacked. I don’t know what her current position is or if this witch is in any way connected to your plans, if she is valuable or expendable in your estimation."

"Hmm, and who might that be?" asked Voldemort, turning around another bend in the patch between the tall evergreen hedges, which opened up to a small circular area. They had reached the middle of the spiral maze. An old, gnarled, huge evergreen tree stood in the middle, like the centre of the universe.

Harry stopped and faced him with a serious, angry expression. "I want to take revenge on Undersecretary Dolores Umbridge. I want to torture and kill her as payback for all the pain that she caused me." He spoke in a harsh, cold voice, "I want her to know it’s me, Potter, the former Golden Boy, before she dies. And I want to involve the werewolves, ripping her to shreds alive, leaving only scraps for the crows."

Voldemort had also stopped and raised both finely sculptured black eye-brows at the complete change of attitude. A few minutes ago, the younger wizard had been so cheerful and happy. Now, Harry looked and sounded as if he really wanted to rip someone apart.

Intrigued, the Dark Lord enquired, "Explain," while crossing his arms in front of his chest and leaning his back against the large, old yew tree growing in the middle of the maze. He could feel the elemental power of the earth thrumming through it and intermingling with his own, dark magic. This was a special place of power; the Malfoy ancestors had created this maze around the ancient yew for a reason.

To Voldemort, yew trees had been always special, his interest starting when he bought his yew wand as an eleven year old from Ollivander’s. At Hogwarts, he learned in Herbology and Potions, that yew is associated with immortality, renewal, regeneration, everlasting life, rebirth, transformation, access to the Otherworld and our ancestors and was a symbol of the old magic. The Yew is sacred to Hecate, and the Crone aspect of the Triple Goddess; both are guardians of the Underworld, death and the afterlife. Yew trees in Britain were ancient, up to 4000 years, often found around blind springs, planted as Druid groves, where later muggle churches were built.

The small evergreen leaves are dark green, even in the middle of the coldest, bitter winter, which is a symbol of life, but they were deadly poisonous at the same time. The entire tree is poisonous - wood, bark, needles and seed. They are used in several dark potions, like in abortion potion or an extremely potent poison Severus had created for him during the first war called *Ibidem Nex*, one drop of instant death. The only part which isn’t poisonous is the bright red, fleshy part of the seed that birds could eat, thereby giving them a chance at life during winter, the time of darkness and death. Even muggles revered Yew for these same reasons as wizard kind throughout the northern world.

Harry paced around the little circular space like an angry panther, his magic swirling around him in a threatening way, while he growled out, "I hate Umbridge. She’s had it out for me all right, she tormented me every way she could. It started last summer. I was still shaken from the trials of the bloody Tri-Wizard tournament and your fucking resurrection party in the graveyard, again stuck at my shitty muggle relatives, without any contact to the wizarding world." Harry sneered, "On orders of Dumbledore of course, for my own fucking good."

Voldemort frowned while watching Harry stalk around him. He was surprised by Harry’s language and realized that the young man must be incredibly angry for a multitude of reasons to lose his composure like that in his presence. He disliked foul language, it was uncouth, but for now, he
would wait and listen.

"To top that hellish summer off, two bloody Dementors attacked me and my cousin one evening, completely out of the blue."

“What?!” exclaimed Voldemort standing up straight at once. This was disturbing. Why hadn’t he known this before?

“Yes, two bloody Dementors,” repeated Harry ardently, holding up two fingers of his right hand while his left was clenched into a fist. “They cornered us in a narrow alleyway not far from Privet Drive and nearly sucked my soul out, it was horrible…dreadful. I barely managed to fend them off with my Patronus, which resulted in a letter from the fucking Ministry, telling me I was expelled from Hogwarts for performing underage magic and that my wand would be snapped in a few minutes. Can you believe it? I nearly escaped a fate worse than death by defending myself with a charm many adult wizards cannot properly cast, I also heroically rescued my worthless muggle cousin along the way, and the British Ministry of Magic wanted to kick me out of the Wizarding World? Fucking Ministry. Last May I learned that this was all Umbitch’s doing, which of course I didn’t know back then."

Harry’s fury was rising; all that frustration, fear, confusion, and outrage from the past summer came boiling up again. His black hair and clothes moved as if in an invisible wind. Voldemort watched him prowl around him and relished in the darkness pouring of the young man. It was like watching as a volcano erupted; all that rage and hate the boy had held back for so long came pouring out.

Harry’s power was like the best old red wine, caressing his senses. Salazar, this boy—no young man—was truly worthy of his attention, so powerful and glorious in his wrath. Harry would be a terrible weapon against his foes. Dumbledore was such a fool; well, the Light’s loss was the dark side’s gain. He, Voldemort, would only have to direct this weapon skillfully – and take care to ensure it stayed loyal to him.

Which wasn’t too difficult. As starved for affection, friendly touch and reassurance as Harry was from his deprived and neglected childhood and the past years at Hogwarts, a bit of positive attention, understanding and openness did wonders to deepen their bond, that thankfully had not suffered from the very few times he had had to resort to doling out pain as a punishment so far. It was exhilarating to witness that the Harry Potter came to the Dark side and submitted to him of his own free will, as opposed to being forced and tortured into compliance; an idea that he had briefly entertained after their encounter in the graveyard. That the cunning, stubborn and powerful young dark wizard was most eager to learn from, to fight with him and not against him anymore was beyond fortunate. Before this summer, he never would have believed such a development was possible.

Last summer, Voldemort had heard of course from Lucius and Yaxley that Harry Potter was in trouble for performing underage magic, but he had had absolutely no idea of the incredible danger the young man had been in. To think, that this idiotic ministry sycophant had recklessly endangered his Harry, his Horcrux! Regardless of what more Harry would reveal, the Undersecretary’s fate was already sealed.

Lucius had mentioned the woman a few times when reporting about Fudge and his underlings. She was a nasty piece of work; sadistic, ruthless, ambitious and cunning, that fit in well with his Death Eaters—she didn’t know of course that Lucius was one—nevertheless, any potential value this woman had as a Dark side supporter was completely negated by her crimes against the boy. If Harry would not go after her – which he wanted to – Voldemort himself would have ordered her capture and enjoy killing her.

Harry’s angry voice snapped him out of his musings. "Some more letters from Dumbledore and
other people followed one after the other during the next half hour. Another letter from the Ministry changed the immediate expulsion threat to a hearing about underage magic in August, where my fate would be decided. But the day of the trial, Lucius was there in the Ministry. I got a glimpse of him in the hallway outside the courtroom talking to Minister Fudge, so he must have told you?"

Voldemort was ready to speak, but it seemed as if Harry didn’t really need his answer, as he rushed to recap the rest of that bizarre evening in Surrey.

"My aunt and uncle of course believed that I had somehow hexed their precious son and were furious at me for all those freaky owls that invaded their perfect muggle kitchen," Harry sneered. "Didn’t get any chocolate, in case you were wondering. They sent me to my room and locked me in, without food which of course was their usual punishment.

"Ah, and as the icing on the cake," Harry sneered, "I found out that evening that our neighbour, old batty Mrs. Fig was no muggle, but a squib and a spy for Dumbledore. He had asked her to have an eye on me! Unbelievable, this man. She wasn’t allowed to tell me about the wizarding world when I was a kid. She either never noticed the neglect and abuse going on at number four, or Dumbledore didn’t believe her. Or he believed her, but left me at the Dursleys nevertheless, for the greater good, that bastard!"

Harry was quivering in remembered hate and rage. He could not stand still, but continued to circle around the large evergreen tree and watched Voldemort out of the corner of his eyes. The man’s face wore a dark scowl, the lips pressed together. Was he angry with Harry or did he sympathize with him and feel emphatic anger at Umbridge, the Ministry, Dumbledore and the Dursleys?

"And this was just the start of the trouble Umbitch caused me in fifth year. As you know, she was appointed by Fudge himself to Hogwarts as the new DADA teacher and so called High Inquisitor. She gave me endless detentions, forced me to write hours on end with a cursed blood quill, until the message sunk in, as she called it."

Harry stepped close to the elder wizard and held his hand up. "Here, look, I removed the glamour. How much did you know about all of this, Marvolo?"

Voldemort’s hand shot out quick as a viper to grab Harry’s wrist. He carefully inspected the back of Harry’s right hand. There, he found faded scars, letters etched deeply into the skin; I must not tell lies. Voldemort scowled, locking fierce eyes with the young man. "Then don’t tell lies Harry, tell me everything. I will not protest any punishment this woman suffers at your hand. Believe me, if I had known about this, I would have tortured and killed her myself! Umbridge was always a supporter of the Dark Side, not a Death Eater of course, but she could have been useful in the Ministry. Nevertheless, she has forfeited the right to live."

Voldemort’s eyes glowed. {Nobody touchesss what isss mine} he hissed, completely incensed, as he tightened his grip possessively and tugged Harry closer with his left hand on the small of Harry’s back. Harry shuddered and gasped.

“I didn’t know how bad your living conditions were or what happened to you last summer or during fifth year,” Voldemort continued, “Lucius and Yaxley only overheard that you had performed underage magic and got an expulsion hearing for it, but not what exactly you did or why you did magic. Umbridge must have known you were all alone in the muggle world if she got to your relatives’ address. That was attempted murder, nothing else. Most adult wizards can’t defend themselves against Dementors.”

Hugging the young wizard possessively to his chest, Voldemort snarled out, {Ssshe will pay} all the
while glaring daggers over Harry’s shoulder, his eyes shining more red than dark brown.

Harry relished in the fierce embrace, the feeling of dark power curling and unfurling over him and leaned his head for a moment on Voldemort’s shoulder. Nodding with a nasty teeth baring grin, he viciously hissed his answer. {Yesss, sssshe will.}

He knew Voldemort’s vice like grip would leave a bruise on his wrist—it hurt quite a bit—and he felt a bit uncomfortable pressed this closely to the older man, to any other man that wasn’t Draco, but he tolerated Voldemort’s possessiveness because it felt absolutely fantastic to be so valued and protected. Here was living proof again that he mattered, that someone cared, that he wasn’t worthless like his relatives had always told him. Harry felt better, seeing that the Dark Lord shared his sentiments against the toad. What would he have given last year to have an adult that believed him and took action against that vile woman!

It was mind boggling that one letter of complaint to Voldemort of all people would have ended Umbridge’s reign at Hogwarts for the simple reason that last year, the Dark Lord had considered Harry as his to hurt and kill—but still, as his—and under his protection against all other threats.

Voldemort loosened his grip again, studying the back of Harry’s hand for a moment longer before asking, “I wonder, did she treat other students the same as you, or were you singled out? Severus never mentioned anything like what you said. He hates Umbridge as she was a nuisance and a menace, but he never reported of her harming students with a blood quill. That’s torture to write hours with one until it scars like this.”

Harry answered with a glare and wrenched his hand lose, to take up his agitated pacing around the circular maze centre again. “No. Severus wouldn’t know, at least I don’t think so. No Slytherin children suffered under her regimen at Hogwarts in the last school year, because none of them was so foolish as to provoke her as I did. I was just so angry; I lost control over my mask and because of that, I couldn’t keep my mouth shut. I knew you were not a figment of my overactive imagination. She gave blood quill detentions to several of the Gryffs, very few Claws and some Puffs who believed my claims that you were back.

"Why was it not reported?" Voldemort wondered. "How is it no teacher knew of it? Did no student complain?"

"I was the first one she used it on." Harry recounted, his insides burning with anger. "After that detention was over, I went directly to McGonagall. When I tried to tell her what happened, she snapped at me to keep my head down and not to get into any more trouble. She didn’t even let me tell her how the detention actually was and what it was exactly that Umbitch was using on me, a student."

He sighed and shook his head. “When she brushed me off without actually hearing what I had to say, I believed that the other teachers wouldn’t listen to my complaints either. And when the other students realized that my own Head of House wasn’t willing to listen to me, they decided not to say anything either. After all, if the Gryffindor Golden Boy, Dumbledore’s favourite student for the past four years, couldn’t get his own Head of House to believe him, then what chance did they have?”

"I never knew," Voldemort murmured as his dark eyes narrowed. "To think that the woman would use such a barbaric tool on students to hurt them and that Fudge, incompetent fool that he is, allowed it to happen..."

"Oh, that was not everything that happened," continued Harry his angry tirade. "On the day of the History of Magic exam, after you send me that fucking vision about Sirius, Umbitch wanted to use Veritaserum on me and was this close," Harry lifted his hand and indicated a minimal space
between his thumb and index finger, "to use Cruciat.us on me, a student. She would have, if Granger
and Snape hadn’t intervened. Can you believe that? Bugger, Granger and Snape saved me, again;
Severus…my saviour, my hero." Harry grinned, his fury burned out mostly before his face and voice
turned resigned and sad. “You know what the worst of it is? Because Umbridge controlled all the
mail and had blocked all the fireplaces at Hogwarts, I couldn’t contact Sirius anymore for months.
After you sent me that bloody vision, I assumed him to be in mortal danger, but Granger insisted it
could be a fake. I wanted to check up on Sirius before jumping to conclusion, that’s why I broke into
Umbridge’s office to try and use her Floo. I did manage a short Floo Net connection to
Headquarters and spoke briefly to Kreacher, the old house-elf. He said Sirius was out. Later that
night, after Sirius was dead, I learned that that wasn’t true, but earlier when it mattered, I couldn’t
contact Grimmauld Place again, because Umbridge barged into her office.

“What followed was her interrogation of me; her attempts to use Veritaserum and Cruciat.us.
Granger and I lured her into the Forbidden Forest, where we then escaped and rode on Thestrals to
London together with the others. So, I put a large part of Sirius’ death on her doorstep. By the way, I
haven’t forgiven you for this; I can’t, although I completely understand why you tried to lure me
there. I know you tried to get the prophecy by other means first; for example, I had one vision of
Rockwood reporting to you before the other one around Christmas when Nagini attacked Arthur
Weasley.”

Voldemort nodded his head. Well, he had to believe what Harry told him. He could read the truth in
his eyes. And now they had arrived at a most unpleasant topic, again. Better not dwell on that vision
and the debacle at the Ministry. Although, it had led to a few positive outcomes in the end; his
possession of Harry, the revelation of the prophecy and their new alliance, rescuing his Horcruxes,
the regaining of his sanity and his new passionate relationship with Severus.

His mind went over all the information he was just given and knew he would enjoy seeing Harry
take revenge, especially considering Umbridge had almost cost him his Horcrux. She had dared to
hurt what was his, which was inexcusable. He used to torture and kill people for far less offence.

And, there was of course the issue of the oppressive anti-werewolf regulations this senior
Undersecretary was responsible for. Fenrir had ranted and raved about that often enough, and
Harry’s god-fatherly friend, Remus Lupin was affected too of course. The law from 1993 made it
nearly impossible for known werewolves to get or hold a decent job in the Wizarding world. That
explained Harry’s wish to include the werewolves in his revenge on Umbridge.

"Very well then," Voldemort concluded, looking down at the younger wizard. "The favour is
granted; Dolores Umbridge is yours to do whatever with. I shall have the necessary information
collected so you know when best to abduct her. You should plan her punishment and execution
together with Fenrir and Remus. This would be the perfect occasion for us to meet the pack leaders
and to show them that I am sincere in my wish to end the repression of the werewolves.”

"Thank you Marvolo. Yes, I will speak with them as soon as they are back. If possible, I want to go
through with it on the night of the next full moon, which would be the twenty-eighth." Harry smiled
darkly, happy that he was finally getting revenge on the toad that had made his life hell.

Voldemort saw the smile and he relished in the malice in it. 'Yes, Albus Dumbledore should have
been more careful with the Saviour. His loss is my gain.'

“Alright Harry, I’ll keep that evening free of any other commitments or meetings,” Voldemort said
and he gestured for Harry to continue walking with him. The two walked in comfortable silence for
a bit before Voldemort broke it. “Harry, there is something I’d like to speak with you about.”

“Ok,” Harry nodded. “What is it you want to talk about Marvolo?”
“Albus Dumbledore,” Voldemort snarled.

~...~

Albus tuned out the other occupants in his office as his mind wandered. 'Nothing has worked out; the brat refuses to answer any letters sent by the Granger girl and no one has heard from him at all. What is going on? I've spoken to Mrs. Figg and she informed me that the Dursleys had gone on a vacation at the start of summer and had returned at the end of July.'

"I still can't believe the twins did this," Hermione spoke and drew him out of his thoughts.

"Believe what Ms. Granger?" he turned to look at her.

"The twins!" Hermione's eyes blazed. "We saw them today. I knew Mr. Weasley suspected it, but I didn't expect it to be true!"

Albus was confused, though he didn't let that show on his face; had to let them believe he was all knowing. He turned his gaze to Molly.

"Arthur and I were at home when we realized that the twins had disappeared not only from the Family Clock," Molly explained, "but from the Family completely. Arthur felt a shift in the Burrow's wards as well as the Family Clan indicating that the twins had been removed; the Clock only confirmed it."

"It turns out," Arthur spoke up, "the twins disowned themselves from the Weasley Clan."

"What?" This time, Albus could not keep the confusion or shock from his face or voice.

"Yes," Molly scowled, "they are no longer Weasleys. We saw them today and they looked different and they kindly informed us they were no longer Weasleys, but they were now Potters."

"How is that possible?" Albus narrowed his eyes at her. "That means that they had to have had contact with Harry at some point. Did you find anything out?"

"No," Ron shook his head. "Mum went off on them and then they told us off before walking away."

"Professor," Hermione spoke up, "if the twins are now Potters, and that couldn't have happened without them meeting Harry, does that mean they told him about the will meeting?"

Her question made everyone pause and look at her; they had never thought about that.

"It's obvious that they did," Hermione continued, building momentum. "At the reading, they declared they would side with Harry, and based on their new appearances, they were adopted into the Potter Clan, which can only be done by someone of the Potter blood which is Harry. And if I'm right, and I know I am, then that means that Harry knows everything that happened at the will reading, which would explain why he never answered any of my letters and it would make it very difficult to go forward with the plan that we had at the beginning of summer."

"She's right," Ron slumped back into his seat. "With the twins telling Potter everything, he won't be inclined to give us any money."

"And that's not all we have to worry about," Hermione continued; at the looks, she sighed exasperatedly. "Did you forget whose company the twins kept this afternoon?" She turned to Albus.

"Malfoy, Parkinson and Zabini were at the store, along with Luna and two other guys."
"Ms. Lovegood," Albus frowned, "why would she be in acquaintance with Mr. Malfoy?"

"I have no idea," Hermione shrugged, "but they all looked pretty cosy to me." Her brows furrowed. "The two boys they were with, there was something familiar about them; it's almost as if I've met them before."

"What were their names?" Albus was slightly worried, though he didn't show it.

"Well," Hermione spoke, "I didn't hear the names clearly, but I think I heard one of the twins call one of the boys Cory."

"What?" Albus' slight worry went into panic; 'It cannot be? It is a mere coincidence. I made sure of it; there is no way my magic was reversed by anybody. No...I would've known.' "How did that boy look?"

"Well," Hermione's brow furrowed as she recalled the appearance of the boy. "He was muscled, but not too muscled; he had shoulder length curly hair, which come to think of it, so did the other boy, but this boy's hair wasn't as dark and he had light brown eyes."

"Hmm," Albus mused. "And what of the other teen? What did he look like?"

"In all honesty," Hermione said, "for a split second, I thought I was looking at Harry, but I dismissed that thought; this boy was far too muscular, he is taller than Harry is and he also carries himself with a confidence that I know Harry doesn't have. In fact, the only reason I thought it was Harry was his eyes; they are almost the exact shade of green as Harry's, except his are darker...almost the same shade of green as the Killing Curse while Harry's are the same shade as emeralds."

Albus went quiet as he thought on the information; 'just who are these teens?'

"You forgot to mention that he's also dating Malfoy," Ron pointed out.

"We don't know that," Hermione fired back.

"Oh come off it 'Mione," Ginny scowled. "Malfoy had his arm wrapped around the guy's waist; that should tell you that they're dating, or at the least that there's something going on between them."

"Then it cannot possibly be Harry," Albus said, "it does not do well for the Saviour of the Wizarding World to be into men."

"He isn't!" Ginny and Molly vehemently denied.

"And we also know of the rivalry between Mr. Malfoy and Mr. Potter," Albus continued. "So it must've been the son of an acquaintance of Lucius Malfoy."

"But why would Fred and George be so chummy with them?" Hermione asked, refusing to let go of that point. "Why would they willingly put up with Malfoy and the others?"

"I'm afraid to that Ms. Granger," Albus looked at her over the top of his glasses, "I have no answer; however, I would like for you three to keep an eye on both Ms. Lovegood and Mr. Malfoy, as well as Mr. Potter, in the upcoming school year."

"So we should still go ahead with the plan to befriend Harry once again?" Hermione asked. "If the twins have gotten to him, he won't likely want to speak with us."
"He will," Albus waved her concerns away. "Just remind him of what you have been through the past five years for him."

The finality to his tone and statement told them the discussion was over and they got up and headed to the Floo. Just before she stepped through, Hermione turned back to Dumbledore.

"Professor," she said, "I think you should know that the four teens, Malfoy, Luna, the boy and Cory, all had animals." At his look, she continued. "The animals were Japanese; two pups and two kittens, both kittens had twin tails."

The slight widening of his eyes was the only reaction that let Hermione know he heard her. She nodded and stepped through the Floo. When they were gone, Albus dropped his facade and allowed his emotions to show.

From the start of the summer, nothing was going as he had planned. He had thought that with Sirius' demise, his hold over Harry would be strengthened as the boy would be too grief stricken to do anything but comply with his wishes, but it was not to be. First the boy had lashed out at him, refusing to have anything to do with him for the summer and by that, he Dumbledore had lost out on having Horace Slughorn as his potions master. Then Sirius had gone and changed his will without him knowing about it, so all his plans regarding the Black money had gone up in smoke and somehow, his hold over the Potter Vaults had been taken as well, which left him slightly confused as he knew that Harry hadn't known. Add to the fact that Sirius had left Grimmauld Place to the Malfoy brat which left the Order without a Headquarters as they had been booted out.

To add to all that; he had a meeting with the Board of Governors in five days, one which had him apprehensive as he wasn't too sure what it was about. All he knew was that somehow Lucius Malfoy was involved. He couldn't understand how he had lost control of everything so fast; he was Albus Dumbledore, the defeater of Grindelwald, the mentor to Harry Potter, a master manipulator and controller, he wasn't supposed to have everything collapse around him like this. And he now had to worry that his pawn knew of some of his manipulations.

"Who knows exactly what those blasted twins told the boy," Albus frowned. His thoughts drifted back to the Black and Potter vaults. "I should've had control over those two vaults, but once again, the mutt interrupted my plans, and with the clause he placed on it, only the wolf can gain access to them other than Potter."

He got up and walked over to the window, looking at the grounds. "If the twins spoke to Harry, then I can only surmise that Lupin did as well; his wolf was unhappy with me the last time we saw each other and he hasn't answered any of my summons."

His thoughts drifted to the meeting. "I have too much to worry about this blasted meeting. Just what is Lucius up to? What could he have possibly said to the Governors that they want to meet with me? I need to think." He sighed. "It matters not. Soon, Harry shall be in school and he shall be back under my control; this was just a slight rebellion he was going through, he will get over it. I will not lose my most valuable pawn. Speaking of, whatever is going on with Severus? He has never spent the summer away from everyone despite his nature."

He turned and walked back to his seat and laced his fingers together. "The animals that Granger mentioned, well, all children have to abide by the school rules, so they will just have to get rid of them. No animal will enter this school that I cannot monitor."

In his corner on his perch, Fawkes trilled sadly and softly; it was a sad sight to see how much Albus had lost himself to power. Absolute power corrupts absolutely, and in the case of Albus Dumbledore, that was true.
It was now the thirteenth, the day of the Governors’ meeting. Lucius had already spoken to the Dark Lord, going over his job and his presentation; he could not fail.

Remus and Fenrir had returned about two days ago with word of success on the two wolf packs joining up with Voldemort. After a resting day, Remus and Lucius had spent the day together yesterday.

"Are you ready?" Remus asked as he walked into Lucius’ bedroom from the adjoining bathroom.

"Malfoys are always ready," Lucius smirked.

"They're also full of themselves," Remus rolled his eyes as he walked over to his lover, yes lover.

"I do not recall hearing you complain last night when you were full of me," Lucius murmured as he accepted a kiss from his lover.

"That's because I was too incoherent last night to even remember my own name," Remus grinned as he wound his arms around the taller man's neck. "So, I couldn't very well muster up complaints, now could I?"

"Of course not," Lucius grinned as he dipped his head for another kiss. It turned heated as Remus stepped closer, closing the distance between them and pressing his body against Lucius, feeling the hardening of his cock.

"Remus," Lucius growled out as he pulled back from the kiss, his grey eyes dark with desire.

"I thought I was the animal," Remus shifted against Lucius, rubbing his own cock against the blond. "I want you again; I want to feel you in me, pounding my ass like you did last night."

Lucius snarled and pulled Remus into another heated kiss, walking backwards until he fell on the bed, taking Remus with him. He kept his hold on the sandy-haired man, devouring his mouth even as a moan escaped his lips when Remus shifted until he was straddling him.

With his legs on either side of Lucius' hips, Remus started rocking against the blond, creating mind-numbing friction that had him moaning wantonly. He pulled his lips from Lucius' mouth and started kissing a path down the blond's neck. "Merlin I want you."

Lucius flipped them over, looking down at his love with pure lust and rocked against Remus causing said guy to arch his back, pushing his cock more firmly against his own. He reached for his wand and banished their clothes, leaving them naked; the skin to skin friction caused them to moan loudly as Remus rocked faster.

"In me," Remus panted out, tightening his grip in Lucius' hair. "Fuck me Luc...get in me NOW!"

The last part was growled, and Lucius was too far gone in his lust to refuse his lover. Bending down to kiss Remus, he slipped his hand between their bodies, pausing briefly to grasp his lover's cock; his thumb slid over the head, drawing more pre-cum from the already leaking cock and a howl from Remus who bucked into his hand.

"Damnit Luc!" Remus snarled, his eyes flashing amber. "Stop teasing and fuck me!"

"Have to...have to prepare...you," Lucius said between pants; his cock was painfully hard and it twitched with the need to be buried once more inside the wonderfully heated body of his lover. His
hair had loosened from the style he had them in, but he didn’t care; his body’s pleasure dominated his mind too much for him to be concerned about that.

Remus muttered a wandless Lubricating and Cleansing Charm, as well as a stretching one and looked up at Lucius. “There...now I'm prepared.”

Positioning the head of his cock at the werewolf’s entrance, Lucius groaned when he felt the heat radiating from it. He gritted his teeth and fought for control not to slam into the body. He eased the tip of his cock inside, cursing when he felt the internal muscles clamped down viciously around him. Apparently his pace was too slow for his lover as he felt Remus' hands on his ass before the wolf slammed himself backwards, engulfing Lucius in one thrust.

"Fuck!” Lucius swore when he felt the sweltering heat envelop his cock. His hair fell across his face as he leaned forward to look down at Remus and a thin sheen of sweat soon covered his body.

"Yes! Do it!” Remus arched his back and tightened his muscles in reflex around the hard cock inside as it slammed into his sweet spot.

"Stop doing that,” Lucius hissed between gritted teeth, trying to control his body's urges. His body was taught with tension and he could feel his control slipping rapidly.

"Move!” Remus demanded as he pulled away, leaving just the tip of Lucius' cock inside him before slamming back, letting out a keening wail as the move sent Lucius’ cock directly into his prostate.

Lucius' control snapped and he shifted one of Remus’ legs from his waist to his shoulder and gave him what they both wanted; he started fucking him raw.

"Harder...faster...damnit Luc, I'm not going to break,” Remus groaned as he thrust back against his lover.

Lucius growled, but the brutality of his pace increased; his thrusts became harder, more erratic as the two lost themselves in the pleasure of each other's bodies which became slick with sweat as a result of their fast paced coupling.

"So tight...so hot,” Lucius looked at Remus, "you should...see how you look..." his gaze shifted to where his cock was entering Remus and he couldn't help but to groan; it was fucking hot.

"You like this don't you?” Remus panted out. "Stuffing me with your big cock...f-fucking me good..."

Lucius dropped Remus' leg and pulled out, drawing a moan of disappointment from his lover, before flipping him over onto his hands and knees before slamming back into him.

"Fuck yes!” Remus shouted as the position sent Lucius deeper, each thrust hitting his pleasure button. "Fuck me like a bitch in heat...” inside, Moony howled in triumph at the dominant taking from his Alpha. Remus dropped down to rest on his forearms, the movement forcing his ass higher and sending Lucius’ cock deeper inside him, drawing a groan from his lover and a desire-filled whine from him. He loved knowing he could make the always-in-control Malfoy, lose his cool. Smirking lustfully, he tightened his muscles around Lucius’ cock, relishing in the pleasure-pain moan that came from him.

The dirty words only fuelled Lucius' lust; when Remus shifted position sending him deeper, he couldn’t help the groan that escaped. And when the minx decided to tighten his muscles around him, he couldn’t stop the pleasure-pain moan from escaping before he grabbed Remus’ hips, anchoring himself as he fucked him harder and faster. One hand moved to Remus' chest, lifting the man and pulling him back into his chest, their sweaty bodies slapping against each other in an erotic rhythm.
He pressed a kiss against the man's neck before moving to whisper into his ear.

"You feel so tight and hot around my cock," Lucius groaned out. "I love fucking you...the sight of my cock moving in you...touch yourself...wrap your hand around your cock...

"Lucius," Remus moaned out as his hand reached out shakily to grasp his own cock; the feel of his hand on his member was intoxicating and he found himself moving his hand to Lucius' thrusts. "Oh Merlin...harder..." his breathing increased as his balls tightened in anticipation of his rising orgasm.

Lucius complied, pumping furiously in and out of his lover. Moans and groans sounded throughout the room as they two raced towards completion. The pleasure that they were experiencing was all encompassing.

Remus fell over the edge first, howling as his climax ripped through him; cum spurted out of his cock in thick, white ropes, covering his hands, chest and the bed.

Lucius stiffened as he felt Remus' inner muscles clamped down reflexively on his cock, pulling his own orgasm out of him and with a shout of Remus' name, he coated the man's inner walls in jets of cum; his hips pumped a few more times as his cock was milked dry.

Breathing loudly, the two fell forward and Lucius carefully eased himself out of Remus, before falling to his side, pulling his lover to him, not caring about the cum covering his lover's chest.

"That was...that was amazing," Remus smiled even as he tried to get his breathing back under control.

Lucius said nothing; he grinned, and with a wave of his hand, cleaned the two of them of the sticky mess.

"Thanks love," Remus turned to him, his eyes dancing in joy.

"As much as I detest the idea of leaving you," Lucius caressed Remus' cheek. "I do have that meeting to attend."

"I know," Remus nodded; he snuggled into Lucius' chest before pulling away to press a kiss to his cheek. "You should get ready to go."

Lucius nodded and got up from the bed. He looked down at his lover, satisfaction rolling through him at the sated and dishevelled look on Remus.

“Go,” Remus smirked when he saw the look in Lucius' eyes.

Without saying anything else, Lucius smiled and headed to the bathroom. After casting a Charm to adjust the water temperature to the way he wanted it, he took his shower, making sure to clean his body thoroughly...there was only so much a Cleaning Charm could do. When he was done, he stepped out and stepped in front of the mirror; like his son, Lucius prided himself on his hair and so he took extra care as he fixed it to how he wanted. Banishing the towel, with a wave of his hand, he was dressed. Smiling at his reflection, Lucius walked out of the bathroom, dressed in his finest robes, looking as impeccable as always, every inch of the pureblood he was.

"What will you do today?" Lucius asked Remus as walked over to the bed.

"Go see Harry and the others," Remus smiled before he moved closer to where Lucius was standing to press a quick kiss to blond man's lips. "I'll see you when you get back."
"Of that you can be sure," Lucius smirked before walking out the bedroom, his robes swirling around him, leaving Remus to smile and shake his head.

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Walking through the hallway to the room where the meeting was convened, Lucius smiled predatorily at the way people moved out of his way; he heard some wizards squeak in fear and he relished it.

He entered the room where the meeting would be held and walked over to one of the seats situated in front of the Governor's bench; he cast a quick Tempus, and was pleased to note that he was on time, if not a bit early. Malfoys were impeccable on that type of thing. He had just settled into his seat when a side door opened and the Minister for Magic, Rufus Scrimgeour walked inside, followed by the Board of Governors; some nodded to him, others ignored him as they all took their seats.

"Lord Malfoy." Rufus nodded at him.

"Minister for Magic," Lucius nodded back, keeping his face, and eyes, free of emotion.

The Minister and the Governors talked amongst themselves quietly as they waited for the final party. At about ten after the hour, Albus Dumbledore came through the doors. When he got to his seat, the door closed and was locked and warded by a governor.

"Now that everyone is here," spoke Rufus, and the tone of the Minister of Magic indicated he was displeased at being kept to wait, "this meeting shall commence. This meeting was called to determine the competency of Albus Dumbledore as the Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. What say you?"

"It is obvious this is a mistake," Albus smiled almost condescendingly, trying to display a grandfatherly persona. "I have always acted in accordance of what is best for not only the school but for the students as well."

"If I may elaborate your honours?" Lucius spoke politely, allowing the Malfoy manners and prestige to shine through.

"You may Lord Malfoy," a governor spoke, eager to hear if there were only rumours or tangible accusations against the seemingly almighty Headmaster with too many forenames and titles.

"I dispute the Headmaster’s claims," Lucius stood up. "Over the past five years, his actions have not helped the students, but have in fact endangered them on more than one occasion."

"That is not correct," Albus spoke up, "Lucius, perhaps you should offer proof before you commit yourself to slander."

"I am delighted that you said that," Lucius’ smile was predatory. "Let's take a look at the year 1991 to 1992 shall we? Does the Philosopher's Stone summon any memory? You placed a very valuable and very dangerous artefact in a school filled with children, underage students."

"It was for protection," Albus interrupted, "I had removed the stone from Gringotts as I felt it would have been safer at Hogwarts, and I was right; if you recall, Gringotts was broken into."

"Protection you say?" Lucius smirked. "How was it protected when the school was attacked for the stone and a child, the Saviour of the Wizarding World, was injured because someone coveted it? In fact Albus, I would go so far as to say that you deliberately placed the stone at Hogwarts for that very reason. You wanted to entice You-Know-Who himself or one his supporters to come to
Hogwarts and to provoke a confrontation between them and the then young Mr. Potter. Was it safe to keep a large aggressive Cerberus on the third floor corridor to guard the stone? It was only by sheer luck that no student was killed."

"You would be wrong and the students were told at the welcoming feast to keep away from that corridor," Albus' eyes lost some of its bluster and he had a small frown on his face.

"Moving on," Lucius said smoothly and so, he detailed for the Minister and the Governors, everything that had been allowed to happen under Albus' tutelage and just how many students were injured because of the man's actions or inactions. Of course, Lucius skilfully avoided mentioning what really was behind the happenings in Harry’s fourth year or how he Lucius, had been involved in starting the drama that was the Chamber of Secrets; he hoped that Albus would not dare to reveal what really happened because he wanted to keep the depth of his knowledge about the Dark Lord a secret. When he was done, almost all of the Governors, Rufus included, glared at Dumbledore.

"What say you Albus?" Rufus looked down at him.

"I am afraid Lord Malfoy has over exaggerated what has happened," Albus spread his hands. "I would never willingly place a student's life in danger."

"And yet," a governor spoke up, "the facts do speak for themselves. Your actions have endangered more students in the past five years than any other years. And it all coincides with the arrival of Harry Potter in 1991. Perhaps it is time we removed you as Headmaster as you seemed to focus your energy more on him than any other student."

"You cannot do that!" Albus dropped all pretence and frowned outright at the Minister and the governors.

"Actually," Rufus frowned at him, "we can, and we will. Albus—"

"Minister Scrimgeour," Lucius interrupted, injecting false innocence into his voice, "I am sorry to interrupt, but I do not think it would be wise to remove Albus from his post."

Everyone, Albus included, looked at him in shock.

"I know it is surprising that I would prohibit that," Lucius continued, "as I am the one that brought these actions to your attention, however, I feel as if you were to outright remove him from his position, it would cause too much discord."

"What do you suggest then Lord Malfoy?" Rufus asked.

"Place someone in Hogwarts," Lucius smiled, "Someone that will not only keep an eye on Albus, but someone who will protect our children as well. It is my understanding that the position for the Defence Against the Dark Arts instructor is available; appoint someone for that position."

"And are we to assume that you have someone in mind?" a governor asked. "You do remember the last person the Ministry had in the school?"

"Yes I do," Lucius nodded, "I wish to be appointed to the post and unlike Madam Undersecretary Umbridge, I will ensure that our children do learn something and are able to defend themselves if they are ever in such a situation where it is needed."

"You cannot allow this to happen!" Albus shot to his feet. "Lucius Malfoy cannot teach those children; he is a Death Eater. He was arrested for it."
"All charges were dropped Albus," Rufus scowled, "And you know that. Add to the fact that there isn't anything that would indicate Lord Malfoy has been a less than upstanding citizen."

"He bears the Dark Mark," Albus argued, "Surely that is grounds for not appointing him that task."

"I assure you Albus," Lucius was reeling with joy and amusement, and he allowed smug satisfaction to be heard in his voice. "I do not bare the Dark Mark. I am a Malfoy and Malfoys do not tarnish their reputation or their skins, no matter the cause."

"I know you are connected to Voldemort," Albus looked over at Lucius, ignoring the scandalized gasp from their audience at hearing that name spoken out loud.

"Albus," a governor frowned. "Do you have proof of such accusations?"

"All he has to do is bare his left arm," Albus said. "You cannot hide such an abomination."

Lucius said nothing and smirked at the man as he shrugged off his outer robe; after folding it, he placed it neatly on his chair. Then he unbuttoned his left shirt cuff and slowly rolled up his silk sleeve, revealing his left arm to the gaze of the room; it was bare.

"You are powerful Lucius," Albus' eyes glinted with anger. "I have no doubt you were able to glamour your arm."

"Perhaps Albus," Lucius' voice was silky, holding a smug undertone. "However, to ensure that I have not done anything to render the supposed Mark invisible or disillusioned, I will allow you to have Alastor Moody scan with that...magical eye of his. Although, I was under the impression that you were more than powerful enough to see through glamour spells." This was a dig at the old man —thought he didn’t know it—as he knew Albus hadn’t seen through Harry’s glamour for the past five years.

Dumbledore looked at Lucius before glancing down at his arm. He pulled out his wand and waved it over the pale skin, murmuring diagnostic spells. Tense minutes passed by before he looked back into the smug eyes of Lucius.

"Well Albus?" a governor asked. "Does Lord Malfoy bear the Dark Mark or not?"

"It appears I was mistaken," Dumbledore admitted reluctantly through gritted teeth. "As I cannot find any trace of magic that would determine that a Charm was used to hide the Mark, I can only surmise that Lord Malfoy does not in fact, bare the Dark Mark."

"Then our business is concluded," the same governor continued. "Lord Malfoy will take the post of the new Defence Against the Dark Arts professor."

"I sincerely thank you your honours," Lucius inclined his head in a slight bow. "You will not be disappointed."

"This meeting has come to a close," Rufus said. "This coming school year, Lord Malfoy is the Defence professor. You are dismissed."

Albus left, but not before he threw a look of hatred towards Lucius, who only smiled.

Lucius turned once again to the Minister and the Governors, bowed again before turning around and walking out the room, smug satisfaction rolling off him waves. He had accomplished what his master wanted.
After he took the Floo back to his Manor, Lucius quickly made his way to his Lord's wing. Coming to a stop in front of the door, he knocked three times and patiently waited for his Lord to bid him in.

"Enter."

He opened the door and walked in, closing it behind him. The Dark Lord was seated in his wingback chair with Severus sitting close by on the couch. Lucius walked over to them before bowing deeply.

"My Lord."

"Lucius," Voldemort acknowledged him. "I trust you have good news?"

"I have excellent news," Lucius smiled as he looked over at his Lord. "Your plan has been successful. Not fifteen minutes ago, the Minister and the Board of Governors have appointed me as the new DADA professor."

Voldemort smirked slowly and his crimson-brown eyes flashed in pleasure. "Excellent; things are moving along quite nicely." He nodded to Lucius. "Well done Lucius; I am most proud of you."

"Thank you My Lord," Lucius felt pleased at the praise. "If that is everything my Lord needed me for?"

"You may go Lucius," Voldemort nodded, "Be advised; we will meet again after dinner for a debriefing."

"Yes My Lord," Lucius bowed once again before leaving.

"Your plans are coming to fruition," Snape said as he stood up and walked over to his lover.

"Yes," Voldemort leaned back into his chair and looked at his potions master before reaching out to pull him into his lap. "The tides have just gotten stronger."

After Lucius had left, Remus walked through the stately manor to the main floo and travelled to Potter Manor to visit Harry. He found Harry outside in the garden, reading a book and now and then comparing it with a second one besides him.

"Hello cub, how are you?" Remus greeted his honorary godson.

Harry looked up at the sound of a voice pulling him into reality. With a big smile, he dumped the books on the ground and jumped up, shouting happily, "Moony! You’re back!"

He hugged the older man enthusiastically and then gestured to the chair besides his. "Come, sit down and tell me all about your journey to the wild packs. Do you want tea or something else?"

Remus could only chuckle as he listened to his godson; he was thankful that Harry sometimes acted like the teenager he still was. After he had satisfied Harry’s curiosity about his journey to the werewolf packs, Harry told him about his wish to exact revenge on a certain Undersecretary Dolores Jane Umbridge. When Remus heard for the first time in detail what exactly Umbridge had done to Harry during fifth year, he reacted similar to Voldemort - although for different reasons -
with outrageous anger and assuring Harry that he would gladly help him to pay the toad back all the pain she had caused.

Remus had suffered like all other werewolves under the anti-werewolf legislation that was drafted by Umbridge in 1993. These regulations made it very difficult for people with lycanthropy to find legal employment, thereby forcing them like Remus into poverty. So it was a given that all the other werewolves hated the witch with a passion and would need no persuasion to help in chasing her around and tormenting her, on the contrary.

Remus agreed to leave again on the next day to talk to Fenrir on how to best arrange for the werewolf packs to meet on the night of the next full moon, which would be on Wednesday, August 28th. He was pleased to hear that Voldemort had promised to keep the evening free of any meetings or gatherings, so nothing would interfere with Umbridge’s punishment from the Dark Lord’s end.

Fenrir knew the topography of Britain’s wilderness areas better than Remus did, so he would ask him to choose an adequate spot in a national park; like for example, in Dartmoor, Exmoor, Snowdonia, Brecon Beacons, North Yorkshire Moors, Northumberland, or the Cairngorns. It had to be a remote place, far from any muggle or wizarding settlement and suitable for chasing the toad around a bit, with some grass, heather or open woodland, not too steep and mountainous. Harry himself preferred a place in England or Wales to Scotland, so that Hedwig would not have to transport him, Draco and a possibly struggling Umbridge too far from London.

Harry planned to talk to Draco to ask if he wanted to participate. With Hedwig’s help it should be relatively easy to sneak up on Umbridge in the early evening after work hours, stun and abduct her to a suitable spot. Voldemort had ordered Lucius to supply Harry with detailed intelligence on Umbridge, like how her day was usually organized and where she lived.

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Albus Dumbledore was not a pleased man. Ever since the start of summer, things had gone bad to worse and he had no idea why or how to stop it or make it better; the will reading, the ring, and now, this latest episode with the Governors and Lucius Malfoy. He looked around the room and knew he had to call the meeting to a start.

Since Sirius had left Grimmauld Place to the Malfoy brat, he had had to find a new place to serve as the Headquarters to the Order of the Phoenix; something he was very displeased about. The only place he felt he could have it, other than his office at Hogwarts, was in his brother’s bar. At first glance, it might not sound like a safe idea, but they used the pub whenever Aberforth would have his day off and the pub would be closed to the public—like now.

Sighing, he knew he had to let the members know the latest news, so he stood up. “Silence.”

Immediately all noise ceased and Albus smirked inwardly at the power he held over them.

“Welcome to another Order meeting. Now, before we start, I’m afraid I have some pressing news to pass on.”

“What is it Albus?” Kingsley Shacklebolt asked.

“Two days ago,” Albus started, “I attended a meeting with the Board of Governors, the Minister and Lucius Malfoy.”

“Whatsoever for?” Minerva McGonagall asked as murmurs broke out amongst the others.

“It was apparent that Lucius had requested a meeting with them to discuss my tenure as
Headmaster,” Albus continued on with his explanations. At his words, the murmurs grew louder and angrier.

“They can’t take you from the school!” Molly Weasley screeched out as she moved to her feet, others echoing her statement.

“I am humbled by your faith,” Albus said softly, though inside, he was smirking with delight.

“Albus,” Minerva looked at her long time friend. “They already tried to take you from the school before and we saw how that turned out. They cannot possibly think they will find another Headmaster to rule.”

“Fear not Minerva,” Albus soothed the ruffled feathers. “My position as Headmaster is still very much intact.”

“So the Governors saw reason then?” Arthur asked.

“I’m afraid not,” Albus sighed. “They were well and ready to remove from my post, however they were stopped by Lucius.”

“Are you saying that Lucius Malfoy,” Bill spoke up, “the man that has been out to have you removed from the school for years stood up for you?”

“Yes,” Albus nodded, “however it was not without reason. You see, I was able to retain my position as Headmaster under one condition.”

“And what condition was that?” Molly asked.

“The Governors wanted someone in the school to keep an eye on me,” Albus stated, “They wanted someone they could trust.”

“In what capacity would they be there?” Minerva asked. “And didn’t they learn anything from the deplorable woman Dolores Umbridge?”

“If you recall Minerva,” Albus looked at his friend, “there is but one position at Hogwarts that is open, that of the DADA professor, and yes, they have learned from Dolores.”

“So then,” Minerva started only to blanch as realization hit her. “No, Albus that cannot be.”

“What is it?” Arthur asked as he looked between the two.

“Albus,” Minerva ignored him to stare at her friend. “Tell me I have arrived at the wrong conclusions.”

“I’m afraid I can’t Minerva, for you are right,” Albus looked at her before looking at the room. “As I was saying, they allowed me to remain as Headmaster under the condition they place someone in the school and that someone is none other than Lucius Malfoy.”

“Are you saying,” Bill started.

“Yes William,” Albus nodded, “Lucius Malfoy is the new DADA professor.”

The room fell into a shocked silence. It lasted for a few minutes before once again, Molly Weasley allowed her displeasure to be known.
“They can’t bloody well do that!” Molly screeched. “Lucius Malfoy teaching our children, what were they thinking?!”

Her words were the opening everyone needed to start voicing their own opinions. In a matter of minutes, the room was filled with the loud, overlapping arguments. In the midst of it all, Bill sat with a smirk on his face, listening to everyone; he couldn’t wait to inform his Lord of the reactions to his latest plans.

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It was now the 28th, the day Harry would take his revenge on Dolores Umbridge for the hell she had put him through. Harry and Draco were watching and waiting for their target.

"How long does it take to buy cat treats? It's been at least fifteen minutes," whined Draco, whispering right into Harry’s ear.

Harry just shrugged one shoulder and leaned a bit more into Draco’s embrace; the years spend at the Dursleys had taught him patience. Some things could not be rushed; the toad would come out eventually.

Clad in black, Death Eater attire with hoods covering their telltale hair, silver masks on their faces and hidden under Harry’s Invisibility Cloak, Harry and Draco were keenly watching the entrance to the Magical Menagerie. They stood, pressed tightly against each other – not that one of them complained - right at the corner of the building, in the narrow gap between the pet shop and the Twillfit & Tattings, the next shop, a few paces beyond the steps that led up to the entrance of Gringotts, a large white marble building.

A disillusioned Hedwig perched on the iron banister around the small balcony atop the portal of the Wizarding bank, waiting for her cue to fly down and land on Harry’s shoulder, ready to transport them to the forest clearing where Fenrir, Remus and the three packs would gather. Umbridge’s punishment would be the perfect celebration and bonding activity for the werewolves packs as the new allies of the Dark Lord.

Lucius, Yaxley, McNair, Travers and Selwyn had taken turns to observe Umbridge’s habits, especially her departure schedule in the evenings after work. On the last two Wednesdays, she had left the Atrium of the Ministry at a quarter to six, travelled through the Floo to the Leaky Cauldron and headed up Diagon Alley for the pet shop to buy food and treats for her cat. After that, she often did some other shopping before heading home.

After asking Voldemort for his opinion whether the operation should better be public or covert, Harry decided to stage her abduction here right in front of Gringotts and the pet shop. Because the kidnapping of Slughorn was so quick and successful, he wanted to repeat that action. If everything went as planned, other people shopping in Diagon Alley or in front of Gringotts would only notice two black clad, masked figures for a moment, before they disappeared in a sudden flash, without the typical crack of Apparation. When the Aurors arrived to investigate the incident, the Magical Menagerie’s shopkeeper would perhaps tell the Aurors and any reporters that Madam Umbridge had visited her shop; at least Harry assumed that she would remember Umbridge, because the woman was a regular customer on Wednesday evenings.

This whole mysterious occurrence should confuse and worry the public and the DMLE. If Umbridge did not turn up at work in the front office of the Minister tomorrow morning, it would put the Ministry in a tizzy and on the next day, the Daily Prophet would speculate about public security and why Umbridge had been abducted.
Finally, the door to the pet shop opened accompanied by a bell chiming, and Umbridge came out, carrying a small paper bag decorated with a lilac paw pattern in her hand. She stepped down the two steps to the sidewalk and turned to her left, walking in the direction of Gringotts and the Leaky Cauldron. As soon as she was a pace away from the corner of the shop, Harry pulled the cloak off. The two young men jumped forward, quickly dodging other pedestrians bustling along the street, wands raised with "Stupefy" and "Petrificus Totalus" on their lips. The moment Umbridge noticed the two black clad figures to her left appearing out of nowhere she turned her head, blinking in bewilderment. Before she could pull her wand out or say anything, a stunner and the Body-Bind curse hit her in tandem.

Draco grabbed her stiff form before she toppled to the ground, while Harry threw the invisibility cloak over her and took a tight hold of both of them. A second later, Hedwig landed on Harry’s shoulder and flashed all of them away, leaving a shocked, babbling and frightened crowd of evening shoppers behind, standing around a lost bag of cat food spilling its contents to roll around on the cobblestone street.

~...~

They landed in a clearing surrounded by a loose circle of oak, ash, blackthorn and hazel bushes and some conifer trees. Draco and Harry let go of Umbridge the second their feet touched down and jumped away from her, which caused her to crash onto the rocky ground. Both young men managed to stay on their feet, this landing went better compared to the last time, when they had landed in a tangled heap on the floor of the dungeon together with their captive, Horace Slughorn.

"Hedwig?" Harry looked around for his familiar. A rustling of wings, then he felt her claws digging into his shoulder and her soft feathers near his face. He raised his hand to caress her breast; she nipped him lightly on the fingers to show her affection.

"There you are, well done, that was perfect!" he praised the intelligent bird. Carefully he raised his wand to touch her. "Come, let’s get that charm of you; Finite Incantatem." The air besides him seemed to ripple and a moment later, he could see her body again.

"Beautiful as ever," he cooed. "Do you want to fly around for a while, or do you want to wait here, Hedwig?" She flapped her wings, cuffing him over the head with the tip of her wing while taking to the air.

*I will explore this area, and you should too; prepare yourself for the hunt later!* Hedwig told Harry.

While Harry was busy with Hedwig, Draco cast a summoning charm and deftly caught Madam Umbridge’s wand—which sailed through the air—with his seeker reflexes. Draco smirked at Harry, "That went well, absolutely perfect. Where are we?"

"Yes, that was fun. Hmm, Fenrir said this clearing is somewhere in the middle of Exmoor National Park, when he described the coordinates to Hedwig," Harry answered, while picking up his invisibility cloak from besides Umbridge and folding it into a small package, which he stuffed into a robe pocket.

"Ah, ok, I know where that is. So, where is everybody?" Draco looked around the clearing; they were alone, apart from the witch lying stiff as a board on the partly moss and fern covered ground.

Harry chuckled. "We are quite early; it will take almost two hours until the moon rises, shortly before eight o’clock and sunset is also at seven past eight. Then the werewolves will start to gather here. We can leave her lying there until we come back. Hmm, perhaps better tie her up. Incarcerous!"
Ropes shot out of his wand, wrapping tightly all around the witch. With a swish and flick of his wand, he levitated Umbridge through the fern into a small furrow, half way underneath a blackthorn bush, effectively hiding her from view, scratching her face and clothes quite a bit in the process. Draco noticed a vicious smirk on Harry’s face.

For good measure, he cast silencing and sleeping spells on her, should the stunner or the Body-Bind curse wear off before they were back and a muggle repelling and Notice-me-not charm on the fern surrounding the blackthorn bush, should somebody wander around this forest who was not invited to the later 'celebration'. Satisfied with his preparations, Harry slipped his wand back into the wand holster that was hidden underneath the right sleeve of his black robe.

“So, whatever shall we do to pass the time?” Draco asked him in a teasing voice, stuffing his mask into a pocket.

With a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, Harry walked backwards while also taking of his mask and stuffing it in another pocket. Then he turned around and started to walk down a narrow path through the trees.

“We could always go back to the manor,” he said over his shoulder, his face telling that he didn’t prefer that option. “Or better, let’s explore, get a feel for this area! Fenrir said there are woodlands and heaths and little clearings full of grass, moss and fern, really quite cosy, if one wants to rest and take a nap…” While talking, he had started to jog.

"Ohhh, I didn’t have so much resting in mind. Hey, wait for me!” With a happy shout, Draco followed Harry racing down the path.

~...~

Dolores Umbridge suddenly woke up and had no idea where she was. She felt cold, sore, stiff and battered; her hands and face hurt, as if a cat had scratched her. Touching her face, she felt small cuts and abrasions. How come?

Blinking her eyes and slowly sitting up, she noticed first that she was on a hard, rough, cold surface and that it was getting dark. In the twilight, she noticed some ferns, bushes and tree trunks a couple of yards away. Wherever she was, it was completely silent apart from the sound of leaves rustling. So, she wasn’t in London anymore. But no birdsong sounded above her, weren’t there usually some birds chirping during the twilight hour? Strange.

She sniffed and smelled forest, leaves, moss, nature, but also something else. What was that? It smelled similar to wet dog fur? Confused, she scrambled to her feet and looked around, while quickly patting down her pockets and checking her sleeve. No wand. Her wand was gone! What happened and where was she?

A memory surfaced abruptly; she had just walked out of the Magical Menagerie, when two black clad men with silver masks accosted her, a bright red light had hit her at the same time she felt all her muscles size up and her body stiffen, then darkness – they must have stunned and bound her. Why?

Turning in a full circle, Umbridge’s panicked gaze took in her predicament. She stood in an overgrown clearing in a forest. The sun must have set as the full moon was rising and sending shafts of bright silver light through gaps in the clouds between the trees. A fine drizzle fell down from the sky, it was getting colder and damper by the minute.

Scared, she called out, "Hello? Is there anybody here?"
A movement near the ground between the bushes caught her attention. Shapes moved about, dark shapes, quite large with glowing eyes. Many eyes, and then a low growl resonated all around her. Her frenzied mind put the facts together in a second, because dim or naive she was not. This was a forest, today was a night of the full moon, the growling shapes, that dog like smell – werewolves! A circle of angry werewolves surrounded her! Hear heart couldn't decide whether it should stop beating or jump out of her throat in horror. Terrible memories of the centaur’s assault froze her. This was worse! She tried to Apparate, but nothing happened. She struggled to breathe and find a way out of her rising panic. She decided to do what she always did, demand respect, and try to get back control over the situation.

So she stood straight and prim, raised her chin and took a deep breath before speaking in an imposing tone. "How dare you to take me hostage? Release me at once, you filthy half-breed creatures!"

The words evoked a chorus of hisses and snarls from the trees around her.

“I am Dolores Jane Umbridge from the Ministry of Magic!” She called out towards her audience; perhaps they didn’t know how important she was? “I demand respect! The Department for the Control of Magical Creatures will punish you all harshly for this act of treason. Let me go! Hand over those criminals responsible for abducting me from London to the Ministry to avoid severe punishment for all werewolves. If you let me go at once, I will speak in your favour.”

Loud growls, yelps and snarls answered her as the circle of wolves became clearly visible in the moonlight, as they all stepped forward out of the shade of the trees and bushes onto the clearing. Dolores backed up, but there was nowhere to run; she was surrounded by werewolves.

“You are quite delusional witch, aren’t you?” a gravelly voice called out. “Encircled by all the werewolves of Britain and still you dare to insult us?”

At the same moment, someone pushed from behind, she stumbled to the right.

“How dare you! Let me go!” she screamed hysterically, trying to turn around.

Another shove came out of nowhere; she heard vicious snarling behind, this time though, claws ripped her robe open and deeply scratch her shoulder. It hurt like fire. Blood splattered in a wide arc. A shadow jumped lightning fast towards her from the other side, slashing at her hip, ripping open her robe on that side as well, followed instantly by more burning pain when the claws tore skin and muscle away.

The twin attacks caused her to screech in fear. “Ahh! No! Stop it! How dare you to hurt me, you filth! Go away!”

The incensed werewolves roared and growled at her from all sides, a cacophony of angry voices. They were staring at her, some jumping forward and giving false charges, their jaws open in a sinister way that promised more blood and pain. She stumbled back and forth, trying to evade the sharp teeth snapping at her.

“Shut up!”

“How dare you to call us filth!”

“Fucking Ministry bitch!”

“Now you’ll get your just desserts!”
“You’re the reason I lost my work and now live in a dump!”

“You’re the reason I lost my work and now live in a dump!”

Panic overwhelmed her. They knew who she was and didn’t cower? What should she do? What could she do? Trembling from head to foot, she stood still as her eyes darted around wildly, trying to find a breech in the circle of wolves, a means of escape. She tried again to Apparate, but again, nothing happened. And where was her wand?

“Tsk, tsk, now, where do you plan to go?” the gravelly, growling voice addressed her again from behind. “Our moonlight party has just started.”

Turning around towards the voice, she could barely make out the shape of a tall, broad shouldered man with shaggy hair. His silhouette was half bathed in moonlight, half hidden by the dancing shadows of the trees. How was there suddenly a man among the werewolves? A moment ago there were only werewolves milling around her. Could he change his shape at will? Was that possible?

“Who are you?” she asked the man.

“My name is Fenrir,” he answered smugly.

Dolores gasped in terror. “F-Fen-Fenrir G-G-Greyback?”

He bowed with a sweeping gesture, “The one and only! Can’t say it’s a pleasure to meet you though.”

She gulped and stuttered, shaking like a leaf, “W-what d-d-d-do you w-want?”

Fenrir laughed and the other wolves growled. “What do we want, she asks?”

He grinned at her, flashing his teeth. “Not very sharp are you, Umbitch? Let me remind you; what kind of law did you instigate back in 1993, hmm? Does that ring any bells? No? What about anti-werewolf regulations?”

She blustered back. “That was a very necessary law! Foul half-breed creatures like yourself cannot be allowed—Ahhh…no!”

Fenrir had enough of her foolish words. He jumped at her and punched her in the face and gut.

Dolores wheezed, flew back several yards and hit the ground. She doubled over her face scratched, her hands clutching her stomach, blood drenching her robes from the previous shoulder and hip wounds.

“Silence you fucking bitch!” Fenrir snarled, towering over her hunched form and delivering a kick into her side, causing a rib to crack. Dolores shrieked in pain.

“That law of yours caused nothing but trouble; more prejudice and injustice. All weres and their families suffered and still suffer because of you. You pushed us into poverty,” he explained the obvious to the stupid witch.

She shook her head, eyes wide in fright and stunned disbelief. Never, ever, had she considered that the stupid, smelly werewolves would dare to attack her, to pay her back. Outrageous! She had only wished to protect all the upstanding citizens of the Wizarding World from the foul creatures. Cornelius himself had signed the law!
Fenrir glared at her and snarled, “You know very well that your law made it almost impossible for registered werewolves to find a job and earn a living in a legal way. No more! You’ll get your punishment now and when the Dark wins this way—and make no mistake, we will win—we’ll be free again and can rightfully earn a living like any other witch or wizard. Now get up!”

The plump witch had managed to regain her footing by now, though not without difficulty, totally shell-shocked by the situation. “W-what…but I-I-” she stammered, wiping the blood off her cheeks and nose with a pink handkerchief she had fumbled out of her pocket.

Fenrir stepped closer and Dolores recoiled in mortal fear; she felt dizzy from lack of air and blood loss.

“Now, you run,” he told her in a low voice that dripped with menace, sharp canines bared. All the other werewolves were silent and listened.

“If you manage to reach the border of the forest before midnight, perhaps we’ll let you escape.”

“What? Where am I? How far away is that border? How late is it?” she asked shrilly, shaking with fear as the blood continued dripping from her wounds. “B-but-but I have no wand to defend myself. Give it back!”

“That’s your problem. Run. Now! Take your chance, or we’ll rip you to shreds right here!” Fenrir snarled into her face.

Dolores swallowed, nodded and looked around; to her left, several werewolves backed up and opened up a break, a small gateway in their circle. She started walking in that direction, looking anxiously over her shoulder, just in time to witness Fenrir crouching down and transforming into a mighty, tall wolf once again. Scared, she looked forward and started to jog; she couldn’t run very fast with her high heeled shoes, torn robes and grievous wounds encumbering her movement. The laughter, growling and snarling of the werewolves rose again behind and in front of her.

She stumbled and caught herself before trying to run faster. There were so many! Everywhere, right and left between the trees, stood more and more of the dreadful, filthy animals! She had to get away! There was a patch winding through the trees, so she followed it. Gradually, silence fell around her.

The werewolves didn’t follow her at once, so she dared to feel a tiny flame of hope that she could and would find her way to the end of the trees. The light in the forest was shifting; the moon was bright and full, but sometimes, clouds moved in front of it. A faint drizzle fell on her, which she hadn’t noticed before in her panic. After a few minutes of stumbling and jogging, the trees thinned. Was this already the end of the forest? No…it was only another clearing, so she stumbled on, desperately searching for a new path through the dark trees in front of her.

Suddenly, she heard a howl rising far behind into the otherwise quiet night. Another howl answered from her left, then one from her right. She couldn’t see them, but all at once, she was certain that they would find her, as she was leaving a bloody trail. It was common knowledge that wolves had an excellent sense of smell. If only she had her wand, then she could heal her wounds and clean up the blasted blood!

Now more than desperate, she stopped for a second and flung her high heeled pink pumps away. She would try to run faster in her stockings. Looking back over her shoulder for a second, she could make out several dark shapes followed behind her. ‘Oh no, there they come again!’ flashed across her mind. They howled and growled and then, they divided; some broke off to the side and some continued on after her, snarling and snapping at her feet.
Dolores shrieked and tried to run faster, taking the next path towards the right where, not only did the spaces between the trees seem a bit wider, but more light from the moon shone down between them. The wolves behind her fell back as they slowed down, but she was too panicked to wonder about their unusual behaviour; she just kept running as fast as she could.

All of a sudden, there was another wolf on her right—snarling, snapping at her right hand and leg—and she realized that it had overtaken her to cut off her path. She veered to the left again, only to crash into a branch, but she didn’t let it slow her down.

The werewolves herded her this way and that way, until she was completely out of breath, heart racing like it would burst out of her aching chest any second. She often crashed into bushes and trees in the dark, though it alternated with brightly lit patches in the clearings. The wolves that came close only made false chargers or nipped and scratched at her, creating superficial injuries, but they didn’t try to bring her down in earnest. She was too terrified to realize that they were just playing with their prey—her.

Dolores didn’t know where to turn anymore—crazy with panic—but she kept moving. Abruptly the trees fell back and she stumbled into a moonlit bathed, open landscape. She was out! New and stronger hope flared in her still frantically beating heart. Would they stop pursuing her? She looked over her shoulder for a moment while she kept stumbling over the heather and stone littered ground. Her feet hurt so much; they were bleeding from numerous cuts and her stockings were shredded. She wanted to stop but she couldn’t; why? There were several wolves racing after her out of the trees.

She could see them much better under the unobstructed moonlight and she couldn’t help but wish they would stay under the canopy of the trees. Four of the werewolves that she had spotted were already bounding their way towards her, crossing fierce distances with each powerful leap, their sharp maws growling, snarling and snapping. Their ears were flat against their heads, their snouts crinkled with barely contained fury, their eyes dark with bloodlust.

The terrible sight gave her one last burst of adrenaline. She turned and scrambled up a slope as fast as she could. The werewolves chased her over the rising ground. Wheezing for breath, she stopped in the middle of the flat space on the hilltop. Her chest ached, her heart beat furiously against her cracked ribs, and it hurt so much everywhere; inside, outside and her feet. Her knees buckled as she just couldn’t stand or move anymore. She was dirty, bruised and bloodied. Any second now, she expected to feel the sharp bites of their jaws and their foul breath. She closed her eyes and crouched low on the ground, her arms over head, whimpering in fright.

After what seemed like hours, she realized that nothing was happening. Confused and scared, she looked up again. The werewolves had stopped a few meters away from her and sat down on their haunches, their yellow eyes fixed on her and tongues lolling out of their mouths. Watching in horror, she observed as the rest of the werewolves ran out of the shelter of the forest. Strangely, they didn’t attack straightforward, despite the fact that she was completely helpless, instead, they formed a wide circle—several rows thick—around her, keeping their distance, yet effectively cornering her in that spot.

It was terrifying and horrific sight. She had had no idea that there were so many werewolves in Britain; it looked like hundreds of them—much more than the number the Ministry had registered. She was drawn out of her musings when the wolves started howling again. It was a swelling and ebbing of sound all around her which caused every hair on her neck to stand up and her skin to wrinkle like gooseflesh. She shivered, trembled and whimpered from fear and exhaustion. She just couldn’t figure out what exactly they were waiting for. As if they heard her thoughts, the howling ceased abruptly.
A movement below the clouds and a soft, rushing, flapping sound from above had her looking towards the sky. Dark shapes flew from the forest towards her; they hovered a moment and then swooped around the hill she was kneeling on. Something glittered amongst the darkness, but she couldn’t make out whether or not it was a knife or a badge. After a few seconds, she did.

‘Brooms; these are humans, wizards, on brooms!’ the thought was exhilarating. ‘Perhaps they’re Aurors, surely they will help me?’

“Help! Help me, please! They are werewolves! Help me!” she called out.

The dark shadows rushed through the air and landed at the foot of the hill she was kneeling on.

‘Hmm, that looks like two cloaked wizards with brooms,’ she thought. ‘But, what about the third? I can’t see any broom. Perhaps he shrunk it real fast?’ Dolores was confused; nobody could fly like that without a broom…could they?

Again, she cried out as loud as she could. “Take heed, there are werewolves! A lot of them! Help me! I can’t get away! I lost my wand…please! Help me!”

She squinted and tried to see the dark shapes clearly, but it was difficult to make them out, although the moon was hanging high in the sky by now and bathing the heath covered ground in white light. The drizzle had stopped and there were much fewer clouds in the sky.

She didn’t understand. What were the wizards doing? Why didn’t they draw their wands and start hexing and cursing the werewolves? Dolores had caught her breath halfway by now and struggled to stand up so that she could see the circle of werewolves, and the advancing wizards below, better. In her mind, they had to be men, wizards, what else could the human shapes be?

The three men in black cloaks were walking, no, gliding, up the hill towards her. The werewolves moved to the side on their own, opening up a straight path towards the hilltop. It was very strange. It almost seemed as if the werewolves ducked down in submission when the wizards moved passed them. Dolores couldn’t make sense of what her eyes told her and she gaped at them. When they came closer to her, she noticed that the taller one was walking in front and the other two smaller ones were positioned a step behind and to the left and right of him like guards or escorts. They all were black cloaks with a hood; the two behind had silver masks on their faces while the one in front wore just a cowl, so that his face was also hidden.

Dolores did not want to acknowledge who they seemed to be. Her frenzied mind supplied the answer still. ‘Death Eaters!’ Hooded black cloaks, white or silver masks, disguising all identifying features—these were the outfit of the Death Eaters, You Know Who’s followers; the terrifying, cruel soldiers of the Dark side.

‘No…that’s not possible…or is it?’ the thought whispered in her mind. She remembered that someone in clothes and silver masks just like these two had attacked her in Diagon Alley. But, if they were Death Eaters, then why would they kidnap her? She was not known as a supporter of Dumbledore. Wouldn’t purebloods despise werewolves and help a fellow wizard or witch?

The cloaked men had reached the hilltop during her mental raving and had stopped a few paces from her. Dolores still couldn’t make out their features, but she did notice how utterly silent the night had become; the wolves weren’t snarling, howling, barking or making any of the noises they had made earlier. She stared up at the tall man in front and red eyes gleamed at her from under the cowl.

“Please, please help me,” she begged him. “You…you are wizards, are you not? Please, have
A sudden burst of magic hit her and her legs instantly gave out, causing her to drop to her knees; she barely caught herself with her wound-filled hands. She winced in pain and looked up.

The smaller man on the right stepped forward and spoke. "We are wizards indeed, but why should we help you? Did you show mercy when you had the power to humiliate and hurt me and others?"

Dolores gaped at him; the voice sounded male and young and yet, she couldn’t figure out who it was.

"No, you enjoyed torturing me," the young man snarled. "You vicious, bloody toad!"

"W-what?" she stammered out, utterly confused and taken aback by the accusation. "What are you talking about? I didn’t torture anybody. This must be a misunderstanding. You are obviously confusing me with someone else. I am Dolores Jan Umbridge from the Ministry of Magic. Who are you, sir?"

The man chuckled, but it wasn’t in a friendly manner. "Oh, I know exactly who you are alright. I’m Harry Potter. It’s a pleasure to meet you again Madam Umbridge," he sneered in a mocking tone.

"Potter? That’s impossible, you are lying!"

Harry stepped closer to her and removed his hood and mask, revealing his face to her. She was shocked at his appearance; he no longer wore glasses and he wasn’t as scrawny and thin faced as when she had last seen him. But the trademark raven-coloured hair and green eyes—that narrowed at her—left no doubt that this truly was the face of Harry Potter.

"P-Potter, Potter, no, but--" the confused witch on the ground choked out. Panic seized her heart and throat and seemed to squeeze her like an iron fist. ‘What is Potter doing here, in these clothes? It’s impossible.’ She thought frantically. ‘Am I dreaming? Did one of them cast a Confundus charm on me?’

"I always get even Umbitch," Harry spat at her. "I haven’t forgotten you. How could I ever forget what you did? You sent Dementors after me last summer; they almost killed me and my cousin. Fortunately, I can cast a Patronus! Because you didn’t believe that the Dark Lord was back, you forced me to write hours on end with a blood quill in detention. That amounts to torture, alright. You wanted to cast Crucio on me and use Veritaserum on me…a student! You kept me from my godfather until it was too late and now, now he is dead! So, you will pay and you’ll pay today!"

The short speech scared and bewildered her even more; Dolores didn’t want to believe her eyes and ears. Potter wanted revenge for last year? Was he the one that abducted her from Diagon Alley? How was this possible? Harry Potter was supposed to live in the muggle world during the summer; he couldn’t do any magic without alerting the Ministry. And, did he just talk about You-Know-Who by the very name only the Death Eaters and Dark side supporters used? She had to have misheard him; Potter was Dumbledore’s man, that’s what everyone in the Ministry of Magic believed.

“But Potter, how-what are you…?” she started to ask. Then, righteous anger overwhelmed her and she cried out, “You little brat! You deserved every one of your punishments last year. You always disrupted my classes with your cock and bull stories!”

Harry’s face looked murderous. “Shut up, you fucking bitch!” he growled at her.

But, Dolores was so shocked and confused that she didn’t heed him. Instead, her attention turned to
how Potter and the other two figures looked and felt like. She couldn’t sense any magical aura from them and it never once occurred to her deluded mind that they were hiding their powers. Instead, she concluded that the Boy-Who-Lived had come with his two sidekicks, all of them mediocre, weak students who disguised themselves as Death Eaters to frighten her. She had already forgotten about how the werewolves had acted a few minutes before.

“What are you doing here in this getup, posing as Death Eaters? Is this a Gryffindor or Weasley prank? It’s not funny at all!” she screeched.

Harry grinned to himself, wondering if she was really that dumb. He could feel that Voldemort and Draco had bristled in anger for several minutes, but seeing as how they had previously planned this encounter, they kept it hidden. For the moment, the show was all Harry’s.

“Now, stop this masquerade and help me to get away from these werewolves,” Dolores suddenly demanded in her prim High Inquisitor voice that Harry and Draco remembered from last year. “You’re supposed to be the Golden Boy; the Chosen One; the Saviour. Not consorting with filthy animals.”

Harry and the other two men smirked at each other and then they started to sneer and laugh at her, the woman was out of her mind; this was beyond hilarious. The werewolves though, fell into a chorus of low growls and snarls upon hearing her call them filthy animals.

“Now you see me as the Saviour?” Harry snorted in amusement before he turned deadly serious in the blink of an eye. “Well guess what Umbitch? You’re too late. I’m no longer anyone’s saviour, but you, you can think of me as the Dark Angel.”

The declaration was done proudly, with the promise of pain and death blazing in his Slytherin green eyes and a vicious snarl showing his eyeteeth. Then, he stepped back two paces until he was at the side of the taller man again.

Dolores shuddered, gulped, blinked and even rubbed her eyes, as if all this was a hallucination or a bad dream. It couldn’t be reality as that concept was far too horrible for her mind to grasp. Potter couldn’t simply have power over her like this! She tried to stand up, but her legs still were like jelly.

‘Ooh, perhaps one of them cast the Jelly-Legs hex on me? No matter, I’ll get out of here and then, Potter will end up in Azkaban...where he should’ve been all along!’ The triumphant thought echoed through her mind.

She looked at the taller, heavily cloaked person standing next to Potter. She wondered if it was one of his friends, one of the red heads—a Weasley. Whoever this was, the man or boy hadn’t spoken so far. The face was indiscernible, hidden in deep shadows, only gleaming red eyes watched her.

‘No doubt some glamour or some trick of those Weasley twins,’ she assumed mentally.

“Who are you? Weasley, right?” the plump witch yelled at him. “You’ll be in so much trouble boy, for helping Potter!”

This finally caused a reaction, but it was not the one she had wished for.

A wave of fierce, dark magic slammed into her, crushing her mercilessly to the ground. She knew for certain now that the man was no Weasley, but a Dark wizard—for it could only be a dark wizard wielding such power that glided towards her. A second later, she was forcefully pulled up into the air by invisible manacles around her wrists. Dolores shrieked in pure terror, kicking out with her legs as she tried to find a purchase on the ground below, but it was useless; she was dangling.
helplessly in the air. Just who was this man?

Harry watched the scene unfolding before him cackling with glee inside his mind. Oh Umbitch would get the shock of her life. Voldemort had decided to use a glamour for this occasion as nearly all British werewolves were assembled here.

The cloaked and hooded man reached up and pulled his cowl down with one hand, while the other pointed a wand at her.

“You foolissssh woman!” a high, cold voice hissed at her.

Dolores was petrified from horror; her eyes and mouth bulging open but she couldn’t make a sound. Before her stood a tall man, cloaked in swirling, moving darkness, with white skin, a bald head and a face that was barely human with snakelike features; a flat nose, slits for nostrils and red eyes, whose pupils were slits—like a cat’s—gleamed still more brightly through the darkness. Dark power was rolling off of him in waves, shaking and suffocating her.

‘This must be Him; He-Who-Must-Not-B-Named! Oh Merlin and Morgana, I’m such a fool!’ Dolores realized in a flash of clarity within her confusion. She was really in deep, deep trouble.

“Formica Innumerussss!” Voldemort hissed with a vicious smirk, deliberately speaking the incantation out loud for the benefit of his two young companions so that they could learn a new dark curse and observe its effects over time.

“Ahhhh! No, get them off me! Nooo!” Dolores wailed when her skin was suddenly swarmed by black and red ants. They were everywhere, biting, stinging, and crawling over her body. How disgusting! They thronged between her breasts and legs; they climbed over each other from her shoulders up her neck, onto her head and scrambled into her hair, eyes, ears, nostrils and mouth. She shook like crazy, jerking and twisting her body, in a desperate attempt to get them away or to shake them off, all the while shrieking incoherently, only to find that the ants would crawl into her open mouth every time they could. She spat some out, sneezing and coughing; they were already clogging the insides of her nasal passages and wandering down her throat. Wherever they clambered or ran over her skin, their acid burned like fire.

Harry and Draco watched interested and chuckled at the vile woman’s predicament.

Voldemort ended the curse after a few minutes when Dolores’ face had turned from red to blue; it appeared she was choking on the flood of tiny insects. The hysterical woman was in no state to listen or understand anything.

He looked over to Harry and commanded. “Clean her up.”

Harry hurried to comply; a few Scourgifies got rid of the remaining ants on her head and torso, while Anapneo cleared her airway from blockage, so she could breathe again. Looking closely at her, he noted that she was quite a mess; her clothes were torn and hanging in tatters, the exposed skin was inflamed, her face was swollen red and blotchy, her eyes were nearly swollen shut from the ants’ acid, blood was dripping down from the previous scratches and wounds, and through all that, she was still sobbing and hiccupping.

‘The ugly toad, she deserves this,’ thought Harry when he went a few paces back to stand again next to Draco.

“Madam Umbridge?” Voldemort spoke. “Stop the snivelling and listen, would you?” She didn’t stop her crying or look up towards Voldemort, which was a big mistake; he hated people...
who cried, especially for no reason. A quick and voiceless ‘Crucio’ from him got her attention as she screamed like a slaughtered pig, even though he only held her under the curse for a mere thirty seconds. What a disgustingly weak witch.

With difficulty, she addressed him in a quivering voice. “Y-Yes sir?”

“Madam Umbridge, this is no Weasley prank at all,” he started, “Do you know who I am? Do you understand why you are in this position?”

Dolores shuddered and quaked uncontrollably, hanging with her arms pulled above her in invisible chains, breathing with difficulty due to the constriction of her chest. She struggled to formulate a response.

“I-I apologize. You must be…He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. I’m so, so sorry I did…not…recognize your Lordship…as I should have,” Dolores croaked out in between gasps for air.

“Your apology is too late and meaningless. Lord Voldemort does not allow anyone to hurt or touch what is his. Precisely what did you think you were doing last year, hmm?” he growled at her, stalking in a circle to inspect her pitiful, unattractive form. Harry and Draco stayed a few paces away and waited.

“What do you mean? H-How did I offend your Lordship?” she asked, ending in a whimper of fear. “W-w-whatever it was, I didn’t—I didn’t mean to!”

“Do not lie to me!” Voldemort snarled, incensed at her. “You meant it! You dared to attack the Boy-Who-Lived!”

Dolores recoiled as if he had punched her, her eyes widening as far as possible. Her face paled dramatically. She was scared and confused; she didn’t understand why he would speak that way. After all, he hated Harry Potter, didn’t he? But then, what was Potter doing there and with him?

Her meandering thoughts were rudely interrupted when a burning hex slashed across her abdomen. She screamed and fixed her eyes once more on the darkest wizard of them all, showing him that she was eager to listen.

“You sent those Dementors to Little Whinging. They could have killed him! You tortured him last year under the pretence of detentions! Harry Potter was always under my protection. He was always mine—enemy or ally—and you dared to endanger and hurt him,” Voldemort spoke. “You tried to kill him when he was MINE to kill!”

Dolores gaped at him; this was madness!

Voldemort looked at her calculatingly. “You did not believe him when he said I was back, didn’t you? Why should Harry lie about something like that? Foolish woman. Your time is up, now you will pay for your crimes!”

Taking a few steps back towards Draco and Harry, Voldemort cast a wandless ‘Sonorus’ on himself before addressing Umbridge and their audience.

“My friends, the werewolves,” he turned around with a sweeping gesture, indicating the circles of werewolves surrounding the hilltop, “they have an old, justified grudge against you. That Werewolf Regulation Act from 1993 has caused them much difficulties and suffering. When we overtake the Ministry, this law will be declared naught and void, so that these wizards and witches can return to their old homes and lives, work their crafts and reopen their shops.”
At this declaration, a loud cheer went up; a cacophony of howls, barks and joyous shouts, because some of the werewolves had changed back to human form.

Voldemort, Harry and Draco looked around and smiled viciously.

Dolores whimpered in fear as she realized she would not get away anymore; she would die this late summer’s night under the bright white light of the full moon. The werewolves wanted her blood and they had allied themselves to You-Know-Who. Harry Potter, the Chosen One, was standing beside Him and Potter was not a prisoner of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Name, but rather, the young man was clothed like a Death Eater and he had his wand.

It was the end of the Light side, of the Ministry and Dumbledore. But neither knew it and she couldn’t tell anyone because she was hanging here helpless in invisible chains. Trembling like a leaf in the storm, she looked over to the three wizards and realized that they were suddenly farther away. Why had they backed up so much during You-Know-Who’s short speech to the Werewolves? They were now standing nearly at the brink of the steep slope, leaving a lot of free space between her and them.

A howl rent the night air.

Voldemort nodded at Harry, who raised his arm high up in the air.

The werewolves of Britain fixed their yellow eyes on the Boy-Who-Lived standing next to the Dark Lord on the lonely heath covered hilltop in the midst of Exmoor Park under the velvety moon and starlit late summer night sky. This was a special night for all of them; the night of celebration of the new alliance between them. Nothing would stand in their path. They were many, and they were strong.

Harry looked at Umbridge, smirking and enjoying the terror in her face and in her voice as she screamed shrilly. “No! Potter! Please! Don’t!” it was the purest music to his ears. Letting his dark magic flare around him, he slashed his arm down, his wand shooting out a shower of red, gold, silver and green sparks.

Draco shivered in awe from Harry’s display of dark power; his lover looked gorgeous.

Dolores shook in dread, screeching a last, “Nooo!” towards the heavens.

Upon this signal, the mass of werewolves surged forwards, racing upwards; jumping, snarling, snapping, biting and clawing at the bound witch. Umbridge was torn to pieces alive and her frenzied shrieks rent the air.

After a while, Voldemort let his Dark magic surge forward. When they felt that, the werewolves cowered and reluctantly let go of Umbridge. Barely alive, she opened and closed her eyes, moaning and wheezing, bloody foam gurgling out of her mouth, rivers of blood spurt ing out of the shredded, torn stumps of her arms and legs. She was a complete and utter mess, lying on the blood, piss and shit soaked ground. The remainder of her shivering body covered in blood and gore, dripping out of the deep gashes in her chest and abdomen, entrails sloshing and curling half inside, half outside, ripped apart.

Voldemort, Harry and Draco stepped forward to inspect her, but Draco shuddered and quickly turned around, fighting not to vomit as he hurried away; he didn’t need to look any closer.

Harry shook his head at his boyfriend’s squeamishness and shared a look with Voldemort. It was truly a gruesome sight, the barest remains of the once human woman. The werewolves had drawn
and quartered her alright; it was quite a medieval form of execution, which Harry and Voldemort found totally appropriate for the vile witch. She would be dead in a minute from the blood loss.

With a quick ‘Petrificus Totalus’ Harry rendered her torso and head unable to move. Another flick, levitated her up into a comfortable height for what he intended to do next. He moved the torso a few feet to the side, so that they would not have to step into the mess on the ground.

The Dark Lord stepped up besides Harry and tapped his wand onto Umbridge’s forehead for a moment, while hissing an incantation under his breath. A moment later, a smaller, simpler version of the Dark Mark was branded into her skin, the skull covering her forehead and the snake slithering down out of its mouth, down her nose and into her bloody mouth and back again to form the symbol of infinity.

Harry admired the snake; it looked quite realistic for a tattoo. It undulated in a disturbing fashion on the ruined face, which appeared frozen in a grimace of terror and agony. He glanced at Voldemort and asked, “Will the tattoo continue to move even when she’s dead?”

“No, this is no true Dark Mark, only a copy,” explained the Dark Lord.

“Oh,” Harry nodded, “ok.”

Voldemort nodded to him and stepped back; his part in the preparation was finished. He intended to use the opportunity to speak with Fenrir and the other werewolf clan leaders.

Out of a pocket of his robe, Harry pulled a quill. Careful to not get any of her disgusting blood or intestines on his clothes if he could avoid it, he bent over Umbridge’s hovering form. On her face, from left chin up over her cheek, nose and over the right cheek, he wrote a short message to the wizarding world using her blood:

This vile woman was punished because of her crimes against children and werewolves.

While Harry mentally maintained control of the levitation spell, he used his wand to change the thin bloody letters into thicker lines with a few taps, shimmering in dark red, black and green, so that they were better to read upon the injured, flaky skin. Another tap with a burst of magic fixed them permanently.

The journalists and Aurors were supposed to be able to read it in a few days. Voldemort and he had planned that Umbridge’s head should still be recognizable, to be found in the early morning on September second in the front of the Daily Prophet in Diagon Alley—a Death Eater would deliver it on time—branded with the Dark Mark and inscribed with their message.

Umbridge’s frozen, panicked eyes were duller now, rapidly losing any expression. She didn’t wheeze so loud anymore. The blood and bloody foam was not gushing, merely dripping down from her many wounds. She was dying in agony, just like they had wished.

Harry took a half step back and aimed his wand at her neck. He gathered his magic and with a brisk, slashing motion—as if he wielded a sword—he incanted, “Sectumsempra!” effectively beheading her. The severed head would have fallen to the ground had he not quickly grabbed it by the hair with his left hand.

“Ugh, that’s so gross,” Harry said before he levitated the corpse a few feet away and let it hit the ground with a loud, squelching sound in the middle of the pool of blood. Then, he twirled his wand around to conjure up a black sack into which he gingerly stuffed the toad’s head. An Impervius Charm later and he had an effective means of transportation, one which wouldn’t leave blood
While Voldemort was standing down at the foot of the hill, still talking with Fenrir and the other clan leaders, Harry looked around in search of Draco. He was looking forward to a nice shower, a glass of something stronger than butterbeer and then a comfortable rest wrapped around his boyfriend; but first, he needed to find him. A moment later, he spotted the blond standing a couple of yards away on the side of the hill with his own mask removed and looking out over the moonlit moor. Fortunately for Draco—and the wolves—he was left alone as the werewolves paid him no mind. Carefully placing the sack on the ground, Harry made his way over to his boyfriend.

“Are you ok?” he asked when he was standing in front of him.

“T’m fine,” Draco nodded, “I’ve never seen anything so gruesome in my life, so I was understandably caught off guard.”

“Fancy way for saying you puked ‘cause you were squeamish,” Harry grinned.

“I am not squeamish!” Draco straightened up and looked at him with narrowed eyes.

“You were just caught off guard,” Harry teased.

“Exactly,” Draco huffed, slightly frustrated at the dark haired teen’s teasing.

“I’m just messing with you,” Harry smiled and placed his arms around Draco’s waist, drawing the boy closer. “How do you really feel?”

“I know,” Draco rested his head on Harry’s shoulder. “If you’re asking if I’m bothered by what you did tonight, then no, I’m not. If the way you tortured Gibbons at the beginning of summer didn’t turn my mind from you, what makes you think what happened here tonight would? Besides, the bitch deserved it for how she treated you. If it wasn’t the fact that this was your revenge, I would’ve helped you curse her.” He lifted his head and looked at Harry, his grey eyes searching the green ones. “I had no idea she had done all those things to you.”

“I know you didn’t,” Harry replied. “I never blamed you for it; not even when you joined her squad.”

“Good,” Draco smiled in relief. “I’m glad.”

Harry kissed him and it was full with so much passion and heat that when they pulled back, both boys’ eyes had darkened slightly and they were panting a bit.

“Let’s go before I take you here and now,” Harry whispered against Draco’s lips before capturing them in another kiss, this one shorter.

“Ok,” Draco nodded.

Harry stepped back before grabbing Draco’s hand in his and walking over to where Umbridge’s body and head were. Casting a levitation charm, the head floated in front of the two wizards as they made their way to where the Dark Lord and everyone else were.

“I trust it is finished,” Voldemort said when they stopped a few feet away.

“Yes My Lord,” Harry inclined his head in a slight bow.

“Very well,” Voldemort nodded before turning back to Fenrir and the other leaders. “We will
continue with our discussion at a more appropriate time. This is your night, so enjoy it.”

“Thank you my Lord,” Fenrir bowed. “And we will.”

Voldemort nodded once more before turning back to Harry and Draco. “Let us depart.”

Voldemort apparated away while Harry and Draco summoned and mounted their brooms once more, before the two young wizards took off into the sky. They didn’t want to disclose the secret that Hedwig, a white phoenix, had bonded to Harry to all these werewolves, so the boys planned to fly until they were about a mile away, before Hedwig would meet them and flash them back to Potter Manor. There, they would spend the rest of the night relaxing and relishing in the success of their mission.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: here is the link to the continuation of Harry and Voldemort’s talk. it was written by Tonks-is-Cool and I apologize for this part not being uploaded to this site. Just Talking? Shattered Illusions of Safety IV
Making an Entrance Part Two: Surprises at School

Chapter Notes

A/N: hey guys…it's been a long while, but the new chapter is here now! Really sorry for the wait; I was busy with school, but now I'm not anymore...yay me! so, enjoy...

Disclaimer: I own nothing…if I did, Ginny would have died in the CoS, Dumbledore would have choked on his lemon drops and Harry would have stood up for himself against Molly and Dumbledore.

Disclaimer 2: this story is based on characters and situations created and owned by JK Rowling and Bloomsbury/Scholastic. No money is being made and no copyright or trademark infringement is intended.

"Talking"
'Thinking'
|Hedwig's mental speak|
\Harry's mental speak\
Letter or commentary/introduction and flashback
{Parsseltongue}
~…~ indicates scene change

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Last time on RDA;

...Voldemort apparated away while Harry and Draco summoned and mounted their brooms once more, before the two young wizards took off into the sky. They didn’t want to disclose the secret that Hedwig, a white phoenix, had bonded to Harry to all these werewolves, so the boys planned to fly until they were about a mile away, before Hedwig would meet them and flash them back to Potter Manor. There, they would spend the rest of the night relaxing and relishing in the success of their mission.

True to his words, Harry and Draco had spent the night relaxing. The next day, the morning of August twenty-ninth dawned quietly; the sunlight flittered through windows, slowly waking the occupants of Potter Manor.

Harry was the first to wake up, being how he was always a light sleeper, and instead of moving, he turned his head slightly to look down at the blond laying on his chest. The past few months seemed surreal at times, but he was beyond thankful that they had happened. He had everything he could hope for and more; he was finally free to be his true self, he was no longer required to be a pawn of Dumbledore, he had his friends—his true friends—and now, now, he had the one person he’d always wanted by his side.

Brushing a lock of hair from Draco’s face, Harry smiled softly; he still couldn’t believe he had him. He had known that the blond had liked him, but he hadn’t been too sure of the depth of his feelings, but now he knew; Draco loved him as much as he loved Draco.

As if sensing his musings, Draco stirred; he shifted around for a few seconds before he slowly
opened his eyes and when he saw Harry looking down at him, he smiled.

“Morning.” Draco greeted sleepily.

“Hey,” Harry smiled.

“What time is it?” Draco rubbed the sleep from his eyes as he shifted against Harry.

Casting a quick *Tempus*, Harry looked at Draco. “Just a bit after seven.”

“Oh,” Draco said before he snuggled back into Harry. “Then I’m going back to sleep.”

“Draco,” Harry laughed, “you have to get up. And you know how long you take to get ready.”

“I know,” Draco grumbled as he sat up, allowing Harry to do the same. “Perfection can’t be rushed Harry.”

“Yeah yeah,” Harry grinned before casting a temporary breath freshening charm on the both of them before pulling Draco to straddle his lap. “Now, for my proper good morning.”

“Finally,” Draco smacked his lips, his mouth tingling at the minty flavour of the charm before he smiled at Harry.

Harry chuckled before drawing the blond closer, claiming his lips in a kiss; his tongue teased along Draco’s bottom lip, imploring the blond to open, and when he did, his own tongue darted inside, mapping out the contours of the blond’s mouth.

Draco reached up to wrap his arms around Harry’s neck, as he shifted closer without even breaking the kiss. His movement made him aware of the quickly hardening situation beneath him and he smiled into the kiss as he rocked forcefully on his boyfriend’s lap.

Harry moaned when he felt the stimulation against his groin and his own hips rocked back against Draco’s; his cock was hardening as desire and lust moved hotly through his veins like lava. One of his hands drifted up to tangle in Draco’s hair while the other drifted over the blond’s body, settling on his arse and squeezing it rhythmically, silently encouraging the movement.

The kiss became more passionate as the heat rose between the two. Draco tore his lips from Harry’s, breathing harshly. He moaned and tilted his head when he felt Harry’s lips against his throat; his hips bucked and a louder moan escaped him when Harry sucked on the spot where his neck met his collar bone, it was one of his pleasure zones. He could feel his boxers dampen as pre-cum dripped from his member and he rocked faster against Harry.

“Your taste so good,” Harry groaned against Draco’s neck, his hand moving from Draco’s arse to his hips as he pushed them down while pushing his own up. *[Want you ssso bad...]*

“FUCK!” the expletive burst from Draco’s mouth as he frotted against Harry. He really loved hearing his boyfriend speaking that language; it was the most erotic thing he ever heard.

Harry growled as he flipped them over, settling between Draco’s legs as they went around his waist. He ducked his head to kiss Draco, pouring all his love and desire into it before drawing away. Nipping at Draco’s neck, he made his way down Draco’s body, licking and nibbling the slightly salty skin; he stopped at his nipples, sucking at each before gently biting them only to repeat the motion over drawing the most erotic cries from the blond.

“Merlin...Harry!” Draco felt himself fast sinking into an abyss of pleasure; his body felt like an
instrument, one that Harry played perfectly. His hands moved to grab on to his lover’s shoulders, tightening reflexively with each swipe of Harry’s tongue across his nipples.

Harry grinned against Draco’s skin as he moved downwards, his tongue tracing a hot path on the blond’s stomach; when he got to Draco’s bellybutton, he circled his tongue in and around, causing his lover to gasp as his muscles moved reflexively. He continued until he got to the top of the boxers and he paused, looking up into Draco’s lust darkened eyes asking silently for permission to continue.

When he felt Harry’s hands on his boxers, Draco felt anticipation rise in him; finally, it was going to happen. He had been going insane with lust and want and need ever since that day in Harry’s bedroom at Privet Drive, and they were finally succumbing to it. He felt Harry pause and he looked down, knowing his grey eyes would be dark from the pleasure. Seeing the question there, he didn’t even hesitate to nod.

Smiling briefly, Harry turned his attention back to the boxers and slowly pulled them down, kissing Draco’s body every time flesh was exposed. Soon enough, the boxers were gone, and Draco was left lying in the nude. Harry’s emerald eyes—which had been slightly darker—darkened even further, until they resembled two black pools of pure, unadulterated desire as he took in the mouth-watering sight of his love; hair tousled from his sleep and their activities, his grey eyes almost black with pleasure, his breaths coming in pants as his chest heaved, cock hardened, the tip purple from the extent of the blond’s desire...to Harry, Draco was the embodiment of perfection.

[Ssso beautiful] Harry hissed, grinning darkly when he saw the blond shiver and arch his back in lust. “I want to suck your cock Drake.”

Draco moaned as he twisted in the sheets.

“Can I?” Harry gave a swift lick down the length of the cock and back. “Please?”

“Do it,” Draco’s eyes opened into slits as he looked at his lover.

Harry’s grin was feral. “I’m going to make you cum so hard.”

“Please...please,” Harry’s words only served to fuel the already out of control yearning burning through Draco; he didn’t care that he was pleading and that Malfoys didn’t plead. This was his boyfriend, the one he loved, the one he trusted.

Harry bent down and kissed Draco’s knee, slowly making his way to the prize that lay between the blond’s legs surrounded by a bed of moonlit-coloured curls. He placed both hands on the blond’s thighs and he licked a slow trail from the base of the weeping organ to the top where he dipped his tongue into the slit, tasting the pre-cum that had gathered there. He ran his tongue around and under the mushroomed head, going back to dip into the slit, before moving downwards placing open-mouth kisses as he went.

He’d never done this before, but he was determined that Draco would enjoy it. He traced a vein, licking around the length as he shifted to suck at the sacs located beneath; his tongue teased the perineum and he grinned when Draco near shot off the bed at the sensation; his hands moved from their position to hold Draco’s hips steady.

Draco writhed on the bed in pleasure as his hand fisted in the sheets; his whole body felt overloaded...he could die from the pure pleasure he was experiencing. His body became slick with sweat, dampening the sheets below him as he moved. His hand untangled from the spread and he grabbed onto Harry’s head, tangling his hands in the raven coloured locks. They tightened and his eyes flew open when he felt Harry’s tongue on that spot between his arse and his cock.
“Harry!” the name came out on a strangled gasp.

Harry moved back to the cock; he loved tasting it and his mouth watered at the thought of taking it in his mouth. He sucked, licked, kissed and nipped his way over the length, driving his boyfriend up the wall as his ecstasy increased until the blond couldn’t handle it anymore.

“Harry,” Draco looked down at his lover, his eyes cloudy from his desire. The teasing from the brunet was sensory overload as the anticipation of feeling the glorious mouth on his cock was becoming too much for him; he had to feel that wet heat around his cock. “If you don’t suck me now, you will regret—FUCKING MERLIN’S BALLS!” the words exploded from him as his cock was suddenly enveloped in a hot, wet heat.

Harry wrapped a hand around the base of Draco’s cock; one to stop the blond from cumming too soon and two, to anchor himself. His head bobbed slightly as he took in more of glorious length. Draco wasn’t the only one feeling pleasure; the feel of the silky smooth, yet hardened cock in his mouth was beyond anything he ever felt. The taste exploded on his tongue; it was slightly strange—nothing like anything he’d ever tasted—but somehow it still tasted of Draco, so he moaned in appreciation and lust.

He was a bit too enthusiastic and he felt the blond’s cock hit the back of his throat and his gag reflex kicked in, so he pulled back a bit before he hollowed his cheeks and sucked hard, pulling a scream of pleasure from Draco as the blond shot upwards.

Draco had been reduced to state of incoherent babbling. Everything felt too much yet he didn’t want it to stop. Harry’s mouth on his cock was beyond his wildest dreams; he could feel his balls tightening up as his orgasm started building. He tried pushing at the brunet’s head, but he didn’t stop or slow down, if anything he increased his sucking and Draco fell back on the bed, giving himself up to the rising orgasm.

Moving his other hand up, Harry fondled Draco’s balls, kneading them as he sucked his cock. He felt Draco pushing at his head, trying to tell him he was close, but he didn’t stop; he wanted the blond to cum in his mouth...he wanted to taste him. Bringing the hand that was around the blond’s cock into play, he moved it up and down, pumping him in time to his sucks. Pressing his thumb lightly against the perineum, he gave a particularly hard suck on the head before he pulled back.

“Look at me Draco,” he commanded, his voice slightly hoarse from his oral stimulation and his lust for the blond.

Hearing the raw need in Harry’s voice, Draco couldn’t help but to obey; he looked down into the lust filled eyes of his boyfriend and he moaned wantonly.

When he had the blond’s attention, Harry placed his mouth directly above the head of his cock. *Cum for me my Dragon; give me your essence* he dropped his mouth on the cock and sucked harshly as his hand made a corkscrew motion at the base; the Parseltongue and the movements were enough to send Draco over.

“HARRY!” Draco’s back arched dangerously, his hands tightened in Harry’s hair, his mouth open in a scream as he exploded in Harry’s waiting mouth, cumming harder than he ever had.

At the first taste of the blond’s cum, Harry noted it was salty with a slight bitter taste and something else that seemed uniquely Draco, but he was determined to have all of his lover, so he worked his throat to allow the cum to slide down his throat as he swallowed. He sucked the slowly deflating cock softly, milking it of the last drop. When he was done, he pulled off with a soft pop and grinned at the sight of a satisfied Draco. His own cock ached fiercely with the need to bury himself in the
blond, but—and with a lot of control—he ignored it.

Draco panted as he relaxed onto the bed; his body thrumming with satisfaction. He looked down at Harry and smiled weakly at the sight of his lover grinning with a few drops of cum on his chin.

“Come here,” the blond commanded softly and he reached out his hands to pull Harry up

Harry moved up Draco’s body—peppering kisses as he went—kissing him softly on his lips before resting his forehead against Draco’s. “Are you ok?”

“Never better,” Draco grinned and kissed him again; he tasted himself and wrinkled his nose slightly, but he didn’t comment on it nor did he hesitate to place another kiss on the brunet’s lips. He shifted and let out a gasp when he felt his boyfriend’s still rock hard member teasing his entrance and that’s when he realized, Harry hadn’t cum. His cock twitched and slowly hardened as his eyes started clouding over with lust once more. “Harry.” He reached between them and grabbed the brunet’s cock, pulling a tortured groan from him.

“Draco,” Harry panted out as the blond started pumping him; his hips started bucking, fucking the blond’s hand.

“I want you,” Draco whispered as he pressed his lip against the brunet’s.

“Are you sure?” Harry looked into his eyes; as much as he wanted him, he didn’t want to force him...he wanted to be absolutely sure it was what the blond wanted.

Reaching out to grab his wand from the bedside table, Draco pointed it towards his lower half, performing the Cleansing Charm—wincing slightly at the feel—before Summoning a jar of lube.

“I’m sure,” Draco smiled as he put his wand back on the table.

“I love you,” Harry, overcome with love, kissed Draco. “I’ve never done this before.”

“I know,” Draco touched his cheek. “Just follow what I say.”

“Ok,” Harry nodded. “What do I do?”

“Dip your fingers in the lube,” Draco instructed. “You’re going to start with one finger first, then two; with the two, you’ll do a scissoring motion to loosen me up.”

“I think I got it,” Harry said as he dipped his fingers in the lube; it was slightly cold, but he didn’t mind. He trailed one finger up Draco’s legs before settling against his entrance. Looking back up at the blond, he once again asked for permission.

“Do it,” Draco panted out, the anticipation killing him.

Harry lightly circled the entrance with his finger, teasing his lover before slowly slipping past the ring of muscle. He near bit his tongue at the heat that surrounded his finger; he got up to his first knuckle before he started thrusting slowly, making a circle each time the finger went in. On the third go ‘round, he brushed against a tiny nubbin inside Draco’s body and it caused the blond to let out the loudest moan as he arched his back in pleasure.

Draco bit back the urge to tell his boyfriend to hurry; he knew Harry wouldn’t do that unless he was absolutely sure he wouldn’t hurt him and it would as it had been a few years since he had been in this position. His body thrummed with desire and he moaned when he felt Harry’s finger breach him and start thrusting. At the first touch to his prostate, Draco couldn’t help the loud moan that escaped
him and he arched his back in pure pleasure, sending the finger just a little deeper.

“Damnit...Harry...d-do that...again,” Draco panted out.

Harry grinned and pulled the finger out before pushing back in with two. He made sure he touched the blond’s pleasure button as he started scissoring; he moaned when Draco started fucking himself on his fingers. It was the hottest thing he ever saw. He added another finger and increased his pace.

“Such a greedy whore for my fingers,” Harry rasped out, his voice filled with need. “So fucking hot...Merlin I need you.”

“Then take me,” Draco twisted in the sheets as he forced the words out. “Please Harry...j-just fuck me...”

“Draco,” Harry groaned out the name as he pulled his fingers from the blond’s arse. He dipped his fingers in the lube and coated his cock, hissing in pleasure at the cool sensation on his heated cock. He held his erection in one hand and lined it up to the blond’s entrance. He rubbed the tip around the hole, reducing the blond to babbling from his teasing.

“Stop fucking teasing,” Draco growled as he tried—unsuccessfully—to impale himself on Harry’s cock; all he managed to do was to tease himself further and strengthen his arousal. “Ohhh...you’re such a bastard...”

While he had been teasing Draco, it backfired on him as Harry found his control slipping away from him; the need to be inside the wanton blond was becoming too much. He moved forward slowly, pushing against the hole of his lover until the head of his cock slipped in.

“Holy fucking hell!” the words tore from Harry’s throat as he felt the muscles clamp down on his arousal and tight, hot heat of Draco’s arse surround his cock. He stopped, his neck arching back, the tendons standing out as he used all his willpower not to snap his hips forward in a brutal claiming.

Draco tried to move, but felt Harry’s hands tighten on his hips. “Wh-wh—

“Don’t,” Harry growled out as he squeezed his eyes shut; the slight movement that Draco had made had brought him close to the edge. “Don’t move. I want...(swallows)...I want this to last...”

Carefully, Harry eased his aching cock further into the hot cavern of his lover until his balls rested against Draco’s arse. He braced his arms on either side of the blond’s head, panting through gritted teeth as he tried to control his body’s urge to slam repeatedly into his blond lover.

“So fucking tight...so hot...” Harry groaned.

Draco’s hands flew to Harry’s hips as his neck arched back; he had never felt so full in his life. Harry was so thick and was touching him in all the right places. And he needed him to move. Donning a wicked smirk, he spread his legs and gave a tiny thrust; his reward was strangled groan, so he did it again.

“Fuck Draaaco,” Harry’s eyes rolled into his head from the intense pleasure. “Stop moving.”

“No,” Draco shook his head and this time, he arched his back, sending Harry’s cock deeper. It brushed against his sweet spot and a cry escaped him. “Move Haa...rry...I-I need you to move...”

Harry pulled back until the tip of his cock was just inside before slamming back in. “Is this what you want?”
“FUCK YES!” Draco shouted. “Fuck me baby...fuck me good.”

“Oh Sweet Merlin,” Harry moaned as he increased his pace, slamming in and out of the blond; one particular thrust sent his cock directly into Draco’s prostate, causing him to arch his back as he held on to Harry’s biceps.

“Oh yeah...faster...oh Merlin...harder,” Draco panted out. “Fuck me harder...”

Harry growled as he moved to his knees, holding the blond’s hips; his pace became brutal as he fucked Draco; sweat rolled off their bodies, glistening in the light but neither cared.

“So fucking wanton,” Harry growled as he slammed into his lover. “So greedy for my cock...aren’t you?”

“Y-yes,” Draco babbled, his head tossing side to side in ecstasy. “Give it to me...”

“Fuck you’re hot,” Harry’s breathing was ragged. “So good...feel so good around my cock.”

Harry bent down, claiming Draco’s lips in a harsh kiss. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Draco whispered back before he groaned at a hard thrust.

Harry’s hand slipped between their bodies to wrap around the blond’s cock and Draco’s eyes flew open at the sensation. He gripped the base of the blond’s cock before he started pumping in time to his thrusts.

Draco slammed back against Harry’s hips, fucking himself as he fucked Harry’s hand. Pleasure was coming at him from every angle and his senses were becoming overwhelmed. His breathing hitched as his balls grew taught as he felt a coiling sensation as his orgasm started to rise. He had never felt so much pleasure in his life and was drowning in ecstasy.

“I-I’m g-gonna c-cum,” Draco managed out before he kissed Harry again. Wanting the brunet to fall with him, he tightened his muscles around him, delighting in the tortured sound that came from his lover. He did it again even as his hands drifted around to grip his boyfriend’s arse, anchoring himself as he slammed back to meet Harry’s thrusts.

Harry could feel his own orgasm approach and he increased his pace; when he felt Draco clench his muscles and the already tight channel become tighter, he couldn’t help the sound that escaped. He felt Draco’s hands on his arse and his neck flew back with a moan.

“Oh Merlin,” Harry panted out. “Cum with me Drake...” he moved his lips to the blond’s ear and hissed. [You’re ssso fucking hot...jussst a hot little whore for my cock...cum for me my Dragon...I want to feel you sssqueezing my cock ass you let go...]

Draco of course had no idea what his boyfriend was saying, but he didn’t care; the moment the hissing started, he was gone. His back arched, his eyes flew open and his arse clenched painfully around Harry’s cock as his orgasm exploded from him with a howl of...

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“HARRY!” his cum burst out, covering Harry’s hands, their chests and a bit hit his chin.

Feeling the internal muscles clamp down, Harry gave in to his orgasm as it ripped through him, coating the inner walls of the blond’s arse as he came with a growl of...

“Draco!” He gave a few more thrusts as his cock was milked before he collapsed on top of his boyfriend.
Both boys were breathing heavily, before Harry turned to look at the blond.

“You ok?” he asked.

“Ask me again when I can think,” Draco chuckled weakly. He shifted, only to gasp when Harry’s cock nudged his over-sensitized prostate.

Hearing the gasp, Harry rose up off the blond and slowly pulled out, much to Draco’s disappointment. He collapsed on his back—Draco immediately rolled into him—and he wrapped his arms around the blond after casting a Cleansing Charm on the two of them.

“That was...better than everything I hoped,” Harry said after a few minutes.

“We’re not going to do the sappy thing are we?” Draco teased.

“Shut up,” Harry laughed as he lightly pinched the blond on his arm. “Fine then; you’re the best I’ve ever had.”

“Of course I—wait a minute,” Draco looked at his boyfriend. “I’m the only one you ever had.”

“Hmmmm,” was the noncommittal answer from Harry, his eyes dancing with happiness.

“I am the only one, right?” Draco leaned up to look at his boyfriend better.

Harry paused; his eyes locked onto Draco’s arm as he lightly ran his fingers up and down.

“Harry!” Draco glared at him. “Tell me; am I the only one you’ve ever been with?” Draco knew he was being irrational, after all he had been with Henri, but the thought of someone having the brunet; it sent icy rage and jealousy through him.

Harry looked away, biting his lip to stifle his smile; it was just too much fun riling his boyfriend up.

Draco moved to straddle his boyfriend, his arms crossing across his chest as he glared down at him. He bent down and grabbed on to Harry’s shoulders and started shaking him. “Tell me now who else have you been with? Who has touched you?”

“Why?” Harry looked up at him.

“So that I can find, kidnap and torture before I kill them, of course,” Draco said all this in the way one would describe the day.

“Draco,” Harry dropped his gaze so the blond wouldn’t see the amusement in them. “They’re not magical, so you can’t do anything to them.”

“I...do...not...care,” Draco growled. He was about to say something else when he finally got a look at Harry’s eyes and what he saw made his eyes widened. “You complete and utter bastard!” he smacked him against his chest.

“Ow!” Harry yelped through a laugh. “What’d you do that for?”

“You had me going,” Draco accused as he smacked Harry again. “I can’t believe I believed you.” He pouted. “You’re mean.”

Harry laughed and tugged on Draco’s arm, allowing the blond to fall down. He tucked a lock of hair back behind his ear as he cupped his cheek before kissing him. “There was no one else; there never was and there never will be. You’re it for me Drake.”
“Good,” Draco grinned as he kissed Harry again. “Because if you ever cheat on me, I will make you beg for death and I would torture your lover days on end before finally killing them only to bring them back and start the process all over again.”

“You’re gorgeous when you talk about torturing someone,” Harry grinned as he ran his hand through Draco’s hair. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Draco smiled before he shifted off of Harry and the bed and make his way to the bathroom. “Now come on; despite that Cleaning Charm, I would like a shower. You’re washing my back.”

“Yes sir,” Harry grinned as he moved to follow the commanding blond.

~...~

When the two got to the kitchen an hour later, it was to find that the house’s occupants were there. Remus turned to look at them, sniffing the air before grinning wolfishly.

“Shut up,” Harry muttered as he sat down at the table, pulling Draco into the seat next to him.

“I didn’t say anything cub,” Remus chuckled.

“I can practically hear you thinking it,” Harry responded, smiling when Minky set a plate of eggs, waffles, crumpets and juice in front of him and one for Draco.

“What’s going?” Fred teased as he looked over at the two. “Did something happen?”

“Yeah,” George joined in. “Why is Draco over there, looking like the cat that got the cream?”

“None of your business,” the blond responded before turning his attention to his breakfast and starting in; he hid a smirk as he knew George’s remark was right. He had gotten the cream and then some.

“We can be thankful they know of Silencing Charms,” Snape drawled, a teasing tone to his voice, “as I am sure we would have been more than aware of what they were up to.”

“We already are,” Cory added, smirking at his two friends.

“Like any of you are in any position to talk,” Harry grumbled, causing the others to laugh.

“What are you doing here anyways?” Draco directed his question to Snape. “I thought you’d already be at the school getting ready for classes on the first.”

Severus glared at him before he answered. “I thought it prudent to at least have breakfast before I have to suffer the sight of those insufferable people that are my co-workers.”

Everyone laughed and that was the scene Pansy and Blaise walked into.

“Hi everyone,” Pansy greeted and she sat next to Draco. “Good morning.”

“Morning,” Blaise nodded as he bypassed Draco to sit in the empty space next to Cory. He hadn’t forgot how Harry had reacted that day in Diagon Alley and he wasn’t about to remind him of it, no matter if they were now friends.

“What are you guys doing here?” Cory asked as he looked at the two.
“We were able to persuade our parents to allow us to come here so that we could go to the Platform with you,” Pansy said as she started in on the plate Tanna had placed in front of her.

“Of course,” Blaise added, “the fact that the Dark Lord had warned them helped. He told them that we were now working with Harry and should anything happen that threatens that, they would be severely punished.”

“Of course,” Remus grinned.

“Good morning,” Bellatrix said as she, Rodolphus and Rabastan walked into the kitchen.

“Morning,” the group replied.

“Are you going to joining us on the Platform in a few days?” Pansy asked.

“I wish we could,” Bellatrix shook her head; she would like nothing else but to be there on the first to see her son off, but that just wasn’t possible.

“But we are easily recognizable,” Rodolphus continued. “It would create a panic that our Lord does not need.”

“Yes it would,” Luna spoke up, “but, this is a moment that you have yet to experience and you should embrace it.” She looked down at her plate. “Hedwig does work miracles and I suppose if you should choose to be like Pansy and I, things would work out.”

Harry smiled and chuckled at the blonde.

“Excellent suggestion Luna,” Snape nodded. He saw the confused looks on Blaise and Pansy’s faces and clarified. “It was through the help of Hedwig that the LeStranges were able to not only regain their memories, but also some of the damage that their stay in Azkaban had warranted. A few simple spells should take care of the rest.”

“Bella is easy recognizable by her wild black hair,” Harry said, “All she has to do is wear it like Pansy and Luna wear theirs; down and straight. Just cast a spell to slightly change your appearance and no one would recognize you, making it so that you can join Cory at the Platform to see him off as you should’ve all these years.”

The LeStranges all looked at each before looking back to Harry and Luna.

“That’s a really good idea,” Rabastan smiled at the blonde before looking at his brother and sister-in-law. “We can do it Sunday morning before we leave for the platform.”

Rodolphus and Bellatrix nodded in agreement.

Remus looked at the teens. “So, what are you guys going to do for the rest of the day?”

“Well,” Harry looked at the others. “I figured I’d spend the next couple of days just relaxing and getting ready for school—if our Lord doesn’t require us for anything that is.”

“Sounds like a plan to me,” Pansy smiled.

“Not us,” Fred exchanged a grin with George. “We have to go and open the store.”

“Speaking of which,” George stood up. “We should go.”

“Alright,” Fred nodded and moved to where his twin was standing. “We’ll see you guy later.”
The two left the kitchen and the others turned to each other.

“What about you three?” Cory looked at his uncle and parents.

“Spend the day with you guys until Our Lord calls us for a mission,” Rodolphus answered.

“Sounds good to me,” Pansy grinned before she got up from her seat. “Let’s go.”

“Remy?” Harry looked at his godfather.

“I believe Lucius is busy,” Remus smiled. “So, I have no problem spending my free time with my cub.”

“Then I shall make my way to the school,” Severus spoke. “I bid farewell to the summer days as my time will once again be filled with attempting to instruct mindless dunderheads something useful.”

“You know you love them,” Draco teased before he hurried out of the kitchen when he saw the tick in his godfather’s jaw.

Severus watched Draco leave before turning to Harry. “You have my condolences.”

Everyone laughed before they followed after the blond while Severus made his way to the Floo.

~...~

The morning of September first came quickly. As always, Harry woke earlier than the others.

Looking down at the blond still asleep on his chest, he smiled and pressed a kiss to his head before he carefully moved Draco’s body off of him. He laughed softly when he saw that Draco had cuddled into his pillow, and then he made his way to the bathroom.

Back in the bedroom, Draco, who had shifted in his sleep, woke up when he realized he couldn’t feel the body heat or the body of his boyfriend. Sitting up in the bed, he heard the shower going and grinned. Flipping back the covers, the blond got up from the bed and headed towards the bathroom, not even caring about his naked form. He pushed the door open, smiling wider when he saw Harry’s form behind the glass door.

He quickly went through his routine before he turned back to stare at his boyfriend. His boyfriend—even now sometimes, he still couldn’t believe that Harry was actually his. He would admit that a part of him had always hoped the brunet would notice him and would want to be with him. Even when he was with Henri, he thought about Harry.

Speaking of Harry, slight movement from the shower drew his attention and his eyes focused on his boyfriend’s body. His gaze travelled from head to toe in a slow perusal of his body; from his face to his chest to the cock nestled between his legs in the bed of dark hair. His mouth watered and he licked his lips as he continued staring.

“Are you going to continue ogling me or are you going to join me?” Harry’s voice broke through his thoughts.

“What?” Draco shook his head and looked up into Harry’s face. He saw amusement, but behind that, he saw the lust dancing through the green eyes. His gaze dropped back down to Harry’s groin and his breathing became slightly shallow when he saw Harry hardening under his scrutiny.

“Come here,” Harry said huskily.
Draco moved towards the shower, pulling back the door and stepping inside. The moment he did so, Harry pulled him into a kiss.

“Good morning,” Harry whispered against Draco’s lips.

“Good morning to you too,” Draco smiled back before he pressed his lips against Harry’s again. His arms went around Harry’s neck while Harry’s went around his waist, pulling him closer; their bodies touched and both boys groaned at the feel of their hardened length against each other.

Draco ran his tongue across Harry’s lips asking for access and when Harry’s mouth opened, he immediately mapped his boyfriend’s mouth. The kiss became more intense and heat rose between them as Harry’s hands travelled down Draco’s back, cupping his ass and pulling the blond even closer.

Draco pulled away from the brunet’s mouth and pressed kisses along his neck, moving up to his ear. He sucked on the earlobe—pulling a heavy moan from Harry—before pressing his lips near the ear and whispered, “There’s something I’ve wanted to do since I saw you that day at Privet Drive.”

“What’s that?” Harry managed to strangle out.

Draco said nothing as he pulled away from Harry’s embrace and slowly fell to the ground until he was on his knees. He was eye level to Harry’s cock and he couldn’t help but to lick his lips.

He reached out and grabbed the base before leaning forward and blowing slightly on the head.

“Oh sweet Merlin,” Harry’s head fell back against the shower wall when he felt Draco’s breath. “Draco.” The blond’s name came out on a moan.

Draco extended his tongue and flicked it at the tip, tasting the drop of pre-cum that was there. The taste exploded on his tongue, and he smacked his lips as he cocked his head to the side; it was slightly salty, with a sweetness that reminded him of treacle tart—something Harry loved to eat. The taste was all Harry.

His tongue darted out again, licking around the head and he moaned at the taste. He had to have more. Looking up at his boyfriend, he felt exceedingly powerful when he saw the desperate lust on Harry’s face; it was empowering to know that he and he alone had that type of control over him.

“Look at me,” the blond commanded.

Harry felt like he had died and was currently in heaven, or maybe hell, he didn’t care. He felt so overloaded with pleasure. Draco’s tongue on his erection had anticipation building in him as he knew that his cock would soon be in that hot mouth and he couldn’t wait. He clenched his fists to stop himself from ending things too soon. Through a haze of lust, he heard Draco’s command and obeyed.

Sure he had his boyfriend’s attention, he grinned before he ducked his head forward, engulfing half of Harry’s length in his mouth in one swoop. The taste exploded in his mouth and that coupled with the strangled scream that broke free from Harry’s mouth made him groan wantonly. He could feel his own cock leaking and reached a hand beneath him to grasp his length, tugging slightly from base to head.

Harry’s hand flew to Draco’s head and tightened slightly in his hair when he felt Draco suck him in. He had never felt a pleasure like that before; burying his cock in the blond’s arse was a feeling he more than loved, but having his cock sucked blew his mind.
“D-D-Draco...f-f-fuck,” Harry panted out as his head flew back against the wall.

Draco hollowed his cheeks and started sucking; he pulled off until just the head remained his mouth. He ran his tongue around and under the head, before tonguing the slit, lapping at the pre-cum that dripped steadily. He moaned as he started bobbing his head, going half way before coming back up. His hand moved as he did and he tugged and fucked his own fist in time to his movements over Harry’s cock.

Draco moaned again when he felt Harry’s hands tighten in his hair and the vibrations caused Harry to shake slightly and toss his head from side to side. He pulled off with a pop and kissed, licked and nipped his way around the brunet’s cock before he took him back into his mouth again. Getting an idea, he grinned—as much as he could—around his boyfriend’s girth. He allowed the hardened flesh further into his mouth, stopping just a little further down than before.

Moving his hand from around the base, he trailed his fingertips down to Harry’s balls, fondling them, alternating between gentle and slightly rough. He heard his boyfriend whimper and her smirked inwardly as he slowly lifted his head, letting his teeth gently scrape against Harry’s cock as he did so. The primal scream that came from Harry had him moaning in satisfaction and he tugged on his own length even faster.

Harry’s mind was a puddle of lust formed, desire-filled goo; he couldn’t think of anything but the feel of Draco’s mouth on his cock. His head lolled forward and his eyes, already clouded over, went positively hazy at the pure eroticism that he saw; Draco’s lips around his cock and ecstasy etched onto his face. He whimpered when he felt the hand on his balls and screamed when he felt the teeth. It was dangerous and that made it even hotter. His hips started thrusting and he couldn’t stop. He could feel his orgasm building inside him; his balls tightened and the coil of pleasure tightened even further. His breath came in pants and he threw his head back as his hips moved faster, fucking Draco’s mouth.

Draco could feel the tension coiling inside of Harry; he could feel the balls in his hands as they grew tight and he knew it would be over soon. When Harry started thrusting his hips, he moaned around the length and tightened his fist slightly around his own as he increased his pace. The movement of his boyfriend’s hips sped up and he quickly pulled off, taking in a few breaths of air before he dove back on, doubling his efforts. What his mouth couldn’t get, he brought his hand from where he was fondling Harry and grabbed the cock, fisting it in time with his own movements.

Soon enough, both boys were groaning as their release crashed through them like freight trains. Harry’s head hit the wall with a ‘thump’ as a guttural scream left his lips, Draco’s suction milking his cock and Draco moaned long and loud at the stream of cum down his throat and that pushed him over the edge. He spurted over the tiled floor and wall.

Panting, Harry reached down and pulled the blond up, claiming his mouth in a dominating and pleasure-filled kiss, not caring that he could taste himself. He pulled back after a few seconds. “I...ever...see...Henri...again,” Harry said between pants, “I...will...kill him.” He kissed the blond once more. “Fuck Draco...that was amazing.”

“Good,” Draco’s voice was slightly hoarse, but he was grinning widely, grey eyes sparkling in delight. He kissed Harry. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Harry chuckled before he picked up the body wash. “Come here. Let me wash you.”

The two boys finished their shower in good time, their bodies relaxed and spent. While Draco was in
the bathroom fixing his hair, Harry was in the bedroom getting dressed.

\Hedwig\n
The phoenix flashed into the room. She landed on Harry’s shoulder and rubbed her head against his cheek.

\Good morning beautiful\n
\Morning; is everything ok?!\n
Yes. I just need you to take something to the twins for me.\n
Harry walked over to the dresser and grabbed the notebook and biro that was laying there. He scribbled a note on it and then walked over to his trunk and opened it, pulling out a couple of vials that was filled with the Polyjuice potion. He ripped a page from the book and transfigured it into a small and unbreakable sack and carefully placed the vials inside before tying the note to the top and placing the tied string inside Hedwig’s beak. \Give this to Fred or George, but make sure they are alone when you give it to them. They’ll know what it’s for. Remember, you cannot be seen\n
Hedwig trilled indignantly and cuffed Harry’s ear with her wing. \I am not an invalid. I understand the importance of discretion.\n
“Sorry girl,” Harry grinned and the phoenix trilled once more before flashing out. Seconds later, Draco walked into the bedroom.

“You ready?” Harry asked.

“Just about,” Draco nodded.

~...~

By ten-thirty, everyone was in the kitchen finishing off their breakfast.

“Ready for school?” Remus asked as he walked into the kitchen.

“More than ready,” Luna smiled. “This school year will be our most interesting yet.”

“I agree,” Pansy grinned at the girl.

“Allright, I’m done,” Blaise stated as he stood up from his seat.

“Same here,” Draco nodded as he too stood up. The other teens followed.

“Time to go join the masses,” Harry laughed.

“Not without us,” Rodolphus said as he, Bellatrix and Rabastan walked into the kitchen.

“Morning,” the teens greeted the three adults.

“Morning,” Rodolphus nodded his greeting. “Where are the twins?”

“They’re at the store,” Draco answered. “Are you guys going to go with Luna’s idea?”

“Of course we are,” Rabastan grinned as he looked at Bellatrix and Rodolphus before he pulled out his wand. He waved it over himself, muttering under his breath. When he was done, Remus conjured a mirror for him. He smiled when he saw his reflection; he hadn’t changed much except that, his
brown eyes had changed to a dark blue and his hair changed from dark brown to a dirty blond.

Bellatrix and Rodolphus had done the same and when they were done, the teens couldn’t help but gasp at their looks; especially Bella’s. Rodolphus’ light brown eyes had turned blue like his brother, but his were sky blue and his hair had changed from short and dark-brown, to shoulder-length and black. Bella’s hair was no longer black and curly, but was now reddish blonde and hung straight, reaching lower-back, her dark brown eyes turned light blue; all in all, she was even more attractive.

“Nice,” Blaise grinned as he looked at the three.

Bellatrix squealed, her eyes dancing in delight as she hugged her son. “Now, finally, I can be at the Platform and watch you off. And if those witches try to do anything, I can hex their arses. Maybe use a few Crucios.”

“Mum,” Cory shook his head as the others laughed. “You can’t go around casting Crucio on everyone that tries anything.”

“Why not?” Bellatrix demanded.

“Because,” Harry laughed, “it would make things a bit difficult for our Lord if terror occurs without him knowing and you know, everyone is supposed to be hidden and quiet, like the sneaky viper, readying itself to strike at the right moment.”

“Fine,” Bellatrix looked away before looking back and grinning; her eyes shining with a maniacal light, thought she wasn’t thinking murderous thoughts. “At least I still get to see my son get on the train.”

“Alright,” Luna smiled and stood up, the others following.

“Are we going to Floo or Apparate?” Blaise asked. Both he and Pansy had their school supplies with them; they had shrunk them and put them in their pockets.

“Apparate,” Harry answered. “I don’t want to use Hedwig as yet and I really hate to travel by Floo powder. Bellatrix can take Luna and Cory, Drake and I can go with Rabastan, and you two can be taken by Rodolphus.”

“Draco,” Pansy turned to her blond friend. “Your father is usually the one to take you to the Platform. Why isn’t he taking you now?”

“It’s a surprise,” Draco grinned. “Don’t worry though, you’ll find out why soon.”

“Alright,” Pansy nodded and moved to stand next to Rodolphus.

“I’ll go over to see if Lucius has left as yet,” Remus smiled before giving Harry a hug and squeezing Draco’s shoulder before heading to the Floo.

“Let’s go,” Draco said. He mentally called for his familiar, smiling when the pup appeared in the room in a ball of light. Yasha yipped as Draco lifted him in his arms.

Hedwig, we’re leaving. Did everything go as planned with the twins?

Ok. What are you going to do today?
Ok little one, I’m going to go flying for a bit before heading to Malfoy Manor. I’ll be at the school after I know you arrived!

Ok. See you then!

Harry broke the connection before calling Sesshomaru, as Cory and Luna called for their animals as well and soon enough the teens were ready to go.

~...~

Hermione, Ron and Ginny, along with Molly and Arthur, were already at the Platform. Despite the usual yearly lateness, they had managed to be there at ten-fifteen; it was now ten thirty-five and they had spent the last ten minutes scanning the platform for any sign of Harry.

“Does anyone see him?” Hermione asked as she glanced around.

“No,” Ginny was frustrated. “He never showed up at our house all summer but come on, he should be here.”

“He’ll probably be late,” Ron scowled, “just so he can draw attention to himself.”

“Now Ron,” Molly chastised her son. “Do not be like that; you know how his family treats him.”

“Whatever,” Ron looked away. “So he has a few troubles at home, he should just get over it.”

“Merlin’s beard! Look, over there!” the shock in Ginny’s voice drew their attention.

“What is it?” Arthur asked.

“It’s Malfoy,” Ginny gestured to where the blond was standing. “And he’s with the two teens from Diagon Alley and Luna, Parkinson and Zabini.”

“But who’s that with them?” Hermione asked as she took in the sight of the three adults with the six teens.

“Their parents probably,” Ron shrugged.

“We should go,” Ginny said, “I mean, I haven’t seen Harry as yet and if he was here already, then he’s probably on the train and avoiding us.”

“Ginny’s right,” Molly nodded before she hugged them. “Remember, look for him and find out if and what the twins told him.”

“We will.” Hermione’s eyes were bright with determination. They grabbed their trunks and turned away from the couple, heading to the train. They passed by Draco and the others and Hermione had to squeeze Ron’s arm to stop him from attacking when Cory made a derogatory remark towards her.

~...~

When they appeared on the Platform, they immediately drew stares from the others that were there. Students and parents were staring at the group; some with fear, some with awe, some with shock and some with appreciation.

“It’s nice to see they recognize greatness,” Draco said smugly.

“Behave Drake,” Harry nudged his boyfriend with a smile.
“Oh so many witches and wizards,” Bellatrix smiled as her hand twitched at her side.

“Calm yourself Bella,” Rabastan grinned at his sister-in-law knowing what was going through her mind.

“Mum please,” Cory grinned. “Uncle Ras is right, calm down.”

“Oh alright,” Bellatrix sighed. “You boys spoil all of my fun.”

“Don’t worry,” Harry leaned over to kiss her cheek making the witch squeal in delight. “I’m sure they’ll be plenty of witches and wizards for you to torture in the future.”

“We should go,” Luna smiled as she looked around the Platform, noticing the majority of the students boarding.

“Stay safe,” Rodolphus nodded to the teens. “Remember to keep your heads up.”

“Hex anyone that bothers you,” Rabastan grinned, “just don’t get caught.”

“We won’t,” Draco smiled, “we’re all Slytherins and if there is one thing we know, it’s discretion.”

The group laughed before saying goodbye to the three adults and headed for the train. As they walked, the students cleared a path for them, not wanting to anger the Prince of Slytherin and his companions; of course, the fact that Harry had a slight glare on his face helped them to move.

Ron, Hermione and Ginny passed them and Cory couldn’t help but to say something.

“I see the Mudblood was able to find her way out of the gutter trash,” Cory grinned maliciously.

The five teens laughed at his words and their laughter doubled when they saw the hurt in Hermione’s eyes as well as the way she held back Ron.

“You have such a lovely way with words,” Luna smiled before kissing her boyfriend on his cheek.

“Let’s go guys,” Harry chuckled and they continued on to the train. Within minutes, they had boarded the train, and they headed down the corridor looking for an empty compartment. They found one and entered it, with Cory discreetly using his wand to lock and ward it.

“Our entrance into the school will be as memorable as our summer has been,” Luna said once the teens sat down.

She, Cory and Blaise sat on one side, while Draco, Harry and Pansy sat on the other.

“So what did you guys have in mind?” Cory asked.

“It has to be something that will let everyone know of our changed situations,” Draco said, “but it has to have a touch of Slytherin and Gryffindor combined; something cunning and bold.”

Immediately the teens started throwing out ideas on how they could accomplish that.

Luna became quiet after awhile. Resting her head on Cory’s shoulder, she smiled as she looked out the window. She didn’t worry because she knew that her brother would come up with a plan. Her gaze shifted from the window to her friends before they rested on Harry.

She knew that he had an idea and it was one that would be as cunning and sneaky as any Slytherin and yet bold enough to be called Gryffindor...exactly what they were going for.
Harry, feeling her gaze, looked up and they locked eyes. She smiled, and he followed moments later.

“You have an idea,” Luna told him, effectively drawing a stop in conversation from the other four.

“You do?” Pansy turned to look at him.

“Yes I do,” Harry nodded, the smile still on his face.

“What is it?” Draco asked.

“Well,” Harry started and he outlined his plan to them. When he was done, Luna and Cory were smiling, Draco was smirking and Pansy and Blaise were looking at him in wonder.

“Tell me again why you weren’t placed in Slytherin?” Pansy raised an eyebrow.

“So, I take it’s a good plan?” Harry asked.

“It’s damn near brilliant is what it is,” Draco leaned up to kiss him. “My boyfriend is a genius.”

“It’s good seeing you like this Dray,” Pansy smiled at her childhood friend. “It’s good to see you so relaxed and carefree and happy...truly happy.”

“Thanks Pansy,” Draco smiled. “And I am happy; quite possibly the happiest I’ve ever been.”

“We all are,” Luna said. She looked out the window and saw Ron and Hermione walking past, which prompted her to giggle.

“What’s so funny?” Blaise asked.

“The Confundus Charm that Cory placed on the door is working wonders,” Luna laughed. “Ronald and Granger have passed by this compartment three times already, each time turning back looking lost and confused. I must say, it’s a look I like on Granger’s usually know-it-all and bossy face.”

“Well don’t worry,” Harry laughed along with the others. “It’s a look we’ll see a lot of this school year.”

“That is true,” Pansy conceded with a smile.

Harry looked to the door once again before a slow smile started to build on his face.

“I love it,” Luna giggled.

“What?” Draco asked when he saw it and to Luna’s words.

“I have another idea,” Harry grinned, his eyes sparkling mischievously. “Hedwig.”

The phoenix flashed into the compartment, settling herself on Harry’s lap, mindful of Sesshomaru.

“She’s so beautiful,” Pansy cooed as she stretched out to rub Hedwig’s breast.

Hedwig preened under the attention and trilled softly, relaxing everyone even more. She turned her head to Harry and trilled once more.

|What is it?|

“I need you to take your owl form for me please,” Harry told her. “There’s something I want to do.”
Hedwig trilled. *(Something to do with the traitors?)*

“Yes,” Harry nodded as he rubbed her head. “So, will you let me?”

Hedwig cocked her head to the side before trilling once more. *(Of course; you know I’d do anything to get back at them for how they treated you. Besides, I have the feeling the aftermath is going to be very fun)*

“It will be,” Harry laughed before he brought out his wand and gently tapped it on her head. Soon enough, where the phoenix once was, a white owl was now in its place.

Harry reached into his pocket and pulled out a small packet, tapping it with his wand, he removed the shrinking charm.

“What is that?” Blaise asked.

“It’s a muggle note book,” Draco answered. “They use it to write in.”

Opening the note book, he clicked the biro and started writing. At each stroke of the biro across the page, Blaise and Pansy stared in fascination as the other three explained just how the ballpoint pen worked.

When Harry was done, he tore the paper from the book and folded before handing it to Hedwig.

“Find the traitors and give this to Granger,” Harry told her.

Nipping his finger affectionately, Hedwig took the paper before flying through the window.

“What was the note about?” Cory asked as he watched the white bird fly around for a few minutes as she disappeared from view.

Harry grinned. “Oh, nothing much...just messing with Granger.” He opened his eyes wide and made his voice quiver as he continued. “I’m just saying how I am so sorry for everything and that she was right and everything was my fault and how I wouldn’t blame them at all.” He laughed.

“What’s the purpose of that?” Blaise asked

“Granger,” Harry started. “As much as she betrayed me and wants nothing to do with me, she will feel ashamed of her behaviour. She will have regrets for how she’s treating me right now. It will eat at her despite the fact that she is on their side.”

“Has anyone ever told you that you have a very devious mind?” Pansy smiled.

“Yes,” Harry laughed.

“This year is going to be the best,” Blaise smiled.

“I couldn’t agree more,” Luna said.

~...~

Ron, Hermione and Ginny walked up and down the train, searching through the compartments for Harry. The ones that they were able to search, no one had seen him. They didn’t realize they had passed his compartment three times, due to the Charm that was on it. After patrolling once more, they made their way back to their compartment.
“He’s not here,” Hermione sighed as she sat down. “How is he not here? How did he miss the train?”

“Maybe he didn’t miss it and is just hiding,” Ron scowled as he sat next to Hermione.

“Don’t you think we would’ve found him?” Ginny crossed her arms and looked at her brother.

“I just do—Hedwig?” Hermione sat up and looked out the window. She had spotted what she thought was the white owl, but she wasn’t sure. She leaned closer to the glass, and sure enough, she saw the bird again. “Hedwig!”

She opened the window, Ron and Ginny, looking out behind, and watched as the owl came through to land on the seat away from them.

“It is you,” Hermione said when she looked at the owl. “Where’s Harry?”

Hedwig cocked her head to the side to look at the girl. She was angry at the trio in front of her, Hermione especially, for their actions against her master.

Hermione looked at Hedwig, squirming slightly the longer she stared at the bird; for some reason, it felt as if Hedwig was giving her a disapproving, disappointing and angry look. She always knew the owl was smarter than most owls, but still...

“Look,” Ginny pointed at Hedwig. “She’s got a note. I bet it’s from Harry.” She reached out for it, only to squeak in surprise when Hedwig jumped away from her. “What the hell?”

“Le’m me try,” Ron said and he too reached out his hand only for the same thing to happen. “Ruddy bird, keep still and give us the bloody note.”

“I’ll do it,” Hermione sighed, but before she could reach out for it, Hedwig flew up and dropped the note onto her lap before flying out the window.

“Well that was rude,” Ginny scowled briefly in the direction where Hedwig went before she turned to Hermione. “Well, open it...see what it says.”

“Hold on,” Hermione huffed as she opened the note.

_Hermione,

_I just wanted to say you were right; I should’ve listened to you. I didn’t and now Sirius is gone. Everything is my fault. I am so sorry for everything you have been through over the years just by being my friend. I don’t blame you for blaming me or for hating me, ‘cause I blame myself.

_I’m sorry you no longer feel like being my friend. People do die around me and I don’t want you to die. I should’ve known someone like me doesn’t deserve friends. Even though I’m no longer your friend, I’ll always see you as mine. Thanks for everything Hermione, and I am truly sorry.

_Your former friend,
_Harry J. Potter

_P.S. I’m not on the train, though I know you won’t be looking for me. And when we see each other at school, I’ll make sure to stay out of your way.

Hermione’s heart clenched as she read the words of her former friend; once again, she found herself regretting her actions.
“Well,” Ron grinned, “this works out really good.”

“What do you mean?” Ginny asked.

“Potter’s blaming himself for everything,” Ron smiled. “So, it makes things easier for us. When we tell him we didn’t mean it, he’ll be so happy, he’ll forgive us.”

“You’re right,” Ginny smiled before sighing. “I can’t wait until we get to school. I can really play up the sympathetic girl. Hmmm, I wonder how I’m going to get him.”

“You will Gin,” Ron nodded, “don’t worry.”

Hermione paid no attention to the siblings; her mind was still caught on Harry’s words. Was making a name for herself in the Wizarding World worth sacrificing the one person who was on all accounts her very first friend? If it wasn’t for Harry, she never would’ve become friends with Ron or any of the other Weasleys. She would’ve spent her seven years at Hogwarts friendless and alone if it wasn’t for Harry. And how does she repay him? By betraying him...why?

Hermione sighed as her gaze drifted down to the letter lying on her lap. She tuned out Ron and Ginny’s talk as her mind wandered once again. ‘Am I really doing the right thing? Harry did everything for me, so why am I doing this? I just want to make a name for myself; to show the Wizarding World that me, a Muggleborn, was just as good—if not better—as them. I want people to see that I belong here, that I have as much right to be here as any other Wizarding folk.’

Hermione shook her head, not wanting to think too much on everything she was doing. She became aware of the silence and looked up to see Ron and Ginny both staring at her; looking into their eyes, she saw the concern in Ron’s eyes and in Ginny’s she saw the rising suspicions behind the concern and she knew, she had to stop thinking her previous train of thoughts. She had come too far to back out now.

“You ok?” Ron asked.

“I’m fine,” Hermione smiled before sighing. “I’m just wondering why he waited until now to send a letter. He could’ve done that all summer.”

“Who knows?” Ron shrugged.

“At least you have more an opening to get him to forgive you,” Ginny grinned, “though it shouldn’t be too hard.”

Ron laughed and Hermione joined him, studiously ignoring the voice in the back of her mind that whispered how she was once a lonely little girl with no friends and it was the boy she was betraying now that changed all that.

~...~

Back with Harry and the others, Hedwig flew back into the cabin before landing on Harry’s lap. She shook her self off, her magic easily removing the charm, allowing her to be back in her phoenix form.

“Thank you girl,” Harry smiled at her.

|You never have to thank me| Hedwig trilled.

|How did she react?| Sesshomaru asked through his mental connection to Hedwig.
Hedwig trilled before showing the images to the pup and Harry as well.

“So?” Draco raised an eyebrow as he looked from Harry to his familiars.

“Granger reacted as I predicted she would,” Harry smiled and leaned back against the seat.

“Excellent,” Cory nodded.

“Things are progressing quite well,” Luna chuckled lightly.

“Yes they are,” Pansy nodded.

Hedwig trilled. *I'm going to go back to the house*

“Alright,” Harry nodded before he rubbed her breast in an affectionate manner. “I’ll see you later.”

Hedwig trilled once more before she disappeared in a flash of fire.

“I still can’t believe you can speak to phoenixes,” Blaise commented.

“There’re a lot of things I can do that you won’t believe,” Harry smirked.

“I can attest to that,” Draco’s smile was smug.

“We are not speaking bedroom talents Dragon,” Luna giggled.

“Oh,” Pansy’s eyes glazed over as she thought of Harry and Draco naked.

“Hey!” Draco mock glared at her. “Stop imagining my boyfriend naked.”

“Oh I’m not,” Pansy waved his words away before she grinned saucily. “I’m imagining the both of you.”

“Pervert,” Blaise smiled.

“Like you’re one to talk honey,” Pansy smacked him on his shoulder.

“You love me still,” Blaise grabbed her hand and kissed it.

“Why, I don’t know,” Pansy shook her head before laughing.

The others laughed and the rest of the ride was filled with their chatter as they spoke about the upcoming year.

~...~

When the train pulled to a stop, the six teens stayed in the compartment and watched as everyone left. Sure that everyone were gone, they got up and walked down the corridor to the exit.

“This is going to be awesome,” Blaise grinned, excitement shining in his dark eyes. “Everyone’s expressions will be priceless.”

“I agree,” Pansy laughed as she looped her arm through Blaise’s.

They got off the train and headed towards the carriage. Blaise and Pansy walked directly to the door and got in, while Draco, Harry, Luna and Cory all stopped to look and pet the Thestral.
“She’s a beauty, isn’t she?” Luna asked.

“Yes,” Draco nodded. “I can’t believe I didn’t know they were there. This is the first time I’ve ever seen one.”

“Only someone who has seen death can see them,” Cory explained softly as he reached out to gently rub the Thestral’s head. “I can see them because I saw Sirius die back in May; Luna could always see them as she saw her mother die...”

“I see them because of Cedric and Sirius dying right in front of me,” Harry added. “And you see them Drake, because you saw Umbitch die.”

“I always knew her death would be beneficial,” Draco remarked and the others laughed.

“Are you guys coming in or what?” Pansy stuck her head out the door, brows puzzling when she saw Cory touching the air.

“We’re coming,” Harry nodded and the four moved into the carriage.

Nothing much was said as the teens relaxed into their seats. Before they knew it, the carriage had come to a stop. They stepped out, nodding to the teacher that was stationed there, before they made their way up to the castle. When they entered, Harry, Draco, Cory and Luna nodded to the two Slytherins before disappearing from sight.

Blaise and Pansy walked into the Great Hall, heading for their seats at the Slytherin table. They had just sat down and had turned to speak to Theodore Nott when they stopped and their eyes widened slightly in surprise. Two men were walking towards the staff table from the small side door at the back—one which the professors often used.

“Son of a bitch,” Blaise breathed as he looked at the staff table. “That’s the surprise?”

“I can’t believe this,” Pansy narrowed her eyes.

Sitting at the staff table right next to a surprisingly younger and healthier looking—to students other than Blaise and Pansy—Severus Snape was none other than Lucius Malfoy.

The rest of the Slytherins slowly noticed where the attention of the two were and all turned to face the table. Slowly, an excited buzz rose from the Slytherins as they took in the sight of Lucius.

Blaise and Pansy looked at each other and grinned. The school year just got even more interesting.

~...~

“Bloody hell!” Ron’s eyes opened wide as he stopped abruptly on his way to his seat at Gryffindor table.

“Ron?” Hermione touched his arm in concern. “What is it?”

“Hermione,” Ron kept his gaze forward. “Tell me Lucius Malfoy isn’t just sitting down at the staff table.”

Hermione, along with Ginny and the other Gryffindors, turned to where Ron was looking and when they saw the Malfoy Patriarch, their mouths dropped open as sounds of horror and disbelief escaped them.

“Oh my God,” Dean Thomas exclaimed as he dropped into his seat, his eyes still on Lucius. “What
“I don’t think he had much of a choice,” Hermione finally broke out of her shocked stupor to answer Dean.

“Why do you say that?” Seamus Finnegan asked.

“His expression says that he’s displeased with Mr. Malfoy’s presence,” Hermione explained as she sat down. “So my guess is, against Dumbledore’s wishes, the Ministry appointed Mr. Malfoy.”

“As what?” Seamus asked.

“What subject is currently without a teacher?” Hermione asked.

“DADA,” Ginny said with wide eyes. “Merlin, are you saying Lucius Malfoy is our new DADA professor?”

“It looks that way,” Hermione nodded. Whispers travelled down the Gryffindor table as Hermione’s suspicions were passed along.

“I bet Malfoy’s loving this,” Ron scowled. “The bloody git.”

“He’s not there,” Seamus pointed out and gestured towards the Slytherin table, where sure enough, they didn’t spot Draco anywhere.

“Uhm, Hermione,” Ron tapped said girl on her shoulder, “do you know who those two blokes are?”

Hermione turned her head to face Ron. “Hmm? Who?”

“Look there,” Ron pointed out, “on the other side of Flitwick and Hagrid, the two new faces. Who’s that?”

“No idea,” Hermione shook her head slightly before her features pulled together in a frown. “But, it seems Professor Burbage is missing.”

“Burbage?” Ron turned confused eyes to her, as did a few other students.

“Professor Burbage,” Hermione explained patiently. She had taken Muggle Studies back in her third year only, but she remembered the teacher and that she was a friendly, middle-aged witch. “She teaches Muggle Studies. So, maybe one of them is the new Muggle Studies teacher.”

The others nodded thoughtfully before they looked back towards the Staff table.

“Has anyone seen Neville?” Dean asked as he looked up and down their table.

Choruses of no echoed down the table.

“Yeah,” Seamus nodded. “And where’s Harry?”

“He said he’ll be here,” Ginny answered. “Probably had some trouble with his relatives again.”

“So, does anyone know who that man is next to Malfoy?” Dean asked. “If I didn’t know better, I’d say he was related to Snape.”

The others turned to look at the man and they drew the same conclusions as Dean. The man next to Lucius had the same black hair as Snape except that unlike Snape, his hair looked full and had a
slight curl at the end of it; his nose was smaller and didn’t have the bump that Snape’s did. His features seemed softer than Snape’s and his eyes, though the same dark colour as Snape’s, held amusement.

“I didn’t know Snape had family,” Ginny remarked.

“You guys,” Hermione’s eyes widened and her voice was anxious. “I think that is Snape.”

“What?” Ginny, Ron, Dean and Seamus all looked at her before looking back at Snape.

“Are you mental?” Ron gaped. “That can’t be Snape.”

“Sorry mate,” Seamus said. “I think it is too.”

Ron was going to say something else but was stopped when the doors to the Great Hall opened and the first years walked in.

“Merlin, were we that small?” Ron questioned as he looked over the students.

“Yes.” Hermione, Seamus and Dean all answered with amused grins.

The sorting started, and they clapped whenever Gryffindor gained a student as the others Houses did when the same happened. Soon enough, the sorting was over and the friends became quiet when Dumbledore stood up and made his speech before introducing the staff. As Hermione had anticipated, one of the new professors was the Muggle Studies teacher and the other had replaced Professor Binns for History of Magic; this caused a murmur of approval and polite scatter of applause across the hall as most students believed that a teacher who was alive, had to at least be a slight improvement over a dead one. When Dumbledore got to Snape, their mouths dropped open when he confirmed Hermione’s suspicions.

“No bloody way!” Ron exclaimed. “That can’t be Snape!”

“What do you think happened to him?” Ginny asked as she looked over their potions master.

“I don’t know,” Hermione answered, much to the shock of the others. When she noticed their looks, she scowled. “Don’t look so shocked.”

“You guys were right,” Dean injected before they could respond to Hermione’s answer. “Mr. Malfoy is the new DADA professor, Dumbledore just announced it.”

“Damnit,” Ron scowled. “Bloody Malfoy’s going to be even more of a git that he usually is.”

“Whatever,” Ginny looked around, her brows furrowed. “Where is Harry? He should’ve been here by now?”

“Don’t worry,” Hermione patted her hand. “He’ll show.”

The words were barely out of her mouth when the doors to the Great Hall opened once more; everyone turned to the entrance and mouths dropped open in shock when they saw who it was.

Walking into the hall was Luna, but she wasn’t the Luna that most people recognized; this Luna didn’t have the same platinum blonde hair as she normally did, but was sporting a dirty blonde look. What drew people’s eyes was the tall, dark haired, green-eyed gorgeous guy walking with his arm around her shoulders.

Both male and female students stared at the two with lust and appreciation in their eyes and all the
female and some males glared at Luna with jealousy.

“That’s him!” Ginny hissed.

“Who?” Seamus asked as his eyes travelled over the dark haired boy’s body. “Merlin, I’d love to tangle with him.”

“We ran into them in Diagon Alley.” Hermione explained as she glared at the two. “Luna pretty much ignored us, but he and his friends insulted us.”

“Such fickle sheep they are,” they heard Luna say.

“Of course,” the dark-haired laughed and the females sighed at the sound. “Only you Luna could say something like that.”

Gasps echoed throughout the room, especially from the Ravenclaw table, as most of the students recognized the name.

“I swear,” Seamus said as he watched the two walk down the Gryffindor table. “If I didn’t know any better, I’d say that bloke was Harry.”

“I thought so too,” Hermione nodded even as her eyes narrowed as she looked over the teen once more. “But, I dismissed that thought. That guy is nothing like Harry is.”

“Hermione’s right,” Dean nodded as he looked at the teen again. “That guy has a confidence that Harry never had.”

“You know me,” They heard Luna reply as she giggled.

“Of course I do,” the teen grinned and whimpers echoed around the hall. “You’re my best girl Luna.”

“And he’s freaking gorgeous,” Seamus exclaimed. “I mean, not that Harry wasn’t hot, ‘cause he was, but this guy is beyond that.”

Before anyone could respond to that, their attention was once again drawn to the entrance where two other teens walked through and gasps of shock and appreciation echoed from the students once more.

“Oi!” Everyone watched as another dark-haired teen walked over to the duo, followed by a very familiar blond.

“Is that Malfoy?” Lavender Brown whispered. “Merlin, did he get hotter. And who’s that guy with him?”

“Hands off my girl Potter,” the dark-haired teen said. Mouths dropped open when they the teen say the name.

“That is Harry!” Dean whispered harshly.

“I don’t believe it,” Hermione shook her head and narrowed her eyes at the four; Ron and Ginny did as well. They remembered Diagon Alley and the way the teens, Harry especially, had treated them.

“…~

“How far are they?” Cory asked as he leaned against a wall, Luna tucked into his side.
"They’re going through the sorting," Draco answered from his position in Harry’s arms.

"This is going to be amazing," Harry grinned. “The looks on their faces will be so delicious.”

“I agree,” Cory laughed. “How do you think Blaise and Pansy reacted to your surprise?”

“They were suitably shocked,” Luna answered with a smile. “But they are Slytherins after all. However, the reactions of the traitorous trio were and will be even more satisfying.”

“Good,” Harry laughed.

“It’s time,” Draco said. “The Old Fool just finished his speech and the introductions of the teachers.”

“Alright,” Harry nodded. “Let’s do this.”

He shifted and moved away from Draco as Luna did the same with Cory.

“Ready for this Luna girl?” Harry asked as they walked towards each other, coming to a stop in front of the doors.

“Since you came up with the idea,” Luna grinned.

Harry laughed and wrapped his arm around her shoulders as hers went around his waist and her head rested on his shoulders. Focusing on the doors, he used his magic to push them open. The moment he stepped through, he ignored everyone’s gaze and looked down at Luna.

Luna lifted her head off his shoulder and smiled at him. “Such fickle sheep they are.”

“Of course,” Harry laughed, drawing sighs from the male and female population. “Only you Luna could say something like that.”

The name of the female Ravenclaw drew gasps from others present. Some, almost all, students hadn’t recognized the blonde, despite the fact that she had shared classes with some of them for the past five years.

Up at the head table, Lucius and Severus exchanged looks and hid their smiles from everyone else.

Harry and Luna walked towards the Gryffindor table, talking softly to each other, yet aware of the whispers that flowed through the hall.

“’You know me,” Luna giggled.

“Of course I do,” Harry grinned and he laughed inwardly at the whimpers that echoed throughout the hall. “You’re my best girl Luna.”

“Oi!” a voice sounded from behind them and the duo turned back to the entrance as did everyone else, only to see Draco and Cory walk in. Their appearance drew gasps of shock and appreciation from the other students.

“Hands off my girl Potter,” Cory grinned as he reached the two.

At his words, mouths had fallen open in shock and whispers started again as everyone finally recognized the dark haired, gorgeous, green-eyed teen.

“What can I say Neville,” Harry grinned, enjoying the disbelief that echoed, especially coming from the Gryffindor Table. “I love blonds.”
“I thought your name was Cory,” Draco drawled as he came to a stop in front of Harry and Luna. “Luna, I’d appreciate it if you removed yourself from the vicinity of my boyfriend.”

“Whatever Drake,” Luna laughed as she moved from under Harry’s arm and into Cory’s.

“Thank you,” Draco sneered, though his eyes danced with laughter, as he took her place before placing a gently yet possessive kiss on Harry’s lips.

“I keep telling Harry here that my name is no longer Neville Longbottom but Cory LeStrange,” Cory nodded, delighting in the shocked silence that followed his words. “But, he doesn’t listen it seems.”

“I do listen,” Harry protested.

“Mr. Potter, Ms. Lovegood and Mr...LeStrange, was it?” Snape’s voice sounded behind them and the quartet turned to face him.

“Hello Professor Snape,” Harry smiled at the man as did Luna and Cory. He rolled his eyes when he caught sight of the horrified looks on the faces of the Gryffindor students. ‘Really, they should learn to keep their emotions to themselves...I wonder how far we can go before one of them faints from shock?’

“As I recall Mr. Potter,” Snape narrowed his eyes at his students and though his voice was filled with contempt, it was also filled with glee at what was happening, though you wouldn’t be able to tell unless you knew him; fortunately, Harry, Luna, Cory and Draco did. “It is required for all students to be punctual and suitably dressed in their uniforms and robes during the opening feast. Regardless of the fact that you are the Golden boy of Gryffindor and our dear Headmaster, you are not exempt from the rules. Neither of you are. Detention, tomorrow night at seven.”

“Severus,” Dumbledore’s voice sounded down the hall. “To be fair, young Mr. Malfoy must serve the detention as well.”

Snape stood still, his eyes moving from one student to another before turning to glare at Dumbledore before resting back on the four. “Very well then; Mr. Malfoy, you are to join your fellow students. Do not be late. I suggest you proceed to your seats.”

The four nodded; Luna gave Cory a quick kiss on his cheek before heading over to the Ravenclaw table while Draco did the same to Harry before heading to the Slytherin, taking his place between Blaise and Pansy. Harry and Cory smiled before moving to their own seats; however, instead of taking their regular spots, they sat down at the end of the table next to three of the first years.

“Would Corvus LeStrange come up here please?”

Everyone turned to look from the Sorting hat to the students around the hall, most gazes resting on where Cory and Harry were sitting. Whispers ran rampant up and down along three of the four house tables amidst looks of shock and confusion.

“Go on,” Harry grinned at his friend.

Cory grinned in return and got up, ignoring the looks from the others, and headed towards the front of the hall where the hat was. As he passed where Ron, Hermione, Ginny and the others were sitting, he took note of the looks of shock, disbelief and horror on their faces and smirked.

“Put me on your head young man,” the hat commanded.

Cory did as he was told and sat on the stool facing everyone.
“Hmmm,” the hat started. “Well, well Mr. LeStrange, what a pleasant surprise. I see you are no longer willing to go by the name Neville Longbottom.”

“No,” Cory shook his head. “Neville Longbottom is no longer my name.”

“Good,” the hat nodded. “Interesting; you are your mother’s son yet, you are your own person. You have the cunning of Slytherin, the bravery of Gryffindor and the loyalty of Hufflepuff. You would do great in all three.”

“I’d like to stay in Gryffindor please,” Cory thought politely. Despite now knowing the truth about his heritage, he was raised as Neville Longbottom, which meant, the manners that the Lady Longbottom had instilled in him were still there.

“Very well then,” the hat nodded. “Best be...Gryffindor!”

Cory grinned and removed the hat from his head, replacing it on the stool and headed back to where Harry was laughing and cheering. He jogged quickly to his friend’s seat.

“Anyone ever tell you, you suffer from insanity?” Cory asked as he retook his seat.

Harry looked at Cory and deadpanned. “I don’t suffer from insanity, I enjoy every minute of it (*)�)

Cory stared at Harry for a split second before he broke down laughing; a few students that heard Harry’s comment laughed as well.

Seconds later, Harry joined in as well before his gaze shifted to the Slytherin table and his laughter slowly died down. He saw the students looking from Draco to him curiously and knew that that’s Luna was talking about. The Prince will have to address his subjects.

The rest of the feast passed without incidents, well, if you looked passed everyone staring at Draco, Harry, Cory and Luna, and it was time for the students to head to their dormitories. When Cory and Harry got up, they headed straight to Luna.

“Hey,” Harry smiled when they got close. “Anyone give you trouble?”

“Hi,” Luna smiled at her brother. “And no.”

“Good,” Cory nodded before he and Harry turned to the Ravenclaws.

“Let’s get one thing straight,” Harry started; his voice went cold and his eyes hardened. “Luna is like my sister. If anyone messes with her, they mess with me. And trust me,” he smirked and it was so malicious, that a few students whimpered. “Messing with me is not something you would want.”

“Luna is off-limits,” Cory picked up. “She’s no longer the subject of your pranks. You’re supposed to be Ravenclaws, the smartest house in the school, and with the way you’ve treated her over the years, you’re no better than bullies. Touch her, hurt her, and you’re going to have problems with us.”

“Is that understood?” Harry asked.

Too afraid to answer, the Ravens could only nod.

“Good,” Harry nodded before he turned to Luna and his eyes softened as he smiled at her. “Be good Luna girl and hex anyone that dares to mess with you after that warning.”

“I will,” Luna giggled. “Though I think you’re warning pretty much dissuaded anyone from even thinking of attempting anything.”
“We’ll see you at breakfast tomorrow,” Cory said before he gave her a quick kiss. Nodding once more to the Ravenclaws, he and Harry made their way back to their own House mates and out the hall. As they left, they spotted Draco and they nodded to him.

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“So,” Lucius turned slightly to Snape as he kept his eyes on his son and his friend. “This is their plan?”

“A very effective one,” Snape nodded, his onyx eyes shining with amusement and pride as he listened to Draco, Cory, Luna and Harry. He registered the shock and disbelief from the Gryffindor students when Harry called Cory Neville, and he couldn’t help but to grin slightly. ‘The boy is too much of a Slytherin for his own good.’

If either one of them had bothered to look at Dumbledore, they would’ve seen the way his face paled when he heard Cory’s name.

Lucius watched as Snape stood up and made his way to the teens. He heard him assign detention and held back a smirk. They had been trying to figure out a situation in which to give Harry detention in order for them to go to the Chamber of Secrets and this had been the perfect time.

‘Severus cannot give Draco detention as that would be too suspicious,’ he turned to look at Dumbledore. ‘Old Fool, where is that sense of right and wrong? Prevent Severus from allowing Draco to escape untouched.’

As if he had heard his thoughts, Lucius watched as Dumbledore stood up and made his speech about including Draco. He held back his smirk and as he watched Snape walk back towards the table, he could see his friend doing the same.

“A brilliant plan,” Lucius murmured to Snape when he reclaimed his seat. “It is too bad that boy was never placed in Slytherin in the first place, he would have been even more remarkable than he was now.”

“I for one am glad he had kept his true persona hidden and allowed himself to be placed in Gryffindor,” Snape replied back. “If Harry had revealed who he truly was and allowed the hat to place him with the Snakes, I do not think the school would have survived and we might not have accomplished the things we have or the things we will.”

“An astute point you make,” Lucius said after a moment of silence. His gaze drifted back over the students and he listened as the Sorting Hat called Cory up. When it shouted out ‘Gryffindor’, he shook his head. He had an idea of what the teens were planning and he was curious to see how it would turn out.

Moving his gaze across the hall, he saw the way the Slytherins were looking at his son and a barely there frown found its way onto his face.

“Do not worry,” Snape said to him. “Draco will handle things.”

“And how are you so sure?” Lucius asked. “I have no doubt as to the hold my son has, but it is quite unbelievable to assume the older Slytherins will be so cooperative or gentle.”

“Trust your son Lucius,” Snape replied. They became quiet once more as they enjoyed the rest of the feast. Both men relished in the looks the students still threw them and they knew that the school year would be even more interesting, especially for Lucius considering the plans that his master had.
“Come,” Snape said as he stood up. He watched the students leave the hall. “You will see your son in his element and you will observe that your fears regarding the older Snakes are unfounded.”

Draco said nothing as he left the Great Hall and headed to the dungeons. Pansy and Blaise walked beside him on either side with the rest of the Slytherins behind them. The first years, though they had heard the Headmaster instruct them to follow their prefects, had seen the way the Slytherins had waited for the blond to move before they did and had done accordingly.

The other Snakes were curious as to their Prince’s sudden attachment to the Golden Boy, but knew they had to wait until they were behind closed doors to voice any questions. They hadn’t heard of anything from their parents, so naturally, they wondered what to do, but they would wait until they got an explanation from Draco.

When they got to the entrance, Draco muttered the password and went inside, heading directly to the chair sitting near the fireplace. Immediately, Crabbe and Goyle took up standing positions behind the chair while Blaise and Pansy sat on the arms.

Draco walked over to the chair and sat down, Pansy and Blaise adjusting themselves so he’d be more comfortable. He looked out over the common room, noticing that all the Slytherins had taken up spots facing him with the first years sitting on the carpeted floor in the front. Slipping into his Malfoy training, he wiped all emotions from his face, leaving his eyes and his expression blank.

When the last Slytherin had entered the room, the door closing behind them, Draco’s eyes roamed over the students before settling on the first years.

“All first years please stand.” Though his voice was soft, it was still easily heard throughout the room and the steely command in it made them took note and had the first years rising to their feet. “New students stand as well.”

One new student stood in the crowd; though they were a bit apprehensive and slightly terrified, they did not let it show. It was a point in their favour.

“My name is Malfoy, Draco Malfoy. Welcome to Slytherin House. I can tell you’re terrified and a bit apprehensive as to what I am going to say,” Draco started. At their startled looks, he smirked briefly. “It is not recognizable to the others, but they are not me; I have spent my life being taught to hide my emotions and to read others. I must congratulate you however on a job well done of hiding it; now onto important matters.

“We here in Slytherin have a set of rules that we follow. You might balk at them, but keep in mind they are for your own good. Rule one, you are never to leave this common room on your own; if you’re going to go somewhere, travel in packs of three or more. The reason for this is that, lone Slytherins are targets for the other houses. While the other houses may get along with each other, they do not associate as much with us. The worst of the lot is Gryffindor; the rivalry between our house and theirs is legendary and not to be taken lightly.

“Next rule; your loyalty is to your house. Any disagreements with fellow Snakes are to be kept within the Slytherin common room only. When you leave here, you will present a united front; you will not give the other houses any chance to hold power over you. If they knew of any rift between us, they would capitalize on it.

“Slytherins pride themselves on their appearance, their behaviour and the ability to keep their emotions in check—except when we’re playing Quidditch, then you can express however you want,
but it must still be done in a way that doesn’t bring shame to our house.” Draco paused and looked at the students. “Do you understand what I’m telling you so far?”

“Yes sir.” They replied respectfully and politely.

“Good,” Draco nodded. “Now, if you were to ever seek revenge on another student, you are not to get caught, you are not be seen seeking your revenge and you are to make sure that there is nothing that would implicate you and if need be, deflect the blame onto someone else.”

He stopped and looked at the first years and smirked—they smiled back tentatively—before continuing. “When it comes to your academics, you are to perform your best. While we may not be as smart as Ravenclaw, we are not stupid either. You will hear of a student, Hermione Granger, and you will ignore her. She is referred to as the brightest witch of our generation, but the truth of the matter is, Granger is book smart; she can recite any information from any book that she has read, but that is as far as everything goes. Now, I know it may shock some of you older students to hear me speak so amicably about her being as she is a Mudblood, but I believe in knowing your enemy.”

“Sorry to interrupt,” the transfer student, a female, spoke up.

“Go ahead,” Draco nodded, though his eyes had narrowed slightly.

“What does Mudblood mean?” the girl asked.

“What is your name?” Draco asked her.

“Gabriella Garibaldi,” the girl answered.

“A Mudblood is a derogatory term that is used to describe a Muggle-born witch, or wizard,” Draco answered. “A Muggle-born is someone whose parents are not magical. Slytherin is composed mostly of pure-blood students, and occasionally, we do get half-bloods.”

“So, we do not associate with them?” Gabriella asked.

“No, we do not,” Draco answered. “This school has a few, but Granger is by far the worst of it. She believes herself to be better than us pure-bloods and tries to change things which she has no true knowledge about.” He was referring to the elves and her trying to start S.P.E.W. and the other Slytherins chuckled as they knew.

“I take it from your question,” Draco continued. “You weren’t raised in the ways of a British pure-blood?”

“No,” Gabriella shook her head. “Make no mistake, I am a pure-blood. I was born in Italy and I lived there until I was five, which is when my mother decided to send me to America to be raised by family. I went to a Wizarding school as well as a Muggle one and I was completely outraged at it. At both schools, I had to deal with females that believed they were above everyone else, that they were better than me, and one of them just happened to be a teacher’s pet. She was a genius, but she liked rubbing it into other’s faces.” Gabriella’s eyes narrowed in hatred as she remembered her former classmate. “I’ve had to stop myself from hexing her into oblivion more often than not. As a kid, the excuse of accidental magic was perfect for any revenge I did, but as I got older, I couldn’t use that excuse anymore.”

“Gabriella,” Draco smiled. “You are going to fit in just fine with us. I take it you’ll have no problem removing Granger from her self-made pedestal?”

“None whatsoever,” Gabriella grinned.
“Good,” Draco nodded. “School curfew is at ten; however, Slytherins are to be in their common room from nine-thirty. Lights out is at eleven. For younger students, first to third year, this rule is adjusted to one hour earlier, so do try to be in the common room at nine, alright? As I said before, students from the other houses rarely associate with us, however, there are now three exceptions, Cory LeStrange and Harry Potter of Gryffindor and Luna Lovegood of Ravenclaw. Those three students will be there for you for whatever reason you may have; they are your allies.”

His statement was the opening the Slytherins needed.

“What exactly is going between you and the Golden Boy?” a sixth year, Alexander MacDougal, questioned.

Draco’s smile was smug as he looked at Alexander, but he said nothing and turned his attention back to the first years. “As for the professors, as much as they try not to be, they are biased against our house. Professors like McGonagall and Flitwick are very fair, but when it comes down to it, they will be more for their own house members than they are for us. Our Head of House Severus Snape, the Potions Master, and now Professor Malfoy, the new Defence teacher, are the only professors that are truly on our side. If you are in trouble, go to either one. They will help as they are former Slytherins themselves, which brings me to another rule; once a Slytherin, always a Slytherin!

“You might hear discouraging things about both, but pay them no mind. They are only looking out for us; yes, Professor Snape is mean to the other houses, but he has to be. For the longest time, he was the only one that truly looked out for us. When it comes to the Headmaster, do not ever go to him for anything. As much as he claims to want unity within the school, he doesn’t. He is very biased against Slytherins; if you can, avoid ever having to be alone with the Headmaster for a private talk. If such a situation is unavoidable and you find yourself having close contact with him, try to avoid looking directly into his eyes; he is a very skilled Legilimens and is not above using his talent on unsuspecting students.”

His words caused worried murmurs amongst the new students. Some first-years looked confused; obviously they didn’t know the expression. Draco ignored this however as he was sure that someone would explain to the young snakes later and point them towards a beginner’s book on Mind Arts on the bookshelf of the common room.

Instead, he repeated his instructions. “I cannot stress this enough, do not ever go to the man for help. Always go first to one of our prefects for help; they wear badges similar to this one (he motioned to the prefect badge pinned to his robe) or to Professors Snape and Malfoy or an older Slytherin student.”

Draco shifted in his seat as he looked at the students. “Remember everything that was said tonight and take it to heart. Now, Professor Snape is going to stop by to speak with you, I suggest you go to your dormitories and go through your books—reread the first chapter. If there is one thing our Head of House cannot stand, it is an unprepared student and he will not tolerate it from his Slytherins.”

The first years heard the dismissal and glanced at each other before looking around to find their dormitories. Without saying anything, two older students got up and led them to where they were supposed to go.

Gabriella sat down, but she held a troubled look on her face and Draco noticed it.

“What is it Gabriella?” he asked.

“Oh,” Gabriella looked at him before shifting her eyes. “It’s nothing...it’s just, I didn’t get a chance to purchase all my school supplies, so I was just thinking about what I was going to do for classes
“You’ll be a sixth year, won’t you?” Draco’s brows furrowed as he looked at her and then, he remembered Luna’s words.

“Yeah,” Gabriella nodded.

“See me later tonight,” Draco said.

“Ok,” Gabriella nodded, though she was wondering why he would want to see her.

“So Draco,” Alexander called out. “You never answered my question; what is going on between you and Potter?”

“What do you mean?” Draco smirked.

“Dray,” Pansy chuckled and playfully slapped her friend’s arm. “Stop being mean and tell them what they’re all dying to know.”

“Fine, fine,” Draco tapped her on her side. “You ruin all my fun. You want to know what is going on between me and Harry; it’s simple, we’re together.”

“What?” the word echoed out of everyone’s mouth.

“But,” Alexander looked at the blond. “You’re rivals.”

“We were rivals,” Draco clarified. “We met up at the beginning of summer and we talked without the influence of everything else and decided that we had more in common than we thought.”

“You’re dating the Gryffindor Golden Boy,” Millicent Bullstrode said. “He’s Dumbledore’s little puppet.”

“Harry isn’t as golden as everyone believes him to be,” Draco said before he narrowed his eyes at Millicent. “And he is no more a puppet of the Old Fool than I am.”

“What about your father?” Theodore Nott asked. “How does he feel about your dating Potter?”

“My father is pleased with my choice in partner,” Draco answered smugly. “Like I said Nott, Harry isn’t as golden as you think.”

“He’s right,” Blaise spoke up. “We met with Harry when we were in Diagon Alley buying our supplies and even we were surprised at just how less golden the supposed Golden Boy was.”

“Potter is more like us,” Pansy smirked, “than anyone thought.”

And with those cryptic words, most of the Slytherin students got the idea of what the trio was telling them.

“I don’t believe this!” Dominic Montague, a fifth year, spoke out harshly. “How could you date Harry Potter? He is Dumbledore’s Golden Boy and the sworn enemy of our Lord! You’re betraying our Lord and our cause! You’re nothing but a traitor!”

Draco’s grey eyes darkened dangerously. Though the room was warm from the fireplace, the sudden chill that emanated from Draco had students shivering and thankful they were not the ones on the receiving end of his anger. Looking into Draco’s eyes, the students shivered at the frigid look in them; it was like being outside in the middle of winter during an ice storm in Antarctica. Draco stood
from his seat and the students that were around Dominic, and in the path, moved away.

A growl sounded through the room and students jumped out of the way with screams when they saw the reason; standing waist high, a pure white dog with blood red eyes and blue pupils stood next to Draco.

Yasha, who had disappeared into Draco’s room after they had gotten to Hogwarts had felt his master’s anger and had responded to it.

Draco came to a stop mere feet from Dominic, as did Yasha, and the picture the two presented was enough to have Dominic stepping back and regretting to have spoken his thoughts so freely.

“You would dare,” Draco’s voice, though soft, was filled with rage and malice, “to question me? You would dare to accuse me of betrayal when you know nothing! You would dare to accuse me of being a traitor?! I owe you no explanation and I would suggest that before you even think to throw accusations my way, that you be sure of what it is exactly you are saying! Do I make myself clear?!”

~...~

As they stayed hidden in the shadows near the secret entrance, both Snape and the elder Malfoy watched on as Draco spoke to the first years and the transfer student.

Lucius looked at his son in pride. The way Draco spoke, the way his very presence commanded the room, he was every bit the Malfoy as Lucius expected.

“I never realized the influence Draco had over the house,” Lucius murmured to his friend.

“From his first year here,” Snape looked briefly at him, “other students, older ones included, have looked towards him. It may have started out due to your position in the Dark Lord’s ranks, but Draco came into his own. They look to him for guidance.”

“It is quite the relief to see that Draco is recognized as the Prince as I was,” Lucius said. “His control near rivals mine.”

“And with Draco’s subsequent attachment to Harry,” Snape mused. “That control will only get stronger.”

“How so?” Lucius asked, casting a quick glance at his friend before looking back at the happening in the common room.

Before Snape could answer, they listened as Draco spoke to Gabriella and Lucius’ pride in his son grew.

“From what I have gathered from both Ms. Parkinson and Mr. Zabini,” Snape continued on when Draco had finished speaking to the girl, “the students of Slytherin have long suspected something off about Harry. They knew somehow that he wasn’t as golden as he portrayed himself to be. I dare suspect the only reason they had not approached Harry was because on all accounts, Draco hated him.”

“But now that they will learn that it is not so,” Lucius said with awareness, “there’s nothing to stop them.”

“Exactly,” Snape nodded. His attention was drawn back to the room when he heard one of the younger years accuse Draco of betrayal.
Both men felt the temperature drop in the room and Lucius made a move to step out when he felt Snape’s hand on his arm.


Lucius glanced at the potions master, but heeded his words. He turned back and watched and listened as his son tore into the student. When Draco fired off a curse, he couldn’t help the pride that enveloped him and he unconsciously straightened a bit because of it.

“Do not start strutting peacock,” Snape teased.

“Quiet,” Lucius didn’t glance at him.

Snape smirked and moved to step out of the shadows, Lucius behind him.

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Too terrified to say anything, Dominic could only nod. When Draco turned to walk away, he breathed a sigh of relief, thinking that that was it...he was wrong.

“A house is as strong as its prince,” Draco stopped suddenly, his back still towards Dominic. “And I am the prince of this house. You dared to challenge me with your baseless accusations and that shall not go unpunished.”

Before Dominic could properly register the words, he noticed the movement of Draco’s right shoulder and arm, indicating that he summoned his wand into his hand from a hidden wand holster. His instinct screamed at him that an attack was coming. He barely managed to avoid the Blasting Curse that would have sent him flying back and hitting the wall with force; he dropped to the floor and raised a shield, but did not retaliate. Looking up at Draco, he nodded and lowered his wand as a sign of submission.

“Never question me or my actions ever again,” Draco sneered at him.

Dominic nodded again and scrambled quickly to his feet, keeping his eyes on the floor.

“Is there a problem?” Snape asked as he and Lucius stepped into the room.

“No sir,” Draco shook his head, his gaze never leaving Dominic.

Snape looked at Dominic before looking at his students. “Gather the first years.”

A fifth year student went up to the dormitories and seconds later, returned with the first years behind them.

“I trust Mr. Malfoy has explained the rules of Slytherin to you?” Snape inquired.

“Yes sir,” the first years responded.

“Very well then, there is no need for me to reiterate,” Snape said before he narrowed his eyes at them. “The rules apply to the entirety of Slytherin, both old and new students. Should anyone of you show a complete disregard and break them, the consequences shall be dire. Am I understood?”

“Yes sir.” chorused the students once more.

“Over there is our house notice board,” Snape gestured towards one wall of the common room. “There the study groups and the appointments for the year meetings will be posted tomorrow. In a
few days, you will also find the Quidditch training schedule and any club activities there and lists of older students who offer their help as tutors. The first and second years all have the same basic classes like Transfiguration, Charms, Potions, Defence, History and Herbology together. The main class schedules for all years are on the board and here are your individual schedules.”

He waved his wand—without speaking an incantation—and a small stack of schedules and note rose from a side table, divided themselves into individual pieces of parchments and flew towards the astonished first years. Each one of them got a class schedule and a note with a day and time during an afternoon in the next week for an appointment with their Head of House after the official Slytherin first-year meeting tomorrow afternoon.

After that, another couple of different coloured parchment stacks, did the same routine and sailed towards the smirking older years—they had had this little demonstration of their Head of House’s proficient magic already in the past years. The Slytherin first-year students were not gaping like goldfishes or Muggle-borns at the magic, because they all came from wizard families, but they still looked impressed.

Snape addressed the first-years again, but also made eye contact with the lone transfer student. “From third year onwards you can choose several electives like Arithmancy, Ancient Runes, Care of Magical Creatures, Divination or Muggle Studies, so there are some small differences in the class schedules of the older students. The fifth years study for their O.W.Ls and the seventh years for their N.E.W.Ts, so it’s best if you ask fourth or sixth years for help as they will have more free time than the fifth and seventh years. Of course, you can always turn to the prefects. Do you have any questions so far?”

The students stared at him and each other, quickly averting their eyes. He knew from many years of experience that they would come up with lots of questions later and that the prefects would handle them competently as always. However, he wanted to get to know his new Snakes personally and scan them for any potential problems; he knew it didn’t ease matters with potentially troubled or abused children to pressure them so soon after arriving at Hogwarts.

So, he set up two meetings; first, an informal get-together as a group to establish a basis of contact and trust and later, an individual meeting. Should one of the prefects notice that a student was hurt or have special problems, they would inform him at once so that he could take the appropriate measures.

“Should you need to speak with me,” Snape continued explaining to his new Snakes, “my usual office hours are posted on the board and on my office door, which is located next to the main Potion’s classroom down here in the dungeons.

“Should you need me outside of class time or office house in case of an emergency that the prefects cannot handle,” his tone made it clear that only most dire circumstances would overtax his prefects and that the new students should not bother him with trivial matters, “come to my office and press your wand hand on the door. Should I be somewhere else inside this large castle, the wards on the door will inform me that you seek help. In the evenings or early mornings I’m often in my private lab, as I brew all the potions needed for the Hospital Wing of Hogwarts or experiment on new potions when I am able to. And believe it or not, even I sleep sometimes. In this case, you will have to wait a while. I will come as soon as possible.”

He fixed the students with a stern gaze and received nods and a chorus of “Yes, sir!”, “Alright, sir!” and “Thank you, sir!”

“I shall expect all of you at breakfast tomorrow morning,” Snape continued, “no exceptions. At seven-thirty, a prefect will start a short tour for the first years and any new transfer students from this
common room to show you around the main parts of Hogwarts and then, they will lead you to the Great Hall for breakfast. So do get up on time and gather over there at the fireplace before seven twenty-five. Good night.”

With those words, both professors left the common room.

Waiting until they were sure their professors were gone, they students turned back to their prince.

“So Malfoy,” Nicole Vaisey, a seventh year grinned. “How is our newest member? Is he as good as he looks?”

Draco settled back into the chair and grinned at Nicole. “Now, why would I give you any details?”

“Oh come on Draco,” Millicent teased. “Tell us something. I mean, we all know Potter’s hot and with his new looks, the boy is a god amongst men...both of you are...so you have to tell us something.”

“And watching you wonder is so much fun,” Draco laughed and stood up. “I’ll see you guys tomorrow. Come on Gabriella.”

“Ok,” Gabriella nodded and followed the blond up the stairs.

“Draco!” Nicole, and other girls, shouted out. “Just tell us something!”

Draco laughed and ignored them as he continued on his way.

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As Harry and Cory walked through the halls, they talked softly amongst themselves, ignoring the looks they were receiving from the students in the hallway. As they neared Gryffindor tower, they slowed their walk.

“I bet you anything,” Harry turned to grin at Cory. “Most, if not all, of the students will be waiting in the common room for us.”

“Harry,” Cory laughed. “That’s a sucker’s bet. No way am I taking it.”

“Spoilsport,” Harry laughed.

“Hey Harry,” Cory’s voice was a bit softer as he didn’t want anyone to really hear what he was saying.

“Yeah?” Harry turned slightly to look at him.

“Are you going to forgive Granger?” Cory asked.

“Yes,” Harry didn’t hesitate with an answer. He flicked his wrist and deftly waved his wand around them, casting Muffliato—a nifty speech scrambling spell he had learned from Snape and Voldemort over the summer.

When he saw the confused look in his friend’s eyes, he smiled. “It’s like I said on the train, Granger wants to fit in, she wants to move on up in the Wizarding world and she also has this unhealthy belief in authority, especially the ones she knows. She was manipulated by the Old Fool into betraying me; I think that at first, she may have protested but eventually she gave in. And now, now she’s starting to question her actions. I believe the turning point would be Sirius’ will reading; when he compared her to Pettigrew, I think that’s when she started taking a second look at what she was
“But she’s still doing it,” Cory pointed out.

“That’s because she still respects the Old Man,” Harry shrugged as they were just feet from the entrance. “Rather stupid really, but what can you expect? He more than likely filled her head with nonsense and I know she was promised the Black Library, but now...Cory, just because I forgive her, doesn’t mean I forgot that she did betray me. All it means is that I don’t want to have to spend any energy on her any more than I have to. Granger will come around; we’ll mess with her a bit, before we tell her some of the things Dumbledore has done.”

“And if she believes?” Cory asked.

“I still think she’s a bossy, know-it-all Mudblood,” Harry grinned, “and though she has a tendency to be really stupid, she is a powerful witch. Not as powerful as you or Luna or me or Drake, but she is powerful.” He paused and said the password to the Fat Lady—after overhearing it from one of the students—before continuing what he was saying. “Who knows? Our Lord might have some use for her.”

The two looked at each other before erupting into laughter.

“You’re funny Harry,” Cory said between laughter as he and Harry walked into the common room.

“I aim to please,” Harry grinned. “But could you imagine it? Her, working for him.”

“Stop,” Cory clutched at his sides and Harry flicked his wand once more, this time, to cancel the spell that had shielded their conversation from any eavesdropping pictures or lurking listeners.

Everyone in the common room stopped what they were doing and looked at the two.

“What’d I tell you?” Harry smirked as he looked over the Gryffindor members.

“And that’s why I didn’t take the bet,” Cory grinned.

Hermione stood up from her seat as she walked over to the two boys.

“Yes?” Harry raised an eyebrow at her.

“You’re really Harry?” Hermione asked as she looked into his green eyes.

“Yes I am Harry,” Harry turned back to Hermione.

“But, at Diagon Alley, you called me...” Hermione shook her head as she recalled the hurtful words Harry and Cory had spoken to her. “Why would you say those things to me? I’m your best friend, why would you insult me like that? How could you?”

Harry’s eyes narrowed. “People change; they grow up, they learn things they never thought to and they do what is best for them. But you should know all about people changing.”
Hermione felt her hackles rise. ‘What is he talking about? There’s no way he knows about everything.’

‘Traitor,’ Ron snarled as he moved to Hermione’s side. “How could you betray us like that?”

“You dare to speak to Harry about betrayal?” Cory glared at Ron. “Or did you forget about a certain will reading?”

Ron, Hermione and Ginny paled at the words but before either one could respond, Seamus stepped up to them.

“Were you really Neville Longbottom?” he asked.

“Yes,” Cory nodded.

“But,” Seamus’ brows drew together in a frown. “I don’t get it, how can you be Cory LeStrange, if you are Neville Longbottom?”

“Simple,” Cory answered. “I didn’t know I was Cory LeStrange. I spent the last sixteen years believing I was Neville Longbottom. It was only this summer I found out the truth; everything was overwhelming so I left my house and went to Harry’s.”

“You spent the summer with Harry?” Ginny was shocked, as were Ron and Hermione.

“Yes,” Cory nodded. “He was the only I trusted not to freak out.”

“Freak out!” Ron said suddenly. “You’re nothing but a Death Eater spawn and you Harry, how could you spend the summer with him with Bellatrix as his mother?!?”

The temperature in the common room dropped as Harry’s eyes darkened. His eyes bore into Ron as he answered him. “Who I spend my summer with Ronald, is of no concern of yours.”

“But Harry,” Hermione spoke up, “what about Diagon Alley? All those things you said and the letter you sent with Hedwig...”

“I meant it all and the letter was a lie,” Harry answered. “As far as I was concerned, our friendship is over. After all, that is what you wanted; a school year without being killed or having your life in danger. We are not friends Granger, you made sure of that.”

Hermione stepped back as if slapped while the rest of Gryffindor looked at her, each wondering exactly what the girl had done to warrant those words from her best friend.

Seeing the looks on their faces, Harry decided to explain. “You all know that Sirius Black was my godfather and that he was wrongfully accused of betraying my parents. You know he broke out of prison to clear his name and to protect me and you also know that he died back in May.”

Everyone nodded. The news of Sirius’ death was known throughout the Wizarding World and the Gryffindor students knew how much Harry loved his godfather.

“Right,” Harry continued, “but what you don’t know is that Granger here wrote me a letter telling me that it was my fault my godfather was killed.”

Horrified gasps echoed throughout the room as everyone stared at Hermione in shock; they couldn’t believe the girl would say that to Harry.

“And if that wasn’t enough,” Cory spoke up, drawing everyone’s attention. “Ronald here wrote to
Harry; he was basically telling him he couldn’t be his friend anymore because he wasn’t getting any fame from it.”

Ron turned red in anger and embarrassment and without thinking, he drew his wand on Cory. “Shut up!”

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you Weasley,” Cory sneered.

“Harry!” Ginny walked up to him. “Why are you doing this? They already apologized for what they said. We’re your friends.”

“Oh shut up Ginerva,” Harry glared at her and Ginny took a step back. “The only reason you’re here is because you fancy yourself in love with me and you want the prestige that comes with being the girlfriend of the Boy-Who-Lived. I can tell you now that that’s never gonna happen.”

“And what? Malfoy is good for you?” Ginny scowled. “You’re not a faggot!”

“How would you know?” Harry smirked at her and it was so reminiscent of Draco’s that she gasped. “And I suppose you think you are? Sorry, I don’t mingle with whores and that’s all you are.”

“Don’t talk about my sister like that!” Ron snapped and turned his wand on Harry.

“You’re the only one here—and probably the whole school—that doesn’t know that hot crotch here has been sleeping her way through Hogwarts since her third year,” Harry grinned and a few Gryffindors snickered at his description of Ginny.

“Expelliarmus!” Ron shouted, causing everyone, except Cory, to gasp.

Harry watched as the spell came close and made no move to stop it or protect himself. He allowed it to hit its mark and he was sent backwards causing everyone, again with the exception of Cory, to gasp, when his body hit the wall.

Ron held a triumphant grin on his face, satisfaction rolling through him at having hit the great Harry Potter. He lost his grin in a second when Harry stood.

Harry moved to his feet, his head was bowed, but the fury was rolling off him in waves and everyone could hear his magic as it crackled in the air. Harry lifted his head, his eyes darkening to a Slytherin green and the pure malice in them caused people to squeak and whimper in fear; they had never seen such a look on Harry’s face before.

Ron was frozen to the spot, his wand still outstretched as he watched his former best friend stalk towards him. Seeing the danger in the green eyes, in that instant, he understood why Harry had always escaped the Dark Lord and why the crazed man wanted him dead.

Still standing in the same spot, Cory grinned and shook his head; he always knew Ron was a fool but even this was beyond stupid. He wondered if Ron realized that Harry had allowed himself to be hit with the spell and with one look at Ron’s face, he knew he didn’t, but looking at Hermione, he could see that she understood exactly that. He watched as Harry walked towards Ron and was more than thankful that he was on Harry’s good side.

“That feeling of satisfaction you had as the spell connected, remember it,” Harry’s voice was soft and calm and that was worse than if he had been yelling as the rage seemed to be even more amplified. “For that will be the first and last time an attack from you will ever touch me. Consider this your warning Weasley, we are no longer friends; you raise your wand against me again and I will not hesitate to retaliate. From this point on, you are as insignificant to me as flying is to Trelawney.”
Understood?"

Ron trembled slightly from the feel of Harry’s power and could only nod his head.

“Good,” Harry smiled and it was too dark to be kind and Ron’s trembling increased.

Hermione stepped to Ron and grabbed his arm, pulling him away from Harry and towards one of the chairs in the corner. Everyone moved out of their way before turning back to Harry.

Some of the Gryffindors stared at Harry fearfully, some stared at him in awe, but they all moved out of his way as he walked over to the couch in front of the fireplace to sit, Cory joining him.

Cory noticed that some, if not all, of them were still looking at him weirdly and with a hint of betrayal so he sighed and decided to explain. “Look guys, I understand that some of are confused and probably feeling betrayed about me being Cory LeStrange, but I can’t help it. The truth of the matter is, like I said earlier, I didn’t even know. When I found out at the beginning of summer, I had to talk to someone and Harry was the only one I could think of that wouldn’t judge me about it.”

“But Nev—I mean Cory,” Dean spoke up, “it is a little hard to accept and understand.”

Cory said nothing at first and just looked at them, but inwardly he was smirking. This was the perfect opening. Placing a sorrowful look on his face, he continued. “But how do you think I feel? I spent my whole life believing my parents were Frank and Alice Longbottom; that they were heroes—Aurors—but instead, I find out that my real parents are not those heroes, but are actually two of the most notorious followers of You-Know-Who. It was a huge shock.”

Some people, girls mostly, nodded in sympathy; having to find out that you’re not who you thought you were and that you’re real parents were Death Eaters...they could understand his shock.

“So Harry,” Parvati cleared her throat before continuing. “That scene during the feast, was that real? Are you and Malfoy really together?”

Harry looked at her for a few seconds, causing the girl to wonder if he would answer her. “Yes.”

“But how?” Parvati asked. “Why? I thought you were rivals, that you hated each other?”

“We were rivals,” Harry answered. “But I never hated him. Draco and I met up over the summer and we talked things out. Surprising I know, but without all the pressure that was at school, we realized we never hated each other.”

The Gryffindors looked at each other before looking back at the two boys.

“We’re not asking you guys to go up and befriend Draco or to suddenly trust me,” Cory said, “but, if Harry could see past who my parents are and still be my friend and we could forgive Draco for how he acted in the past and move on from it, then you guys could consider doing the same.”

Some were still eyeing them with distrust, but neither boy cared. What they cared about was the fact that some of the students seemed to be listening to what they said.

“How did you guys get so muscled?” Seamus bounded over to them, eyes moving from each boy to the next. “I mean, you guys got gorgeous, or in Harry’s case, even more so.”

Cory and Harry laughed at the Irish boy’s words and relaxed even further into their seats. Seamus’ question seemed to put the others at ease—though Ron, Ginny and Hermione still casted distrustful looks towards them—and the rest of the night was spent with everyone talking about their summers.
before they all drifted off to bed.

~...~

The next morning, Harry and Cory walked out of Gryffindor tower talking to each other. As were the case last night, students stopped and whispered as they passed and they knew that what had happened last night in the common room had been kept secret, which naturally meant that the whole school now knew about it.

As they walked down the corridors, Luna joined up with them and they continued on. As they neared the Great Hall, they spotted Draco coming from the direction of the dungeons; he was walking with Pansy, Blaise, Crabbe, Goyle and the rest of the Slytherins. The prefects had already taken the students on the tour and had met up with Draco and the others on their way to the Great Hall.

When the Slytherin group saw them, a smile lit up Draco’s face and he quickened his pace slightly.

“Hey,” Harry smiled as he drew Draco into his arms. “I missed you last night.”

“Me too,” Draco admitted with a smile as he placed a quick kiss on Harry’s lips. “I’ve gotten so used to sleeping next to you that it felt strange sleeping alone.”

“I know the feeling,” Harry grinned before turning to the other Slytherins. “Pansy, Blaise.”

“Morning Harry,” Pansy smiled. “Any chance of seeing you two kiss some more?”

“Pervert,” Luna grinned at the brunette.

“You know it,” Pansy laughed, “besides, you know if you didn’t consider Harry your brother you’d find it hot too.”

“Astute point Ms. Parkinson,” Luna conceded with a smile and a nod of her head before turning to the girl next to Blaise. “I see our Snakes have already started taking good care of you Gabriella, especially the prince himself.”

“How did you know that that was my name?” Gabi questioned as she looked at the blonde girl with suspicion. “If I recall, you arrived at the feast after the sorting was over.”

“Word of advice,” Cory grinned. “Don’t try to think too much on it. It’s just how Luna is.”

“Luna’s a bit clairvoyant,” Pansy grinned.


“Italian?” Harry questioned as he shifted his arm to wrap around Draco’s shoulder.

“Yes,” Gabi nodded. She looked over Harry and couldn’t believe what her eyes were seeing; she had thought Draco was gorgeous, but his boyfriend was even more so. With his jet black, shoulder length wavy hair, Avada Kedavra green eyes and muscled physique, Harry Potter was the absolute epitome of gorgeousness; with his tanned skin tone, he was like a Greek God come back to life. Alone, each boy was handsome in their own right, but together, they made a very striking picture; they were like night and day with Harry’s dark features—from his hair to his body—and Draco’s light features from his hair also to his body, which although was tanned, it wasn’t as tanned as Harry’s.
“You guys make a breathtaking couple,” Gabi smiled.

“They do, don’t they?” Blaise grinned as he leered at the couple, though he kept his distance, not wanting to provoke Harry.

“Are we going to breakfast or not?” Theo interrupted. “You know how Snape gets.” He walked up and stopped next to Harry. “Theodore Nott.”

“Harry Potter,” Harry held out his hand for a shake. “Please to meet you.”

“Same,” Theo nodded before turning to Luna and Cory.

“Luna Lovegood,” Luna waved with a smile.

“Corvus LeStrange,” Cory grinned, “but you can call me Cory.”

“And now that that’s out of the way,” Harry smiled. “I’m hungry. Let’s go.”

The group turned and headed towards the Great Hall’s entrance and their arrival into the Great Hall drew everyone’s attention, teachers included, and deafening silence followed.

“Slytherin or Gryffindor?” Luna asked.

While the other Slytherins headed to the table, Draco, Harry, Luna, Cory, Blaise, Pansy and Gabi stood where they were. At Luna’s questioned, they noticed that while the Slytherins looked at them impassively, the rest of the students were torn. Especially the Gryffindors; half were looking at them with fear and anger and the other half with nothing. The former telling Harry and Cory that Ron had possibly gotten to them even more.

“Hey Harry, Cory,” Seamus grinned as he got up from his seat and walked over to them. Behind him, Ron scowled darkly, but made no move to say anything.

“Hey Seamus,” Harry greeted.

“You guys sitting with us this morning or with the others?” Seamus asked.

“Let’s not give anyone any heart attacks,” Draco said. “We’ll sit with Slytherin, you guys can go.”

Harry looked at his boyfriend, his head cocked to the side, looking very adorable to many of the girls and some of the boys. “You sure?”

“Very,” Draco nodded before squeezing Harry’s hand reassuringly. “Go.”

“Alright,” Harry smiled at him before heading to the table with Cory and Luna. Some of the Gryffindors moved out of their way, but they didn’t care. Seamus moved from his spot to sit in front of them, and he was followed by Dean—no surprise as the dark-skinned boy was his best friend—Lavender, Parvati and surprisingly Romilda Vane.

Harry was talking with Seamus when he felt the pressure on his mind and he instinctively knew who it was. Knowing what he had to do, he allowed the person entry, making sure to place a false memory—one that was of his summer and doing his outside chores, and of the Dursleys leaving him at home—to the forefront. Keeping with his act, he allowed a grimace to dominate his face as he moved his hand to his forehead to rub it. After a few more seconds, he frowned before he forcefully expelled them, turning just in time to the staff table to see Albus blanch and rock backwards slightly. He glared slightly at the man as he recalled the conversation he had had with Voldemort just after
they spoke about his wanting to punish Umbridge.

Across the hall at the Slytherin table, Draco’s eyes narrowed in curiosity when he saw the glare his boyfriend was throwing at the Headmaster and vowed to speak with the dark-haired teen later.

~...~

Up at the staff table, Albus watched the proceedings with narrow eyes, the famous twinkling missing from them. He kept his gaze on the Gryffindor table where Harry was sitting with Cory and the others, his gaze boring into Harry as he used Legilimency. He saw the memories—not knowing they’re planted—and noticed the way Harry grimaced and frowned before he felt himself being thrown from the boy’s mind, the force of it causing him to blanch and rock backwards.

When he regained his composure, he frowned in contemplation at the slight glare on the teen’s face.

‘What is going on?’ he thought. ‘There is no way he is aware of everything I have done. He is more than likely angry at what those Weasley brats told him about the will reading.’ He gaze shifted from Harry to Cory to the Slytherin table and he frowned. ‘I must speak with him and nip these relationships in the bud. It does not do well for the Saviour to be associated with children of Death Eaters. A few Compulsion Charms and a little guilt trip will work perfectly.’

He turned to his second in command. “Minerva, when you hand out the schedules, inform Harry that he is to see me in my office after classes this afternoon but before dinner.”

“Very well Albus,” Minerva nodded before she turned back to her meal.

~...~

Harry took his eyes off the Headmaster and focused back on his breakfast. He felt eyes on him and turned to look at Cory, who held a concerned look within his eyes. He nodded, to let him know he was alright. Luna—who was sitting between Harry and Cory—was talking to Romilda when she stopped suddenly and turned to look at Harry.

“Luna girl?” Harry looked into his sister’s eyes and took in the sudden gleam of delight that lit them up.

Luna’s gaze drifted to the ceiling before back down to Harry and she smiled a small smile—it was the smile of someone about to delight in destruction—before leaning in close to Harry. “The students are about to get a glimpse into the world of revenge on the Dark side.”

Harry’s brows furrowed in confusion for a split second before they cleared as realization hit him and a predatory grin came across his face. He looked around the Great Hall, taking in the relaxed yet slightly strained—some students were still throwing wary looks in his direction—atmosphere and knew that it was about to change. These students were going to get a wake-up call as the reality of the war was about to hit home, if they had already forgotten about the events in the middle of summer; those Giant and Inferi attacks, the various disappearances and murders, the great Dartford Crossing Bridge collapsing...

On cue, the flapping of wings drew the students’ attention to the owls flying towards them; in their talons, some held packages, while most held the morning post. The post was dropped on the tables in front of the students and they reached for them.

Harry looked around once more and caught Draco’s gaze; he glanced quickly at the paper before glancing back at the blonde, the smile still on his face and he watched as recognition hit Draco and a thin smile made its way across the aristocratic features.
There was a rustling of paper as students opened up the Daily Prophet and soon enough, there was a scream from the Hufflepuff table before others echoed throughout the hall.

“Oh my God!” Hermione’s voice sounded and people turned to her.

“What is it?” another Gryffindor asked.

“Read the paper,” Hermione instructed. People did and shocked and disgusted gasps sounded.

Smiling, Harry picked up his own paper and opened it, grinning at the headline;

**Former Senior Undersecretary Dolores Umbridge Murdered!**

Is nobody safe anymore?!

Early yesterday morning, when the employees of the Daily Prophet showed up to work, they were greeted by a gruesome and horrifying sight. Sitting upon the steps of the Prophet was the severed head of the former Senior Undersecretary to the former Minister for Magic, Dolores Umbridge—who was abducted in the middle of Diagon Alley on the evening of August twenty-eighth. But what made the gruesome discovery even more horrifying was the message inscribed on Umbridge’s face from one cheek over to the other;

This vile woman was punished because of her crimes against children and werewolves.

And that was not everything. The already shocked employees saw something that, if they hadn’t seen it with their own eyes, they never would have believed it; reaching down from her hairline, over her forehead down to the bridge of her nose and into her mouth was a terribly familiar and feared black marking; the Dark Mark! It looks like a skull with a snake coming out of its mouth, the snake slithering around the dead Madam Umbridge’s bloody, bitten through lips in a figure 8!

“The state of the mutilated head, smeared with blood and dirt and the frozen, swollen features, speak of a most dreadful, painful death,” said Auror Barnaby Proudfoot, who was the first official to examine the grisly find.

It is no secret that during her time as Undersecretary to former Minister for Magic Cornelius Fudge that Umbridge made a few enemies, but still, one cannot help but to wonder what it was exactly the woman had done and who had in turn done this to her. Was this the work of You-Know-Who? Was this done by a Dark side supporter? Or are we dealing with someone else entirely who wants to place the blame elsewhere? When questioned, Minister Scrimgeour had this to say;

“Despite her many faults, former Undersecretary Umbridge was a citizen and if she had indeed done crimes against children, then such crimes should have been reported to the proper authorities. We do not deal with vigilantes. If this is indeed a work of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, then it is added onto his list of crimes against the British Wizarding World. He started a war, but we will finish it.”

The minister had no more to say. If this was truly, You-Know-Who’s work, then Umbridge becomes another casualty on those who have been killed by the Dark side. Further details about the investigation of this capital crime—and first statements of various concerned citizens and Ministry employees, about the possible meaning of the message and reasons for the murder—are on pages 6, 8 and 9.

Harry grinned as he read the paper before he wiped the smile from his face—though his eyes still held a triumphant look—and looked around. The horrified looks on both students and teachers filled him with joy as he had accomplished exactly what he has set out to do. He was pleased to note that most students seemed to be shocked, but that on several faces, there was unmistakable glee at
Umbridge’s fate; he even heard some faint whispers about how she deserved it and that they would like to thank whoever had gotten rid of her. His gaze rested on Hermione and he could see the horror and disbelief on her face and he couldn’t help but to shake his head; that’s why the girl couldn’t last a day as a soldier of the Dark side.

Hermione looked up and caught his eyes and he knew she caught the satisfaction in his features and he could almost see the indignation and rant build inside her and he knew she would be after him sometime soon—he couldn’t wait.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks to all of you for reading and reviewing and loving our story.

(*) I have no idea who this quote belongs to, but I do love it. If anyone knows who spoke it, please let me know *smiles* lots of hugs and kisses to you guys...
Schedules, Warnings and Resolving Issues

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing…if I did, Ginny would have died in the CoS, Dumbledore would have choked on his lemon drops and Harry would have stood up for himself against Molly and Dumbledore.

Disclaimer 2: this story is based on characters and situations created and owned by JK Rowling and Bloomsbury/Scholastic. No money is being made and no copyright or trademark infringement is intended.

"Talking"
'Thinking'
Letter or commentary/introduction and flashback
{Parsssel|tongue}
~…~ indicates scene change

Last time on RDA;

...Harry grinned as he read the paper before he wiped the smile from his face—though his eyes still held a triumphant look—and looked around. The horrified looks on both students and teachers filled him with joy as he had accomplished exactly what he has set out to do. His gaze rested on Hermione and he could see the horror and disbelief on her face and he couldn’t help but to shake his head; that’s why the girl couldn’t last a day as a soldier of the Dark side.

Hermione looked up and caught his eyes and he knew she caught the satisfaction in his features and he could almost see the indignation and rant build inside her and he knew she would be after him sometime soon—he couldn’t wait.

Harry tore his gaze away from Hermione and looked around at the students; he noted the ones that had a satisfied look on their faces and figured that they had served detention with the dead Umbridge and was happy that justice had finally been done to her.

He turned back to look at Luna and smiled when he saw the gleam in her eyes, one that was very similar to the look Bellatrix had in her own eyes when she was hexing someone.

“Perfect,” Luna whispered to Harry.

“I ever told you how much I loved your sadistic side?” Harry grinned as he wrapped an arm around the blonde’s shoulder.

“Harry,” Luna giggled, drawing looks from the others around them, some smiling at the obvious affection between the two.

Before he could respond, they were interrupted by the Ravenclaw Head of House, Filius Flitwick.

“Ms. Lovegood,” the short teacher spoke up, “here is your class schedule.”

“Thank you sir,” Luna smiled as she took the paper from his hand.
The professor nodded with a smile before he continued on his way to the Ravenclaw table. Both Harry and Cory turned to Luna, but neither one had chance to say anything as Professor McGonagall—Gryffindor’s Head of House—walked up to them.

“Here are your timetables Mr. Potter, Mr. LeStrange,” Minerva handed out the schedules to the two boys.

Harry glanced at it. As expected, he was signed up for five subjects; Transfiguration, Charms, Defence against the Dark Arts, Herbology and Potions. He looked up at McGonagall, beaming. “Everything looks alright. Thanks so much, Professor.”

Minerva nodded in confirmation, pleased and proud that the young teen was determined to be more studious this year and to continue with Potions to get a NEWT result that opened up the career of an Auror for him, allowing him to follow in the footsteps of his father and godfather.

“Now, Mr. LeStrange, about your schedule,” Minerva turned to Cory. “Herbology and Defence against the Dark Arts of course, with an Outstanding and an Exceeds Expectations, there is no question about that. Professor Sprout is very pleased with you. However, I must inform you that you cannot continue with Transfiguration, as an Average Owl result is really not good enough for the demands of my advance class.”

Cory nodded and looked up at her. “What do you suggest, Professor?”

“That you attempt a NEWT in Charms. You achieved the necessary Exceeds Expectations on your OWL examinations,” Minerva told him. “I already entered you in this class.”

“Alright,” Cory smiled, “thanks Professor.”

Minerva nodded and turned back to Harry. “Oh and Mr. Potter, the Headmaster would like to see you in his office after classes this afternoon but before dinner.”

“Did he say what it was about?” Harry frowned up at her.

“No,” Minerva shook her head, “he did not. However, I would suggest you see him to determine what it was he wanted.” She turned to leave, but then stopped, “by the way, he favours Acid Pops.”

“Yes ma’am,” Harry nodded and pocketed his schedule.

Minerva nodded and continued down the table, handing out the schedules to the rest of the Gryffindor students.

As he looked down at his schedule, Harry saw that for today, the first period was Ancient Runes and since he hadn’t signed up for that class and had dropped Divinations, it was a free period for him. Following that was DADA, which he honestly couldn’t wait for. After DADA, there was a break and then there was another free period for him as Arithmancy was in that slot, followed by lunch. He hadn’t registered again for Hagrid’s class, which would be right after lunch, and the finally, a double dose of Potions.

Folding and pocketing his schedule, he turned back to his friends. “What do you have next Cory?”

“Free period because I don’t take Ancient Runes,” Cory answered as he looked over his own schedule, “after that, it’s DADA, then a break. Since I don’t take Arithmancy, that’s a free period again, then lunch and after that, free time again while you suffer in Potions.”

“Shut up,” Harry laughed and smacked his shoulder playfully. “Anyways, sounds good, that means
we’ll have our breaks together then.”

“I think we all will,” Seamus injected with a grin.

The bell to signal the end of breakfast sounded and the students moved to their feet as they breakfast dishes disappeared by the elves. Harry stood next to Cory and Luna and they turned to walk out the Great Hall.

“It’s time the Beaver learns that not all rivers flow smoothly,” Luna turned slightly to Harry. “Some have Dams that help them, but others have Dams that need to be broken. The Dam on the Beaver’s river needs to be broken.”

Those who heard Luna’s words looked at her in confusion, but Cory smiled while Harry nodded.

“Harry!” Hermione called out as she hurried to catch up to him. She continued calling his name and caught up to him just outside the Great Hall.

“Is there something you need?” Harry stopped and turned to look at her, as did the few students that were in the hallway.

Hermione scowled at him. “I saw your reaction when you read what happened to Undersecretary Umbridge in the Daily Prophet.”

“And?” Harry raised an eyebrow and his eyes held amusement.

“Despite how she acted during her time as professor here last year,” Hermione started, “she didn’t deserve to be murdered so brutally and you should be ashamed of yourself for even feeling the slightest bit of joy! How could you even enjoy the thought of someone’s death?”

Harry’s body tensed and the amusement faded from his eyes, only to be replaced with barely suppressed fury. The temperature dropped and a few students shivered from the coldness they could feel emanating from him.

Hermione, shocked and suddenly afraid, took a slight step back.

“You believe she did nothing that warranted her death?” Harry snarled at her. “That woman was a menace to all of us students last year, including you! She made my life a living hell, or did she almost getting me expelled and slanting my name in the Prophet mean nothing?” Harry took a step forward, his boring into Hermione’s. “Did you forget she admitted that she deliberately sent those two Dementors to Surrey that nearly killed my cousin and me? Or did you forget when she wanted to use an Unforgivable on me?”

Gasps echoed around them and murmurs of shock rose from the students. They couldn’t believe what he was saying; Dementors, Unforgivables? It was true though that Harry had been slandered by the Prophet and many of them had believed him to be a delusional, attention seeker last year.

Hermione looked away briefly.

“What?” Harry sneered at her. “You can’t stand to hear it? You were there. You were there when the bitch threatened to use the Cruciatus Curse on me and you dare to tell me she did nothing that warranted her death?”

Hermione flinched at Harry’s tone and the accusing looks she was getting from the other students. Her gaze drifted to beyond Harry and she saw the contempt on Cory’s Draco’s and Luna’s face. Her gaze turned back to Harry and she felt ashamed, terrified and a deep loss when she saw the disgust in
his eyes; that—more than anything—hurt her.

Without taking his gaze from her, Harry raised his arm and showed his hand to Hermione. Retrieving his wand from its hidden location, he tapped it on his hand, revealing the ‘I must not tell lies’ scar that was left by Umbridge’s detentions.

“This!” he pushed his hand closer for her to see. “You must remember! This is what she did to me and countless other students last year; all because I spoke the truth about the D—about Voldemort.”

Harry ignored the flinches and gasps around him, scolding himself mentally for the almost slip in uttering ‘the Dark Lord’, because it had become so natural to him over the summer. He quickly continued his rant, “and because we were teaching ourselves some DADA when she refused to teach us anything useful. You yourself gave me the Murtlap essence to heal this when I came back on countless nights with a bleeding hand to the common room, for Merlin’s sake!”

Hermione squirmed under his intense gaze and the murmurs of the surrounding students. Some of them rubbed their hands where their own scars lay and looked at Hermione with confusion and displeasure.

Harry stared incredulously at her. “What the hell is wrong with you Granger? You’re the one that started our rebellion, our Defence Group. It was your idea and—though it pains me to say this—it was a brilliant idea. You were so pissed at Umbridge last year that you paid her back by leading her into the forest, or do you not remember?” Harry shook his head. “How could you forget what she is responsible for? Remember how I couldn’t talk to Padfoot anymore because the bitch controlled the post and Floo network? Hmmm? And what happened because I couldn’t check up on him when it really mattered? I led us into a trap, one that nearly got us all killed and even worse, Padfoot died!”

Harry stopped a moment to catch his breath and push down the painful memories of losing Sirius, before he sneered. “So I’m sorry if it’s not acceptable to you Saint Granger, but as far as I’m concerned, the bitch got exactly what she deserved.”

Murmurs of agreement echoed from the other students as they looked at Harry and Hermione and each other. They may not have understood all of what Harry had referred to, but what they did understood was enough.

“What is the meaning of this barricade? Snape’s voice stirred the students and many of them hurried away, but some daringly remained.

“Nothing sir,” Harry never removed his gaze from Hermione. “Just a little misunderstanding as Granger here tried to give a rebuke that was neither warranted nor appreciated, but I’m sure she understands that from this point forward, such actions from her part should be thought upon carefully before they are taken.”

The subtle warning wasn’t lost on Hermione and she felt tears prick her eyes. It was finally sinking in just how much she had lost by her actions.

Snape gave a minute nod and his eyes gleamed with satisfaction—though only if you truly knew what to look for would you see it—before he turned a dispassionate gaze on the surrounding students.

“Classes start in five minutes. It would be wise and beneficial to your health to be there on time.” His voice held a dangerous undertone, one that had the students immediately dispersing the area. Satisfied, he turned and walked away, his robes billowing behind him.

Pansy shook her head before she broke off from Draco and Blaise and walked up to Harry.
“Come on Harry,” she looped her arm around his and briefly leaned into him, “being around all these do-gooders is seriously unhealthy for my life. Be a gentleman and escort me to class.”

Harry glanced at Pansy. He turned to her, dismissing Hermione, and smiled at the girl, “only for you Pansy.”

“Of course,” Pansy smiled, happy that she had gotten his attention from Granger.

“I do hope she isn’t the only one you’re going to be a gentleman to,” Luna grinned as she walked over to Harry’s other side. “I’d hate to have to...remove her.”

“You know you’re my best girl Luna,” Harry pressed a kiss to the blonde’s cheek, delighting in the giggles he drew from the girl. “Let’s go. We wouldn’t want Pansy to become ill, now would we?”

“No,” Luna shook her head and the trio walked off. Cory smirked at Hermione and Ron before he followed his girlfriend and best friend.

Draco turned to follow them, but stopped when he got close to Hermione. His gaze slowly travelled her body before he met her eyes, sneering. “It goes to show that imbeciles attend this school if they refer to you as the brightest witch of our age considering we are shown you stupidity on a daily basis. Umbridge may not have given me detention and I may have been a component player in her Squad, but even I know she deserved her death.

With that, the blond walked away from her, the other Slytherins following him.

Hermione closed her eyes in sadness and humiliation. She opened them when she felt Ron’s hand on her shoulder. She looked at him. “I’m fine.” She then turned to head to her Ancient Runes class, which was with Draco and a few Slytherins, joy. As she was walking, she saw Seamus and Dean talking to each other, occasionally looking at her.

“I suppose you think Umbridge deserved to die as she did?” She asked the two.

“Really Hermione,” Seamus shook his head. “Of course she did. She was a right menace to this school. Harry had every right to be happy about her being dead seeing as how she loved picking on him more than any other student. Harry spent more time in detentions than anyone else.”

“And you scold him for being happy?” Dean looked at her. “In case you didn’t notice, Harry wasn’t the only student happy about her death.”

The two boys said nothing more as they hurried off, not wanting Snape to catch them in the hallway.

Hermione watched them go and wondered, not for the first time, if what she was doing was worth losing not only herself, but the one person she could’ve always counted on.

~...~

On that same morning, witches and wizards all over Britain opened the Daily Prophet. Most were shocked to read the headlines, some only surprised or mildly interested.

In a modest, sixteen and seventeen century manor house built from coursed and squared grey rubble near Selwood in Somerset, two elderly witches dressed in fine black robes, with cashmere shawls against the early morning chill draped over their shoulders, sat at the breakfast table in the dining room, silently nursing their second cup of tea.

Through the wooden mullioned windows they could see the garden and a row of bushes and trees
that bordered the property. The house was no grand manor like Malfoy Manor, but adequate for a family, some servants and room for guests, with its two stories and attics, several bedrooms on the first floor behind the dormer gables to each side. Four brick chimney stacks rose above the Welsh slate tiled roof. The interior was comfortable, not lavish, with many exposed ceiling beams. The right ground floor room had a large fireplace in a moulded 4-centred stone surround, moulded cornice shelf, ornamental plaster over mantel with the arms of the Crabbe family.

They looked up when the delivery owl picked on their window. Before one of the old ladies could rise from the table, Narcissa slipped through the door from the hallway and rushed through the room to open the window. The blonde took the newspaper and just remembered to add a few knuts to the pouch the owl carried before the bird could pick her hand. The owl turned around, fluttered through the window and sped off again.

"Good Morning Mother, good morning Grandma," she belatedly greeted the elder ladies, whilst walking over to the table and taking her seat, completely preoccupied with smoothing out the rolled up Daily Prophet.

"Morning Cissy," her mother mumbled back.

"Oh, my!" she exclaimed, when her gaze fell on the headline.

"Cissy? What’s happened now?" asked her mother, a slender woman, with greyish blonde hair and heavy lidded blue eyes.

Her grandmother just held out a demanding hand with her wand and summoned the newspaper out of Narcissa’s hands. The haughty blonde regarded her with narrowed eyes and a tight smile, her irritation barely hidden. Irma Black, née Crabbe caught the newspaper and held it up close to her face, her old eyes weren’t as sharp anymore as they used to be, but the blaring, and thickly printed headline screamed murder.

Her daughter-in-law, Druella Black, née Rosier, leaned over to snatch a peek; she could not rein in her natural curiosity. "Umbridge? Why was she murdered?" She asked.

"Wait a moment Ella, I’m still reading," snapped Irma.

Narcissa busied herself with pouring a cup of tea and started to butter a scone, burying her anger and resentment deep within her mind. She was the youngest woman at this table, in disgrace, forcibly divorced and stripped of her names and titles by Harry Potter. As Lady Malfoy, she would have been of high ranking, the one to read the Prophet first, but she was bitterly reminded of the old proverb, ‘Beggars should be no choosers, but yet they will’. She wasn’t Lady Malfoy anymore and had to be grateful that her relatives had taken her in.

Narcissa was quite angry at herself that she didn’t understand what had happened earlier in the summer and that she hadn’t noticed what had gone on in her own home. For some reason—one that she could not fathom—Potter had suddenly been in Malfoy Manor. She had seen him, with her own eyes, in a meeting room with many Death Eaters and it was obvious from his demeanour, that he was not a prisoner. As unbelievable as it was, he seemed to be in league with Lucius and Draco and tolerated by the Dark Lord!

Narcissa had no explanation for this or for why her husband—former husband—and son had turned on her as they had or why Draco had behaved so defiantly and cockily. She couldn’t help but to wonder if Potter was somehow responsible. Had he tricked her son with a *Confundus Charm* or a Love potion or did he place him under *Imperius*? But that couldn’t be; surely Lucius would have noticed something amiss with his son and he would never have allowed Potter to set foot in Malfoy
Manor. Unless...was Potter capable of holding Lucius under *Imperius* as well?

Narcissa shook her head. That was not possible; the Dark Lord would have surely noticed. Potter couldn’t trick *Him* or could he?

Formally, Narcissa would have thought the assumption to be utterly preposterous. Potter was the epitome of Gryffindor, Dumbledore’s Golden Boy and the Light’s saviour; but, the amount of magical power and ferocious control that the blasted boy had suddenly commanded—it had been scary, terrifying and so completely unexpected, considering the last five years of Draco’s writing—or talking—spoke about an arrogant, mediocre, uncouth and uncivilized but lucky Potter, the Headmaster’s—and most teachers’—pet.

Narcissa sighed as her thoughts returned to the Ministry of Magic—as it always did—and not for the first time, she wondered what had truly happened there in May. She remembered what Bella had told her and Lucius afterwards. Bella had killed Sirius Black, however inadvertently, and then Potter had chased her through to the Atrium and cursed her. Bella had told them how he had casted Crucio, for Merlin’s sake! Definitely something unexpected from the bloody Gryffindor.

Then Potter and the Dark Lord had duelled, then the Dark Lord and Dumbledore and then how the Dark Lord had somehow managed to possess Potter and using him, had spoken with Dumbledore before he Apparated away with Bella. Why hadn’t the Dark Lord killed Potter, if he was that close to him? Narcissa wondered if the Dark Lord simply *could* not kill the boy or if there was a good reason why her Lordship did not *want* to anymore. This was not normal, it was unnatural. If the Dark Lord wanted to kill somebody, he just did, like swatting a fly, period. She wondered what he had learned during the possession and what the thrice damned prophecy had said that created all the uproar?

All summer, she had searched the Daily Prophet for any hints that Harry Potter had fallen out of grace, that the Dark Lord had killed the impertinent whelp, but had found nothing. Regardless of the cause, something drastic had changed about Harry Potter. The young man she had met, she hadn’t recognized him as Potter at first as he had looked so different; he was taller, stronger, healthier and astonishingly very handsome without his ugly glasses.

Even now, she still did not know how to evaluate the recent earth-shattering developments, but even she was not such a fool that she forgot the first Slytherin rule—self-preservation—and so, when she had been taken in by her mother and grandmother, she had kept quiet about what had really happened at Malfoy Manor. She had only told them that Lucius had divorced her on account of infidelity and had kicked her out of her home, cutting off all access to the Malfoy funds.

In regards as to why she was suddenly without a last name and dirt poor, she had told a half truth about the will of Sirius Black, the last Head of House of the main Black Family line, that her relatives had knowledge of; Sirius had died at the Ministry and had fallen into the Veil—according to Bella—and that Harry Potter, somehow, was the new Head of the Black family. She had claimed that in the will, Sirius had decreed that no other living Black could change it; however, should Harry Potter die without a will, then Draco would become Heir. She had no idea if she—as his mother—being disowned and cast out, would have any bearing on that.

After a mighty tantrum and much scolding, her mother had done a short ritual—a blood adoption—so that she was at least recognized as Narcissa Rosier, a member of an old pure-blood family again.

Now, she was positively ‘dying’ to read the Prophet for herself, especially after that alarming headline. Who would have had a reason and the means to murder the former Undersecretary Dolores Umbridge?

As her gaze drifted once more back to the paper, Narcissa couldn’t help but to have the idea that
somehow, Harry Potter was behind it...and if that was true, then he was much more dangerous than she thought he was. If the Dark Lord had come to some kind of truce or agreement with Potter after the incident at the Ministry, then it was clear that he wasn’t Dumbledore’s puppet anymore and that filled her heart with happiness, regardless of her personal issues, for it bodes well for the outcome of the war.

~...~

The sixth year students were queuing outside the Defence Against the Dark Arts classroom on the third floor in two groups; Gryffindors on one side and Slytherins on the other. Most of the students were whispering and shuffling their feet; they were nervous or simply curious about their new teacher. Depending on the view point, just how would the DADA class be, with a man of Lucius Malfoy’s questionable and/or distinguished reputation?

After Harry and Cory had walked Pansy and Luna to their classes, the two boys had headed to the library for their free period. They could’ve gone to Gryffindor Tower, but they decided against it. At the library, Harry had shown Cory secret section of the library that Madam Pince had shown to him a few years ago. The two boys had spent the time going through the books, comparing it to their school books and the books from Potter Manor.

When the bell had rung, the signal for them to head to their class, they had left the library and headed to the third floor where their DADA with Professor Malfoy was. On their way up, they had met up with Dean and Seamus and the four had walked the rest of the way together, with the other Gryffindors joining them along the way.

Now, Harry and Cory stood a few paces away from the rest of their house, casually leaning against the wall. Now and then, they would share a glance or a half smirk with their Slytherin friends on the other side of the wall.

Draco was surrounded, as usual, by Pansy on his arm with Crabbe and Goyle as bodyguards behind him. Millicent, Daphne, Lillian and Tracey were whispering and watching the interaction between the Slytherin Ice Prince and the two handsome, dark haired male Gryffindors with fascination while Theo leaned against the wall at the side of group, sulking as he shot covert glances at the Gryffindor group across the hallway from under his half closed lids.

Blaise himself was leaning casually and seemingly unaffected by the tension in the air, besides him on the wall and was observing everything with a smirk playing around his lips, barely holding back chuckles.

Theo keenly watched the dynamic between Potter and Long-no wait, LeStrange—it had been a huge shock the previous evening to know that Neville Longbottom was suddenly a LeStrange. How? Why?—and the other lions. Granger and Weasley were visibly separated from their house mates. He knew of the confrontation that the two had had with Harry last night and the one Granger had with him earlier this morning. Right now, Granger looked stressed, harassed and put out, but mostly sad. She kept sending longing glances at Potter, while Weasley gave off an air of being angry, sulking, jealous and betrayed? But of what? Theo wasn’t sure how to read the Weasley’s ugly face and tense body language. The other lions were huddled closely together; strange thing was, they weren’t acting as arrogant and confident as they usually did, but instead, they seemed somewhat unsure and uneasy, confused. Out of that group, only Finnegan and Thomas appeared to be the most at ease.

Shaking his head, Theo’s gaze drifted from the Gryffindors to covertly study the young man besides Potter. It was another mystery, an enigma, if there ever was one. Longbottom had somehow discovered he was a LeStrange during the summer, which could only mean he was either the son of Rodolphus and Bellatrix or the bastard son of Rabastan, all of whom are most faithful followers of
the Dark Lord. Whichever of the LeStrange brothers was the father, must have accepted him or the family name wouldn’t have changed and his looks wouldn’t have changed either.

Theo clearly remembered yesterday evening, when LeStrange had announced to the entire Great Hall that he was no longer Neville Longbottom and how he had basically said he preferred being called Cory now as Neville was not his name. Even the Sorting Hat had recognized the change as it had called out Corvus LeStrange and not Neville Longbottom. What had Theo staring at Cory in fascination was that, anyone would expect the former Longbottom to be depressed and completely lost after finding out about his parentage, but the young man across from him was the complete opposite; he was handsome, confident, content and in high spirits, a far cry from the bumbling, scared, timid fool that Neville Longbottom had been for the past five years.

So, how could the former Gryffindor near-squib, the waste-of-space change so drastically and accept his world being turned upside down? The LeStranges were publicly known as Death Eaters, there was no doubt about their loyalty to the Dark Lord. They had been in Azkaban; their hateful, haggard faces were omnipresent on the most wanted posters of the Ministry that hung in the Leaky Cauldron and Diagon Alley. And how could Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived, be suddenly estranged from his former best friends and be all chummy with Long—Cory LeStrange, the son of Death Eaters out for his blood?

Theo was miffed that his father hadn’t told him anything and from what he knew, Crabbe and Goyle’s fathers hadn’t disclosed any information either about the drastically changed relationship between Potter and Draco. Theo knew that he might be thin and stringy and definitely not the winner of a Hogwarts most-charming smile or beauty contest—those titles would no doubt belong to Draco and Potter—but he was no fool. To him, it was unthinkable that Lucius Malfoy, the Dark Lord’s right hand man, would allow his son to strike up a friendship or more with the Boy-Who-Lived without his complete consent. Which made him wonder; just how and why had Draco and Potter met and why had their relationship change so radically?

Draco had been unreachable all summer and as far as he knew, none of his friends had been allowed to visit Malfoy Manor during the holidays. Letters by owl post had been scarce and cryptic. The Malfoy Floo was blocked off to anyone without a specific password and his own father had refused—without explanation—to disclose the password to him. All of this together was very unusual because ever since their early childhood, there had always been opportunities of casual visits, or garden parties or midsummer balls and in previous summers, Draco had taken turns in visiting his friends. Which meant that something at Malfoy Manor had changed most dramatically; but what? Was it a matrimonial crisis between Draco’s parents?

‘No,’ Theo shook his head, ‘everyone in their circles was aware that the marriage was one of convenience, a union between two old families to ensure a pure-blood heir and steadfast or increased political power and wealth. It was the same with other marriages between the other pure-blood families.’ Theo’s brows furrowed. ‘Hmmm, even if there had been mounting tension or open strife between Draco’s mother and father, it would never be made public. They would keep up appearances, wouldn’t they? So there had to be another explanation.’

Theo came out of his thoughts and looked over at Draco. He saw the happiness on the blond’s face and did a double take. Happiness? Since when did Draco Malfoy show so much emotion—positive emotion? Yesterday evening in the Slytherin common room, he had looked just the same way when he was speaking about Potter. A second later, Theo watched as the haughty mask was back on the blond’s face, leaving only a smirk playing around his lips. But Theo had seen enough; he had seen the light in the grey eyes, the positively sizzling look between Draco and Potter, the latter who also looked so different to his usual bearings.
Before, Potter was scrawny, ragged, tired, worried, stressed and nervous, but now, now it’s as if a weight has been lifted from his shoulders and he knew that something happened during the summer to cause that. Potter was more handsome, positively gorgeous without the ugly glasses and ragged, horrible muggle clothing he used to wear when not in his school robes. His jet black hair was longer and looked good, in a just shagged way, not like the former unruly rat’s nest anymore. He was also taller and he moved with more grace, like a panther; he radiated power and self-confidence. His gaze shifted back to Draco and he saw that even though the blond had his mask back in place, he still couldn’t contain the positively glowing, radiant and healthier look. The blond looked more alive than he’d ever seen him. It was something he Theo had noticed right away when he had first laid eyes on Draco and Potter the previous evening during the Sorting feast.

‘What in Merlin’s name is going on?’ Theo asked himself. ‘Did Potter visit Draco at Malfoy Manor? Was that the reason Draco had answered our letter’s so evasively?’ Theo clenched his fists and shook his head slightly. ‘But if—then why hadn’t Mr. Malfoy kill Potter on sight or capture him to hand him over to our Lord? Lucius Malfoy was deeply loyal to the Dark Lord and he wouldn’t betray him for Potter’s sake...would he?’ Theo unclenched his fists, relaxed his body and scratched his neck absently, his thoughts moving furiously.

More often than not, he had wondered where the Dark Lord resided. Each day, his father would leave to go to work and elsewhere; sometimes he had been called in the evenings and stayed away half the night during the previous year. Of course his father never told him or his brother where he went or what he did exactly; only that he was working for the cause and fulfilling the Dark Lord’s wishes. He and his brother knew better than to press their father for answers as they understood the need for secrecy, even though they were curious, but then again, who wouldn’t be?

Theo himself knew though from the Daily Prophet—and what little titbits his father had told him and his brother—of the commotion that had happened at the Ministry of Magic back in May; that the Dark Lord had been spotted by former Minister Fudge in the flesh and that Potter was somehow involved and that suddenly, both Potter and Dumbledore were the good guys once more in the eyes of the public. He knew that Sirius Black, the escaped convict, had been killed, and that some of Potter’s friends had been in the hospital wing the next day. And the last few days of the term, Potter had been incredibly angry and troubled.

His thoughts drifted to the summer and everything that had happened. He recalled all the articles about the Dark Wizard attacks in both the Muggle and wizarding world, the election of the new Minister by the Wizengamont, and now, the death of Umbridge, despicable woman that she was. He knew the woman had been abducted from right in front of Gringotts and had been found murdered a few days ago with the unforgettable image of the Dark Mark and that cryptic inscription on her face, but what he couldn’t understand was how it was connected to everything else that had happened.

Theo looked up and once more looked over the Gryffindors; just who hated that woman with a passion. ‘Was it a Gryffindor? The only ones to come to mind are the Weasel terror twins.’ His gaze moved to Harry and his eyes narrowed slightly. ‘Potter? It couldn’t have been him. He couldn’t have been behind Umbridge’s gruesome death...but then, who else would dare to fake the Dark Mark on a corpse’s head?’ as he tried to dismiss that idea, Draco and Pansy’s words from last night came back to him;

...Harry isn’t as golden as everyone thinks he is...

...Potter is more like us than anyone thought...

‘It can’t be!’ Theo’s gaze widened slightly as he looked at Harry. ‘But, both Pansy and Draco...their words...could Potter really have done that? How could he do magic like that during the summer
When he and the rest of the Slytherins had met up with Potter in front of the Great Hall, he had watched the way he and Draco had interacted and so he had played along and had been polite. What had shocked him was how polite, friendly, easy-going and completely relaxed Potter had been in the Slytherins’ presence. It was totally different from before when tension and hostility would be between them.

Theo sighed and shifted against the wall as he bit his lip. ‘But why? Why was it so different? It can’t be because he and Draco are now together...that can’t be the only reason. Something else is going on. But what? What could’ve happened that would let Draco’s father have no problem with his son being with Potter, why he would let him spend time at Malfoy Manor? Regarding the Boy-Who-Lived, Mr. Malfoy, as much he loved Draco, wouldn’t do anything without the consent of the Dark Lord...oh sweet merciful Merlin!’

Realization filled Theo’s entire being. Suddenly, everything made sense; the blocked Floo, the lack of the usual Malfoy parties, Draco’s behaviour, the increased confidence and hope of victory for the Dark side his father had started displaying over the summer, the Dark Lord’s changed stance on Muggles and mudbloods—the decrease of large scale public attacks, public Muggle baiting—and the now visible rift between Potter and his former friends and the unease and confusion the rest of the Gryffindors had towards Potter and Long—no, LeStrange now, add in Potter’s glee over Umbridge’s murder. It all led to one startling fact: Potter had changed sides during the summer. And when you add the actions from last night—the surprising entrance, the interactions between the four students and Snape—the former Neville Longbottom and Luna Lovegood had changed sides with him as well and Professor Snape—his Head of House—was in on it too!

‘So then, that detention,’ Theo mused, ‘wasn’t a detention at all; everything seemed a little too rehearsed, like it was planned. I mean, Snape hadn’t ripped into Potter as harsh as he usually did. Compared to other times, that was tame. So the detention was a ruse, which means, they’re up to something and they needed the cover of detention.’

Theo straightened up and a thin smile was playing around his lips, though he kept his face otherwise impassive. A Gryffindor would’ve whooped and jumped around, but not him. He was a proud Slytherin. Taking a glance to his side at Blaise, he saw that the dark-skinned Italian looked cheerful and giddy with happiness and amusement. Well, to be honest, it wasn’t visible to any casual observer or outsider, but he had shared a dorm and classes with the attractive boy for five years, so he’d notice the change last night in Blaise after seeing him again after the long summer months.

He looked over to where Draco and Pansy stood. His eyes took in Pansy’s stance against Draco, which wasn’t something new. What was new however was that unlike previous years, Pansy wasn’t acting like a simpering moon calf anymore, she looked content, in good spirits. No, it was more like she was filled with hidden glee and anticipation, similar to Blaise. In fact, she didn’t seem to be angry or jealous at Draco’s new relationship with Potter or the attention they paid each other. And then, he was hit with another realization.

‘They know; whatever is going on, Blaise knew and Pansy did too and,’ Theo’s smile widened just a tiny bit. ‘They are ok with it. They aren’t worried about Draco being manipulated by Potter or LeStrange.’

As if sensing his thoughts, Blaise turned his head and looked over at him; the Italian raised an eyebrow before looking over to Potter and LeStrange for a moment and then over Draco and Pansy.

Theo raised his own eyebrow before he nodded in approval and smirked back, pleased with not only himself, but the world. Now, he finally understood what Pansy meant when she said Potter was more
like them than anyone thought and why Draco said he wasn’t as golden; Potter was a snake in lion’s clothing. The tide of the war had turned in favour of the Dark side.
Duelling and Defence

Chapter Notes

**Disclaimer:** I own nothing…if I did, Ginny would have died in the CoS, Dumbledore would have choked on his lemon drops and Harry would have stood up for himself against Molly and Dumbledore.

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"Talking"
'Thinking'
Letter or commentary/introduction and flashback
{Parssseltongue}
~…~ indicates scene change

_Last time on RDA;

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When the door to the Defence classroom opened silently by itself, the students closest to it peeked inside, but hesitated. When no one was willing to enter first, Harry shook his head, scoffed and straightened up off the wall; raising his chin slightly, he strode forward, followed closely by Cory, who exuded a confidence that the others had never seen in Neville Longbottom.

Draco led the Slytherin group in next, scoffing and sneering at the dithering Gryffindors who reacted with anger at being bested and gathered the courage to follow them with everybody pushing and shoving to show they weren’t afraid or apprehensive at all.

The students filed into the classroom, looking around curiously to gauge any changes to the decoration or layout compared to the previous years. They noticed that like in years past, the huge, old dragon skeleton hung above as usual and the windows were open, letting in plenty of sunlight and fresh air. Unlike their last years however, the walls were adored by new pictures, showing people that appeared to be in pain and injured; one picture was showing a man stumbling around with two deep slashes across his chest and abdomen, blood and gore dripping down between his hands that were clutching at his stomach.

Another had a man writhing around on the floor, hands grasping for his legs, his knees bent grotesquely at an unnatural angle. In the third picture on the left side, a man stood trembling but ramrod straight in his frame as he stared ahead with an air of horrified, anguished detachment, a tear pooling in the corner of his wide open eyes, lips pressed together. His arms hung at his sides; in one
hand, he loosely held a wand, the tip pointing downward. Across from him, you could just make out
the shape of a body’s legs and feet, lying very still on the ground and on the other side, stood a
shadowy cloaked and hooded figure, pointing its wand at the distressed man in the foreground,
obviously controlling him with a spell.

Their gazes moved from the walls to take in the new arrangement of the desks; instead of the
previous one where all the desks were in rows facing the front of the room with the teacher’s desk,
they were now arranged into a U-shape with the chairs behind them on the outside. It caused a
moment of confusion as normally, the Slytherin students would have taken one side of the classroom
while the Gryffindors would take the other, separated by the middle aisle. It was their standard sitting
order for the past five years.

Draco and Harry shared an amused glance before the blond nodded towards the middle of the U and
raised an eyebrow which Harry answered with a smirk. The two boys strode forward, elegantly
vaulted over the middle desks and sat down right in the centre, claiming the best spots side by side.
Cory, Pansy and Blaise followed suit at once, almost as if they had all practiced the move. The
remaining students glared, huffed and shuffled around each other before sitting down; it was an
interesting display of the new inter house pecking order.

Dean and Seamus quickly claimed the seats besides Cory with the other Gryffindors filling up the
row to the left. Crabbe, Goyle, Theo, Daphne, Lillian, Tracy and Millicent sat at the right side of
Blaise and Pansy. After settling down and pulling out their textbooks, quills and parchment, they all
scanned the pictures on the walls again, whispering with their neighbours and speculating about what
the purpose or cause of the depicted gruesome scenes was.

~...~

At the top of the stairs, casually leaning against the door to his office, Lucius watched all the
manoeuvring, the whispers and the glares between the students. The location of the teacher’s office
was a convenient feature for the DADA classroom as it allowed the teacher to observe his students
without their notice. Of course, being who he was, Lucius took full advantage; he had disillusioned
himself before unlocking the classroom door with a flick of his wand. He had wanted to use the
opportunity to go over the names and what he knew about the students’ abilities and loyalties in his
mind before starting the lesson.

In the first morning block, no student had detected him until he decided to show himself. Now, he
was curious if his ‘summer’ students or some of the Slytherins would be more observant; after all,
they were sixth years, not second years like the preceding Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw class. As he
stood there watching the sixth years, his mind went back to the class of second years he had earlier;

Flashback

The little Badgers and Ravens had been wary or terrified of Professor Malfoy at first, but had left the
classroom smiling and chatting excitedly about the interesting lesson and the charming teacher.

After calling role, and asking if they had all gotten the recommended book, The Dark Forces: A
Guide to Self-Protection, he had started them with a five minute pop quiz, which produced the
anticipated result. They had learned nothing useful in the past year from Madam Umbridge save
some theory, but picked up a bit from other, older students. They knew that there was such a thing as
a Shield or Disarming Charm, Blasting or Pain Curse, Curse of the Bogies, Stinging or the
Confundus Charm, Jinxes like Impedimenta, Jelly-Legs, Knockback, or Tarantallegra, but not much
more.

This led to a lively discussion, which erupted after one astonishingly bold Hufflepuff boy, Ashley
Wright, had grumbled something about the old hag have gotten her just deserts. Instead of docking points and reprimanding the boy harshly for speaking ill about a murdered teacher, like the class had expected, Lucius allowed them to speak their minds and vent their frustration about such an incompetent and horrible teacher as Umbridge during their first year. They said that it had been a waste of time, and that they all had been confused, scared and disappointed by the oppressive atmosphere of their first year at Hogwarts in general and DADA class in particular.

Lucius got the impression from their comments and exclamations that those students from pure-blood or half-blood families that had older siblings or cousins attending Hogwarts at least realized that it was not always as chaotic as last year, although DADA had a bad reputation due to the constant change of teachers. The two Ravenclaw students from Dark pure-blood families were silent, he supposed that they comprehended on some level what was going on inside the school and outside in the power struggle between the Ministry, Dumbledore and the Dark Lord. The mudbloods, sorry, Muggleborns, (it was hard to break a lifelong habit) four in Hufflepuff and two from Ravenclaw, didn´t understand at all what had happened in the previous year. They told him of one other Ravenclaw Muggleborn student, Peter, who had not returned after the summer. They missed their friend dearly.

Lucius kept his neutral and considerate mask firmly in place; of course his first idea was that the family had been exterminated by the PCT (Pest Control Team). His eyes strayed to Rose Zeller for a moment, glad she was safe and didn´t overly react to him, the Obliviate seemed to work flawlessly. However, the Ravenclaw Mudb—Muggleborn girl called Eleanor Summerfield earnestly told him she had phoned her friend last week – did he know what a telephone was – yes, he did- and Peter´s parents had decided that they didn´t want to pay their hard earned money for such a complete hoax of a school as Hogwarts! They had enrolled him at a muggle secondary school in the town, the Galway Community College.

Lucius stared at her for a moment, but got over his surprise quickly and took note of the boy´s name and address, Peter O´Donnell, Galway, Ireland; he promised that he would speak with their Head of House, Professor Flitwick, enquiring if Flitwick had talked or written to Peter´s family and they would try their best to convince the Muggle family to allow the boy to come back.

When he was a member of the Board of Governors, Lucius had never really considered what might happen to mudblood children that left Hogwarts prematurely or did not attend the school at all for some reason. A few years ago, he was determined to rid Hogwarts of the filthy mudbloods, not caring if one of them got injured or killed. However, with his better understanding of the Muggle world from today, he was sure this was dangerous on several levels. To leave a twelve year old magical child untrained in the Muggle world after one year at Hogwarts could only end in a disaster and a serious breach of the Statute of Secrecy. To discover something like this in his very first class did not bode well for the state of affairs regarding mudbl-err, Muggleborns in general.

At the short staff meeting yesterday evening, not one word had been uttered about a Ravenclaw second-year missing. Minerva had only complained about her missing lions; the Creeveys. If he hadn´t allowed the class today to talk so freely, he wouldn´t have known of Peter at all. Lucius quickly copied the information he had on the boy onto another piece of parchment. What he didn´t tell his students, was that he would write post haste to Dolohov, inquiring if this mudblood family was already under observation or not. If the parents would consent and had kept their knowledge of the magical world secret, the boy could return at once. If not – they would have a fatal accident.

When Lucius looked up again at the class, he noticed Summerfield and some of the other Ravenclaws gratefully beaming at him and a frown on the faces of Damon Blishwick and Alfreda Selwyn, the Dark pure-blood children. He sighted internally; he would have to speak with them privately later, before they send letters home that accused him to be a blood traitor or worse, a
defector from the Dark Lord for speaking friendly to the Muggleborns.

Smiling Lucius assured the class that this year at Hogwarts would be an improvement and asked what they would like to learn first in Defence. He listened amused to their eager suggestions, jinxes and hexes to prank others or to defend themselves with counter jinxes they wanted to learn, of course. Then he called a pair of students to the front and proceeded to teach them the basics of the simplest Shield and Disarming Charm, Protego and Expelliarmus. They caught on quickly, which earned him the adoration of the whole class, despite assigning all of them homework, namely the practice of the incantation and wand movement for these charms.

Mission accomplished! Roughly twenty children would tell their peers and write their parents that Professor Malfoy was a competent, charming, kind, and understanding teacher, with no prejudice against Muggleborns at all. The rumours that he was an evil Dark wizard and slimy Slytherin were obviously unfounded. Lucius smiled to himself; over the course of the year—when they trusted him more—he planned to hint that he was a Dark wizard, indeed, but not necessarily 'evil' as there was no good or evil. The real world wasn’t black or white, but shades of grey.

End flashback

Bringing himself out of his memory, Lucius watched as the sixth year students found a place to sit before he began his decent down the stairs. The sound of his dark grey suede leather boots and the rustling of the elegant, midnight blue teachers robe were muted by a stealth charm. His long blond hair was pulled back into a low ponytail, held by a dark blue ribbon. He smirked when he noticed that Harry, Draco and Cory had perked up one after the other and followed his progress out of the corner of their eyes; they did so without overtly staring and giving him away.

A moment later, he watched as Blaise picked up on the sly looks and gently nudged Pansy with his elbow. The girl looked around slowly, but searchingly, to the classroom door and then up to the office door where the students most likely expected him to stay before class began. Pansy blinked and lowered her eyes, a tiny smile tugging at her lips. The Young Nott—Theo—who was sitting besides Crabbe and Goyle junior, seemed to have noticed something happening too as he darted his eyes around the front of the classroom and up the stairs, slowly sitting up from his slouched posture; he subtly fingered his wand like Cory, Harry, Draco, Blaise and Pansy had already done. They all carried their wands hidden in a sheath sown inside their sleeve, or in a wand holster strapped to their forearms, wand always at the ready.

Lucius watched as the rest of the Slytherin students noticed the miniscule movements and covert looks of their neighbours and instantly snapped to attention, but in a subtle way as to not alert the—now rather loudly whispering and chatting—Gryffindors. When he reached the bottom of the stairway, he was pleased to note that the Gryffindors, save Harry and Cory, appeared to be completely oblivious to his presence.

‘Fools,’ he mentally sneered, ‘so easy to kill...if such were my intention. However, I am here to teach and teach them I will.’

He waited on the first step for half a minute until the deep gong of the School bell sounded through the castle, signalling the start of second period. The lions stilled for a moment and looked to the door of the classroom, before they continued their whispered conversations. Granger, easily recognizable by her wild, glossy brown hair, sat silently, warily at the end of the table, her eyes darting back and forth between the classroom door and the door at the top of the stairs to the teacher’s office. Weasley was talking across the girl beside him with the dark skinned boy about Quidditch. Harry, Cory and the Slytherins watched the bottom end of the stairs shrewdly or rather, they watched Draco for any instructions he might give.
Lucius softly cleared his throat. At the sound, the Slytherins, Harry and Cory fixed their attention on him. From the Gryffindors, he noted that Granger was the only one that instantly focused on him; she quickly pulled her wand out in a fluid motion, her eyes narrowed in mistrust, while her housemates continued with their inane chatter.

‘Interesting,’ Lucius mused, ‘it seems the mudblood girl did at least learn something in the Department of Mysteries.’

His gaze once again drifted over the Gryffindors and he found himself disgusted with their actions. They were in the Defence class and not one of them was alert for danger.

‘Let us see if this can shake them up.’

If the students could see the feral grin on their professor’s face, they would have ran screaming from the room, but as it was, they couldn’t and so were unprepared for what he was about to do. Raising his wand, Lucius pointed it towards the Gryffindor side and sent a wordless *Stupefy* at them.

Harry, whose reflexes would put the best Auror and Quidditch player to shame, was on his feet with his wand pointed towards the students before anyone even realize. “*Protego!*” The blue shield erupted in front of the terrified students.

At the same time that Harry moved, Draco stood—as did Cory, Blaise and Pansy—and pointed his wand to where he knew his father was. “*Expelliarmus!*”

The other Slytherins, who had jumped up after they saw the actions of the five, had their wands pointed in the same direction. The students looked at them like they were crazy and watched as Draco’s spell soared towards the seemingly empty space only to gasp in surprise when the spell was blocked and their professor suddenly appeared, his Disillusionment charm cancelled. The reactions of the lions was quite amusing as all of them—apart from Harry and Cory—jumped or flinched and stared wide eyed at him in shock. Weasley nearly toppled backwards off his chair, but he righted himself and swiftly fumbled for his wand, holding it in front of himself defensively with a dark scowl. Granger only gasped and pointed hers at him while the other two girls shrieked as if he was an Inferiusr or a Dementor.

“Fifty points to Slytherin and fifteen points to Gryffindor for their fast reactions and for paying attention,” Lucius’ silky drawl washed over the students. “Twenty-five points from Gryffindor for chatter and unpreparedness.” He walked forward until he reached the first tables; to his right sat Granger and Weasley and to his left stood Davis and Bulstrode.

Weasley grumbled under his breath. “Typical Slytherin unfairness.”

Unfortunately for him, Lucius heard his every word and he looked down at him with narrowed eyes. “Mr. Weasley, do you want to enlighten us with your personal and no doubt well researched opinion on the House point system?”

Granger elbowed him to shut up and Weasley shook his head, glaring and scowling furiously.

Lucius nodded before looking at the entire class. “Good morning class and welcome to Defence and Duelling. My name is Professor Malfoy.”

He noted that while the Slytherins, Harry and Cory all replied with a cheerful, “Good morning Professor Malfoy,” not one of them had lowered their wands.

“You may be seated,” he spoke to the students and smiled in approval when he noticed that even though they complied, they still kept their wands in sight on him.
“Oi!” Seamus cried out after the others had sat down. “Give a bloke a warning mate.”

Lucius’ eyes narrowed into slits as he looked at Seamus. When the Irish teen shifted in his seat, he took his gaze off of him and walked along the tables, making eye contacts with the students. The Gryffindors looked down at the table while Harry, Cory and the Slytherins calmly met his gaze.

“A warning, you say Mister...Finnegan, was it?” Lucius sneered. “Do you think perhaps that in a duel, your opponent will give you a warning as to when they will fire? I assure you, no such thing will happen.” He looked out at the students. “This is a Defence class and as such, you must come to this class prepared for anything. If my intention was to see to the deaths of you lot, with the exceptions of Mr. Potter, Mr. LeStrange, Ms. Granger and the Slytherins, you would all be dead. And five points from Gryffindor Mr. Finnegan, for your disrespect.”

The Gryffindors swallowed uneasily—Hermione blushing slightly at the compliment—while Harry and Cory exchanged smirks.

“I am aware that the last year was a lost year for your education in this subject,” Lucius continued on as he turned around and walked along the other side of the room his robes billowing slightly, reminiscent of Snape, “but I believe in your fourth year, you had a competent teacher, one that told you what is essential for your survival.”

“Constant Vigilance, sir!” chanted Harry, Cory and the Slytherins as the Gryffindors still seemed too shaken up.

Lucius smiled and nodded, chuckling, “Exactly, class.”

With the exception of the Five—Harry, Draco, Cory, Blaise and Pansy—the students stared at their professor in shock. The impeccable and unfeeling Lord Malfoy was chuckling, and in a classroom? They wondered what was so amusing.

Lucius made his way around the other side of the tables and stopped again a few feet in front of both Granger and Weasley. Both eyed him warily and they still had their wands on the tabletop in their hands. They didn’t trust him at all. Good.

“Miss Granger,” he addressed the Muggleborn in a friendly tone, taking care to smile charmingly and to keep his body language nonthreatening and relaxed.

Hermione swallowed; it was a sign of her nervousness. Being this close to their professor brought back some unpleasant memories of the fight that occurred in the Department of Mysteries and how that curse had hurt. Still, it was ingrained in her to have manners and her habit of obeying her teachers forced her to answer him.

“Yes sir?” she replied, feeling slightly breathless.

“Mr. Weasley seems to think I’m unfair or biased towards my own house,” Lucius continued in that same friendly tone. “Do you remember how many points were granted and deducted just moments ago and do you understand the reasoning behind them?”

Hermione blinked up at him a little uncertainly. She was afraid of the man as the last time she had seen him was in the battle situation at the Department of Mysteries fighting as a Death Eater. She mentally scolded herself for her thoughts. She had no reason to worry that the man would kill or hurt her, especially not in the classroom in front of the others. After all, the Headmaster or the Board of Governors appointed him. Or did the Ministry send him to Hogwarts like they did with Umbridge last year?
In all honesty, she was very surprised at the way he addressed her; it was like how a normal teacher should. He didn’t sneer at her, or ignore her as if she was beneath his pure-blood notice, nor did he try to intimidate her. He was perfectly polite so far and had only asked a simple question, albeit it was tinged in sarcasm and was directed at Seamus. And he did award Gryffindor some points. If it was Snape, he wouldn’t have done that; he would’ve torn into Ron and Seamus for disrespect and deducted way more points.

Shaking her head, Hermione looked up and blushed slightly as she realized she hadn’t answered his question. Taking a quick look around, she calculated the points. “Yes sir. You gave five points to the students that weren’t surprised when you fired the spell and revealed yourself and you took five points from the students that jumped or cried out when you suddenly appeared as they were distracted, unprepared and unobservant.” She paused. “I think that’s fair enough. And Seamus should’ve addressed you with sir.”

Lucius inclined his head towards her. “Thank you Miss Granger.” He suppressed a smirk when the Weasley boy glared angrily at her, who shot him an apologetic look.

“Now I noticed that out of all of you,” Lucius walked again down the row of tables and made eye contact with the students, “only a few were especially observant; while two students had already fired off a spell, the rest of you had spells on your lips, ready to defend yourself against a potential, yet unseen, threat. I must say, I consider myself lucky that you didn’t curse me into next week,” at that point, he smirked and made eye contact with Harry, inclining his head in a greeting, “but I wanted to test your ability to react accordingly to the situation.”

Harry shared a glance with Draco and smirked at Lucius, twirling his Holly wand in his hand.

Lucius smirked back and continued, “Some of you,” he threw a glare at Seamus, Dean, Ron, Lavender and Parvati, “have somehow managed to scrape the necessary O.W.L. for this class, an Exceed Expectations, but you will not survive for long out in the real world without some form of improvement.”

Typical Ron flushed red and was embarrassed and angry; the others looked ashamed at their tables or hands. They had all trained hard in D.A. under Harry last year, which was the reason why their Defence O.W.L. scores had been so good despite the fact that they had had that dreadful, incompetent Umbridge woman teaching them. But still, they had felt too complacent and secure in the classroom that they hadn’t even considered that their new teacher would stand in front of them invisible or attack them out of the blue like Professor Malfoy had done.

“I do hope,” Lucius stated, while walking around the classroom again, “that at the end of this year, you will be able to defend yourself adequately. Other teachers will no doubt remind you all day to study hard for your N.E.W.Ts; I remember that from my own start of sixth year.”

Several students grinned or chuckled quietly.

Lucius stopped and fixed Harry and Cory with an intense look. “Whether you manage to achieve a good grade on your N.E.W.T is not so relevant, much more important is if you stay alive until the end of your seventh year to actually take your N.E.W.Ts.”

Shocked mumbling and uneasy glances from several students followed this statement, which Lucius of course completely ignored as he walked to the other side of the room, circling the students like a shark.

Harry responded only with a raised eyebrow and a smug look, instead of the anger he would’ve shown in the previous year. He internally congratulated Lucius on his acting skills; it was just the
right amount of subtle banter that looked like taunting to anyone who didn’t know of their true relationship.

Draco looked over at his boyfriend and smiled briefly and reassuringly.

“Around this classroom, I have placed some paintings that show what happen if your defence is lacking.” Lucius gestured to the wall he walked along, and the students turned around and eyed the gruesome pictures again. “During this school year, we will speak at length about the curses or other dangers depicted and practice shields, jinxes, hexes, curses and counter curses.” He turned to the students. “Are there any urgent questions?”

Hermione straightened her spine and sat at the edge of her chair, ready to prove that she listened eagerly and would not let her guard down. Ron scowled and glared hatefully at the professor. Harry hid a smile behind his hand; they were so predictable.

Parvati raised her hand.

“Yes, Miss...?” Lucius nodded to her.

“Patil sir, Parvati Patil,” she answered before she gestured to one of the paintings. “On that picture over there, is than an Inferius, sir?”

“Indeed it is,” Lucius replied as he looked at the painting she pointed to.

“Professor Malfoy,” Parvati looked at him with slightly fearful eyes, “is it true what the Daily Prophet reported in the middle of summer? Did, or does, You-Know-Who use Inferi?”

“Well, the Dark Lord did so in the past, so you are well advised to expect that Inferi attacks could occur again,” Lucius answered evasively, while moving to the U-shaped free area between the tables again; he wanted to see the faces of all the students better.

Parvati, as did several others, looked scared. Ron had a haunted look on his face; he had actually seen a few Inferi close up during the night of the attack on the Burrow and the Diggory’s. It had been horrible. Harry blanched and shuddered; he didn’t like Inferi...at all.

Lucius noticed the looks and reactions, especially those on Harry and Weasley’s faces; he remembered that Ottery St. Catchpole had been attacked during the summer, which would explain why the Weasley boy reacted the way he did, but he was a little curious as to Harry’s reaction as he had no idea as to where Harry would have seen an Inferi up close. ‘Hmm, maybe our Lord took him along to his secret place where kept his Inferi army hidden? The poor boy.’

“Does anyone of you know what to do in case of an Inferi attack? How do you hold them off?” Lucius asked.

Ron and Hermione raised their hands and after a moment, Harry did as well.

“Mr. Weasley?” Lucius allowed Ron to go first.

“Fire!” Ron spat, his face twisted in a scowl as he recalled his frightening experience. “The bloody bastards don’t like fire. Incendio and Expulso hold them off, but they still try to attack you until they are burnt to crisps. Curses like Confringo and Expulso work, but you got to put enough power behind it. Impedimenta or Stupefy slows them down for a bit. They are creepy as hell.”

“That is correct Mr. Weasley,” Lucius nodded, “five points to Gryffindor. You would get ten points if you could bring yourself to censor your language and to additionally address me with ‘Sir’ or
'Professor’,” he chided Ron, while raising an eyebrow at the disrespect of the redhead.

Ron only glared at him, visibly restraining himself from a rude answer. Hermione had one hand on his arm, trying to keep him calm.

Lucius said nothing and turned to Harry. “And what would you suggest Mr. Potter?”

“Well, I would use fire like Weasley said sir, and strong blasting curses like Confringo, Bombarda and Expulso because Stupefy, simple Cutting Hexes or Imperio do not stop an Inferius.” Harry answered, “Also, if you know the commands that could help as well sir. It should be possible to take over control, but that would depend on who is behind the attack, how strong their power of command and their hold on the individual Inferius is. Is that sufficient Professor Malfoy?”

What Harry said, caused several gasps and incredulous looks from his classmates.

“Indeed, that’s true Mr. Potter,” Lucius smiled approvingly at the raven-haired young man, now quite sure that the Dark Lord had instructed the teen how to handle Inferi during the past weeks.

Hermione’s hand shot up into the air once more and Lucius turned and nodded to her.

“What does Harry mean? What commands?”

Lucius motioned for Harry to answer the question.

Harry looked first towards the Gryffindors and then to Lucius before replying. “Inferi or Dementors can be commanded in a special language, sir. Necromancers and some Ministry personnel like Unspeakables and the Auror commander for Azkaban study it.” Harry deliberately didn’t name the language or give an example of a command in the language—Lingua Mortuus—because that was something he couldn’t claim any knowledge of as a simple sixth year student, despite the fact that he had already read through their text book or other Defence books from not only the Hogwarts library, but others.

Lucius nodded. “Precisely Mr. Potter, that’s another ten points to Gryffindor.” He turned to the students. “If anyone wants to read up on Inferi, or any other Defence Against the Dark Arts related topics, you should first consult your main N.E.W.T text book Confronting the Faceless. I also recommend that you look in your old book The Dark Forces: A Guide to Self-Protection, or two other books you will find in the Restricted section of the library, A Compendium of Common Curses and Their Counter-Actions and The Dark Arts Outsmarted in the Restricted Section. As Advanced class students, I expect you to be capable of finding the relevant books or chapters yourself. Should you need a pass for the Restricted section, please raise your hand.” He paused and smirked. “Knowledge is power after all.”

Some students, like Granger, shot him an incredulous but grateful look and made note of the book he recommended. After last year, this was a complete one-eighty for them; a DADA teacher that wanted the students to look for information on their own and to consult different sources. Everybody, save for the sulking Ron Weasley raised their hands. Harry, despite having already gotten permission from Madam Pince, raised his hand as well; he would keep it just in case another teacher happened to see in the Restricted Section.

Lucius flicked his wand and quietly summoned the students’ passes he had prepared in advance, sending them directly to the students. ‘Oh wows!’ travelled around the classroom, as many students looked at him gobsmacked.

“Now,” Lucius drew their attention once more, “at the beginning of class, which defence charm or
which jinx, hex or curse were you prepared to cast at me? What would you choose if we repeated the scenario once more?"

As expected, Hermione’s hand was the first to rise in the air.

“If you have no idea,” Lucius continued, “imagine you walk alone down a corridor and suddenly, you notice somebody moving in the shadows of an alcove with a wand aimed at you. What do you cast? As you answer, please tell me your names. Most of you I already know, but there are still a few unfamiliar faces.” He moved to the Slytherins and nodded at the girl sitting at the end of the table.

“I’m Millicent Bullstrode sir,” she answered, “And I’d use Stupefy.”

“Tracey Davis,” the girl next in line spoke, “Expelliarmus, sir.”

“I’m Lillian Moon, and I’d use Expelliarmus, sir.”

“Daphne Greengrass sir and I’d use Expelliarmus.”

“Stupefy sir, and I’m Theodore Nott.”

“Impedimenta sir, and I’m Vincent Crabbe.”

“Gregory Goyle. Protego sir.”

“Blaise Zabini sir,” Blaise grinned, “And I would’ve used Expelliarmus.”

Draco smirked at his father. “Malfoy, Draco Malfoy. I would’ve used Protego Totalus after firing the Expelliarmus.”

“After casting the Protego on the others,” Harry said, “I would’ve used Protego Horribilis to block whatever else was going to be fired and as a counter, Stupefy.”

“Cory LeStrange,” Cory grinned, “And I would’ve used Impedimenta and Protego Totalus.”

“Protego sir, and I be Seamus Finnegan.”

“Expelliarmus sir, and I’m Dean Thomas.”

“Impedimenta and Parvati Patil sir.”

“Expelliarmus sir, and I’m Lavender Brown.”

“Stupefy. Ron Weasley.”

“I’m Hermione Granger sir, and I would’ve used Expelliarmus.”

Each time a student named a shield or hex, Lucius flicked his wand and made a mark in the air, until a great grid with flaming letters and numbers was hovering in the middle between the tables. He stepped back a few paces and said, “Very well, that is quite a collection. How many of you are actually able to perform these shields or hexes? And are any of you able to perform them silently, voiceless?”

A few hands went up, while the rest of the class mumbled and whispered. Lucius sighed internally; it was his fault after all, for asking an open question like that.

“We will get back to your personal skills later,” he said. “What is the advantage of performing a spell
voiceless?"

Hermione’s hand shot up in the air, as did Draco, Harry, Pansy, Lillian, Theo and Blaise. Lucius looked over to Draco and Harry. He knew very well that Harry was able to perform quite a few shields, hexes and curses voiceless, some even wandlessly. The elder blond raised an eyebrow at Harry who shook his head in a miniscule movement. As he had already called on Hermione, Lucius decided to give someone else a chance.

“Mr. Nott?”

“If I cast silently, my opponent doesn’t hear the incantation. They would only be able to deduce what kind of spell it is from the wand movement and the colour of the spell. This gives me a second of advantage,” Theo explained.

“That is indeed correct Mr. Nott,” Lucius said, “five points to Slytherin. This year, you all shall practice casting voicelessly. It will be required in other subjects as well, such as Charms and Transfiguration.”

“Oh,” echoed around the classroom.

“Most of you have named Expelliarmus, Impedimenta, Protego and Stupefy. Only one of you mentioned Protego Horribilis and two of you would’ve cast Protego Totalus. When I entered this room, one of you moved to cast a shield while the other immediately responded with a defensive spell.” Lucius looked at his students. “Two of you had the foresight to cast a shield and another defence spell, which of course is a good idea if you want to stay alive. Please copy this grid and the names of these most common defensive spells and shields down. Read them up if you are unfamiliar with any of them and write an essay until next Monday. You are to discuss the pros and cons of these methods and against what kind of attack they can or cannot help you.”

The noise level rose as the students shifted their quills and parchments and wrote the instructions down.

“Professor Malfoy?” Lavender looked up from her parchment.

“Yes Miss Brown?”

“You said we should write about defending ourselves,” Lavender continued with her question. “In what kind of situations, sir?”

Lucius smirked and looked over at Harry. “Well, Mr. Potter? Could you give us examples for realistic scenarios, please?”

Many of the students looked astonished from their professor to Harry, each wondering what was going on and why their teacher was asking Harry as if he was the expert.

Lucius read the looks on their faces and had to stifle a groan of annoyance. How utterly foolish of them. Did they not realize that Harry was the best and most experienced student in the DADA class and the whole school? He had actually faced all kinds of monsters and dangers, real Death Eaters and the Dark Lord, for the past five years and had survived.

Harry turned towards Lavender, smirked and drawled. “Oh I don’t know; maybe you should imagine that you’re walking back alone to the castle from the pitch after a late Quidditch practice in the dark. Or you’re out on a Hogsmeade weekend our perhaps you’re strolling somewhere along somewhere in London or your home town. You’ve just finished shopping, or left a pub laughing with your friends.”
Some of the students shifted in their seats.

“Wherever you are,” Harry continued, “you notice someone Apparating or running behind you or hiding in the shadows or under the trees along the way. They attack you with no warning, and not with a tickling charm. Or imagine, you’re walking along the border of the Forbidden Forest around the Black Lake and one of Hagrid’s pets regards you as a scrumptious snack? In any case, a wrong reaction could be your last.” He turned to Lavender. “Is that realistic enough for you?”

“Uhm, yes, thanks Harry,” Lavender replied. She was pale, afraid and intimidated by Harry’s words and demeanour. She couldn’t imagine what it must be like to always be looking over your shoulder like Harry had to do and then, she remembered the Daily Prophet article about Umbridge, who was reported to have been abducted right in the middle of busy Diagon Alley in front of the Magical Menagerie and Gringotts.

Lucius nodded his thanks to Harry and then he cast a quick Tempus to see how much time they had left until break. He raked his gaze over the students before asking with a mischievous smile. “I believe we still have a few minutes before the end of class, does anyone of you still have that book from last year, Magical Theory by Wilbert Slinkhard?”

Loud groans, eyes rolling and mutterings of “Oh no, not that again”, “Rubbish, utter rubbish” and a few cuss words travelled around the classroom. And instead of berating the students for their bad language, Lucius only smirked.

Hermione dug a moment in her bag and then pulled the book out of it. Harry and Draco grinned and placed their own copy on the table; they had known in advance to bring along. The other students watched them, slightly confused and apprehensive.

“Professor Malfoy, this book is completely useless,” Dean said exasperatedly, “why should we bring it along?”

Lucius smirked at the dark-skinned Gryffindor student. “Wait and see Mr. Thomas, you’ll be surprised.” He stepped back and looked at all the students. “Class, please clear your tables and pack away your books and parchment.” He looked at Harry and Draco and made a sweeping and inviting gesture. “Mr. Potter would you and Mr. Malfoy please come here to show your classmates how these books can be put to use?”

“Sure, we’d love to Professor Malfoy,” Harry and Draco replied.

The two grinned at each other in gleeful anticipation all the while quickly stuffing their things into their bags. Handing their book bags to Cory and Blaise, they rose as one and strode quickly around the tables to the front of the classroom. After placing their Slinkhard books on the floor, each boy walked six paces away, turned around, faced each other to briefly bow and then they moved into a classic duelling stance; knees slightly bent, feet apart, one leg a bit forward, the other back so they could dodge and react quickly, wands held up in their right hand in the formal greeting pose with the other hand at their sides.

Lucius moved out of the way to stand near the Slytherin students, before he addressed the rest of the class watching him and the two boys with looks of confusion, surprise and anticipation. “Class, get out of the way, stand next to the wall with the door. Thank you.”

With a wave of his wand, the benches and tables moved towards the other wall underneath the windows so that the space in the middle of the room was as large as possible.

“Good. Can you all see clearly?” Lucius asked. When the students nodded, he continued, “Mr.
Malfoy and Mr. Potter will give you a demonstration of possible attacks and defences, including those books some of you called rubbish and useless. In our next lesson, you will pair up and practice yourselves. Now, pay attention!

Excited whispers rippled back and forth among the students. All were more than eager to see the Prince of Slytherin fight with the famous Boy-Who-Lived, even if they were dating.

Lucius walked to a position at the side, between Harry and Draco and their audience. “On my mark, duel.” He proudly commanded his son and future son-in-law. “For the sake of the instruction of your classmates, please try to call out the incantations; even if you can do the hex or counter-hex or shield voicelessly. Start out with simple jinxes and work your way up. Take care not to set our classroom aflame or to kill any of your classmates with stray curses. Please show us some creative transfiguration.” He ended his instructions with a wink.

“Yes sir!” Harry and Draco cheerfully called out together; keeping their eyes locked on each other. One thought echoed through both minds; ‘This was going to be fun!’

Lucius turned back to the waiting students. “Mr. LeStrange and Mr. Zabini, would you be so kind to act as seconds as in a professional duel?”

Cory and Blaise smirked at each other while swiftly moving to stand next to Lucius.

“Scared Potter?” Draco smirked at his boyfriend, repeating the words from their second year.

“You wish,” Harry grinned, anticipation rushing through him.

“One, two, begin!” Lucius commanded.

Draco and Harry exploded in a swirl of movements and colourful flashes of light as they sent a barrage of jinxes, hexes and counter jinxes or hexes at each other all the while dodging out of the way or throwing up shields when necessary. They started out low, like in practice duels during the summer, with harmless jinxes like Jelly-Legs, Knockback, Densuago, Tarantallegra and simple Protego and worked their way up to barely legal curses and Protego Horribilis. They wouldn’t use any Dark Arts like the lethal Death Eater curses or Unforgivables as they had no intention of giving away their true level of expertise. Harry’s ears were still ringing from Voldemort’s warnings.

Their student audience watched with mouths open and jaws dropping towards the floor. The Gryffindors, who had all been members of the DA and in the case of Ron and Hermione who had participated in the fight in the Ministry, had seen Harry duel for practice or for real before, but even they were surprised at his skill level; it was obvious to them that Harry had improved, that he had had some practice. The Slytherins on the other hand, had not. Sure they had seen him in classroom situations, during the Tri-wizard tournament or altercations between he and Draco over the years, but none of them—apart from Pansy and Blaise who had been to two practice sessions at Potter Manor—had ever seen Harry truly duel or had they ever witnessed something like this fight.

After playing around for a while, Draco sent a powerful Stupefy at Harry. This time, Harry didn’t jump to the side to dodge; instead, he aimed his wand at one of the Slinkhard books between them and transfigured it into a plate of metal, which he then flung deftly into the path of the incoming spell. A loud bong sounded through the classroom when the spell connected with the metal and was reflected back in Draco’s direction, but way up and to the side.

The red bolt of light crashed into the ceiling of the classroom, sending a shower of plaster over the students watching below. Several girls shrieked and ducked, covering their heads with their arms. Only a few students had the presence of mind to draw their wands and throw up Shields in time.
Lucius made a mental note of who had reacted correctly.

While the audience was busy recovering, the two young men in the middle hadn’t stopped, but had continued their duel as if nothing had happened. Draco laughed and aimed an *Expulso* curse at the other book lying on the floor. It exploded in a ball of fire and hot air shooting towards Harry who ducked and threw up a *Protego Totalus* just in time. The burning pages crumbled to black scraps in the air and rained down as ash onto his shield.

Draco grinned gleefully and looked for a moment towards his father and Blaise for approval. That was his undoing. Harry took advantage of his distraction at once. Cancelling the shield and not caring that the hot ash fell onto him, he voicelessly cast the Body-Bind Curse at Draco—who felt his legs stiffen and his arms snap close together all of a sudden—and he crashed to the floor, caught in the last second by a cushioning charm that Harry just managed to cast before Draco’s head hit the floor.

Breathing heavily and wiping his sweaty forehead with his sleeve, Harry lowered his wand and looked to Lucius for instructions as he walked closer to Draco. With a wordless flick of his wand, he cancelled the Body-Bind and reached down to help his partner up. He smiled at his boyfriend and checked him over. His eyes travelled the blond’s body and he took in the sweaty face, tousled platinum hair and his breathlessness. Unbidden, an image of Draco looking exactly like that spread out beneath him rose in Harry’s mind and his emerald eyes darkened in lust.

Draco tried to get his breathing under control; his pride was a little hurt that he had let his guard down like that, but he enjoyed himself immensely. Duelling with Harry was something he loved to do. He shook his head, unknowingly tousling his hair a bit more. He looked at his boyfriend and nearly moaned out loud when his grey eyes met Harry’s lust darkened emerald eyes. A shiver ran through his body as Harry’s gaze moved down his body again, the gaze so hot he felt scorched.

The students and professor could feel the pure desire crackling between the two and Lucius decided to step in before they decided to tear each others’ clothes off.

Walking over to them, he clapped. “Thank you Mr. Potter, Mr. Malfoy. Twenty points each to Slytherin and Gryffindor for showing us a wide variety of attack and defence.” The two boys jerked a bit, remembering that they were not alone. Lucius nearly grinned at the slight blush on both boys’ faces.

“Sadly,” he continued, “We do not have enough time to see the seconds in action. However, there is always our next lesson on Wednesday, which fortunately is a double period.” The bell rang, so he gave his final instructions. “Remember to read up on the hexes, curses and shields used and/or mentioned today that you are not familiar with. I expect you to come back here well prepared. Class dismissed!”

Harry smiled and shook his head while he pulled Draco close for a kiss, a small celebration of their first Defence class success. They pulled back after a minute, and Draco kept a hold of his boyfriend’s hand, smirking at the students staring at them.

The students seemed to shake themselves off and grabbed their bags and headed to the door. Blaise, Pansy and Cory walked over to them; the two boys clapped them on their backs, joking good-naturedly about Draco’s misfortune, while Pansy encouraged Harry to “Kiss it all better” again, which he did with sparkling eyes and a joyful happiness.

Lucius shook his head before he headed over to the four and sent them off with a wink and a small laugh.
Truth be told, Hermione was having a little trouble believing what she was seeing. She slowly collected her books as her mind went over their Defence class. When she had heard that Lord Malfoy would be the new DADA professor, she had expected arrogance, coldness and aloofness from both Malfoys. But, today, this class had rocked her view of the world. Lord Malfoy, the bigoted pure-blood supremacist, the Death Eater—she still had no clue as to how he had managed to fool not only Dumbledore, but the Board of Governors and the Ministry also, into believing he wasn’t one—had treated her, a Gryffindor student and a Muggleborn, fairly and without hate or contempt. He hadn’t insulted or harassed her or Dean for their Muggleborn status.

He was friendly and full of respect towards Harry, obviously realizing that the Boy-Who-Lived would know in depth answers and perform way above the level of the class. And the best thing was, he had done what a competent Defence teacher should; they had actually learned something in this first lesson. Professor Malfoy had set the tone for the rest of the year; he had demanded hard work and dedication, but they would actually learn to duel and defend themselves. She had—in all truth—not expected or anticipated a fantastic experience like that all. And, he gave everyone—those who wanted one—a pass...just like that! No teacher had done that before.

She glanced at her pass and read her note:

Dear Mrs. Pince,

Please grant the following student access to the Restricted Section of the Hogwarts Library:
Hermione Granger, sixth year student of the Advanced Defence against the Dark Arts class 1996/1997, to research for Defence purposes.

Sincerely,
Professor Lucius Malfoy

That was a wide field; she could take out books for nearly everything. Hermione shook her head and looked up. She looked from Malfoy to Harry to Mr. Malfoy and back, taken aback by the casualness between them—it was as if an all-out duel like what had just happened was nothing special at all—and how the Elder Malfoy seemed to be completely alright with the relationship between his son and Harry. She recalled how he had smiled proudly during the duel. Her gaze drifted to Harry and settled on him.

Harry had changed; he was more confident, more graceful and he was also more relaxed and happy. She saw that his emerald eyes were sparkling with a joyful happiness, something she had never seen on his face, unless he was flying on his broom or when it had something to do with Sirius—like the night at the end of third year when they had flown on Buckbeak after rescuing Sirius. Her gaze drifted to where his hand was intertwined with Malfoy’s. She knew that the blond was a contributing factor to the change in Harry, but how much, she didn’t know.

She watched in amazement as Lucius walked over to the four teens, smiling at his son and Harry before he dismissed them. Shaking her head, Hermione remained deep in thought as she left the classroom. She had a lot to think about.

“Man,” Pansy gushed as she and the others left their Defence class. “I thought the two of you were going to go at it right there in front of everyone.”

“Pansy,” Draco looked over at his childhood friend.
“Don’t ‘Pansy’ me,” Pansy grinned, “the sparks flying off of the two of you...”

“She’s right,” Blaise laughed. “It’s a good thing your father spoke, reminding you that you were still in class.”

“I’m sure the girls wouldn’t have mind that at all,” Seamus injected as he had heard Pansy’s comment to Harry and Draco. “I know I wouldn’t have.”

“Seamus,” Harry laughed as he playfully shoved the Irish teen. “Dean, control him.”

“Harry,” Dean grinned, “you should know by now that that’s impossible.”

“I can’t believe you two!” Ron exclaimed loudly as he stomped up to the group. “How can you talk to them? Potter has gone dark! He turned his back on us and attacked me in the common room.”

“Really Weasley,” Cory rolled his eyes. “Don’t act dumb, even if it is a good look for you.”

The teens snickered while Ron turned red in anger and embarrassment.

“Lighten up Ron,” Seamus said. “Besides, Harry didn’t attack you. You were the one that was stupid enough to point your wand at him.”

“He forgot Harry taught the DA last year,” Dean laughed as he leaned against Seamus. “I really don’t know what he thought he could’ve done. Harry is the Boy-Who-Lived after all.”

Harry grinned while Draco smirked at Ron and the rest laughed.

“Weasel,” Draco sneered, “I know it must be hard, but please, stop acting like the fool we all know you to be.”

“He can’t help it,” Harry snickered.

Ron raised his wand, in his anger forgetting just who he was surrounded by, but fortunately for him, before he could cast a spell, Hermione grabbed his arm.

“Ron, don’t!” she hissed at him and started pulling him away. “Let’s go Ron, now!”

But Ron was too hyped up and angry to listen. Forgetting his warning from last night, he pulled his arm from Hermione’s grip and pointed his wand at Harry. “Shut up you traitor! You sc—

Ron’s words were cut off by his body slamming into the wall and an arm pressing against his throat. He opened his eyes, silently wondering when he had closed them, and saw menacing grey eyes glaring at him. He made a gagging sound as he realized that he was being choked by Malfoy.

Draco growled low in his throat as he pressed his arm further into Ron’s windpipe, not caring about the fact that the red head’s face was turning colour or that he needed air. No one attacked Harry—verbally or otherwise—in front of him.

As this was the changeover between classes, the scene was witnessed by students who were on their way to either their common rooms, classes or somewhere else. They watched the scene in shock, horror and fear, with the exception of Blaise, Pansy, Cory and Harry who only shook their heads. They all knew how protective both boys were of each other and that it was suicide to go after one in the other’s presence.

“What is the meaning of this?” Lucius questioned as he walked up to the group. He had heard the commotion from his room and had immediately investigated. What he came across filled him with
curiosity and he wondered what exactly the Weasley boy had done to anger his son.

“Well?” Lucius looked at the students. “Will no one explain what is going on?”

“Weasley insulted Harry sir,” Pansy spoke up, glaring at the Gryffindor in question. “And then he raised his wand at him.”

Lucius held back his sigh. ‘Haven’t the incompetent fools learned by now it is not wise to anger Draco? Especially when it came to something belonging to him; we Malfoys are very protective of what we perceive as our own and Harry belongs to my son as much as my son belongs to him.’

“I do not believe I need to assign detention to both of you, do I?” Lucius raised a delicate eyebrow.

“No sir,” Harry shook his head and stepped forward, resting his hand on his boyfriend’s arm. “Just a bit of misunderstanding.” He looked Ron directly in his eye. “I’m sure Weasley now understands that he cannot go around accusing someone without facing the consequences.” He tugged gently on the blond’s arm. “Let’s go Drake.”

Draco heard the statement and relaxed his arm. Before he could step back though, he leaned close to Ron’s ear to whisper something in it causing the red head to blanch and pale, and then he removed his arm and stepped back.

Harry’s hand drifted down Draco’s arm until he reached his hand where he laced their fingers together.

“I suggest you all depart,” Lucius looked around at the students with narrowed grey eyes. “NOW!”

At his tone, the students all scattered leaving Harry and company. Lucius watched them leave before turning to his son and his friends.

“First day back and already trouble follows you,” the statement was made in a scolding tone, but Harry, Draco and Cory read the amusement in the elder Malfoy’s eyes.

“It’s not like we asked for it,” Cory grinned.

Lucius said nothing, but raised an eyebrow before heading back to his classroom. The teens watched him go before Harry turned to look at Draco.

“You do know I can defend myself, right?” the dark-haired teen asked.

“Yes,” Draco raised a delicate eyebrow and nodded. “And your point would be what exactly? Just like I am yours and you have the right to defend and protect me against anyone who would dare attack me, then I have the same leeway to do so onto others. They need to know that Malfoys are possessive and to attack what we perceive as ours is to bring about our retribution.”

“Never said I minded,” Harry smiled and he turned to walk down the hallway, pulling Draco along. “I like the fact that you get so protective of me.”

“Good,” Draco nodded.

“You two are just too cute,” Pansy giggled, causing the boys to stop and stare at her in shock.

“Did you just giggle?” Blaise asked, staring at her as if she was someone else.

“No,” Pansy shook her head and bit her lip to stop more giggles from escaping her lips. “Giggling is for idiotic, simpering girls who willing act like fools in public eyesight.”
“Say what you want,” Cory shrugged with a smile as he started walking again, the others doing so. “You giggled.”

“I did not!” Pansy protested, but the smile on her face contradicted her words.

“Hmmm,” Draco looked at her but said nothing else.

Pansy shook her head and the five continued on.
Missing Lions, Lunch and Potions

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing…if I did, Ginny would have died in the CoS, Dumbledore would have choked on his lemon drops and Harry would have stood up for himself against Molly and Dumbledore.

Disclaimer 2: this story is based on characters and situations created and owned by JK Rowling and Bloomsbury/Scholastic. No money is being made and no copyright or trademark infringement is intended.

"Talking"
'Thinking'
Letter or commentary/introduction and flashback
{Parssseltongue}
~…~ indicates scene change

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Last time on RDA;

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Hermione sighed as she sat down on the couch in the Gryffindor common room. Her brain was buzzing from everything that had happened yesterday and today. Ron next to her, but she ignored him. As seemed to be the norm, her mind drifted off to Harry and the last five years of school. No matter how much she thought about it, she still couldn’t understand why she had turned on Harry. Every time she thought about everything he had done for her, shame filled when she remembered what she did.

The door to the common room opened and the voices that came through it drew her attention. She and others looked up when they saw Harry, Cory, Dean and Seamus.

Hermione watched her former friend, unaware that her eyes were filled with hidden longing. She desperately missed her friend—the best friend she ever had—but she knew that it was all her fault their friendship had disintegrated.
“You ok?” Ron’s voice drew her from her thoughts and she turned towards him.

“Just thinking,” Hermione said before she sighed. “Ron, why did you raise your wand at Harry? Did you forget what happened last night?”

Ron scowled and looked away briefly before he sighed. “I don’t know. I just get so angry, especially when I remember everything that happened over the summer.”

“I know,” Hermione nodded, “but remember what Dumbledore said. We need to be extra careful because we need to know how his summer was spent.”

Ron opened his mouth to say something but was cut off by Lavender and Parvati rushing over to Harry. The two teens watched the three and how the girls fawned over the pup on Harry’s lap.

Hermione frowned as her gaze drifted to the pup but before she could voice her thoughts, some of the younger years came in and their conversation caught Hermione’s attention.

“So neither Dennis nor Colin is here?” a male fourth year student, Matthew Lewis, asked.

“No,” a female fifth year, Alexandra Everwood, shook her head. “I wonder what happened?”

“Didn’t you guys hear?” a fifth year male, Michael James, asked. “It was in the news. Mr. Creevey was found dead beside a road in Lancashire some weeks back. It could’ve been an accident, but the Muggle police was clueless as to the cause of death. I suppose it could’ve been the Killing Curse as it leaves no visible mark. My guess is, Colin is dead and chances are, so is Dennis.”

“What?” the Matt and Alex were shocked.

“What are you talking about?” Hermione left Ron and walked over to where they were sitting.

“What’s this about Colin and Dennis?”

“They’re not in school today,” the Matt answered.

“It wasn’t in the Prophet, I don’t think, but it was definitely in the Muggle news,” Michael told Hermione. “It was during the summer, just a few weeks ago. My family lives in Lancashire, where the Creeveys lived. I’m a half-blood, so I know. I don’t think this affair made the great London newspapers or the BBC top news...no, just our local newspaper, the Lancashire Telegraph. The father, Mr. Creevey, was the first to be found. He was sitting there, quite dead, but uninjured with a look of fright on his face, in his car which was left standing beside a country road leading towards his village. Perhaps it was a heart attack?” Michael asked his audience rhetorically.”

“You don’t think so, do you?” Hermione asked.

“Nope,” Michael shook his head. “It could’ve been the Killing Curse as it leaves no visible mark. When the police started investigations, the Creeveys’ house stood empty; the doors and windows were not broken into and everything was left as if the owners would come back any minute. But, the boys were gone without a trace.

“None of the neighbours witnessed anything. The police started asking questions and searching for relatives. Next day, the boys’ grandparents were also found dead in their flat in a nearby village. They were in their bed, making it seem as if they died in their sleep. Then, a few days later, their aunt—their father’s sister—and her own family had a car accident on their way back from the holidays somewhere on the continent.

“Their car appears to have veered off the road, crashed down a gorge and burned out. It’s baffling
the police. Everyone Creevey related is dead; an uncle—their mum’s younger brother—drowned while swimming in the sea while he was on holiday, despite the fact that according to his friends, he was a good swimmer. What a coincidence, isn’t it?” the students that were listening to him, gasped and shook their heads, horrified, and Michael continued sombly. “The Muggle police have no idea what happened to the family or who did it, but I believe it’s gotta be You-Know-Who’s people. I mean, it can’t just be a coincidence with all the deaths and attacks You-Know-Who did.”

“But why would V-Voldemort,” Hermione stuttered out the name, wincing slightly when she saw the students flinch. “Why would he order his men to kill the Creeveys?”

Michael looked at her incredulously. Seriously, how could the so called brightest witch of their generation be so obtuse?


Seeing the confused looks of Hermione, Alex and Matt, he elaborated. “Well, you must have noticed that Colin wasn’t the quiet type? On the contrary, from day one here at Hogwarts, he was always running around with his camera and bugging people. Some found him funny, but others didn’t.”

~...~

“Hi Harry,” Romilda greeted as she walked down from the girls’ dorms and over to him.

“Hey,” Harry smiled at the witch before taking up the seat on the chair near the fireplace, while Cory, Dean and Seamus headed up to the dorms.

“Where’s your other half?” Romilda asked as she sat on the chair across from him.

“We’ll meet up in the Great Hall,” Harry told her, “I came up here because the others said they needed something from the dorm.”

“Oh ok,” Romilda nodded before she got up to leave. She stopped just a few feet away and looked back at him. “I really like you like this Harry. It’s nice to see you thinking for yourself and being on your own instead of having Granger and Weasley do it for you.”

Harry cocked his head slightly to the side and looked at her. There was something about her that caught his interest. ‘I’ll have Hedwig scan her sometime to see what she thinks.’ Shaking his head, he smiled at her. “Thanks.”

Romilda nodded before continuing on her way out of the common room.

Harry sighed and relaxed further into the chair. He felt a brush against his leg and looked down to see Sesshomaru.

“Hey Sesshomaru,” he bent down to pick the puppy up. “What are you doing here?”

-got bored in the room and your roommates are being a bit rambunctious-

-Sorry-

Sesshomaru cuddled into Harry’s lap. -think nothing of it. However, I did have another motive for coming down here-
-And what is that?- 

-I would like to see the school- 

-Ok. When the others get back, I’ll take you with me when we leave- 

Sesshomaru yipped softly before leaning up to lick Harry’s chin.

“Oh that’s so cute,” Lavender and Parvati rushed over to Harry and dropped to the floor in front of him. They had just entered the common room and were heading to their dorm when the spotted him sitting with the puppy on his lap.

“He’s adorable Harry,” Parvati said as she reached out a hand to touch Sesshomaru’s head. The pup shifted so that both girls could easily reach him.

“Thanks,” Harry grinned, before he looked at the two girls. “Can I ask you something?”

“What is it?” Lavender looked up at him as she played with Sesshomaru’s paws.

“How come you two are sitting here talking to me?” Harry asked. “You’ve never done that before; even Romilda, who’s never really said anything to me before, spoke to me today, almost like she had just been given permission or something.”

The two girls exchanged looks before they scooted even closer to Harry.

“The reason why is because of Hermione and Ron,” Lavender pitched her voice low so that only Parvati and Harry would hear.

Harry looked at her in confusion.

“Back in first year,” Parvati picked up, “Ron basically warned the other students that you were practically off-limits. He said that while they could talk to you, he was the only one that would be your best friend. Sure some of us laughed, but then he said that Dumbledore knew that and his family could help and be there for you better than anyone because you lost your parents and you needed them.”

“It wasn’t until about third year or so,” Lavender added on, “that Hermione gave us a warning. She said that she was the only one that was allowed to help you with any work; she was the only that you were supposed to come to. She basically said the same thing Ron had said.”

Harry stared at the two girls in shock; never in his life did he think that either one of his former friends had done something like that, that their betrayal had run so deep. To think that the two had prevented anyone else from being a real friend to him...it was mind boggling. ’How could I have missed that? Didn’t I see the betrayals because I expected them to be truthful even though I wasn’t?’

“I didn’t know,” Harry said finally.

“We know,” Parvati looked at Lavender. “Which is why, when you told off Ron last night, most of us were relieved. We’ve wanted to be your friend Harry, but before we couldn’t.”

“Now though,” Lavender grinned, “now we can.”

Hermione’s voice drew the attention of the three and they looked up to see her talking to couple younger years. The three got up and moved closer and they listened in on the conversation. When Hermione asked why Voldemort would order to kill the Creeveys and then shook her head
disbelievingly at Michael’s explanation, watched on by the wide eyes Matt and Alex, Harry found himself answering.

“Because they were a danger to our world,” he said, shocking the others. Whispers broke out among the students that were there and they all stared at Harry, unable to believe that he would say that.

“What?” Hermione whirled around to look at him.

“Why would you say that?” Matt asked.

“Because it’s true,” Harry said.

“So what are you saying?” Hermione narrowed her eyes at him in disbelief. “They deserved to be killed? That they had to die? How can you say that?”

“You’re just as bad as You-Know-Who!” Ron came to Hermione’s side and accused Harry.

The whispers grew louder, drawing Dean, Seamus and Cory from the boys’ dorm.

“What’s going on?” Dean asked.

“Potter’s joined You-Know-Who,” Ron glared, “he just admitted it.”

“He didn’t say that!” Parvati glared at Ron.

“He all but admitted it though,” Alex countered.

Harry glared at Ron. “Again with the accusations Weasley?” he turned to the other students. “What I said was, the Creevey boys were—Colin especially—were a danger to the Wizarding World.”

“And they just jumped down his throat without giving him a chance to explain,” Lavender glared at Hermione.

“So explain then,” Matt demanded.

“It’s simple really,” Harry started, “everyone here knows how strict the Ministry is on keeping the Wizarding World a secret and how important it is that Muggles don’t find out about us, it’s why we have the Statute of Secrecy if the first place. Ever since Colin Creevey entered Hogwarts, he’s done nothing but put this world in jeopardy.”

“How did he do that?” Hermione asked.

Harry looked at her, his green eyes flashing with disgust—the second time he looked at her like that—causing Hermione to inhale sharply. “You’re not stupid Granger. Michael already explained it pretty well. Colin took photos of everything, from me, to Hogwarts to Hogsmeade, and then he developed them into Wizarding Photos and sent them back to his father, to his family. Now what do you suppose they did with those photos? They were proud of their son and would want to show them off to their friends, so that’s exactly what they did.

“I know some of you may scoff and think that that’s nothing, but it is something. Did any of even consider why the Statute of Secrecy was created in the first place? Did any of you wonder about what could have happened all those years ago that caused the Wizarding World to cut itself off from the Muggle world, and go to such great efforts to not have Muggles find out about them? Have you ever thought about just why it was that Salazar Slytherin didn’t want Muggleborns in Hogwarts? What Binns told us back in third year was a lie. I’m sure the Muggleborns and half-bloods have
heard of the Salem Witch Trials that occurred in the United States many years ago, even you
purebloods may have heard about it,” those who knew what he was talking about flinched, “The
times of the Witch Hunt were not funny or harmless at all. Get a decent History book, go to any
Muggle public library and read up on it if you don’t believe me.”

As Harry talked, he registered more and more students coming into the common room and stopping
to listen to him, but he paid them no mind, although, inwardly, he was smirking.

“Contrary to what Ronald believes,” Harry continued, “I have no intention of joining a mad man,
especially the one that murdered my parents,” he was talking about Dumbledore, not Voldemort, but
only Cory knew that. “If You-Know-Who did kill the Creeveys, or ordered some of his Death Eaters
to do it, then I’d suspect it was because he knew what they were doing. Before you ask how, there
are students in this school whose parents are dark pure-bloods, some are even Death Eaters. My
guess is, they were disgusted with what was happening and decided to do something about it.”

“But why?” Jack Sloper, the Gryffindor beater from last year, asked.

“Because,” Harry explained, “Pure-bloods, especially dark purebloods, still cling to the old
traditions, traditions that are barely in use anymore. They are fiercely protective of Magic and the
Wizarding world itself. In their mind, students like the Creeveys who still cling to their own Muggle
traditions and who, without thought, talk to Muggles about the Wizarding World, are a danger to it.
They obviously felt they needed to do something and they did.”

“And you just accept that? Where did you learn about history or what some bigoted pure-bloods
believe? Or did Malfoy influence you with his pure-blood propaganda?” Hermione was aghast; she
couldn’t believe that Harry could be so blasé about the young Gryffindor’s death. She could
understand about Umbridge—now that she’d thought things over—and she knew the Creevey
brothers were annoying and creepy, that still didn’t mean they deserved what happened. She knew
Harry had changed over the summer, she just never realized he had changed so much.

“First,” Harry rolled his eyes, “I went to London this summer and I spent a lot of time in the British
Library, the British Museum and others, the Muggle ones mind you. And somewhere else, I came
upon real wizard history books, not that endless Goblin rebellion crap we’re supposed to learn from
in Binns’ class. Although, I must say that Bathilda Bagshot’s book isn’t so bad if one has other
books to cross check and clarify the information.”

He glared at Hermione. “And no, Draco didn’t influence me with what you call pure-blood
propaganda. What he actually did was encourage me to seek out information and to learn to think for
myself. Like I said, I read several Magical and Muggle History books over the summer, each
detailing the Witch-hunts and the prosecution of magic.” When he saw that he still had everyone’s
attention and that they all seemed some form of curious, he continued. “From the late middle ages to
the eighteenth century many people were lynched or officially prosecuted and killed in Europe and
the colonies because of religious and social prejudices.

“It doesn’t matter that most of those victims were Muggle men and woman falsely accused of
witchcraft, because of course many adult witches and wizards could escape prosecution. Too many
magical people lost their homes or were killed. Think of what happened to teenagers accused of
witchcraft or to the smaller children if their parents were overwhelmed by a lynch mob? Children
could and cannot Apparate for example. This is the historical background of why all wizard nations
agreed on the Statute of Secrecy.”

Murmurs rose in the room as each student processed what Harry was telling them. Truth be told,
none of them had ever truly thought about why there was a Statue of Secrecy or laws on under age
magic.
Cory looked at his friend and hid his smile. He wondered if Harry knew that he sounded just like the Dark Lord when he was giving his lectures; captivating and alluring.

“During the times of the Witch-hunt there was a climate of mass panics which frequently led to a chain of hysterical accusations, be it of religious heresy or witchcraft, when the true reason often was fear or simple spite against others,” Harry continued with his explanation. “The illiterate, lower class Muggles of that time couldn’t explain the changing climate, the devastating plagues and the failing of harvests with their limited knowledge. They only experienced their life as miserable and out of their control, especially during the upheavals of the Reformation and the Thirty Years’ War in Germany. These Muggles sought scapegoats; they blamed people who were living solitary or who were in anyway different from the main population, for their misery; be they true witches or wizard, Jews or sometimes so called wise women who were learned in childbirth, healing and herb lore.

“The Muggle Church strove to destroy all belief into the old Gods, the Old Ways, ancient or traditional knowledge. Their male priests brainwashed large parts of the Muggle population into the firm belief that all kinds of magic or witchcraft were evil, that witches consorted with the devil and demons, that woman were general untrustworthy and far below men. There’s also a disturbing connection to birth control.”

“What kind of connection?” Lavender asked, her eyes wide from what she was hearing.

“One of the accusations against so called witches by churchmen was that they provided poisons to would-be murderers and facilitated abortions,” Harry said and gasps echoed throughout the room. He looked at the shocked faces around him. “Well think about; birth control seems normal and the right thing to do to us in this modern age. Imagine how many upper year girls would drop out of school otherwise, be them Muggles or witches.”

That got him a round of “Harry!” amidst gasps, blushes, nervous giggles and shuffles from his audience.

Rolling his eyes, Harry continued. “Oh come on, you can talk about it. About a thousand or a hundred years ago, Muggle women in Europe go pregnant year after year, because they didn’t have access to information, methods of birth control, like charms and potions for witches or condoms or the pill for Muggle women like in our modern times. Many women died in childbirth because of exhaustion or bad hygiene. Those surviving had terrible trouble rearing their many kids because of their poverty and wide spread diseases. Most kids died early as babies or toddlers. Many Muggle women, who had severe health problems, were caught in this vicious cycle without any escape. The people were suffering and desperate. The only one that could help them in secret were the so called wise women; either witches who could brew potions to prevent or terminate pregnancy, or Muggle women like midwives who still had some old knowledge of herbs to do the same. And that was forbidden knowledge. Many witches or Muggle women who dared to help others ended up hanged, burned at the stake or drowned in rivers if some tattletale accused them of witchcraft.”

The boys looked thoroughly uncomfortable hearing about the topic while the girls looked disturbed and shocked by such a barbaric concept.

“That’s so terrible,” Lavender gasped out, “I never thought about this before. But why?”

“As I already said,” Harry replied, “any witchcraft or sorcery was considered evil, the work of the devil or demons. And, the European Muggles in the Middle Ages and later times, believed it to be their Christian God’s will that as many babies as possible were born, regardless if the mothers were sick and starving and the kids only had a very slim chance of survival. Muggle priests told the people every Sunday that it was their Almighty God’s will that they suffer while living on Earth. That was just the way things were. After death, they would go to Heaven or Hell, depending on their sins.”
Some students—those from pure-blood families—scoffed at hearing that, but most of those from half-blood or Muggleborn backgrounds, looked pensive, having read something like that before, depending on the religious belief of their specific Muggle relations.

“That’s not the worst of it, you know?” Harry continued, “back then, most people couldn’t read, they couldn’t travel, there was no newspaper, no public library, radio or any other way to get information like there is today. And that meant that they didn’t have access to the knowledge to make an informed decision about their lives or bodies, not like we do now, which some of us take for granted. The saddest thing is though, today there’s widespread Muggle religion all over the world telling their believers that birth control is evil. The Clergy insists that it is better to multiply like rabbits and let children and mothers suffer and die, rather than prevent unwanted pregnancies. Totally barbaric.

“Here’s some more history to think about. Another thing I read was that during the decline of the Roman Empire and the rise of the Catholic religion, the perception of Ancient symbols was craftily changed by the Muggle Clerics. For example, the Muggle Church devil—as the embodiment of pure evil—is depicted as a dark figure holding a trident. In ancient times, this same trident was something positive, the symbol of Neptune, the name that ancient Romans gave to the powerful Greek god of the sea and earthquakes, Poseidon.

“The snake, once a symbol of wisdom, knowledge, healing and medicine, was reversed by the Muggle Church into the symbol of evil, associated with the devil, woman, betrayal and deceit. In ancient Greece, snakes were considered to be the wisest and cleverest of all animals. The snake—which periodically sheds its skin—was a symbol of healing, regeneration and renewal. Asclepius’ staff has only one snake entwined around it, which symbolizes healing, regeneration, and the consummate skill of the medical art. Hermes’ Caduceus has two intertwined snakes, which also represent the need for balance, for optimum health maintenance and disease prevention.

“If you think about it, we are influenced by these mythological and warped religious concepts too - one of the first things I was told at age eleven, when I was introduced to the magical world, about Slytherin house was that they are all evil slimy snakes, untrustworthy and that the lion’s house, Gryffindor, was all brave and good. It’s pathetic. The snake of Slytherin and the lion of Gryffindor are only symbols for school houses, for Merlin's sake! There are good or bad people in every house.”

Hermione blinked at him in complete shock, her thoughts going a mile a minute. ‘Harry read history books without me prompting and badgering him to study? He went to a library and a museum on his own? Where he did get access to other wizard books? Where exactly did he spend his summer? Now that he mentioned...yes...I read years back about the prosecution of witches and wizards. It’s true that Muggles cruelly hunted and murdered countless people over several hundred years because they were accused of practicing witchcraft or consorting with the Devil...but still, that doesn’t excuse Harry’s callous attitude towards the Creeveys. They or their father and family didn’t do anything wrong...didn’t they?’

“Look,” Harry narrowed his eyes and looked around the room at the students. “I know what I just said was shocking and that some of you may think I’m cold hearted or something because I’m not upset over the Creeveys’ deaths and truthfully, I really am not. I was never close to either brother to feel true remorse for them being gone.” His eyes and voice hardened and everyone seemed to stand a little straighter, especially the students that had been a part of the DA the years before. “Before anyone starts condemning me for my own feelings, you should be clear about something. This is a war; every day people die and some of them are people that we know. I know that better than anyone; I lost my parents, my godfather and every year since I’ve been here, I’ve had to fight to survive.” He directed his gaze to Hermione, Jack, Matt and Alex. “I’m sorry if none of you like that, but frankly I don’t care. I’m tired of people trying to make me feel guilty for something I had no control over. I wasn’t the one that told the Creevey brothers to expose our world, no matter how little
the exposure, I didn’t tell the Slytherins to tell their parents and I sure as hell didn’t tell You-Know-Who to attack and kill them either.”

He switched his gaze to Ron. “So before you start accusing me of being dark, you should remember all the shit I’ve been through these past few years. If someone like the Creeveys barely even registers on my radar because I’ve got more important stuff to worry about, then I’m sorry.”

“What about the Slytherins?” Hermione asked, unwilling to let the situation go. “How do you think that looks to everyone else? To the Wizarding World as a whole?”

“What about them?” Harry turned to Cory and passed Sesshomaru to him so he could fold his arms. “I’m dating the Ice Prince of Slytherin himself and I made no secret about that.” Some of the students grinned when they remembered last night at the Opening Feast. “I’m also friends with two others and my best friend is the son of the two most infamous Death Eaters, but do I care about that? No. Do you know why? It’s simple; it makes no sense to blame the child for the sins of the parents. Yes Draco treated people—us Gryffindors especially—like crap, but like I told you last night, I forgave him.

“As far as I’m concerned, the past is the past and that’s where it should stay. I’ll say this again since it seems that everyone didn’t hear or understand me. This is a war! And I have more important things to worry about than petty house rivalries, like the fact that a madman wants me dead and will do anything he can to make that happen. Why would I spend my time fighting with Draco or any of the Slytherins when I could be preparing myself for the war? And as for the Wizarding World, I don’t care what they think. No matter what I do, it’s always going to be a problem. A muggle woman once said ‘Do what you feel in your heart to be right for you’ll be criticized anyway; you’ll be damned if you and damned if you don’t’ (1),” Harry shook his head and turned to leave the common room, when he got to the entrance, he stopped and turned back to look at Ron and Hermione.

“You know,” He looked at them with knowing eyes. “You keep going on about me taking up with the Slytherins, but the truth is, I’d rather be surrounded by venomous snakes in the dark of night than walk in the daylight with a lion. With the snake, you know from the start that they will attack if they feel threatened, but with a lion, you never know when they’re gonna turn cowardly and betray you to save their own skin.”

Ron and Hermione flinched as Harry’s words struck home and most of the Gryffindors turned to look at the two.

Harry smiled when he saw that reaction and then he turned and walk away, Cory smirking at the two before following immediately.

“Really guys?” Seamus looked at the two and the students that had started the talk. “Harry’s been through a lot of shit and you all get on his case because he’s not upset over Colin?”

“But Seamus,” Ron started.

“No Ron,” the Irish teen him off. “Harry’s changed yes, but that doesn’t mean he’s gone dark. Harry was your best friend until you started treating him like crap. You’re supposed to know him and because he grew up over the summer and realized he has to change a bit, you don’t like that so you accuse him of being dark. It’s just like fourth year all over again.”

Seamus shook his head and left the common room, Dean following him. After a few minutes, the other Gryffindors left to go their own ways, each talking about what had just happened and the information they had just received.
“That was perfect,” Cory laughed as he walked alongside Harry. He passed Sesshomaru back to his friend. “If I didn’t know any better, I’d swear you planned it.”

“I didn’t,” Harry grinned as he set Sesshomaru on the floor. “But, when an opportunity presents itself, you take it, so I did.”

“You do know that the whole school is going to know what happened, right?” Cory asked.

“Yes,” Harry nodded. “People are going to start thinking outside the box and that’s exactly what we want.”

Cory shook his head with a smile. The smile became bigger when he saw Luna heading towards them.

“Nicely done,” Luna smiled as she pecked Harry on the cheek before moving to Cory’s side. “It was perfect and seeds that were planted are being further nurtured.”

“Good,” Harry smiled.

“Beware the bee Harry,” Luna said suddenly. “Be wary of its bright colours and favourite food as they are but a distraction from its manipulations.”

Harry stared at her for a few seconds before he nodded. “Thanks for the warning Luna-girl.”

“Anytime,” Luna grinned. “He will not succeed, no matter how hard he tries, however, insignificant thoughts should roam around; they should placate the bee.”

Harry nodded, understanding her meaning; Dumbledore will try to perform Legilimency on him, so he should keep his mind filled with unnecessary things.

The trio continued walking, Sesshomaru walking slightly ahead of them when Harry heard his name again. He turned and saw Dean and Seamus hurrying towards him.

“What is it?” Cory asked when the two boys caught up to them.

“Hey Luna,” Dean greeted.

“Hi,” Luna smiled at him.

Luna looked around before looking at Seamus. “Thank you. Harry doesn’t need controlling friends like them around him and it’s nice to see you on his side for a change compared to the first half of last year.”

At Seamus’ shocked look, Harry laughed and walked off. Cory grinned and he and Luna followed their friend.

Dean laughed and clapped Seamus on his shoulder before drawing the Irish teen into his arms and they went after their friends.

Harry was still laughing when he walked into the Great Hall so the few students that were in there, turned to look at him. He ignored them and headed over to the Slytherin table where Draco was sitting with Blaise, Pansy and a few other Slytherins.

“What’s so funny?” Draco asked when Harry walked up to him.
“Luna-girl,” Harry gave a quick kiss to Draco before sitting down next to him.

Draco smiled at the dirty-blonde Ravenclaw. “What did you do?”

“She was being herself,” Cory laughed. “And it shocked Seamus into speechlessness.”

Draco laughed and the sound drew the attention of the other students as they had never heard the Slytherin laugh so easily and freely before. Sesshomaru yipped before he leapt from the ground into Draco’s lap.

“Well hello Sesshomaru,” Draco scratched the pup behind his ears drawing a growl of contentment.

“So what do you have after this break?” Harry asked his boyfriend as he snagged one of the grapes from Draco’s plate. He laughed when Sesshomaru tried to grab a grape as well.

“Arithmancy,” Draco replied as he bit into a grape while giving the pup on his lap another. “And I have it with Granger.”

“Isn’t that your second class with her?” Cory asked.

“Yes,” Draco nodded.

“Ouch,” Harry exaggerated.

“Shut up,” Draco scowled briefly and threw a grape at him.

Harry laughed and caught it against his chest before throwing it in his mouth. Pansy laughed at the two.

“Dragon,” Luna smiled as she grabbed a grape as well. “Be good.”

“Aren’t I always?” Draco smirked at her. The bell rang; Draco handed Sesshomaru back to Harry as everyone got up to head to their classes.

Harry had a free period, while the others had classes. “I’ll see you at lunch?”

“Of course,” Draco smiled before he leaned for a kiss. It lasted a few minutes before both boys broke away, panting slightly.

Harry pulled Draco in for a hug and whispered into his ear. “Go, before I drag you to a room and take you.”

Draco shivered at the words and Harry’s breath in his ear before he pulled back and headed to his class.

“What’d you tell him?” Pansy asked as she passed Harry.

“Wouldn’t you like to know?” Harry grinned.


Harry just smirked, and it was so reminiscent of Draco’s own smirk that she couldn’t help but to huff, grin and shake her head.

“See you later Harry,” Pansy smiled before she left.
With the others in class, Harry decided to head to the library. He had gone back to the common room with Seamus and Dean to drop off Sesshomaru before heading back out.

Walking into the library, he smiled at Madam Pince, who gave a tiny smile and a slight nod of her head when she saw him. He walked through the aisles, passing other students and ignoring them as he did so. As he walked, he spotted a dirty blonde head of hair and smiled as he headed in that direction.

“Hi Harry,” Luna greeted, despite the fact that she had her head down and was reading.

“Hey Luna-girl,” Harry replied. “You waiting for me?”

“Of course,” Luna said as she finally looked up, closing the book she had chosen to read while she was waiting. She stood up and gathered some more books in her hand. “The chairs there are a lot more comfortable and we’d have more privacy.”

Harry nodded and the two walked down the aisles, bypassing the Restricted Section until they came to a blank wall. Harry let his magic flare just a bit and the walls retracted, revealing an entrance. The two stepped inside, the wall closing behind them, and walked the short hallway into an open room. The moment they stepped inside, various torches around the room lit up and the fireplace roared to life, casting a soft glow and warmth. The room held a few chairs with two couches and a table and the floor was covered with a forest-green rug that was soft, almost plush-like. The walls were painted sky blue and they had shelves—filled with books—running along them. It was like a common room and a mini library joined together.

Luna dropped into the chair closest to the fireplace and placed her books on the ground as she curled her feet underneath her.

“Tired?” Harry asked as he sat next to her, allowing the blonde to rest her head on his shoulder; in turn, his arm went around her shoulders allowing her to settle more snugly against him.

“I never quite realized just how taxing and irritating these students can be,” Luna sighed. “It is a relief to finally be myself though.”

“Anyone messed with you?” Harry moved his hand to run his fingers through her hair in a gentle motion.

“No,” Luna giggled, “yours and Cory’s warning were very effective. Now though, everyone’s acting nice and some of the girls have even asked questions about you. They were shocked when I spoke clearly to them and Cho was glaring daggers at me the whole time.”

“So, you had fun?” Harry asked with a chuckle.

“Oh yes,” Luna nodded, “quite a bit actually.”

“Good,” Harry said. After that, it was quiet between the two as they relaxed and enjoyed each other’s presence.

Harry broke the silence after a while. “What do you think he wants to talk about?”

“He is hoping to know why the things that have happened did so,” Luna said. “He also thinks you’ll be desperate to know what it is he wants to talk about.”
“Well,” Harry grinned, “he is in for a rude awakening.”

“Think Snake,” Luna cautioned.

“I will,” Harry agreed. The two were quiet once more.

Soon after, an alarm sounded, letting them know classes were over and it was time for lunch.

“Come on Luna-girl,” Harry stood up and held out his hand for Luna to take.

“Such a sweet big brother,” Luna teased.

“Only for you,” Harry grinned before he wrapped an arm around her shoulder and led her from the room.

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When the two entered the Great Hall, it was to the sight of almost all the students seated. No surprise, everyone turned to the two and Luna smiled when she saw the envious glares sent to her by the girls and some of the boys. Getting a devious thought, she snuggled even more into Harry’s arm, smiling when he tightened his embrace slightly and dropped a kiss on her head. The glares increased in intensity and Luna allowed a smug grin to cross her face, shocking those that saw it.

“Let’s go visit a dragon,” Luna murmured to Harry.

“Alright,” Harry nodded. He looked at the Gryffindor table where Cory was sitting and nodded towards Draco. Cory nodded back and stood up from his seat, moving to the Slytherin table.

The Slytherins made room for them and Harry sat next to Draco, while Luna sat next to him. When Cory came over, he sat next to his girlfriend.

The entire Great Hall—with the exception of Slytherin of course—stared, despite the fact that it wasn’t a secret that the quartet was now friends and that Draco and Harry were dating. The Slytherins were shocked however, along with everyone else, when both Dean and Seamus got up from Gryffindor table and made their way over to them.

“Mind if we join you?” Seamus asked, directing his question not to his friends, but to the Prince himself.

Draco looked up at the two before looking at Harry, Cory and Luna. The three kept their expressions blank, not wanting to influence Draco’s decision. The entire hall—Slytherins now included—seemed to hold its breath, waiting to see what the Slytherin Prince would do.

After a few moments, Draco smirked. “I’ve already acquainted myself to the Prince of Gryffindor himself, so I don’t see why not. Sit down.”

Seamus grinned excitedly and sat down, Dean following more sedately.

“No offence intended,” Pansy turned to the two new comers, “but what exactly made you decide to sit over here?”

“Well,” Dean spoke, “we figured that Harry was right. If he could forgive Malfoy for everything that’s happened in the past and move past it to become not only friends but boyfriends, then we could do the same.”

Pansy stared at the two for some time before she nodded. “Pansy Parkinson, Draco’s best friend
since childhood.”

“Blaise Zabini,” Blaise spoke up from Pansy’s other side, “Pansy’s boyfriend and Draco’s best friend as well.”

“Seamus Finnegan,” Seamus smiled, “been Harry’s roommate since first year.”

“Dean Thomas,” Dean said, “Harry’s roommate since first year and Seamus’ best friend.”

“You know who I am,” Draco smirked.

“Drake,” Harry slapped his boyfriend’s arm, “be nice.”

“I’m not nice,” Draco sneered at Harry.

“Hmmm,” Luna hummed.

“Oh be quiet,” Draco looked over the blonde.

“I said nothing Dragon,” Luna giggled causing the others to laugh as well. The ice broken, the teens eased into other topics.

Around the hall, the students, though they had gone back to eating, still stared at the Slytherin table with looks of disbelief; it was a moment of ‘you had to be there to see it’.

Over at Gryffindor table, Ron scowled darkly while Hermione looked on in confusion and that same hint of longing.

McGonagall entered the Great Hall and stopped in shock when she saw Luna, Harry, Cory, Dean and Seamus sitting at the Slytherin table. Pulling herself together, she walked over to her students.

“Mr. Potter,” McGonagall came to a stop. “Is there a reason you’re sitting at the Slytherin table?”

“Is there a reason why I cannot sit here?” Harry countered and the Slytherins hid their smiles.

“Nowhere in Hogwarts: A History or the rules that states we can’t sit at other houses. I think it’s prudent to show the school as a whole that I meant what I said. The time for House rivalries is over. A war is coming and I’d rather spend the time concentrating on that rather than petty squabbling with other students. It’s time we all grew up.”

McGonagall had no answer to that, so she nodded stiffly and walked away. Up at the staff table, Snape and Lucius watched the proceedings with amusement.

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“He is changing things, isn’t he?” Lucius murmured to Snape, taking care to keep his voice down and casting a Silencing Charm.

“Very much so,” Snape nodded. “That is a good thing. It makes other jobs much easier.”

“Indeed,” Lucius agreed and the two men became silent, basking in the wonderment that Harry Potter was on their Lord’s side.

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Lunch was over and it was time to head to the final class/classes of the day. Since Harry had gotten his Head of House to push for him to be in Potions, his last class was double Potions with students
from each house.

The students got up from the tables and started heading to their classes. The friends separated, with Harry, Draco, Blaise and Theo heading towards the dungeons while the others went to where their classes were.

The four boys were talking among themselves, ignoring the other students around them. When they got to the dungeons where their class was, they stopped outside of the potions classroom. Harry noted that another Slytherin, a girl by the name of Daphne Greengrass if he remembered, was there. He looked around saw that there were four Ravenclaws—Terry Boot, Su Li, Michael Corner and Padma Patil—and one Hufflepuff, Ernie McMillan.

Harry leaned against the wall, Draco next to him, Blaise next to Draco and Theo standing slightly in front of them. The three were talking, so Harry just continued looking at the students. The sound of footsteps drew his attention and he shifted his gaze to see Hermione walking towards them. When Hermione saw him, she stopped in her tracks and her eyes widened in disbelief and shock. Harry smirked when he saw that and gave her a mocking wave.

Seeing that everyone was there, Blaise moved from his position on the wall to the door of the classroom and discovered that it was open. Grabbing his bag, he headed inside, the other students filing in after him.

Harry and Draco sat next to each other in the seats in the back near the wall, Blaise sat next to Theo in front of them while Daphne next to Theo. On the other side of Daphne, two seats away, the four Ravenclaw and one Hufflepuff student sat while Hermione sat in front of them.

Harry and Draco talked quietly amongst themselves, as did the other students. Once in a while, Hermione would glance back at her former friend, but her glances were ignored, or rather, they weren’t acknowledged.

The door to the classroom banged open and Snape stalked inside, robes billowing about him in their usual menacing glory. He got to the front of the classroom and pulled out his wand, waving it at the door, closing and warding it. He turned to the students.

“Welcome to Advance Potions. Due to your presence,” Snape began, “it is correct to surmise that you achieved the necessary grade that is required for this class. Some of you,” he glanced at Harry, “were able to be here due to...special circumstances. We will see if you do have the sufficient skills needed to brew a more than adequate potion, and whether you manage to stay in this class until your NEWTs. I will not tolerate any slacking off or accidents due to immature rivalries. Should you decide that it is above your feeble capabilities, there is the door. Please, do us all a favour and close it from the outside.”

The students looked at their teacher with hints of trepidation and slight fear. Nobody moved. Only Harry and Draco seemed to be amused. Blaise took one glance at them and calmed himself down.

Snape continued with his speech before he paired them off. He smirked at Harry as he announced his partner as Hermione. Harry barely shook his head and got up to move. Draco was paired with Blaise while Daphne was paired with Ernie McMillan.

When Harry sat down, he turned to Hermione and gave her a blank stare. “I don’t want to be sitting next to you, but as I’d rather not have Professor Snape all over me, let’s just put aside our differences for now and complete whatever assignment we’re given.”

Hermione was stung, but she didn’t let it show. She had no idea how he had even got in, but
suspected Dumbledore had something to do with it. She knew he was horrible at potions and was hoping to use this class to show Harry that he needed her.

Snape glanced at Hermione and a tiny smirk played across his lips. ‘That foolish little girl will be in for a rude awakening if she believes that by showing her supposed superior skills to Harry will make him forgive her.’

He waved his wand at the board, revealing their exercise. “The potion you shall be brewing is known as the Stomach Soother Unction and it shall take you the entire potions class to do so.” He paused. “For those of you who manage to finish it correctly and before the time has elapsed, then you shall sit quietly until the others are finished. It might do you good to read your book, _Advanced Potion Making by Libalius Borage_. I do hope everyone got one?”

The students all nodded and chorused, “Yes sir” or “Yes, Professor Snape.”

“Very well,” Snape nodded, “Ingredients are in the cupboard. Begin.”

Harry looked at the potion on the board and smiled. It was a potion that was in one of the books from his library at home and he could brew this in his sleep. He glanced back at Draco and when he caught his eye, he tilted his head to the board and shared a smirk with the blond.

“I’ll get the ingredients,” Harry spoke to Hermione.

“Are you sure you know what ingredients to get?” Hermione asked as she pulled out her text book. “I mean, do you know how to differentiate because I can show you, you know?”

Harry glared at her and walked away. As he passed Snape’s desk, the man looked over at him and shook his head slightly after glancing his eyes at Hermione. Harry shrugged and continued on to the cupboard.

“Granger giving trouble?” Draco asked as he stood next to Harry in the cupboard, gathering his own ingredients.

“Not yet,” Harry replied. “But I have the feeling that she’s going to use this class to either show her ‘superior’ skills or something.”

Draco laughed softly. “Behave.”

“I always am,” Harry grinned and the blond laughed again before leaving the cupboard. Harry finished collecting the rest of his ingredients and turned to go back to his seat.

Placing the ingredients on the desk, Harry made a mock bow. “Are these to your satisfaction, your highness? Did I do honourably and collected the correct ingredients? Or am I doomed to fall at your feet in the displeasure you shall surely find for I am naught but an idiotic schoolboy!”

Harry’s words drew the attention of the class and they laughed at them. Hermione flushed in embarrassment and some shame.

“Get to work!” Snape barked at them, prompting some to jump in fright. If one had looked closely, they would’ve seen the way their professor’s lips twitched with amusement.

Harry sat down, getting his chuckles under control, and pulled his own potions books out of his bag. One was the required _Advanced Potions Making_—with abundant notes in Harry’s handwriting in it, thanks to Snape’s gracious permission to copy the potion related notes in his own sixth year book which he had read through during the summer, and the other was one from the Potter Manor library,
a text book aimed at Potions apprentices. Harry expected that Granger would grasp onto that fact. True enough, seconds later, she did.

“Where did you get that?” Hermione looked at the book with wide and curious eyes. “That is not the required text.”

“No shit Sherlock,” Harry snorted as he opened his book to the page the potions was on and scanned the instructions. Snape’s added notes in Advanced Potions Making correlated well with the Apprentice text; Harry intended to follow Snape’s improvements when in question. He then went back to his bag and pulled his normal iron potions knife, his new silver knife and some measuring scales out as well as a thin rod—a potion stirrer—and placed them on the desk.

Looking at his book, he pulled some Gurdyroots towards him and started peeling and chopping them into thin and even pieces according to the directions. When he was done, he grabbed the ginger roots, peeled and diced those into sizes around one centimetre. Both tasks proved quite difficult, because the roots were so uneven and very sturdy. He proceeded to carefully weigh the required amounts of both before mixing them together in a clean bowl and setting the rest aside.

“You’re doing it wrong,” Hermione looked over at him. “The textbook says those ingredients aren’t to be mixed until they are inside the cauldron.”

“Really?” Harry didn’t stop working as he set the cauldron up with half water, half sesame oil and waited for it to boil. “Isn’t that interesting?”

He glanced back at his book before looking at his lab partner. “Are you going to sit there and stare or are you going to help cut up whatever else needs cutting?”

Hermione looked down to her book; she was thrown off guard by Harry’s new found knowledge of potions. It made her wonder once again what Harry did over the summer. Shaking her head, she reached out to grab some of the ingredients, two Belladonna berries. Sighing, she grabbed her own knife and proceeded to cut them, before she could even begin though, her wrist was seized.

“Don’t cut those beans!” Harry whispered harshly. “You’ll get more juice out of them if you squash it with the flat side of a silver knife directly before adding them; their effect on the potion will be magnified.”

“Look,” Hermione scowled at him. The fact that he seemed better than her rubbed her the wrong way. She hated it. She was the one that was supposed to be the better one; she was after all the brightest witch to hit Hogwarts...ever since Lily Potter. “I know what I’m doing, better than you. Just because you suddenly seem to be able to grasp potions doesn’t mean anything. We’re supposed to do it according to the text book and that is what I’m doing.”

Harry stared at her with a blank expression for so long that Hermione started to squirm slightly in her seat. Guilt moved through her and she opened her mouth to apologize when Harry turned away from her.

“Very well,” Harry said slowly. “If that is the way you feel, since you believe you are so superior,” he pulled his wand from his robes and muttered the duplication spell on the cauldron, “you do the potion your way, and I’ll do it my way.”

Ignoring Hermione, Harry continued working on his potion, following the directions in his book. He quickly got up and headed to the cupboard to get more of the remaining ingredients and when he came back, he separated the ingredients he had already cut, weighed and mixed up in half; he waited until the cauldron was boiling and then placed half of the ingredients in the cauldron and left the
other half on the table. He grabbed his rod and stirred the potion clockwise four times. He waited until the potion base in the cauldron was boiling and then placed half of the roots in the cauldron and left the other half in the bowl on the table. He grabbed his rod and stirred the potion clockwise four times. He then waited one minute before he checked the colour of the potion before he added the other half of the ingredients, stirring it clockwise another four times. While he waited a few minutes until the roots became sort enough to release the essential oils, especially the Gingerol, he squashed the Belladonna berries with the flat side of the silver knife, mixed them with opium and alcohol and added them to the cauldron along with the Gurdyroots and Gingerol. Taking up his stirring rod again, he stirred the mixture seven times counter clockwise slowly.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Hermione get up and go to the cupboard for her own ingredients. He turned back to his potion and watched as the potion changed colour; when it did, he set the cauldron from boiling to low and then turned back to the final ingredients, Flobberworms. He cleaned them and cut them into thin strips, weighed them and then carefully placed them to the side in another bowl. They wouldn’t be needed to go in until after a twenty minute wait period to thicken the mixture with the slime. He glanced at Hermione out of the corner of his eye and saw that she had resumed the work on her own potion, going exactly by the instructions in the school text and that meant she was at least three levels behind him.

He knew the potions would end up in the same result, but his way, would not only allow him to finish quicker, but it would make his potion more potent. He glanced at the time and saw that there was only five minutes left in the first half of the class, before glancing back at Draco and Blaise and saw that their potion was just about the same stage as his own.

Turning around, he glanced at Hermione and saw that her potion had just gotten to the second colour stage. He shook his head and turned back to his cauldron.

~..~

Hermione huffed under her breath as she recollected the ingredients. For all her genius, she couldn’t understand what had just happened. She had thought, and hoped, that Harry would turn to her as he always did for help, despite what had happened at the opening feast and today in the common room. After their DADA class, she had started thinking things through, but then the discussion in the common room had disrupted her flow of thoughts and she had once again found herself questioning Harry’s actions and words.

Absentmindedly, she gathered the necessary items and headed back to her work station. While she read over the book, her thoughts drifted back to her current problem. Even after all that and the not so subtle warnings that had been given to her, she had been looking forward to this class as she knew that while Harry was the best in their DADA classes and average in the others, when it came to potions, he was absolutely rubbish and therefore, she had seen this class as an opportunity to get back in his good graces, to show that he needed her and that she was willing to forgive everything that he had said to her, both at Diagon Alley and here in school. But once again, that option was shot down.

Shaking her head, she rid herself of her thoughts and concentrated on her potion. She followed the instructions and started on slicing and chopping the ingredients. Looking over at Harry, she was surprised and shocked to see that he was already approaching the final stages. Dismayed, she turned back to her own, when she realized that her potion was nowhere near the same stage as his, tears of frustration filled her eyes and she hastily wiped them away. Just in time as Snape descended on their table.

~...~
Snape looked out over his class, gaining immense pleasure of the quietness from the students. He knew that there was only one other teacher that could get the students to be quiet and that was Minerva McGonagall; however, the difference between them was that, the students in McGonagall’s classes learned of her preference for quiet after being in her class, while those under his tutelage learned just by his reputation alone and as such, the moment they entered, they became quiet. It was a power he enjoyed having.

His gaze swept over them as he walked along each pair of students. Those whose potions were off based, even if it was slight, he took great pleasure in informing them. He got to his godson’s potion and as always, pride enveloped him. Draco had spent most of his childhood around him and being who he was as he spent most of his time in a potions lab, his godson was there right next to him. He had felt pleasure the first time Draco showed an interest as he had found someone that seemed to love potions as much as he did.

“Excellent job Mr. Malfoy, Mr. Zabini,” Snape murmured as he looked over their potion.

“Thank you sir,” Draco beamed as did Blaise.

Snape nodded and moved on to where Harry was with Hermione. When he got to their workstation, he stopped and looked at the two cauldrons.

“What exactly is the meaning of this?” he enquired.

Hermione’s startled eyes flew to him and she tried to formulate a response, but Harry beat her to it.

“It’s simple sir,” Harry looked at the potions instructor. “Granger disagreed with the way I was doing the potions, so I made a very easy decision; I duplicated the cauldron and got more ingredients from the cupboard and told her that if she disagreed, she would do the potion her way while I would do it my way.”

Snape looked at both potions, sneered at Hermione. “It seems as if your status as the Brightest Witch Hogwarts has ever seen, has compounded your ego and insufferable know-it-all ability to the point where you deem yourself to be more knowledgeable than others and not one willing to listen or accept a different course of direction.” His dark eyes bored into Hermione, holding her captive. “If you are to succeed in life Ms. Granger, then you must be willing to accept that you do not know or hold all the answers and that there is more than one way to reach a specific outcome.” He turned to Harry. “Commendable so far Potter; Perhaps you do have the skill necessary to be in this class.”

Harry ducked his head and grinned before he turned back to his potion. Hermione bit her lip to stop it from trembling and fought to keep her composure. Snape’s words stung. Truthfully, she was used to his unfairness towards Gryffindor students, but today, he had praised Harry; something that had never happened in the past. It was as if Snape had not only changed his looks during the summer, but also his mood and attitude, same as Harry, who was suddenly competent, polite and not antagonistic towards the professor anymore.

The bell sounded, signalling the end of class—for them, the end of the first half of this class—and Snape walked to the front and turned to look at his students. “The first block is over. Those of you, whose potion is at the twenty minute waiting stage, have a five minute reprieve. The rest of you, continue working.”

Murmurs echoed throughout the class, until a glare from Snape had them all quiet. Only Draco, Harry and Blaise were at that stage, so they relaxed. Harry exchanged grins with his boyfriend until he felt a gaze on him and looked around to find Hermione staring at him. “Is there something I can help you with?”
“I don’t understand,” Hermione whispered, her brown eyes once again filling with tears.

“What don’t you understand?” Harry raised an eyebrow and waited for her to continue. He could see the turmoil in her eyes and knew that her breaking point was coming. It wasn’t a matter of if; it was just a matter of when.

“Everything,” Hermione whispered as she wiped her eyes. “What happened? What changed? How is that you’re so good at potions and that you’re with Malfoy and Nev-Cory is suddenly your best friend?”

Harry looked at her, keeping silent for a few minutes before he spoke. “You lost all right to question me when you did what you did. However, due to certain facts of which you know nothing about, I don’t suppose you ever had the right to begin with. Despite all that though, I had still had hope that you truly were my friend.” His gaze scanned her body before he once met her eyes. “I suppose my hope was completely in vain.”

He turned away from her, putting his attention back to his boyfriend. The blond raised a delicate eyebrow and Harry shook his head with a shrug. The bell that signalled the start of the next period sounded and Harry looked at the time and saw that he had about ten minutes left. He got up from his seat and headed towards Draco.

Hermione watched him go before turning back to her own potion. Her mind was churning—again. Her getting reprimanded by Snape was no surprise, but him being nice to Harry...that was a shocker. She had never felt as lost as she did right then. Sighing, she refocused on her own potion. As she worked, she couldn’t help but to glance at Harry’s potion. She really had no idea where he got the book or how he was able to make a potion correctly. Ten minutes later, she was now halfway through with her potion.

Harry walked back to his seat and shook his head when he saw the glances Hermione kept throwing at his potion. Smirking to himself, he sat down; he gathered the final ingredients and set the cauldron back to boiling. When it did, he carefully slipped in the Flobberworm slices one after the other, while stirring in a pattern of seven times counter clockwise and three times clockwise slowly. He waited three minutes before reducing the heat to a light boil, and stirred another seven times, this time clockwise. The potion turned a lavender colour and Harry placed his rod back on the table and then he doused the flame. If everything was done right, five minutes after the heat was extinguished, the potion would become a thick syrup and pale pink—it’s final colour. When the five minutes passed, Harry smiled when he saw the pale pink. Grabbing three bottles, he took the ladle and filled them. The moment he was finished, he set them on the table and started packing his stuff back in his bag.

When he was done, he stood up and headed towards Snape’s desk, placing the three bottles down in front of him.

“You are finished?” Snape looked up at his student.

“Yes sir,” Harry nodded, showing the required respect to the man he had gotten close to over the summer.

“Very well,” Snape nodded, “clean up your area and then you are dismissed.”

“Thank you sir,” Harry smiled before he turned to go back to his seat. Blaise passed him with his and Draco’s finished work while the blond cleaned up.

Hermione took notice of the small exchange, although she was busy working on her own potion. Her thoughts tumbled one over the other. ‘This is unbelievable. During the entire lesson, Snape
didn’t ridicule or scorn Harry’s efforts, he used only mild banter; and Harry was not cheeky or disrespectful as usual. What a difference that is compared to the last five years! But, how come? Is it only because Harry is now friends—dating Malfoy, Snape’s favourite student and because he’s also on good terms with Malfoy senior? Did the Malfoys somehow influence Snape to be so friendly to Harry?

Harry pulled out his wand and cast *Scourgify*—voiceless—to remove the potion remains and to clean the table. Hermione did a double take. ‘When did he learn to do that?’

When he was done, he put away his cauldron and bent down to grab his book-bag. He stood up and saw Draco and Blaise with their bags over their shoulders, ready to leave as well.

Smiling, he went to them and the three made their way out of the classroom. The second they got to the door, Snape’s voice stopped them.

“Mr. Potter, Mr. Malfoy,” Snape said, “Remember your detention is tomorrow night. I will see you then. Do not be late.”

“Yes sir.” Echoed Draco and Harry before the three boys left.

“Back to work!” Snape growled at the rest of the students.

Chapter End Notes

*(I)*: a quote by Eleanor Roosevelt
Mission One Completed

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing…if I did, Ginny would have died in the CoS, Dumbledore would have choked on his lemon drops and Harry would have stood up for himself against Molly and Dumbledore.

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“Talking”
“Talking via mirrors”
‘Thinking’
|Hedwig’s mental speak|

\Harry’s mental speak\
Letter or commentary/introduction and flashback
{Parssseltongue}

~…~ indicates scene change

Last time on RDA;

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After Potions, Harry was making his way to the Headmaster’s office, his stomach churning in anticipation. He really didn’t want to go to this meeting, but he knew he had to. One, not only to start the plan that he and Voldemort had come up with, but to also let the man know he was through being his puppet without antagonizing him and revealing too much.

He got to the Gargoyle guarding the entrance and muttered the password, stepping through the moment it moved away. He walked up the revolving spiral steps, taking them two at a time. When he got to the top, he made sure his Occlumency shields were tight with a few flitting and irrelevant memories at the front. Satisfied, he knocked on the door.
“Come in,” Dumbledore’s voice sounded and he opened the door and stepped inside.

As he stepped into the office, he saw Dumbledore standing in front of one of the book cases with his back towards the door, studying a slim, dark book.

“Good afternoon sir,” Harry greeted politely. “You wanted to see me Headmaster?”

“Harry, how delightful to see you!” Albus turned around after stuffing the book back between the numerous volumes, his blue eyes twinkled merrily as he moved to his desk. “Have a seat. Would you like a cup of tea? Sherbet Lemon?” he asked, while conjuring a tray complete with steaming teapot, two cups, sugar bowl and cream pitcher with a lazy wave of his wand.

Harry moved to sit and looked at the man that had essentially ruined his life. “No thank you sir. What did you want to talk about?”

“I was hoping to speak to you about your summer and how you spent it,” Albus started, “I was quite worried about your safety. Where did you go? What did you do? How is it that no one could reach you?”

Harry looked away briefly; to the Headmaster, it would’ve looked like shame, but it wasn’t that; he was just hiding the glee that would be in his eyes. Dumbledore was reacting exactly as he had told Voldemort he would.

“My family decided at the beginning of the summer that they were going to go on a trip to visit Aunt Marge,” Harry said as he turned back to look at the man, making sure that he wasn’t looking directly into the twinkling blue eyes. “Uncle Vernon didn’t want to leave me alone, so I was forced to go with them. On our way, Uncle Vernon and I got into a fight and I became angry, so I left them. After that, I caught the bus, and headed to Grimmauld Place. I just wanted to be by myself.”

Dumbledore looked at him over his half-mooned spectacles, trying to determine if he was lying. Satisfied that Harry was telling the truth, he continued with his questions. “Why didn’t you contact your friends? I’m sure the Weasleys or Ms. Granger would’ve have been happy to be there for you.”

“I would’ve,” Harry started, “except that, by that time, both Weasley and Granger had written notes saying that our friendship was over and I didn’t say anything to you because...well...because I was still more than a bit angry at you Professor.”

“Harry,” Albus injected a placating yet slight disappointing and still cajoling tone to his voice. “You know that your friends were scared after the events at the Department of Mysteries. I would imagine that seeing someone die, especially one that they knew, in front of them and then on top of that, to have just gotten through a battle with Voldemort’s Death Eaters, they were undeniably shaken.”

Harry mentally sneered at the man’s words. He knew what the Old Fool was trying to do and it made him laugh. But he was careful not to let any of his true thoughts show on his face, in his eyes or in his voice. “I know all of that Professor, but I was upset too. I needed my friends and they left me.”

“Is that why you are acting so cold towards them now?” Albus leaned slightly back in his chair. “Why you shun them?”

‘So now we get closer to the point of this meeting,’ Harry scoffed mentally. “Partially.”

“And what is the other part?” Albus asked, he was wondering just how much damage control he would have to do because of the hurried actions of his two pawns.
“I know sir,” this time Harry looked directly at the man. “I know about the will reading.”

Albus nodded; he had already known that from the reports he had gotten from the Weasley family a few weeks ago after they had run into the twins and saw their changed appearance. “I suspect Fred and George told you what had happened.”

“Not only them,” Harry continued, “but the Goblins did as well; I know who was there and who inherited what.” He glared at the man. “Why didn’t you tell me about my Godfather’s will? Didn’t you think I had a right to know? To be there?”

“Harry,” Albus leaned forward, “I didn’t tell you because I thought it would’ve been too dangerous. The public had just acknowledged that Voldemort really was back and I was afraid that they would bombard you had they have seen you in Diagon Alley at any time.”

“So you were trying to protect me?” Harry placed a questioning look on his face though inside he was glaring spitefully at the man. “Then why didn’t you just tell me, instead of keeping that from me? I was angry when Fred and George contacted me and told me. I was blindsided and a little hurt.”

“Is that why you allowed them both to become Potters?” Albus asked. He knew that there was more going on, and he needed to know just how much knowledge the teen had before he did any manoeuvring.

“They asked,” Harry leaned back in his chair. “They were angry that no one told me about the reading and when they saw how Ronald had reacted when he got nothing, as well as their parents, they said that I needed true friends and that was the only way to prove they were serious.”

Albus became quiet for a while as he thought over what was said. He was thankful that the teens didn’t seem to tell Harry about the wedding plans for him and the youngest Weasley. After what he had witnessed last night however, he knew that those plans would no longer be needed. And that brought him to his next point.

“Harry, I am concerned about your relationship with Mr. Malfoy and Mr. Longbottom,” Albus started, “Just how is it you came to befriend the young Malfoy, and what happened to Mr. Longbottom? I confess I was greatly disturbed yesterday evening when he declared himself as Cory LeStrange instead on Neville Longbottom.”

Harry looked down at his lap, biting his lip to stop the smile from trying to break through. The Old Fool was just as predictable as he had thought. Regaining his composure, he looked up. “Well, like I said earlier, after I left my family, I made my way to Grimmauld Place. Fred and George had told me about Draco inheriting it, but I didn’t care. I just wanted a place to go; I couldn’t go back to Surrey and I couldn’t go to the Weasleys either, so Grimmauld Place it was.

“After staying there for about two days, I ran into Draco. We shouted and tried to hex each other, but then, we stopped. I told him I’d stay out his way if he stayed out of mine. I still hadn’t grieved for Sirius as yet and being in that house made me do so. One day, Draco came over and heard me. He was his usual self, arrogant and mocking me, but, I realized though that there was something different; he actually seemed astonished and concerned as to why I was there and not with the Weasleys. At first, I didn’t want to talk to him, as we were still enemies, but eventually, I did.”

He stopped and took a couple of calming breaths before continuing. “Slowly but surely, we started talking and we eventually realized that we really didn’t hate each other and that we had a few things in common. It was hard, but we managed to put our animosity behind as after we came to the realization that a war was coming and we had no time for petty school rivalries when we could be
concentrating on surviving.”

“So you spent you entire summer at Grimmauld Place?” Albus asked; he was going over the information he was getting about Draco and a thought was taking hold, two of them actually, but as to which one would fully take root, he was waiting until the end of this meeting to make that conclusion.

“No,” Harry shook his head. “As much as I wanted to, I knew I couldn’t stay there because if I did, I’d be too overwhelmed by memories of Sirius. Like I said, I had gotten a letter from the Goblins, but since Fred and George had already told me what had happened at the will reading, I didn’t bother reading it. But I had remembered it, so I read it and I went to meet with them. That’s when they told me about properties belonging to the Potter family, and so I stayed at one of them.” Harry made his eyes look pain-filled. “Headmaster, why didn’t you tell me about them? I’m so disappointed and hurt. You knew my dad, first as a student, then later as an Auror and Order member. I suppose you also knew my grandparents, at least a bit? They did attend Hogwarts, didn’t they? Surely you learned over the years where my dad’s parents—my grandparents—lived, if not the exact address, then at least the fact that they didn’t live in some shack, or in the small cottage in Godric’s Hollow where my parents hid, but a large house somewhere else? I mean, they were pure-bloods after all.”

Albus frowned slightly. He was upset that not only had the Weasley—no, Potter—twins told Harry about the will, but so had the Goblins. It would also explain Ms. Granger and Mr. Weasley’s lack of progress with Harry. Those chains of events had thrown his plans off course, but...he was confident he could regain his course or chart a new one. He smiled. It was nothing too serious that couldn’t be fixed. Harry was now back at Hogwarts and would be back under his thumb soon enough. He would have to something about the Potter properties. Damnit, he had hoped to keep the boy from discovering Potter Manor, as that was most likely the place where he had spent the summer; an old family manor behind strong wards, under Fidelius and unplottable.

Albus sighed mentally. Some of his questions about the young Mr. Malfoy had been placated, but he was still troubled by Harry’s friendship with Corvus LeStrange. He had no idea how the teen was able to look the way he did as he was confident and certain that his memory blocks couldn’t be broken. ‘So then, just how is it, the young man was able to regain his true appearance? Something like that would only happen if the LeStranges accepted him as their son.’

He had no idea that neither Bellatrix nor Rodolphus had needed to re-accept Cory as their son as Hedwig’s magic had removed all traces of the block, allowing Cory to look like his true family. The only thing was, with them recognizing him as their son meant he could access the LeStrange Family Vault.

“Harry,” Albus began, “I am sorry. I did know your Potter grandparents from school, but not very well. They died from old age before James and Lily had you. Your parents were so very sad, that your grandparents never experienced the joy of holding their grandson, of seeing you grow up. I didn’t want to remind you of these grandparents you never knew. I had planned on advising you to speak to the goblins about the Potter family inheritance next summer, when you came of age. You carry so many responsibilities already. I am sorry; I only wanted you to enjoy your time at Hogwarts without further burdens.”

Harry made a grimace and looked out the window.

“Now, I must ask again, what happened to Mr. Longbottom? How is it this change occurred and that you are now friends with Corvus LeStrange?” Albus asked, one of his two earlier thoughts coming back stronger. “It appears as if his parents are two of Voldemort’s most loyal Death Eaters.”

Harry looked away briefly, giving the assumption he was ashamed and nervous. “It was during one
of the days I was at Grimmauld Place. I got a letter from Cory, who at the time I thought of as Neville. He sounded so scared and terrified. He said he needed to talk to me as I was the only one he knew he could trust. So, I went to meet him. I admit when I first saw his new appearance, I was thrown off-guard and all I could see was Bellatrix’s face. But then, I realized that despite his new looks, he was still Neville to me; the guy that risked his life to help me fight for my Godfather, and I knew I couldn’t turn him away.

“So, I took him with me to my family house I was staying at and he wrote a letter to his grandmother telling her he was going to spend the summer with me. It was a bit hard at first, but eventually, I forgot about how he looked or who he belonged to. All I saw was my friend for the last five years.” Harry finished.

“That was very noble of you Harry. Did he say how he came to look like the LeStranges?” Albus asked. He was satisfied to note that his thought of Harry turning dark could be discarded. His own words just now told that he was still the Gryffindor boy with the Hero-Complex. It was perfect in Albus’ eyes.

“No, not really,” Harry shook his head, “he just said that he was at Gringotts and he was stopped by a Goblin, or something like that. I didn’t really pay much attention.”

“I commend you for what you did,” Albus injected as much disapproval and disappointment into his tone as he could without sounding too fake, “However, you should’ve come to me when Mr. LeStrange sent the note.”

“I know sir,” Harry ducked his head, “but at the time, I was still angry with you. My impulse was to send him away, but then I remembered the last time I was impulsive, Sirius paid for it. And sir, you’ve always told me I should trust my instincts and my instincts told me that neither boy was a threat to me.”

“I understand what you are saying Harry,” Albus tried another angle, hiding his frustration at the teen’s words. “However, my one concern is, did you not suspect that it could have been a set up by their parents or Voldemort?”

“It never crossed my mind,” Harry answered. And it was true. How could it when by that time, he was already on good terms with both Lucius and the elder LeStranges? “Professor, I know that you’re worried, but you honestly don’t have to be. We never talked about our parents because we came to the agreement that we can’t really judge each other based on what our parents had done. We had an opportunity to get to know each other without all the House rivalries and other students’ influences and we took it.

“I learned that the reason Draco is so good at potions is because when he was younger, he would spend most of his time with Professor Snape in his labs. I learned that Nev-Cory, loves plants because to him they were as precious and fragile as he was. He loved caring for them. And they learned that I blame myself for a lot of things and that it’s not Quidditch I love, but the flying and the freedom it brings me.”

Albus was quiet as he looked at the young teen in front of him. He was a little disturbed by the confidence he could feel emanating from him, but deep down, a tiny part of him was proud of the way Harry had took control. His thoughts moved to the Malfoy heir and the LeStrange son, and a thought came to him. ‘Yes...this could be perfect. I need Granger and Weasley back with Potter though. They are needed to keep an eye on him and to push him in the right direction.’ His brows furrowed. ‘There is still something that needs to be addressed.’

“Harry,” Albus looked up and at the teen. “How come your animosity towards Lord Malfoy and
“What do you mean sir?” Harry asked, knowing full well what the man was asking. He knew that portraits around the school, especially those near and in the classrooms, would report of the camaraderie between he and the two professors and he had already had an answer in mind.

“I would think that Lucius Malfoy would abhor his son being close friends with you,” Albus started, “considering certain past situations. I must say I am very worried for your safety, as I would have thought that he would seize the first chance he got to hurt you, or to capture you and deliver you to Voldemort. And I had always suspected that you and Severus would never reach to a point as to where you are now.”

“Over the summer,” Harry explained, “I thought about everything that has happened to me here and I came to a conclusion. You were right sir; I had been treating Professor Snape unfairly all these years, when despite his past with my father and Godfather, he still tried to protect me. He and I might not become really close,” Yeah right, “but, as grudgingly as it is, I’ve come to respect him.”

Harry shifted in his seat, crossing one leg over the other. “And because of that respect, my attitude towards Potions changed as well. Of course, the twins did have a part in regards to that.”

“What do you mean?” Albus asked, “How did they help?”

“Well,” Harry explained, “everything that they’ve accomplished with their shop, it’s bloody amazing. Their success in creating ingenious products comes from combining their inspiration and imagination with advanced knowledge in Charms, Transfiguration, Runes, Arithmancy and Potions. The twins hounded me to quit whining about Potions and to actually make an effort.

“So I did. I thoroughly revised and reread all the material of the past five years during the summer. Now, I understand the basics of Potion making even better and I’m confident I won’t make so many stupid mistakes anymore like I used to.”

Harry smiled, concluding his explanations about the Potion’s Master with a wink. “Of course, Professor Snape wasn’t exactly happy to see me in his Advanced class, but he did gave me the chance to prove myself and he managed to refrain from baiting or mocking me like he often did in the past. Today, class went really well. We had to make a Stomach Soothing Unction, something necessary and useful for the Hospital wing.” He grinned, “of course it also helps that now that I’m with Draco, the Slytherins don’t try to throw random ingredients in my cauldron anymore.

“As for Mr. Malfoy,” he paused as he thought on how to word his thoughts. “Despite what happened in the past, because of my relationship with Draco, I decided to at least be civil and cordial with him. From what little I learned from Draco, his father is very protective of him and if he believes something will endanger his son, he will not do anything to allow that to happen. And believe it or not, Mr. Malfoy wants his son to be happy, so he really made an effort to treat me different compared to how he used to. I don’t know what he told Voldemort, or how he managed to distance himself from the madman—we avoided that topic—but I never felt threatened by him. Of course I was always careful and I watched him closely, ready to defend myself should he suddenly change his mind and turn on me.”

Albus’ eyebrows shot upwards. “Harry, that is-well, astonishing. It sounds as if you met Mr. Malfoy over the summer. And he didn’t try anything? After all, he tried to kill you only a few months ago at the Ministry.”

Harry shook his head vehemently. “No sir, you’re harbouring under a misconception. Down in the Department of Mysteries, Malfoy was the sanest of the lot. He wanted the prophesy orb, but he
wasn’t trying to really kill me. On the contrary, he held back Bellatrix and the others from attacking me. He tried to calm everybody down while at the same time arguing with me, trying to persuade me to give up the prophesy orb.”

Albus looked at him, astonished and contemplative. “Hmm, that is interesting. But, Harry, you can’t be sure of his, of their motives. Are you absolutely certain that young Mr. Malfoy is no Death Eater? Did you see his left arm?”

Harry laughed outright. “Believe me when I tell you Headmaster, Draco isn’t a Death Eater. His skin is clear white, no Dark Mark anywhere.”

“And how do you know that exactly?” Albus questioned. “Did he bare his arm to you?”

Harry bit his lip and looked away, a slight flush on his cheeks, before he turned back to look at the Headmaster, grinning. “He didn’t have to. Let’s just say professor, I spent enough time getting acquainted with Draco’s body to know for certain that he doesn’t bear the Dark Mark.”

Albus nodded, smiling and eyes twinkling at the young wizard, “Very well. Now, what about the rest of your summer?”

“Well, Draco and I met a few times over the summer,” Harry replied, “we of course visited each other, or else we wouldn’t have become close. We practiced duelling, which was a lot of fun and also good training for us. His father was cold towards me, no surprise, but then he got used to me and well, despite past grievances, the man is an excellent dueller and teacher. Which is why I’m glad that he’s our Defence professor; he’s the most competent one we’ve had ever since Professor Lupin and—even though he was really a Death Eater in disguise—Professor Moody.

“I respect him, but at the same time, I know very well that he’s a dangerous opponent. He duelled us a few times, to see what level we were truly at, a part and above OWLs, to evaluate us, for his lessons plans. While we fought, he could’ve tried to really injure or kill me, but he never went that far.”

Albus frowned. “Harry, did you visit Malfoy Manor, or did he always visit you?”

Harry nodded to the first and shook his head at the second.

“Harry!” Albus was well and truly shocked. “That was an enormous risk. What if Voldemort had been waiting for there you? You could have walked blindly into an ambush!”

“Do you think I’m stupid Headmaster?!” Harry snapped back, his green eyes darkening in anger. His magic reacted and the room started to feel pressurized with the rising flow. “Nothing happened. I was invited and welcomed as a guest into their Manor, so by accordance to the ancient tradition of hospitality, I was perfectly safe.”

Albus was reminded of last May when his office had been destroyed and strived to prevent such a thing from happening again. “Calm down, my boy. I did not mean to call you stupid. I was just concerned.”

“I understand sir,” Harry took a few deep breaths, reining his magic back in. When he was sure his magic was back under control, he continued. “You have to realize the advantage of dealing with pure-bloods of a noble house, especially the ones as steeped into tradition as the Malfoys are. Sure Lord Malfoy is sly and cunning, but he wouldn’t break such a vow.” He paused. “Did you and the Order think that Voldemort was hiding at the Malfoys?”

“It is a possibility, yes. Did you see anything suspicious during your visit?” Albus asked eagerly,
even as he stored what Harry had told him in the back of his mind. The boy had learned about magical tradition and pure-blood customs. ‘Just how much did he learn? Damn the Goblins, Malfoys and Potters to hell!’

“No, nothing,” Harry shook his head determinedly. “The only one I saw, besides Draco and his father, were a house elf and a pair of white peacocks on the lawn. I can’t imagine Voldemort picking for worms as a peacock animagus to spy on me. Sir, don’t you think I would’ve noticed if an ugly, deranged, murderous, snake-faced megalomaniac had been hiding behind a hedge, ready to attack me? As you can see, I’m unharmed. Draco is now my boyfriend and Mr. Malfoy acted coldly polite.”

Albus became quiet as he pondered on Harry’s words. Unknowing to Harry—or so Albus thought—he was providing him with a way to get to Lucius.

“Was that all you need Professor?” Harry spoke up, breaking the man out of his thoughts.

“One last thing Harry,” Albus smiled, his blue eyes twinkling, “your friendship with Ms. Granger and Mr. Weasley. They have been by your side for the past five years, will you really allow their words over the summer to destroy such a standing and strong friendship? There was no reason to attack either one.”

Harry desperately fought the urge to glare at the man or to start shouting. He knew the man was manipulative, but he still couldn’t believe what he was hearing. Did Dumbledore really think he was so naive that he would just up and forgive Weasley and Granger just because he said some words? Well, he was in for a rude awakening.

“You should forgive them,” Albus continued, subtly casting a Compulsion Charm to force Harry to do what he wanted. “You will need your friends and I’m sure they are sorry for how they reacted and once apologies are made, you three can put this behind you.”

Harry had been on high alert all the time and stiffened when he felt the Compulsion Charm. Voldemort’s suspicion was confirmed, well, he Harry was not surprised, sad as it was. He could feel the magic telling him to comply with the Headmaster’s wishes and he cleared his mind and threw it off. He looked at Dumbledore, with strong and determined eyes. “I’d appreciate it Headmaster, if you wouldn’t use that Charm on me.”

Albus stared at the teen for a few minutes in shocked silence. “What?”

“The Compulsion Charm,” Harry sat up straighter, “please don’t use it again. I will never be friends with Weasley and Granger again, not after everything they’ve done.” He looked away, placing a look of betrayal and hurt on his face; the former wasn’t faked. “In her letter, when Granger decided I was too dangerous to be her friend anymore, she told me that it was my fault that Sirius was dead and that if I could get my own Godfather killed, then what would happen to her and that what happened in the Department of Mysteries only proved her point.” Of course those weren’t the words Granger had used, but Albus didn’t need to know that.

“I won’t forgive either one of them for that,” Harry finished and looked back at the man. “And that’s why I won’t be friends with them again.”

‘What happened to him? How has he changed so much? How do I regain him under my control if he can tell he’s under a charm?’ he silently cursed the Weasleys and Hermione for being so quick and foolish into letting the boy go. Something bothered him.

“How did you know I was using a Charm on you?” Albus asked. “That Charm specifically?”
“When Voldemort regained his body,” Harry’s eyes took on a glassy look as if he was looking off into the distance. “He tried to use Imperius on me; he used it over and over to get me to bow to him when I kept refusing. At the Ministry, back in May, he tried to possess and control me again. He lured me to the Ministry with a vision and Sirius paid with his life. Because of all that, I studied Defence against the Dark Arts and Occlumency; especially mind controlling charms and curses over the summer in the Black and Potter libraries. Now, I can tell when someone is using a similar Charm on me.” He paused, “what you did didn’t feel as vicious and heavy as Voldemort’s Imperius, but still, I noticed something was wrong. That wasn’t very nice Headmaster...at all.” Harry glared in righteous indignation.

Placing his grandfatherly look on his face, Albus smiled sheepishly, though inside he was more than a little concerned. “My boy, I merely thought I was helping you.”

“I understand sir,” Harry nodded, snorting mentally, “but, please don’t. It...it brings back bad memories.”

“Very well,” Albus nodded. His gaze travelled over Harry’s body and he once again took in the changes; the tanned face, glittering, vibrant green eyes and glossy, black hair. The boy looked taller and much healthier compared to before the summer holidays. However, the most obvious was the lack of glasses. He needed to know what caused those changes, so he adopted a friendly manner to try and wheedle the information out.

“Harry, you do look good my boy, the summer has definitely treated you well. May I ask why and how you managed to get your sight corrected?”

Harry had expected this question and prepared a fitting story to explain his better vision without divulging the real cause, so he replied smoothly, “Well, it was the best summer of my life. I had company, I wasn’t locked in, I worked out and learned a lot.” He smiled softly as images of spending time with Draco and the others flashed through his mind. Shaking his head, he re-focused on the Headmaster. “As for my sight being corrected, the thing is Headmaster, after the events at the Ministry of Magic I figured I couldn’t afford to have this specific weakness any longer. The only thing a Death Eater or Voldemort has to do to defeat me is to summon my glasses! So, I did some inquiries that led me to—let’s say a special apothecary, where I acquired the Sanomyopia potion. It was very expensive and had nasty side effects; my eyes were blind for an hour and hurt for a day, but it worked brilliantly as afterwards, I could see everything clearly.”

Dumbledore pursed his lips and looked reproachful at Harry. “That was very risky, my boy. I’ve heard of this potion, it is a dark variant of the Oculus potion. You went to Knockturn Alley to get it, did you not? A very dangerous thing to do; you could have been attacked and kidnapped by Death Eaters! Or you could have been poisoned or attacked while you were recovering! A foolish risk—

Harry jumped up, shaking his head and glaring at Dumbledore. He spoke loudly to cut off Dumbledore’s scolding, putting on a good show of righteous anger. “No, it most certainly was not! I wasn’t in any danger. I knew going there was a risk, which is why I knew not to take the potion until I was in a safe place. So after I acquired it, I went directly back to the Potter property. Like you said, it was a very dangerous risk, but it was worth it because now I don’t need glasses anymore and they won’t hinder me in a fight.

“You know I have to use any advantage I can get to fight Voldemort, I didn’t care if the potion was labelled dark or illegal by the Ministry because of two extra ingredients—the eyes of a Golden Sniget and an ounce of Unicorn blood—do you think I care about such an inconsequential detail if it means I can finally see the world without blurs and cannot be defeated simply because an enemy summons or destroys my glasses? What’s more important, my life and health or some ruddy bird’s life? You
want me to win, don’t you Headmaster?”

Albus raised his hands to placate the boy. “Yes, of course Harry I want you to win.” But even as he spoke those words, his thoughts were a different manner. ‘Damn! He is getting too independent. Last year Harry never would have visited Knockturn Alley by himself. The boy didn’t know such a potion even existed.’

At that point, Fawkes woke up. The phoenix shook itself off and looked over. When he saw Harry, he started trilling.

<Hello Harry>

Harry turned to the phoenix and his body relaxed into his seat the moment the phoenix started trilling. Through his bond with Hedwig, a phoenix’s trilling always relaxed him.

“Hi Fawkes,” Harry turned to the phoenix. “How are you doing?”

<I’m not as good as I should be>

“What do you mean?” Harry’s brows furrowed as he looked at the bird.

“Harry,” Albus looked from the phoenix to Harry. “You can understand Fawkes?”

“Yes sir,” Harry nodded. “I could ever since first year. He always calms me down.”

<Be careful of him Harry> Fawkes trilled softly. <He cannot understand me, so don’t worry. He is playing a very dangerous game and is intending of using you as a pawn.>

Harry shook his head and wished that he could speak to Fawkes using the same mental connection he had with Hedwig. From what the phoenix had said, Fawkes knew of Dumbledore’s plans.

“Anything new happening lately?” Harry smiled at Fawkes, not wanting to alert Dumbledore to something being wrong.

<His plans regarding the Weasleys have failed, but he is persistent. He had intended, still does, for you to die in a battle with Voldemort and if you don’t, he’d convince the public that you’re dangerous by telling them you have Voldemort’s soul inside of you>

“Really,” Harry grinned though inside he was seething. Dumbledore knew all along about a piece of Voldemort’s soul being in him and he never told him. “Fawkes, you old bird, you don’t have to worry. I’m ok. Sure, my summer started off bad because I lost Sirius, but it got better. I wouldn’t worry about that.”

<HARRY, did you know of the soul piece?> Fawkes straightened and trilled a little louder, his head cocking to the side. From what he was hearing, the young man knew of Dumbledore’s plans and had done something to prevent them from working.

“My summer was a life changer,” Harry explained, “but everything is fine...it’s more than fine. Can I ask you something?”

Fawkes nodded and trilled in agreement.

“I’ve always wondered,” Harry spoke slowly, trying to figure out how to ask what he wanted without tipping Dumbledore off. “Is it hard? Being a phoenix and being bonded to someone. Ok, I don’t know much about phoenixes, but, is there ever a case of them being bonded to someone who’s
not their true master? I mean, like how you’re Dumbledore’s phoenix, can anyone make you bond with them...someone other than Dumbledore?”

Albus looked intrigued at the communication between Harry and Fawkes. Though he couldn’t understand a word that was being said, the fact that Fawkes’ trilling had calmed Harry instead of making him feel bad, helped assuage any doubts he’d been getting. He had no idea how wrong he was.

Fawkes on the other hand, read through the lines and picked up on what Harry was indirectly asking. Shaking out his feathers, he trilled in response. <Yes there has been a case. You are correct in your question young one. Albus is not my true master, I was bonded to him many years ago just after one of my burnings. Because I was so young, I could not defend myself. However, do not worry little one. I have found my true master>

“Wow,” Harry’s shock widened eyes were actually true; though he had suspected that bonding between Dumbledore and Fawkes wasn’t true, as they didn’t act the way he and Hedwig did, he never expected to have confirmation. “I didn’t think it was even possible. I mean, that’s kinda messed up. It’s good you’ve found your true master.”

Albus cleared his throat.

“Oh sorry sir,” Harry turned back to the man in front of him. “I didn’t mean to ignore you. It’s just, I’ve always been fascinated by Fawkes.”

“It’s quite alright my boy,” Albus nodded, already wondering how he could use this new development to further regain control.

“About Cory and Draco,” Harry started, “You really don’t have to worry. They really helped me with Sirius’ death.”

“Hmm,” Albus looked at him over his half-moon glasses. “Do you fully believe they are sincere, that you can get them to join your side, despite their parents’ status?”

Harry smiled. “Don’t worry professor them being on my side won’t be a problem.”

“Then I suppose,” Albus smiled, “it would not be such a bad idea for the friendships to progress. If you are sure...”

“Professor,” Harry said, “If I didn’t believe they were really on my side, I wouldn’t have befriended them so easily. I want the madman that killed my parents to pay.”

Albus felt victory rush through him.

“Professor,” Harry continued before the man could speak. “I know you might say I’m too young, but I don’t think so. I already know of the prophecy and I’ve already lost my parents and Sirius because of him. I don’t want to lose anyone else. I spent this summer thinking a lot and I think if I’m going to defeat the so called Dark Lord, then I need to start training. I need to start learning how to properly defend myself.” He scowled slightly at the Headmaster. “I need to learn how to fight him sir.”

Albus was quiet for a few seconds as he thought things over. *This is perfect. Not only have I ensured he’s still my pawn, but he may have also brought over two children of Tom’s most dangerous Death Eaters. I do not know how Cory was able to break the memory bonds, but it is irrelevant. I can train him without actually training him as I have no intention of him surviving the battle. Perfect.* “Very well Harry. You are correct I suppose. I fear I was trying, again, to give you
the chance to enjoy your young years.”

‘Sure you did, you old fool.’ “I understand sir,” Harry nodded, “but the truth of the matter is, my childhood and my chance to enjoy myself as a teen was stolen the moment my parents were killed. I was never fully a child sir and he made sure of that. He needs to be stopped.”

“I agree,” Albus nodded in agreement, trying to stop the satisfied smirk from coming through. “I will start training lessons. Our first meeting to do so will be this Saturday after dinner.”

“Thank you sir,” Harry’s smile was big. “I promise I will put my all into these training sessions.”

“I have no doubt my boy,” Albus smiled, “now, off you go. Dinner is almost over and you must be famished.”

“Yes sir,” Harry grinned and stood up. “One more thing sir.”

“What is it?” Albus asked.

“Do you think,” Harry trailed off and cleared his throat before straightening up a bit, “do you think it’ll it be ok for me to join the Order? I think I deserve to know what is going on if I’m going to be able to defeat Him. And, if I know what’s going on, then I’ll be able to think more clearly instead of rushing into things.” He paused, “I need to know about whatever information the Order may have on him. It’s because of the lack of information and communication why Sirius is gone. If I had known about the prophecy and that Voldemort was after it, and that Snape somehow could contact you and check up on Sirius, I wouldn’t have broken into Umbridge’s office and I wouldn’t have rushed to the Ministry afterwards and Sirius...Sirius would still be here. I can’t allow something like that to happen again.”

Albus was quiet for a moment before he nodded. “I do believe you are once again correct my boy. The next meeting the Order has, I shall take you with me.”

“Thank you sir,” Harry smiled. “For everything.”

“Think nothing of it,” Albus waved his words away. “Now, you’d best be on your way.”

Harry nodded before he walked over to Fawkes and rubbed the phoenix on his breast. “I’ll talk to you later Fawkes.” He turned to Dumbledore. “That is, if you don’t mind sir. It’s surprisingly fascinating to learn about phoenixes and their bonds with witches and wizards from a phoenix itself.”

“No at all,” Albus waved his hand and smiled. “You can speak to Fawkes at any time.” He wasn’t worried as he knew that due to the bond he had with Fawkes, the phoenix couldn’t reveal anything that was said to him or in front of him.

“Thank you sir,” Harry smiled and then turned to leave. “I’ll see you Saturday.”

“Good night my boy,” Albus waved him away. “Enjoy your dinner.”

“I will sir,” Harry smiled, “Have a good night.” He walked out the office and when the door closed behind him, his smile became a smug smirk and his eyes gleamed with dark satisfaction. His Lord’s plan was now in action. Soon he, and subsequently Voldemort as well, would know where Albus stood in knowing about the rest of the Horcruxes and they would be one step closer to permanently removing the man. He couldn’t wait.

~...~
At dinner, Harry listened quietly to the talk at the table about the first day of classes. He looked up and his green eyes caught on to grey ones; seeing the concern in his boyfriend’s eyes, he smiled to let him know everything was ok and that he would talk to him when they got a chance. The blond nodded and Harry turned back to his musings.

He was feeling a bit off after his meeting with Dumbledore. Sure, when he had entered the office, he had been a bit nervous but mostly confident. A part of him however, had still been worried that the Old Coot wouldn’t buy what he was telling him and that he’d figure everything. It was a legitimate worry as the man didn’t get to the position he was in today by being stupid.

He knew Dumbledore had been suspicious of him throughout the meeting; especially when he told him about Cory, and then with the potion he had gotten from Knockturn Alley. He had seen that his words had reassured him, but that there was still some doubt. It wasn’t until Fawkes had woken up and the two had started talking did he saw the Headmaster completely relaxed and he had sense the victory that the man had felt and knew he had finally convinced him he was still on his side and that despite his relationship to both Draco and Cory, he had no intention of joining Voldemort. He really did have Fawkes to thank for that because he had realized that Dumbledore hadn’t relaxed completely until the phoenix had woken up.

Speaking of Fawkes; what the bird had told him had seriously shocked him. It’s not that he hadn’t already suspected, but it was one thing to have suspicions and quite another to have those suspicions proven correct. But despite the victory he had gained in Dumbledore’s office, he still had to be careful. He was walking a fine line and he really didn’t want to be found out, especially not now. Too much was at stake.

Now that the meeting with Dumbledore was out of the way, he had to get to the Room of Requirement so that he could search for the Diadem that belonged to Rowena Ravenclaw. He knew that Voldemort was waiting—almost impatiently—for it or any information about it. It was one task he definitely had no intention of failing. He just had to figure out when would be the perfect time to do so.

He turned back to his dinner and finished it as quick as he could without drawing suspicion.

“Mr. Potter?” His Head of House’s voice drew his attention and he turned to look at her.

“Yes professor?” Harry wiped his mouth on a napkin and inquired politely. “Was there something you needed?”

“I would like to talk to you about Quidditch,” Minerva looked down at her student.

“Professor,” Harry spoke up, “would it be alright if we spoke in your office instead of here? It’s less noisy and distracting that way.”

Minerva looked at him before nodding. “Very well then; the moment dinner is over, I would like to see you in my office.”

“Yes ma’am,” Harry nodded and when she walked away, he turned back to finish his dinner.

Cory glanced at his friend a few times, his concern and support showing through in a subtle manner. He was curious as to what happened, but he had no intention of pestering him like Granger would’ve done.

“Is everything ok Harry?” Cory asked finally.

Harry turned to him and gave a reassuring smile. “Yeah...everything’s good. There’s something I’ve
got to do and I’m just wondering how to do it.”

“Hi guys,” Luna’s voice interrupted them.

“Hey Luna,” Cory greeted and he shifted down a bit so that the blonde could sit between he and Harry.

“What’s up Luna-girl?” Harry asked.

“Nothing much,” Luna smiled. She looked around the Hall before looking back at Harry. “It’s a perfect night for a walk. The corridors won’t be so bad, so you can think more clearly on hidden things. Just be careful of creatures and their masters; they are quite troublesome.”

Harry’s brows furrowed for a few seconds before he smiled. He leaned over and pressed a kiss to Luna’s cheek. When he pulled back, he grinned at her. “I ever tell you how much I love your brain, sister dear?”

“Always,” Luna laughed. “Just remember that the mouth can’t say anything if the eyes cannot see.”

Harry laughed before he stood up, as did other students around the hall as dinner was over. “I’ll see you guys later.”

“Bye Harry,” Cory said.

“Bye,” Luna smiled and then she called out before he got too far. “Oh and Harry?”

“Yeah?” Harry turned back to look at the blonde.

“I know how much you love flying,” Luna said as she grabbed an apple and bit into it, “and I know that it’s not necessarily the game but rather the freedom that you love. With that said, I think it would be better for you—and those you are connected to—to have the lioness delegate the task to someone else.”

Harry cocked his head to the side, allowing her message to sink through his mind. His brain ran through it and sorted it within minutes. “Ok...do you have someone in mind?”

Luna smiled and looked away before she reached down and grabbed Cory’s hands, playing with his fingers. “Do you know what I loved the most about our time in London?”

“What’s that?” Cory asked.

“Big Ben,” Luna giggled. “Every time I heard it, it reminded me of bells.”

Harry laughed, drawing looks from students, as he jogged back over to the blonde. He bent down and pulled her into a hug before pulling back and kissing her cheek. “You’re such a delight Luna.”

He tapped Cory on the shoulder and then he hurried out the Great Hall, heading towards McGonagall’s office.

~...~

Harry knocked on the door to McGonagall’s private office and waited until he was told to enter before he opened the door and walked in.

“Hello professor,” Harry greeted politely when he saw his Head of House sitting behind her desk.
“Good evening Mr. Potter,” Minerva nodded to the chair in front of her desk. “Please, have a seat.”

“Thank you ma’am,” Harry said as he sat down.

“Now,” Minerva looked at her student. “About Quidditch; the ban that Madam Umbridge had placed on you is no longer in effect and as such, you are cleared to play. Due to your skill, your leadership abilities, I am offering the position of Quidditch captain to you.”

Harry looked at his Head of House with a smile. “Thank you so much professor.” He paused and ran a hand through his hair before he continued. “But, I think I’m going to say no to the captain position.”

McGonagall was shocked. “Why ever would you do such a thing Mr. Potter?”

“Well professor,” Harry shifted a bit in his seat. “I really would like to be captain, but the thing of it is, I really can’t. After everything that happened last May, losing...losing Sirius, showed me that I need to start focusing on what’s important and to stop fooling around so much. I decided to buckle down this year in my education, study more and pay more attention in class, and if I’m Quidditch captain, then I won’t be able to do so. I’m not quitting the team, I just won’t be captain.”

Minerva was quiet for a few minutes. “I suppose from the way you are speaking, there’s someone you have in to be Quidditch captain?”

“Yes professor,” Harry nodded. “Katie Bell. She’s been on the team longer than me, and she’s more knowledgeable about Quidditch than I am. I have no doubt that Katie would make an excellent team captain.”

“Very well Mr. Potter,” Minerva nodded. “I shall take your words into consideration. I too believe Katie is an excellent choice and I admit if you hadn’t been on the team, the offer would’ve gone to her first.”

“Thank you professor,” Harry grinned. “I really do think Katie’s gonna do a good job. Was that all you needed to see me for professor?”

“It was,” Minerva nodded, “however, now that you are here, there was something else I wanted to speak to you about.”

“If I may be so bold to interrupt,” Harry spoke up, “I think you’re talking about my friendship with Draco, Cory and the lack of friendship between me, Granger and Weasley.”

Minerva nodded. “Would you be so kind as to help me understand exactly what transpired between you and these students? I must say it was quite a shock to not only see you alongside Mr. Malfoy and Mr. LeStrange, but to also hear that your friendship with Ms. Granger and Mr. Weasley was no longer there. And, on top of that, the whole affair with Mr. Longbottom turning into a LeStrange, which, to be honest Mr. Potter, I do not know what to think anymore.”

Sighing, but smiling internally, Harry repeated the story he told to the Headmaster. When he was done, his Head was staring at him in silence.

Minerva looked at her lion in silent awe. She had known from his letter over the summer that he was determined to do better and from what she had heard from him this morning when she had handed him his schedule had told her that he was truly sincere, but listening to him now, told her that he had already changed. He seemed more focused, more studious than he was the last five years. She had been shocked and worried when she had learned of what had transpired in the common room between him, Ms. Granger and Mr. Weasley. She had heard the rumours of course, but she had
known not to take anything at face value as students sometimes exaggerated, but from what Harry had just revealed, those rumours were in fact true. The rumours fit what the paintings on the wall of the common room had reported to her as the Head of Gryffindor.

To think that Hermione Granger, the student who had been the boy’s champion since she had lied for him, him and Mr. Weasley, after the Troll incident in their first year could and would say something as callous as to blame him for his godfather’s death was shocking. Truth be told, what he said about Mr. Weasley hadn’t really shocked her. She of course had thought that the two boys were close, but after fourth year when Mr. Potter’s name had come from the Goblet and Mr. Weasley subsequent jealousy, she had started doubting the red head’s friendship, especially when it seemed he was more about fooling around rather than studying and the fact that most of the fights with Mr. Malfoy had either been started by him or they were continued, especially in instances when it looked as if Harry himself wasn’t in the mood to be in a fight.

Hearing about Corvus shocked her; she had had no idea that Neville Longbottom was actually Corvus LeStrange and she couldn’t help but to wonder if the Lady Longbottom knew that her grandson wasn’t really her grandson? But despite all of that, she couldn’t help but to feel proud of her lion. Someone else would not have reacted the way he did and still choose to remain close to the son of two Death Eaters and start a relationship with another, but he had done so. He had put aside whatever prejudices he had against the parents to befriend their offspring. He truly had a heart of gold and Minerva felt lucky to know him and to see the young man he was becoming and she knew that James, Lily and even Sirius would be proud of him. She had initially thought of course that the new relationships and losing his old ones would be harmful to him, but, it was looking as if the dissolution of his friendship with Mr. Weasley and Ms. Granger was a good thing for now. Of course she would keep her eye on him and to see if things progressed for the better, but for now, she was content to leave it as is.

“Mr. Potter,” Minerva spoke at long last. “You have surprised me. I am very much pleased with the new you and your new outlook on life. Of course I am sad that it took the death of your beloved godfather to bring about such a change, but through all that, I am pleased that something good has come of it.”

“I’m glad you think so ma’am,” Harry replied politely.

“You truly are serious about being more studious and focused this year onwards, aren’t you?” Minerva asked.

“Yes I am,” Harry nodded.

“Very well,” Minerva said. “That was all I needed Mr. Potter. You may return to the common room.”

Harry smiled at his Head before he got up from the seat and headed to the door.

“Mr. Potter?” Minerva called out, stopping him just as he opened the door.

He turned to look at her. “Yes professor?”

“I am very much looking forward to seeing this side of you continue throughout the year,” Minerva said, “especially in my classroom.”

Harry gave a slight start as he saw a smile on his normally strict professor’s face; it was small, but it was there.
“So am I, professor,” Harry replied with a smile of his own, “so am I.”

~...~

In Gryffindor Tower, Ron and Hermione were sitting in the common room in front of the fireplace. Hermione’s thoughts were on the potions class and dinner, while Ron was just watching his girlfriend.

“What is it?” he asked, drawing her attention. “Did something happen in potions?”

“Harry was there,” Hermione said after a moment of silence, shocking Ron. She smiled ruefully. “It shocked me too. I don’t know how he got in, but he was there.” She sighed. “When I saw him, I had thought that it was a chance for us to work things out. We know that you and he suck at potions and I thought that I would help him and show him that he needed us, or at least me.”

“So what happened?” Ron asked, “Did it work?”

“He didn’t need my help,” Hermione said. “I tried to help him but he just blew me off. He ended up making the potion on his own.”

“What?” Ron was beyond shocked. He knew that his former friend’s skill in potions was absolute shit, so he couldn’t understand why Potter would blow Hermione off when he knew she was better than him. “And Snape allowed that? He failed I take it?”

Hermione’s brows furrowed even as she shook her head. “Yes, Professor Snape allowed him to do it and no, that’s just it Ron, he didn’t fail. He managed to do the potions correctly and finished before me.”

Ron’s mouth fell open in shock. The thought that not only had Potter managed to make a potion, but he had made it correctly and had finished it before Hermione and all without her help threw him for a loop.

“I was shocked too,” Hermione smiled briefly when she saw the look on his face. “It just makes wonder, just what did Harry do over the summer? He’s so different now.”

“Who’s different now?” Ginny asked as she walked over to them, having heard the question.

“Harry is,” Hermione replied. “He was in Advanced Potions with me and he managed to brew his potion correctly.”

“But I thought he sucked at potions?” Ginny looked between the two of them.

“Not anymore,” Hermione shook her head. “I don’t even know how he even made it into the class. I don’t think he got the right grade needed for it.”

“Maybe Dumbledore had something to do with it,” Ron suggested. “Maybe he thought if Harry was in the class with you, it’d make things easier to get him to apologize to us and be our friend again.”

“Yes well, after today’s class, that will not be happening,” Hermione looked into the fire. It was only the second day of school, first day of classes and already her mind was a jumbled mess. “Harry’s really changed. I mean, not only does he look different, but he acts different as well. I mean, I didn’t even know that he was gay and now, he’s dating Malfoy of all people.” She paused, her brows furrowed. “Though, if you remember last year and how he acted after his first kiss with Cho and then their disastrous Valentine’s date, it makes sense. I should’ve seen it before that he wasn’t very much attracted to girls.”
“I just wish there was a way to get Harry away from Malfoy,” Ginny scowled. “Harry and I belong together. I’ve been in love with him for as long as I can remember and he should be with me.” She brightened up, “maybe mum may know what to do.” With that, she got up from her seat and headed to the girls dormitories to write a note to her mother.

The sounds from the other Gryffindor students entering the common room stopped them from continuing their conversation. Hermione went and grabbed her books to get started on her homework assignments. It wasn’t until later, when she saw Harry enter the common room, did she realize that she hadn’t told Ron about the potions book that Harry had and that she had no intention of telling him.

~...~

As Harry headed back to Gryffindor Tower, his mind wasn’t focused on his meeting with his Head, but rather on his mission from Voldemort. Luna’s coded message replayed in his mind and he couldn’t help but to smile. Stopping briefly, he pulled his wand out and quickly cast Tempus. Seeing he still had time before curfew, he quickened his pace and hurried to Gryffindor Tower.

Entering the common room, he was vaguely aware of the other students, especially Granger sitting over near the fireplace. Ignoring them, he hurried up the stairs to the boys’ dorm. When he got there, he saw Cory sitting on his bed.

“Hey Harry,” Cory greeted his friend, “how was the meeting?”

“It was good,” Harry said as he went to his trunk. “She asked about you and Draco and then we talked about Quidditch and the two traitors.”

“How’d she take it?” Cory asked as he got up and moved to where Harry was.

“She was ok,” Harry said and then he grinned when he pulled out his map and cloak. Shrinking them, he put them in his pocket. “I’m gonna take Luna’s advice. If anyone asks, and by anyone I mean Granger and Weasley, I went for a walk. I’ll be back before curfew.”

Cory cocked his head to the side, knowing that Harry was up to something, but he just smiled and nodded. “Alright, just be careful on your walk.”

“Always,” Harry grinned and he left the dorm room, going back down the stairs and out the portrait door.

~...~

After he had left the common room, he had found a secluded spot and had pulled the Cloak from his pocket, resized it and threw it over him before he continued on his way. Making his way carefully through the halls, Harry arrived on the seventh floor without any problems. He quickly headed down the hall and stopped in front of the hidden entrance opposite the tapestry depicting the attempt of Barnarbas the Barmy to teach trolls ballet.

He started pacing and he concentrated on the words Voldemort had told him. ‘I need to hide my precious heirloom. I need a safe place to store my heirloom,’ he thought to himself. Soon enough, after pacing three times up and down the hallway, a door appeared. Smiling, he opened the door and slipped in, allowing the door to close behind him as he concentrated on the urgent wish to not be found by anybody during the next hour.

Looking around inside, he was stunned. The room was vast, very high and wide, like a cathedral and filled with countless objects. Old furniture was stacked to mountains. He walked slowly through the
free spaces, looking right and left, taking it all in.

He saw many things that somebody, maybe house elves or other students had hidden in the room, including broken and damaged furniture, perhaps hidden to hide mishandled magic. An enormous stuffed troll stood like a sentinel amongst the chaos, a stark contrast to an elegant, large black wooden cabinet, which he recognized as the Vanishing Cabinet in which Montague had got lost the previous year.

Upon, besides and below the furniture, smaller items were stacked without any order or system. He noticed some weapons, like several rusting swords and a heavy, bloodstained axe, thousands of books—probably banned, graffiti, or stolen—chipped bottles of congealed potions and corked bottles whose contents still shimmered evilly, hats, jewels, and cloaks, broken pieces of large shells, maybe dragon eggshells, a chipped old bust of an ugly warlock and flying catapults and a Fanged Frisbee! Fred and George would love this place!

He tried to find something familiar, a magical signature that called to him, but the room was huge, enormous. He didn’t have the time to search through every nook and cranny. So, he drew his wand and carefully placed it on the flat of his palm and spoke.

“Point me Ravenclaw’s diadem.”

The wand wiggled around feebly, turning this way and that, so Harry tried something else. “Point me Tom Riddle’s diadem Horcrux.”

The wand spun around a few times until it settled in one direction. Smiling slightly, he took off in that direction, navigating the obstacles of upturned chairs and rolled up carpets in his path, until he stood in front of a large cupboard. To the side stood a crate, on top of which rested the chipped bust of an ugly old warlock. On top of the cupboard lay several items.

Carefully, he sifted through the pile and there, under a dusty old wig, he found it; an old, tarnished tiara. It didn’t look like anything valuable; if Voldemort hadn’t described it, then he doubted he would’ve found it as it was something he wouldn’t have looked twice at. He put his hand into his pocket, retrieving a handkerchief before he gingerly picked up Ravenclaw’s lost diadem. He turned it around so that he could read the inscription.

“This is it,” he whispered as he looked at it. Even though it wasn’t as strong as when he had held Slytherin’s locket, he could still feel the faint thrum of the familiar dark magic coming off of it.

Filled with immense satisfaction that he had found his Lord’s Horcrux, he couldn’t stop the wide grin that took over his face. Wrapping the diadem gingerly in the handkerchief, he carefully placed it on a stack of boxes. Next, he pointed his wand at a book and transfigured into a small dagger, before picking it up and pricking his finger. Allowing the blood to drip over the covered diadem, seeping into the cloth, he pointed his wand at it and started speaking in Parseltongue, saying the incantation that Voldemort had taught him. It was a simple Dark Arts ritual, using his willingly given blood and combined with the Parseltongue charm, it hid the Horcrux diadem from view and detection. Neutral spells like *Finite Incantatem* or *Specialis Revelo* would have no effect.

He watched as the small package glowed before it disappeared from view. Smiling, he looked around before he turned back to the dagger and transfigured it once more into a box; this time, the spell was said in Parseltongue, ensuring that it would hold longer. Carefully grabbing the diadem, he placed it inside the box, closed and locked it with a locking charm—that was said in Parseltongue—before he repeated the procedure on the box.

His task complete, he headed to the entrance of the room and stopped when he got to the door.
Pulling the map from his pocket, he opened it up and tapped his wand against the parchment. He spoke the incantation to activate and looked it over with caution, noting where everyone was. Satisfied that no one was in his vicinity, he cancelled the map, folded and replaced it to his pocket before throwing the cloak over him and then opening the door.

Stepping outside, he took a quick look around before he took off down the hall. As he walked, he called out to Hedwig.

\Hedwig?\  
|Yes?|  
|Where are you?|  
|I am at Hogwarts. I am using my owl form to patrol the school and the town.|  
|Oh...found anything unusual?|

|I tested the Hogwarts wards and I found that my presence is ignored by them. They deem me harmless allowing to me flash in and out using my true form. I suspect it is because you have been a part of this school for over five years now and you have expelled much magic so the wards are familiar with your magical essence. And as such, because I am connected to you, and because I am a phoenix, they are familiar to my magic as well.|

|Really?| Harry almost stopped in shock from what his phoenix told him. |What else have you found out?|

|There are a few Aurors stationed in Hogsmeade, some werewolves in the forest. There aren’t any new buildings in the town.|

|Do you know who the Aurors are?|

|That girl, Nymphadora Tonks is one, another is Auror Dawlish, Auror Proudfoot and Auror Savage. They patrol the borders between Hogwarts and Hogsmeade and Hogsmeade itself.|

|Hmmm...I’ll have to let Marvolo know. Speaking of, there is a package I need you to deliver to him. Come to the boys’ dorm in your owl form. I’ll be there in about fifteen minutes.|

|Very well|

|See you then girl! he heard trilling in his mind and he couldn’t help but to smile. To his delight, he saw that he was nearing the stairs that would lead directly to Gryffindor Tower. He hurried his pace and soon enough, he was going down those set of stairs, and then up another set. He saw that some students were still out and he carefully avoided them. Stopping in a dark alcove a distance away, he took off the cloak, shrunk it and placed it in his pocket. Keeping a tight hold on the box, he looked around and then stepped out of the alcove.|

Relaxing his body and forcing away any and all tension, he casually made his way to his dorm, smiling at and answering the calls of the other students. After saying the password, he entered the common room, noting that some students were still sitting around. He waved at those that called his name and jogged up the stairs to the boys’ dorm. Upon entering, he saw Cory playing with Sesshomaru and Kilala.

“Hey,” Harry greeted his friend as he walked over to his bed. He placed the box on the pillow and
moved to his trunk to grab his notebook and a pen.

“Hey,” Cory smiled, “did you have a good walk?”

“Yes I did,” Harry grinned as he sat down on his bed.

He looked up when he heard a hoot and saw Hedwig hovering outside his window. “Cory, could you—

“No problem,” Cory got up and opened the window, allowing the owl to fly in. She flew to Harry, brushing her wing against his cheek before she settled next to him on the bed. Harry felt for the box, picked it up and had Hedwig grip it tightly. “The box you feel is for our mutual friend.”

Hedwig hooted and bent forward to nip his fingers.

Laughing softly, Harry opened the book and quickly wrote a message to Voldemort. He stopped, concentrated and then scanned his wand over the paper, muttering in Parseltongue as he did so. When he was done, the paper glowed for a second and the message that he wrote was hidden. What now showed was;

 Hey Gred 'n' Forge,

 How are you?

 It’s so nice to be back to Hogwarts! First day of classes was interesting and fun.

 Our new DADA teacher is truly Lucius Malfoy. Finally a competent teacher that knows what he's talking about! Cool lesson, he demands Constant Vigilance! Shocked half of the class out of their complacency when he stood Disillusioned on the stairs to his office, then came down and cast a stunner out of the blue! I got my shield up in time, of course. You can guess who was taken by surprised, no?

 Had a blast duelling with Draco as a demonstration at the end, and afterwards *wink* I wish his dad hadn't disturbed us...

 Know what? I did quite well in the first potions lesson. Snape didn't scoff and snarl as usual, instead he said: “Commendable, Potter!” Wow, he must have been really impressed.

 You two can be proud! All that reading and practicing over the summer truly paid off. Thank you for bugging me to learn potions, now it’s fun and so easy, like talking snake.

 Bye the way, I still can't believe back in second year, a simple 'Open' in Parseltongue accessed the entire chamber.

 The only drawback here at Hogwarts is that stupid prat of your ex-brother, Ronald, and Granger. I had really hoped to find something, anything in them to repair our friendship, but it seems hopeless. That sucks. You know, illusions aren’t always what they appear to be and now, looking at them, it’s like they removed the Disillusion Charm and I can now see them for what they are.

 Have a good week, sell tons of pranks, until next time!

 H.

He was just in time too as Ron, Seamus and Dean came in the room, talking loudly.
“Hey Harry,” Seamus grinned. “Had a nice walk?”

Harry looked over at Cory and grinned at his friend, conveying his thanks. “Yeah, I did. It felt good walking through the school without so many students around.”

Ron, too curious for his own good, and acting on his stupidity in forgetting all the previous warnings from Harry, sauntered over to the teen’s bed. “Who you writing to?”

He looked down and saw the twins’ names at the top of the paper, which was the start of the letter. He caught a few words like Hogwarts, DADA, Constant Vigilance, Malfoy, Draco, Snape and proud, before Harry grabbed the note up and folded it.

Harry ignored Ron and placed the folded letter in Hedwig’s beak. “You know who to go to. Just be careful.” Wait until you’re a safe distance away, before you turn back into your natural form and then flash to Marvolo.

I will Hedwig hooted and blinked her amber eyes before taking off and going through the window. When she was gone, Harry got up from the bed, grabbed his note book and pen and placed them back in his trunk before he turned to the room. He leaned against his trunk and crossed his arms.

His gaze locked on to Ron’s and he glared at the redhead. “I thought I told you that I wanted nothing to do with you? That includes you staying away from me and nothing I do is of any concern of yours.” He scoffed at him. “However, I will choose to satisfy your curiosity this time. I was writing the twins. I mean, I am allowed to have friends and I’m sure you know that the twins and I were in contact over the summer. Just because I’m in school now, doesn’t mean that contact is going to stop.”

Ron’s eyes narrowed in anger, jealousy and hatred. “Of course, you’ve already turned the twins against us. You made them disown themselves. Mum’s all torn up about it. It’s your fault Potter. You —

“Ron, bugger off. I’m tired of dealing with you,” Harry sneered at him before he moved to his bed.

Seamus, who had watched the exchange, got up from his bed and walked over to Ron. He looked over the redhead, a curious look on his face.

“What the bloody hell are you doing?” Ron snapped at him.

“What button?” Seamus replied as he looked over Ron once more.

“What button?” Dean asked, curious as to what Seamus was doing.

“The one to take Ron off of repeat,” Seamus said. Cory, Dean and Harry burst out laughing while Ron turned red with embarrassment and anger. “Seriously, he’s just saying and doing the same shit over and over, so he has to be on repeat. We need to take him off of it!”

The expression on Seamus’ face was so earnest that the three boys collapsed into laughter, clutching their stomachs, as they rolled on their bed.

“Seamus...I...love...you,” Harry panted out as he tried to get his breathing under control.

“Really?” Seamus ignored Ron and looked at Harry. “Does this mean I can tell Malfoy bugger off?”

“No,” Harry grinned at the Irish teen. “Draco’s there to stay.”
“Damn,” Seamus placed his hands on his hips and shook his head. Seconds later, he turned back to Ron. “Don’t worry Ron, we’ll find the button.” That sent the boys into another laughing fit.

“Piss off!” Ron glared at the four of them before he moved to his bed, harshly tugging the curtain into place, shielding him from them.

“Amazing,” Cory chuckled and sat down on his bed, shifting Kilala. “Time for sleep.”

“Night guys,” Dean and Seamus said as they went to their own beds, closing the curtains.

“Night,” Cory replied and he then he turned to Harry. “Everything ok?”

“More than ok,” Harry nodded. “Let’s get some sleep.”

“Alright,” Cory nodded, “night Harry.”

“Goodnight,” Harry replied and smiled when Cory closed his curtains. He changed out of his school clothes and into his pyjamas. Sesshomaru settled down just below Harry’s pillow, his golden eyes on his master.

<i>Did you find what you were searching for?</i>

<yes I did>

Harry glanced at his familiar as he went to his trunk and grabbed the mirror that Voldemort had given him. He moved to his bed, careful of Sesshomaru, and sat down, his back against the headboard. Waving his wand, he closed his curtains and cast a Silencing spell.

<Marvolo will be pleased>

<i>I’m glad</i>

Sesshomaru got up and moved to snuggle against Harry’s side. <i>I would like to see Yasha tomorrow</i>

<Alright>

Harry stroked the pup’s head. <i>Go to sleep</i>

~...~

In his private room in Malfoy Manor, Voldemort was sitting behind his desk, looking over some documents when a flash of fire drew his attention. He looked up and saw Hedwig flying towards him, a letter clutched in her beak.

“Hello little one,” Voldemort greeted the phoenix. He watched with curious eyes as she carefully settled on his desk, but was surprised when he saw that her talons were not directly touching the desk. “What do you have there?”

He reached out to touch her legs, but drew back in slight shock when she moved out of his reach. His shock turned to amusement when the phoenix glared at him before dipping her upper body forward, wanting him to take the letter.

“Alright,” Voldemort smile in amusement as he took the letter, pausing to rub her breast. He opened it and read it over. His red-brown eyes flashed in delight and he summoned his wand and tapped it against the letter, hissing as he did so.

<i>Marvolo,</i>

One of the tasks you assigned is completed. Your precious seems unharmed. Everything went well yesterday and today.
AD thoroughly grilled me, but it’s OK. I managed to convince him that my loyalty hasn’t changed, despite the fact that I am friends with Cory and dating Draco. LM is doing a splendid job. People are starting to think outside the box like planned, even the lions. Majority of students are pleased with the toad’s demise.

Talk to you at midnight?

Harry

“Very clever,” Voldemort mused, “disguising the letter in the event that it was either intercepted or prying eyes were around.”

He placed the letter on the desk and turned to Hedwig, waving his hand over around her talons while speaking in Parseltongue. A glow came out and it disappeared, leaving the box. He grabbed it from her and carefully placed it down in front of him.

He looked up at the phoenix on the desk. “You may return.”

Hedwig trilled before disappearing in a flash of fire.

Voldemort turned back to the box and his mind went over the letter and the hidden code that was in it and he hissed, {Open}

It unlocked and he lifted the lid, grabbed his wand and muttered the countercharm to the spell Harry performed in Parseltongue. The moment the charm was removed, he felt it; the familiar dark aura, the same one that emitted from his ring, his locket, Nagini and Harry when he was still his Horcrux.

He looked down at the diadem and couldn’t help the wave of emotion. The ring on his finger warmed as it searched and recognized the familiar magic of the other soul shred inside Ravenclaw’s diadem.

{Massster, issss everything alright?} Nagini woke and left her spot to coil around his shoulders. {I felt a presssence...one ssimillar to when Harry had hisss firsssst misssion to retrieve your locket}

“Everything is fine,” Voldemort assured her. “Harry has managed to retrieve another of my Horcruxes from Hogwarts.” He lifted the diadem from the box and held it up for the snake to see. He felt immensely better knowing that his final Horcrux was back in his hands and completely safe. Other than the cup, which was still in the Bellatrix’s vault, and the diary that was destroyed, all his Horcruxes were together.

Grabbing his wand, he cast a quick Tempus. When he saw that it was just a few minutes from midnight, he summoned the mirror—the brother to the one he gave Harry—and tapped the glass, activating it.

“Harry Potter.”

~...~

Harry, who was relaxing on his bed, petting a sleeping Sesshomaru, jumped a bit when he felt the mirror vibrate. Picking it up, he heard his name and tapped it in response.

“Hello Marvolo,” Harry greeted when he saw the Dark Lord in the mirror. “I trust you were able to receive the package without trouble?”

“Yes I did,” Voldemort replied. “You have done an excellent job in retrieving it for me.”
“Thank you,” Harry grinned briefly before he sobered. “Hedwig told me she was patrolling the school and Hogsmeade.”

“Did she discover anything out of the ordinary?” Voldemort asked. “Anything that we should know?”

“She did,” Harry nodded and proceeded to relay what Hedwig had told him. When he was done, Voldemort had a thoughtful look on his face.

“It is nothing less than I suspected,” Voldemort said at last. “In your letter, you mentioned Dumbledore and how the students’ minds were opening up. Elaborate.”

Harry grinned and he told him in detail, everything that had happened since they came back to school. He concluded with his meeting with Dumbledore. “I admit, I was a little wary during the meeting. The man didn’t get to the position he was in today by being stupid, so I was of course concerned, but I thought like a Slytherin.”

“Yes you did,” Voldemort chuckled. His laughter died out as he reflected on something the teen had told him back in the beginning of summer. “Harry, do you remember when you told me that you had an idea as to why Dumbledore was not able to tap into his phoenix’s powers like you can do with Hedwig?”

“Yes,” Harry nodded, “I had thought about it and I had come to a conclusion, but I had no proof.”

“Until now,” Voldemort said.

“I know,” Harry blew off. “Having Fawkes confirm what I suspected...I know it shouldn’t shock me, but I still can’t believe he would do something like that. He forcibly bonded himself to a phoenix.”

“And I created Horcruxes,” Voldemort said dryly. “Despite that little fact, bonding forcibly to a phoenix is something even I would not do.”

Harry nodded, a yawn coming out. “I’m sorry.”

“You are forgiven,” Voldemort assured him, “it is late. Now, as to your mission, things are progressing very nicely. As for the training that the Old Fool has promised, do not be surprised, if the training is more mental than physical or magical. The man will do anything he can to not teach you anything that is actually useful in the war. I assure you, you will not learn any duelling, any new or advanced spells or anything else of that nature.”

“I suspected as much,” Harry agreed and tried to stop another yawn from coming through.

“Do not forget to inform Severus of your task,” Voldemort warned. “His skills and knowledge will be very useful to you.”

“Yes sir,” Harry nodded. “I’ll tell him when we go to the Chamber.”

“Very well,” Voldemort nodded. “You need to be in top form in the morning. Do not forget to select the person you are going to choose to be your double on Sunday.”

“I won’t,” Harry shook his head, “I already know who I’m going to choose, so I’ll let them know before the week is over.”

“Good,” Voldemort said. “You are dismissed.”
“Goodnight sir,” Harry replied and he sighed when the mirror glowed before going blank. Yawning, he quickly got up and opened his trunk, placing the mirror inside. He was about to close it when he remembered the map and cloak was still in his jeans’ pocket. Grabbing and unshrinking them, he placed them in the trunk and then closed and locked it with a Parsel spell.

Not even stifling the yawn that came out, he stumbled back to his bed, closing the curtains and cancelling the Silencing charm. Pulling Sesshomaru close to his body, he finally succumbed to the sleep that had been pulling at his body.
Visits and Lessons

Chapter Notes

A/N: here is the new chapter. Hope you guys like it.

Disclaimer: I own nothing… if I did, Ginny would have died in the CoS, Dumbledore would have choked on his lemon drops and Harry would have stood up for himself against Molly and Dumbledore.

Disclaimer 2: this story is based on characters and situations created and owned by JK Rowling and Bloomsbury/Scholastic. No money is being made and no copyright or trademark infringement is intended.

"Talking"
Thinking’
Letter or commentary/introduction and flashback
{Parsseltongue}
~...~ indicates scene change

Last time on RDA;

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The next day, things continued much in the same order as the day before; Harry and Cory continued to showcase their intelligence in every class, each time rubbing Hermione the wrong way, especially when the teachers would praise them more than they ever did for her.

The young witch still couldn’t wrap her mind around the changes in her former best friend or housemate. It was only the morning second day of classes and already she was usurped from her position as brightest witch and the one with the answers as in every class, either Draco, Harry or Cory managed to not only give the answer before her, but managed to get every single one right.

As for Harry and the others, they relished in the looks from the witch’s face every time she was passed over for a question. It filled them with glee to watch her face change colours each time it happened. It was now lunch and Harry and company had just finished with their morning classes and were heading to the Great Hall.

“You were right Draco,” Gabriella smiled as she walked next to the blond. “It really was fun putting
Granger in her place. The girl really needs to be taken down.” Yesterday she hadn’t done anything; it was her first day of classes and she had acted like the Slytherin she now was. She hadn’t drawn any attention to herself or her knowledge of the subjects, instead, she had sat back, waited, observed and then, she had planned.

This morning during her classes, those especially she shared with Granger, she had put her plan in motion. She had taken immense pleasure in upstaging the girl.

“Second day of classes,” Blaise said as he walked next to Pansy and Draco, making sure the girl was between the two. “And already things are moving along so beautifully.”

“So poetic,” Cory teased as they walked to the Gryffindor table.

“Didn’t you know?” Harry grinned as he took a seat, “Slytherins are known for their poetry.”

“Blasphemy,” Gabriella said as she sat down next to Pansy. “I may be new to Slytherin, but I know for a fact that that’s not true.”

“She’s right,” Draco narrowed his eyes at Harry as he sat next to him. “Don’t ever let someone hear you say that again.”

“We Slytherins will never be caught dead doing such a thing,” Pansy added.

“Sorry, sorry,” Harry held up his hands in surrender with a laugh. “I take it back. Slytherins and poetry are to never be connected ever again.”

“Thank you,” Blaise, Pansy, Gabriella and Draco said as one.

Harry and Cory laughed.

“Hey guys.” They looked up and saw Lavender, Romilda and Parvati smiling as they took seats around them followed by Dean and Seamus.

“Hey,” Cory greeted.

“Where’s Luna?” Dean asked as he looked around for the blonde. “She’s usually with you guys.”

“She said she had to do something,” Harry answered as he started putting food on his plate. “She’ll be here soon though.”

“Cool,” Seamus said as he too started filling his plate with food.

“So Gabriella, how do you like Hogwarts so far?” Romilda asked as grabbed a piece of chicken and placed it on her plate.

“I love it,” Gabriella grinned at the girl. “It’s almost like a culture shock for me. England is different from America, but I’m enjoying myself so far.”

“We could tell,” Parvati laughed, “with the way you beat out Hermione at answering the teachers’ questions, you and those over there, and the smile you had on your face.”

“It’s nice to see little miss perfect being put in her place,” Lavender said. She glanced up at where Hermione was sitting and frowned when she noticed something. “Harry,” she called, drawing the teen’s attention. “Ron has a really smug smile and he’s looking at you.”

The group turned to where Ron was sitting with Hermione and Ginny. Like Lavender said, Ron was
smiling smugly in their direction, specifically at Harry.

“I wonder what his problem is,” Parvati frowned at the redhead.

“Who cares?” Harry shrugged, “Weasley’s always going to have some kind of problem relating to me.”

The others nodded in agreement before they dismissed Ron and started eating. As they ate, they talked to each other about their classes and their summers (apparently yesterday wasn’t enough time to do so). Lunch was going well and everyone was in a good mood. That was about to change. The flapping of wings drew their attention and they looked up to see owls flying down and their legs and beaks were newspapers, the Daily Prophet.

An owl landed in front of the group and Harry reached out to take the paper. He opened it and started reading. As he did so, his hands tightened around it and as his anger grew, the others could not only feel his magic in the air, but they could hear it crackle as it poured off of him in waves.

“Harry?” Draco rested a hand on his boyfriend’s shoulder, wondering why he was so pissed off.

“What is it? What does the Prophet say?”

Cory, who was sitting on the other side of Harry, reached out and carefully pulled the paper from Harry’s hands. He read and let out a gasp when he saw the headline. Around them, other students read the paper as well and the whispers started as the students stared at the group of friends.

“What’s it say?” Romilda asked her curiosity beyond peaked.

Cory said nothing as he laid the paper out for them all to read;

**HARRY POTTER MINGLING WITH DEATH EATERS, IS OUR SAVIOUR TURNING DARK?**

*We at the Daily Prophet received shocking news from the halls of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. According to a source, Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived is in the company of children of Death Eaters. His company includes Draco Malfoy and shocker here, Cory LeStrange, son of Bellatrix and Rodolphus LeStrange. I couldn’t believe it, but I was given information by someone close to Mr. Potter;*

“He’s been buddy-buddy with this Cory LeStrange and dating Draco Malfoy. It’s disgusting. Their parents are Death Eaters, everyone knows that. And the things he’s said and done; we should be scared about their influence on Harry. We know he’s been upset after his godfather died, maybe they cast a spell on him, I don’t know. But it’s worrying for him to be with them. I think it’s a real possibility of Harry turning dark if this isn’t stopped. And if that’s not bad enough, he’s being friendly with not only Snape, but with Mr. Malfoy as well.”

*When questioned as to how that would happen, I learned that the new Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher is none other than Lord Lucius Malfoy! My source had this to say;*

“I think it’s horrible. Everyone knows the Malfoy family is dark. I could just imagine what he’ll teach us. He attacked us in class his first day here. Who knows what else is gonna happen? And it’s not the first time either; Mr. Malfoy was there at the Ministry attacks in May. I don’t know what Dumbledore’s playing at having him here, but us students aren’t safe.”
Is that really true? The information about Mr. Potter does not come as a surprise as he has always been a disturbed boy. It would not be a very big leap for him to become dark, but the question is, has he joined forces with You-Know-Who? And if so, then our chances of winning this war are over and Harry Potter is to blame as he has turned traitor.

Can our Saviour be saved? Can we trust him to defeat He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named if he’s friends with the children of suspected or proven Death Eaters? Did Sirius Black’s death push Mr. Potter over the edge and now he’s abandoned us? I will be keeping an eye out for more news concerning Mr. Potter, as our readers deserve to know what’s going on.

Rita Skeeter.

For more information on Sirius Black, go to page four.

“Oh my God!” Lavender and Parvati breathed as one. They looked up at Harry and then over at Ron who was still smiling smugly. Their gaze drifted up to the Head table where the teachers were sitting and both shivered when they saw the cold fury in Professor Malfoy’s eyes. Shifting their gaze back to Harry, they froze at the menacing aura pouring off of him.

They weren’t the only ones; other students around the hall froze as well as they watched the group of friends.

“Who did this?!” Dean asked, shocked at what some student had done.

“Isn’t it obvious?” Draco spoke up, his voice calm yet deadly. “It’s Weasley. He’s the only one that would’ve done this.”

The others could hear the fury in his voice and were struck with just how similar Draco was to his father. It was Harry though that had them terrified; their green-eyed friend hadn’t said anything yet.

“Harry?” Pansy called out.

Harry clenched his hands into fists and his head lifted to stare at Ron.

~...~

“Ron,” Hermione glanced up at her boyfriend, “why are you staring at Harry?”

“And what’s with the smile?” Ginny asked as she bit into an apple.

“Nothing,” Ron said smugly, “just a little something to bring Potter down, something everyone deserved to know.”

Hermione was going to say something but the owls arriving stopped her. A paper landed on the table, but she ignored it to look at Ron. Soon, whispers started up and she looked around to see that the students were staring at them and at Harry.

She felt and heard Harry’s magic and looked over at him. She saw the paper in his hand and turned her eyes to the one on the table in front of her. With slight shaking hands, she grabbed it and opened it up, reading what was on the page. Her eyes widened with shock and horror as she read each word.

“Ron,” Hermione lifted her eyes from the paper to look at him. “What did you do?”

Ron looked at her and grinned. “I think people should know what’s going on.” He turned to look back at Harry and froze when the green eyes locked on to him.
Harry slowly stood up from his seat and the conversations around the hall died down to a complete stop as the hall went silent.

Harry stepped away from the bench and cracked his neck. He took a step in Ron’s direction when a hand on his arm stopped him.

“Wait,” Luna said as she turned him to look at her.

“Why?” Harry spoke through gritted teeth.

Luna smiled in her mysterious way and looked out above him. A hoot sounded out, louder than the flapping of the wings and he turned to look and saw Hedwig, in her owl form, flying towards them.

She landed on Harry’s shoulder, rubbing her head against his and stuck out her leg, showing him the paper that was tied there. When he took it, she flew off his shoulder to land on Draco’s, shocking Ron, Hermione, Ginny and most everyone else in the hall.

Harry opened the note, read it and then turned to look at Luna. He raised an eyebrow in question.

“Do you really have to ask?” Luna giggled. She stepped closer, looped her arm through his and pressed a kiss to his cheek. “He’ll meet you when you’re ready.”

Harry smiled and kissed the top of her head before he looked over at Ron. He couldn’t let the redhead get away with it. Untangling himself from Luna, he started once again towards him. Cory, Draco, Pansy, Gabriella and Blaise stood up and they and Luna followed after Harry.

“Weasley,” Harry said as he came to a stop next to the boy. “I suppose you think that the stunt you pulled was funny.” Harry leaned down, bringing his head closer to Ron so that only those in close proximity would hear his next words. “In the three days we’ve been here, you’ve been constantly pushing my buttons Weasley. If you think that I will not retaliate, you are sorely mistaken.”

He pulled a tiny fraction of his magic forward, allowing it to fill his eyes making them glow an eerie green, the same shade as the Killing Curse. Ron swallowed loudly and whimpered in fear.

This time, Harry raised his voice so that the entire hall could hear him. “Remember this Weasley; not only am I the son of the smartest witch Hogwarts has ever seen, but I’m also the son and the godson of the Marauders.” Gasps echoed throughout the hall and Harry grinned at Ron. “You’d do well to remember that.”

With that, he pulled his magic back and stepped back from Ron. The others came to flank him with Draco on his left, along with Blaise and Pansy and Luna on his right with Cory.

Draco stepped away from the group and leaned down so that only Ron could hear him. “You’re time is coming Weasley. I warned you to stay away from us, to never spout idiotic ramblings about us again and you did not heed the warning. That shall be your downfall. You will pay for the smear you have done to me and my father’s name.”

Ron’s frightened eyes moved past Draco to rest on Harry’s green eyes. An image appeared in his mind and so terrifying was it, his body gave an involuntary reaction.

Draco wrinkled his nose and stepped back to stand next to Harry before the seven turned the gaze to the floor below Ron’s feet.
“It seems Weasley,” Blaise held a smirk on his face, “you’ve had a little accident.”

“We should go,” Luna spoke up, a dreamy smile on her face. “The Nargles are quite the devious creatures and inhabit the grass on the pitch.”

“Huh?” Gabriella looked at the blonde in confusion.

“Why?” Pansy asked, throwing an arm around Luna’s waist, already used to Luna and the creatures that only she could see and talk to.

“Didn’t you know?” Luna grinned, “The vibrant green colour tricks them into seeing what isn’t there so they of course try to trick them back.”

The seven turned to leave the hall, leaving students and teachers staring after them. Ron turned back to his meal, appetite lost, but was stopped by a hand on his shoulder.

“Mr. Weasley,” Lucius’ cold voice echoed through him, “you have displayed disrespect from the first moment in my class.” He glanced to the puddle beneath him and held back the sneer, though the disgust could be heard clearly. “This place is not a bathroom. Fifteen points from Gryffindor for your atrocious public display along with a detention with me tomorrow evening at seven. It would be wise for you to not be late. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes sir,” Ron gritted out.

“Now, I suggest you leave the hall and change your attire,” Lucius continued, “it is unbecoming for a student to sit there in filth.”

Ron really didn’t want to get up as he knew that if he did, everyone would see the wet spot on his pants. It was just his luck that he had left his robe in the common room so he couldn’t cover up.

Steeling himself, he slowly got up and moved from the bench. Gasps sounded around the room and then it started; first whispers, then giggles and snickers and finally outright laughing. Embarrassed and humiliated, he all but ran from the hall.

~...~

The rest of the day passed without incident with Ron—seemingly for now, finally getting the message through his thick skull—avoiding Harry and Draco. The students got through the rest of their classes and were enjoying dinner. Of course, most of the topics centred on Ron’s display at lunch, the Daily Prophet and McGonagall’s Transfiguration class. It was now evening and time for Draco, Harry, Cory and Luna’s detention with Snape.

Harry looked up at the head table and saw that Snape wasn’t there. He looked at Cory and stood up from the table.

“Oi guys,” Seamus spoke up, “where’re you going?”

“Detention with Snape,” Cory answered. He looked over at the Ravenclaw table and saw Luna stand up and make her way towards them.

“Ouch,” Seamus winced before he grinned, “better you than us mate. Good luck.”

“Shut up Seamus,” Harry muttered good-naturedly, causing the Irish teen to laugh. “See you guys later.”
“We’ll pray for you,” Dean said with a grin and ducked when Harry grabbed a roll and threw it at him before walking away.

They met up with Luna and Draco and the four left the Great Hall and turned to go to the dungeons. They were stopped before they could go too far by Snape walking up to them.

“There is a classroom that is in need of cleaning.” Snape said as he gestured for them to follow him. “You four will do so without the use of magic.”

“Yes professor,” the four echoed as one.

Nothing else was spoken until they were safe distance away. Snape surreptitiously cast a Silencing and Confundus Charm around to prevent the portraits and armours from knowing what was going on.

“Harry,” Snape turned his head slightly to look at said teen, “The way to the Chamber?”

“Second floor girls’ bathroom,” Harry replied, instantly knowing what his professor was asking, “Myrtle’s bathroom.”

Snape nodded and led the way to the bathroom. He found himself filled with excitement at finally getting to see the famed Chamber of Secrets, especially the body of the Basilisk that was inside. According to his Lord, the Chamber would have kept the body intact, almost as if a preservation charm was cast on it.

They got to the second floor and headed to the out-of-order bathroom. When they entered, Snape closed and warded it and then turned to look around. He was curious as to where said entrance was.

“Are you sure the entrance is here?” Cory asked as he looked around.

“Yes,” Harry nodded.

“What a weird place for an entrance,” Cory muttered and Draco nodded in agreement.

“I know,” Harry grinned. He walked over to the sinks and crouched down in front of them.

Snape of course had questions, but he pushed them aside as Harry began to speak in hisses. {Open}

The sound of the sibilant language slid along his spine like teasing fingers, and Draco felt a twitch of appreciation in his nether regions. He had to bite his lip to stop the moan from escaping. There was something erotic about Harry speaking the language of the snakes. A look at Severus’ face confirmed that his godfather was affected likewise, but only because Draco knew him so well and noticed the slight flare of his nostrils and the increased glow of his onyx eyes.

He looked from his godfather and saw Luna smiling at him mischievously while her eyes twinkled knowingly. He scowled at her and turned back to look at Harry.

Anything he might have said was forgotten as the sinks slowly slid out of the way to reveal a hidden passageway and the Potions master felt his jaw drop, and hastily clamped his mouth shut. Draco gaped besides him for a moment before his Malfoy training kicked in; Malfoys did not gape like some plebeians. It was unbelievable that Harry had figured out, at age twelve, what no one except Tom Riddle had been able to do in the thousand years before him: the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets.

“Watch out, we have to slide down the pipes, a giant slide,” Harry stood over the entrance, casting a
couple of cleaning charms and then motioned the others to go first. He wanted to go last so that he could close the faucet behind him; it wouldn’t do for someone to accidently come in here and see the gaping hole in the floor.

Luna grinned and stepped forward followed by Cory and Draco. Even with that warning, they were not prepared for the sudden drop or the length of time they slid in complete darkness down the slimy, cold stone. The pipe finally levelled out, but they were still sliding at a fast pace, and Severus hastily cast a wandless cushioning charm as they flew out of the pipe on to a dirty floor.

Luna’s squeal echoed in the pipes, letting them know the blonde was more than enjoying the ride. The moment she hit the cold stone floor, she rolled out of the way. Cory followed and hit the floor hard, but before he could move, Draco crashed into him, which knocked the breath out of him and before they could move, Severus and Harry crashed into them a second later, cursing in various languages. They all landed in a pile one man on top of the other.

Luna started giggling and the four looked up at her. It took a few awkward moments until they all had regained their footing, lit their wands with *Lumos* and straightened out their clothes.

“Ewww!” Draco’s nose wrinkled in disgust when he realized what they had landed on; there were bones and other debris, ones he didn’t want to study further. Cory rolled his eyes in amusement, while Luna grinned and Severus and Harry shared a smile and a fond look; typical Draco.

“Come on, this way,” Harry said, leading the way. Draco immediately followed him, Cory and Luna after him and Severus bringing up the rear.

They were all astonished when they frequently found pieces of Basilisk skin on the floor amongst animal skeletons. At first, Severus bent down, picking up pieces to collect them, but Harry stopped him with a chuckle.

“Leave those Sir. There’s a lot more down here. We’ll just take some skin along on our way back.”

Snape muttered under his breath as he calculated the amount of skin and its worth. There must be cleaning and preservation spells active down here, not only because of the condition of the snake skin, but also because of all the animal bones—the place should stank something horrible, but the air was only cool and a bit stale. With a sigh, he conceded to Harry’s words.

Walking down the tunnel, the soles of their boots crunching the small animal skeletons that covered the ground, it did not take long until they reached a spot where the tunnel ceiling had caved in. Severus, Draco and Cory scanned the walls and the ceiling nervously, was the tunnel so instable? Would it break down and trap them here in the cold darkness?

“Don’t worry, it only caved in because a miscast spell hit it,” Harry explained, remembering how Lockhart had tried to obliviate him.

Draco walked over to his boyfriend and gently tugged at his sleeve drawing Harry back out of his memories from second year. As Harry turned to lead them over the pile of rubble caused by Lockhart’s wayward spell three and a half years before, Draco’s hand drifted down to lace their fingers together.

Snape moved his lit wand around him, taking it all in. It was very fascinating! To think, this place has been here, undiscovered yet for only one person before now. The door of the Chamber of Secrets finally came into view, and Harry stepped forward to open it, disentangling his and Draco’s fingers.
Draco and Snape raised their wands to cast more light upon the stone door and studied the intricate design with admiration in their eyes.

With a glance at the ornately carved snakes, and hearing Luna’s giggles, Harry turned towards Draco and Snape as he hissed his request. *Open*

The older man and Draco seemed to shiver as the sibilant hisses washed over them, and this time, Harry caught their reaction.

‘*Oh this is fun...*’ he smirked to himself. He continued to speak in Parseltongue, thanking the door for opening and promising to close it gently, his eyes darting from Draco to Snape. A look of pleasure passed over the angular features, and Harry couldn’t help himself—he dropped his eyes to the man's groin. If there was a bulge in the trousers it was hidden by his voluminous black robe, but the heavier breathing and slightly flushed face was evident. Snape had better self-control than Draco, who leaned panting against the stone wall, hands clenched into fists and his face flushed in arousal, staring hungrily at Harry, who just grinned.

Cory cleared his throat, his eyes glowing with amusement. “Harry, stop teasing.”

“Spoilsport,” Harry grinned. His speaking Parseltongue turned on both men; he would delight in telling Nagini at the next opportunity. Not for the first time he wondered about Voldemort and Severus, what their lovemaking was like...were they passionate and rough with each other, as one would expect from two dominant, harsh, forceful men like them?

Shaking off the fascinating but rather inappropriate thoughts, Harry peered through the round doorway into impenetrable inky darkness. When he had been down here in his second year, the Chamber was already illuminated by a greenish glow. Voldemort had told him that his younger self must have called the light when he went down with the Weasley chit previous to Harry’s arrival.

He hissed *Luminarum* to conjure several green lamps that resembled floating orbs that lighted up the ceiling of the Chamber high above.

Smirking mischievously at the Slytherin prince and his professor, Harry led the way into the Chamber and came to a stop in front of the surprisingly intact carcass of the Basilisk.

“You,” Snape started, “a mere boy of twelve, not only defended himself against, but killed a sixty foot, thousand year old serpent and not just any serpent, but the King of all Magical Serpents, the Basilisk. It is remarkable.”

“Bloody hell Harry,” Cory grimaced as he looked at the snake. “I can’t believe you fought this and won.”

“Actually,” Harry looked down at the snake. “If it wasn’t for Fawkes showing up, I’d probably be dead. He scratched out the eyes and blinded the Basilisk. After that, even though it was harrowing, I was able to destroy it using the sword of Gryffindor; stabbed it straight through the mouth.” He looked at it with remorse. “It’s a pity I had to kill it. It would’ve been nice to speak with it to know what things were like back then and to find out more about Salazar himself.”
“I for one am glad it’s gone,” Draco spoke up. “As gorgeous and awe inspiring as it is, it was still a dangerous creature, one of—if not—the most dangerous ones.”

Snape hadn’t said anything more. The Potions Master in him took over as his mind started calculating the quantity of ingredients he could collect and what they would be worth.

“Professor,” Harry turned to his teacher, snapping him out of his daze. “I know you want to get started on harvesting the Basilisk, but we should search for Salazar’s personal chambers. No doubt there’s a library of some sorts there.”

Reluctantly Snape nodded in agreement. The four circled around the entire body once before coming to stand beside Harry who was standing at the head. They then walked over and came to a stop at the foot of the giant statue of Salazar Slytherin.

“Sweet Salazar, this is incredible Harry,” exclaimed Draco as he gazed at statue of his House’s founder. Cory and Luna nodded in agreement.

Snape refrained from such an exclamation; however the onyx eyes glimmered with something like admiration, as he took in the site of Salazar Slytherin's monument.

Lifting his wand, Harry again spoke in Parseltongue, demanding the mouth open. *(Speak to me Slytherin, greatest of the Hogwarts four)*

Shuddering and holding their breath, Draco and Severus watched in awe as the giant mouth opened above them. Harry shivered in remembrance of the giant king of serpents slithering down the front of the statue ready to attack him on Tom Riddle’s command.

Harry turned to his companions and gestured up to the head. "We have to levitate each other up to the head, or we can fly."

Severus quirked a questioning eyebrow. "Fly? Another hidden talent of yours, Potter? Did the Dark Lord teach you secretly how to turn into a Quetzalcoatl?" he teased the younger wizard.

Harry grinned and pulled something from his pocket. A wave of his wand unshrunk his Firebolt rapidly and it hovered ready to mount in front of him. *Some people come prepared on such an excursion,* he teased back. Holding out his hand and gesturing behind himself, he called out to the younger Slytherin, "Come Draco, let’s go! I want to be first!"

The young wizards settled themselves on the quivering racing broom. Draco’s arms went firmly around Harry’s waist, as Harry carefully manoeuvred the Firebolt up a few yards. It carried both of them without a problem. Severus watched them for a moment, before he turned to the other two.

“Ready yourselves,” he warned just as he took out his wand, concentrated, and suddenly the three shot up into the air high above them without any aid.

"Oi! No fair!" Harry shouted when he saw the three. Luna’s laughter sounded in his ear and he couldn’t help the grin. The sound of her laughter always did that as it reminded of tinkling bells.

“Up Harry! Get them!” Draco yelled, his hands tightening around Harry’s waist. His body shook with pure excitement.

Smirking sardonically, Severus lowered himself, Cory and Luna and they stepped into the gaping mouth of the statue. He looked around warily for any hidden danger.

Two seconds later, the Firebolt shot up to the level of the statues head, with Draco squealing—
something very unbecoming to a Malfoy—as they skidded to an abrupt stop a few feet from the three.

“Be quiet child!” Snape chided him.

Draco glared at the man, “How did you do that?”


Harry murmured something about the perks of being Marvolo’s lover. He had been surprised on the night of the 28th, when Voldemort had flown seemingly effortlessly without any aid next to him and Draco hovering on their brooms above the forest, watching Umbridge being chased by the werewolves below.

“You guys are sore losers,” Cory grinned, “never said he couldn’t do that, now did you?”

“Shut up,” Draco huffed as he crossed his arms across his chest.

Luna laughed and skipped over to the blond, throwing her arms around him and pressing a kiss to his cheek. “Cheer up Dragon.”

Not able to keep his mad countenance around Luna, no matter how faked it was, Draco wrapped an arm around Luna’s waist. “Only for you.”

“What am I, chopped liver?” Harry placed his hands on his hips.

“You,” Draco grinned as he walked over to him, wrapping his arms around his neck. “You are more than chopped liver. You are my personal sex slave.”

Harry opened his mouth to retort but was stopped by Draco’s lips on his. He struggled for a few seconds but then gave into the kiss. His arms moved to wrap around the blond’s waist and they tightened immediately.

Draco felt Harry’s tongue and he opened his mouth, moaning as it tangled with his. He tightened his hold on Harry’s neck, his fingers playing with the silky strands even as he angled his head to deepen the kiss.

“If the two of you would be so kind as to halt that nauseating display,” Snape’s dark voice broke them apart and they looked over to see said man glaring darkly at them while Cory was trying to hide his smile as Luna outright grinned.

“Sorry,” Harry said, though the grin on his face said he was anything but. “Let’s go.”

“Impatient brat,” Snape scolded even as he wordless cast several revealing spells on the new tunnel in front of them.

“Anything, sir?” Harry asked. He leaned the racing broom against the wall of the narrow hallway that led inside the statue’s head and turned to look at his teacher.

“It is clear,” Snape replied.

“Alright,” Harry nodded and had his wand out and lit. The others followed suit.

Draco looked back and forth between them.

Harry chuckled softly. “It’s ok; I don’t expect to meet anything down here except for rats, spiders or
maybe a small snake.” He strode forward, the other behind him.

“What’s in there?” Draco asked apprehensively in a stage whisper, following his friends, boyfriend and godfather, gripping his wand tightly and ready to throw up a shield or a hex.

“Nothing to worry about Dragon,” Luna said as she appeared next to him. “There isn’t anything in there that we are to be afraid of.”

“She’s right,” Harry said over his shoulder. “Marvolo told me we could go in. Even if there is something alive or dead inside, I’m sure that the five of us can more than handle it.”

With that, the others continued following, their curiosity driving them. They had never truly believed that the Chamber of Secrets actually existed—well, except maybe for Luna—and they knew that this was an incredible opportunity.

The corridor wasn’t wide, but the five could walk upright and in twos. The floor, walls and ceiling were made of smooth grey stone, curving slightly to the right and then upward. The darkness inside receded as they walked forward, a greenish glow seemed to come from the ceilings and walls. After about thirty yards, the space widened into a round chamber with smooth walls; it looked as if the stone had once upon a time been fluid, like lava or concrete, while it was shaped into this form, there were no sharp corners or any pillars or beams supporting the structure.

The ground was covered with—surprise—the skeletons of small animals, most of them crushed and arranged in a semicircle with a large indentation on one side against the wall. Parts of dry, shed Basilisk skin lay around.

“The Basilisk’s nest, I presume?” Snape commented as his gaze remained trained on the skin.

“Yeah,” Harry replied with a nod, “looks like it.”

“You’re absolutely sure there isn’t another Basilisk around here?” Draco asked warily.

“Nope, well, as far as the Dark Lord and I are aware, there isn’t another one, but you never know...” Harry trailed off. His answer didn’t calm Draco’s misgivings, not one bit, as the blond looked around and behind them, scanning the room for a potential target.

“Drake,” Cory spoke, his eyes looking around the room in astonishment. “Remember Luna said there was nothing here to be afraid of, so there’s nothing here to harm us.”

Draco looked at him before looking at Luna and conceding with a sigh. “You’re right.”

Harry, ignoring the others for a moment, climbed carefully over the wall of skeletons into the nest. He sucked in a surprised breath and crouched down, stretching his right hand towards the ground. The sound had Snape, Cory and Draco raising their wands immediately, ready to defend themselves. Only Luna was still smiling with that serene expression on her face.

Snape stepped forward, positioning himself in front of the teens, keeping his left arm in front of them in an instinctive protective gesture, not even thinking about it.

“Harry?” he inquired suspiciously, even as ‘is there another Basilisk? Impossible; but nothing is impossible with Potter around...’ shot through his mind.

“What is it?” Draco asked as he craned his neck to look around his godfather.

“Blimey, this nest feels really warm and...and cozy,” Harry answered, awe in his voice, “it must be a
warming charm.”

“Merlin!” Cory breathed. “Are you sure Harry?”

“Yeah,” Harry nodded.

The teens and Snape stepped closer to the Basilisk’s nest, wanting to inspect it themselves.

“Truly remarkable,” murmured Snape as he cast a series of wordless diagnostic charms on the nest. ‘*Did Salazar Slytherin have the power to cast a warming charm that lasts a thousand years?*’ He pondered the evidence and turned to Harry. “Do you know if the Dark Lord refreshed this warming charm fifty years ago?”

“Hmm?” Harry looked over at his teacher. “No sir, he didn’t mention it.” Harry clambered out of the nest again and looked around. He then walked over to the left side of the room to study the wall.

The others followed him curiously. At first glance, the walls around the chamber appeared solid without any interruption apart from the entrance they had come through.

“Ah, here it is!” Harry exclaimed as he pointed to a carving of two entwined snakes. Again, he hissed `{Open}`

A low rumbling sound broke the stillness of the room, before suddenly the glowing silver outline of a rounded doorway appeared. A narrow part of the stone wall retreated about two feet, revealing a narrow entrance into another, dark corridor.

“What do you reckon is in there?” Cory asked as he came to stand next to Harry with Luna in tow. The five of them looked into the corridor with an intrigued look on their faces.

Harry turned to look at his friend, and then glanced over at their professor, smirking mischievously. “Any idea? Why do you think this is called the Chamber of Secrets?”

Snape smirked right back. “I suppose Salazar Slytherin didn’t build all of this only to keep his Basilisk hidden?”

Harry grinned. He expected to find Slytherin’s personal library. Voldemort had mentioned a collection of ancient scrolls and manuals of the famous founder hidden down in the Chamber of Secrets.

“Really Dragon,” Luna giggled, “he is the original Slytherin after all. And what exactly do you suppose the ultimate Slytherin would surround himself with?”

“Oh.” Draco grinned after thinking for a moment, “a vault, a library and quite possibly a potions’ lab.”

The new corridor lit up just as the other, a dim green glow, not brightly lit but enough to make out the four doors on the left and right; plain, dark massive wooden doors without doorknobs or handles, giving nothing away about the rooms behind. They were not decorated or inscribed.

Harry stopped in front of the one on the right, looking back at his companions. Draco, Cory and Luna stayed about two paces behind close to the wall, while Snape moved to the right of the door, wand raised, a shield ready in his mind and automatically falling into a wary stance.

Cocking his head to the side, Harry concentrated on the magic he could feel coming from behind the door. His magic responded in kind and he took a step closer as his eyes slipped close. He raised his
right hand and slowly reached out to touch the door, laying his palm flat on it.

“Harry?” Draco questioned and moved to take a step forward but was stopped by both Luna and Snape.

Snape glanced at his godson. “It would not be wise to interfere, Dragon.”

“Don’t worry,” Luna never took her gaze from Harry. “He’s ok; Salazar just needs to ascertain who is entering his lair.”

Harry hissed when he felt a swift stab in the middle of his palm and he pulled his hand back quickly as his eyes opened. He took a step back and glanced at Snape nodded, giving him permission to continue.

Turning back to the door, he commanded it open, the same way he did the others. {Open}

The door slowly swung open to the inside. A gust of stale air hit their nostrils and dust moths swirled around. Harry stood to the side and allowed Snape to step in front of him. The potions master raised his wand, casting another round of wordless revealing spells on the room in front of them.

“Do you detect anything, sir?” Cory asked after a few minutes.

“No. No life signs or wards ahead,” answered the older wizard. “Nevertheless, we should be careful.”

The teens heeded his words and it was with caution that they entered the room. Harry was in front, with Snape last. The moment they entered, the room brightened as the lamps on the wall lit up.

“Whoa,” Cory said as he looked around. The room resembled a common room or a study; complete with a fireplace, couches, carpet on the floor and a small table with a few chairs by it. There were two doorways on across from the entrance and they could see that one of the doorways led into a small library while the other was a bathroom.

Harry waved his wand and wordlessly cast a cleaning charm on the room while Snape lit the fireplace.

“Salazar Slytherin’s personal Chambers,” Draco breathed out. He was fairly quivering with excitement as he stood in the room. He couldn’t believe that he was actually standing in the personal chambers of the Salazar Slytherin, one of the four founders of the school. He knew that many students wished that they could find the rooms for their own House founder and he had. Add to the fact that this was the personal rooms for his own House’s founder, it just made everything better.

Standing next to Draco, Cory and Luna were feeling the same way. Sure they would’ve loved it if they had found the chambers of Godric Gryffindor or Rowena Ravenclaw, but they were still touched and awed. They were standing in one of the founders personal chambers, the most famous founder himself.

“This is beyond anything I’d ever dreamed,” Snape said as he walked around the room. He turned and headed to the library, the others following him.

“I may not be a bookworm,” Cory said as he looked around, “but this is amazing.”

The shelves were filled completely with heavy, wood and leather bound books, scrolls of papyrus and parchment in all sizes; there was not one empty space. As the group looked through library, they were amazed at the wide variety of written texts. There were some written in Latin, some appeared to
be maybe late Old English or Old French and others were clearly written in Parseltongue; they looked like squiggles and not normal letters. They even found books that contained very foreign-looking scripts—probably Arabic—and small pictures like Hieroglyphs and others that must be from Asia; all which none of them could read.

“I wonder if there’s another entrance into this room other than through the statue,” Draco mused as he carefully turned the pages in an ancient book. It was on spells—both offensive and defensive. He wasn’t fluent in Latin, but he had learned some French, Spanish, Italian and the basics of Latin as a child, so he could understand the old text well enough to see what the topic was. He’d have to get a translation spell for the finer points, though.

“I would think so,” Harry answered, “I mean, it’d be kind of stupid to only have one entrance, wouldn’t it?”

“We can search for it at a later date,” Snape said as he replaced a book on the shelf. He was quite reluctant to leave the place, but he knew that they couldn’t spend too much time down as the Headmaster would become too suspicious.

“He’s right,” Luna smiled, “there will be plenty more opportunities in the future. It is best we retreat now and allow the winds that carry the bee to remain undisturbed.”

The males glanced at her before they nodded in agreement. Throwing one last look around the library, they walked out and without stopping, they left the room entirely. They stepped back into the corridor, Harry closing the door softly in Parseltongue, and then they made their back down through the Basilisk’s room, out through the door, Harry once again closing it in Parseltongue, before they came back to the head of the statue.

Harry grabbed his Firebolt and grinned over at Draco. “Wanna take a ride on my broomstick?”

Not even thinking about what he was saying, Draco replied with a roll of his eyes, “As if I’d ride anyone else’s broomstick.”

There was silence for a few seconds and then Harry, Cory and Luna burst out laughing and Snape’s lips twitched.

Draco ran his words back over in his mind and his eyes went wide and his cheeks flushed in slight embarrassment.

“That’s really good to know Dray,” Harry’s laughter died down to chuckles. “I’d hate to have to kill someone for touching what’s mine.”

“I hate you,” Draco murmured with a small smile.

“No you don’t,” Harry grinned and walked over to the blond, throwing his arm around his shoulder and pulling him into a quick kiss and hug. He then turned to others, “So professor, ready to go harvest the snake?”

Snape’s onyx eyes lit up in anticipation and pleasure and he nodded. “Yes. It is what we came for after all.”

Harry mounted his Firebolt and gestured for Draco to get on. “Come on.”

Draco looked at him and a mischievous spark lit his grey eyes. He stepped closer to Harry, shifting his body so that the others couldn’t see his hands and spoke so that only the two of them could hear. “Accidental though they may have been, my words were true. Your broomstick,” he brushed his
hand across Harry’s covered cock, “is the only one I have any interest in riding. And whenever we get a moment alone, I’ll show you just how much I love riding it.”

Harry’s cheeks flushed with arousal and his eyes dilated with lust as his breathing hitched.

The others didn’t hear what was said, but they knew that just by Harry’s reactions, it was something sexual.

Grinning, Draco mounted the broom, deliberately sitting in front of Harry. He scooted back until his ass was nestled in Harry’s groin. Shifting a few times, rubbing against Harry’s cock, he delighted in the muffled moan he heard.

“Minx,” Harry pressed close to Draco and growled in his ear.

Draco shivered at the feel of Harry’s hot breath against his ear and at the promise he could hear in his voice. He desperately wished that they were alone, to continue. Shaking his head, he smiled. “Let’s go.”

Snape shook his head and gestured for Luna and Cory to prepare themselves. Harry shot off on his broom, one arm around Draco’s waist, the other on the broom while Snape levitated himself, Cory and Luna to the ground. This time around, they all touched down at the same time.

Harry quickly got off the Firebolt, knowing if he had to spend any more time feeling Draco wiggling against his cock he would lose all control and take him right there. He looked back at Draco and saw the blond grinning smugly. Scowling, he turned from him and walked over to the Basilisk’s corpse.

As Snape stood staring at the snake, he couldn’t help but to feel giddy with joy. Not only was he seeing a legendary magical animal—the most legendary one of all—but he was going to be able to use it for use. Smiling slightly, he withdrew a sack with a number of small containers from his robes, unshrunk it and started the process of cutting up the Basilisk, removing what he wanted.

The carcass was so huge, so vast, that he would have enough material for years to come. So, he decided to take only a few teeth, one poison gland and some scales today. The storage space in his personal storage cupboard was very limited, even with the use of wizard space, and should another staff member, or Morgana forbid Dumbledore himself, come to the door by chance, it would not do to suddenly have such a large collection of something new and extremely rare without a viable excuse. Of course there was no potion on the Hogwarts school curriculum that would need a sack full of Basilisk parts!

He planned to send a large shipment of the Basilisk material to the lab in Potter Manor with the help of Harry and Hedwig, but that had to be well planned and coordinated. The ingredients could not be shrunk without changing or losing some of their properties; they had to be packed and stored correctly to be of further use and tonight was not enough time.

As Snape went on with his task, the teens started walking around the Chamber.

“This is really unbelievable,” Cory said as they walked.

“I know,” Harry grinned, “I was here in second year and I still can’t believe it.”

Draco walked next to Harry. “I still can’t believe Weasel and Granger thought I was the Slytherin Heir.”

“Really?” Harry cocked an eyebrow. “You really can’t believe it?” he grinned, as did Cory and Luna. “You do remember how you were acting that year, don’t you?”
Draco opened his mouth to argue, but closed it back and grinned. “I was a right prat, wasn’t I?”

“Yes you were,” Harry agreed with a grin, “but it was expected of you.”

“Don’t worry Dragon,” Luna smiled, “we still love you.”

“Now I can die happy,” Draco deadpanned. He laughed and ducked the pebble that Cory threw at him.

The teens continued talking, not paying attention to their teacher, knowing that when he was done, he would get them. And almost a half an hour later, he did.

“There,” Snape said as he stepped back from the remains of the Basilisk. “I am finished.”

“Already?” Harry’s brows furrowed as he looked from Snape to the snake and back.

“Yes,” Snape nodded. “I have collected all that I can. I do not have enough free space in my private store room anyway, or the time to organize and prepare all this time at once. This Basilisk carcass is huge, enough for years to come and immensely valuable. It has been kept in excellent condition down here. It can stay this way until the next visit. It is time we retire before anyone becomes too suspicious.”

“Sounds good,” Cory agreed, “we can always come back later, right? I mean, to explore Salazar Slytherin’s personal chambers some more.”

“Of course,” Luna smiled, her head cocked to the side, “it’s a nice escape from the outside world, isn’t it?” she hummed as she skipped over to the remains of the Basilisk. “There is more than one path to a destination. We should use the snakes’ way next time, it’ll be so much more fun that way.”

Snape nodded, Harry grinned, Cory smiled and Draco shook his head at the blonde’s words.

“Let’s go,” Snape ordered and he led the teens out of the room. When they exited the doorway, Harry hissed for the doors to close, smirking at the shiver that passed through Draco. He intended to repay him for the comment he made at the top of the statue. He continued hissing, most of it ramblings, enjoying the way Draco bit his lip to stop the moans from escaping.

“Harry!” Snape snapped. He knew what the teen was doing and while he normally would delight in the way Draco was being teased, he wasn’t now as he too was affected by Harry’s hissing.

Harry jerked his gaze away from his boyfriend and looked at his teacher, a slight sheepish expression on his face, though his eyes twinkled mischievously. “Sorry professor.”

Draco breathed deeply, all the while glaring at Harry. “I hate you.”

“Love you too,” Harry grinned as he walked over to the blond, throwing an arm around Draco’s shoulder as they continued walking back to the entrance.

They came upon the Basilisk’s skin and Snape stopped to cut off a small piece and place it in his pocket before they continued.

“I hope you have an idea of how to get back up Harry,” Cory said as they all came to a stop at the pipe they had slid down.

“We should walk,” Luna said. She started humming as she looked around the room, giggling in between her humming.
The four males looked at her before looking at each other. Harry shrugged and looked back at the pipe.

*Ssstairsss* he hissed, pooling a bit of his magic into the spell. He watched, as did the others, in amazement as the pipes groaned before shifting, forming out a narrow staircase.

“Up we go,” Luna said in a sing-song voice as she started up the stairs. The rest followed immediately. About halfway up, Draco spoke.

“I just realized something,” he said as he walked behind Harry and Luna.

“What’s that?” Harry asked.

Before Draco could answer, Luna started giggling. Ignoring her, he continued, “Well, if you could conjure the stairs, why didn’t you do that in the first place, instead of having us slide down the filthy pipe like ruffians?”

At his question, Harry stopped suddenly and looked back, his eyes opened wide and a sheepish smile flitted across his face when he saw the glare on Snape’s face and the amusement on Cory’s.

“Oops,” Harry grinned before he turned back around and hurried to catch up to Luna.

“It scares me that the brat is so powerful and can be cunning, brilliant and observant at times and yet so dense at another time,” Snape near groaned, causing Draco and Cory to chuckle.

When the three came out at the top, they saw Luna talking to Myrtle while Harry was leaning against the sinks.

“Told you guys long enough,” Harry teased.

“Shut it,” Cory grinned.

Harry laughed and turned to the entrance. *{Clossse}* he then turned to Myrtle. “Remember you’re keeping your word Myrtle, not a word to anyone about us being here. Not to Weasley or Granger and definitely not the Headmaster.” His eyes darkened and narrowed at her. “Or I will do what I threatened.”

“No one ever visits me anyways,” the ghost replied, fear evident in her voice. It was obvious that she was terrified of whatever it was Harry had threatened her with.

“Good,” Harry nodded before looking at his teacher and friends. “What time is it?”

“You have an hour and a half until curfew,” Snape answered after casting a quick *Tempus*.

“So we have time,” Draco said.

Cory’s brows furrowed. “Time for what?”

Draco said nothing, he just looked at Harry; grey and green locked together and darkened almost simultaneously.

*Sssuch a naughty boy* Harry hissed as he took a step closer to the blond.

Draco’s eyes glazed over as the hissing washed over him; he was instantly thrown back to the last time he and Harry were alone together; the night after they had dealt with Umbridge and the morning they had had to leave for Hogwarts.
Snape looked between the two boys and groaned silently.

“It’s good that they got together now instead of two years ago,” Luna appeared at his side, speaking softly. “Imagine how they would’ve been then when their hormones had just started acting out.”

The mental image caused Snape to glare at Luna, prompting the girl to laugh and skip over to Cory’s side. She reached out for his hand and threaded their fingers together before looking over at Harry and Draco.

“A room you require is free for you,” Luna said, startling both boys to look at her, “don’t worry about obstacles, they are obsolete at this point. Do watch out for the two-faced female red creature.”

Harry cocked his head to the side, brows furrowed as he tried to decipher Luna’s meaning. A minute later, he did and nodded.

“Got it,” he smiled at her. He then turned to his teacher, “Silencer on our shows and the Disillusion Charm?”

“Better safe than sorry,” Snape nodded and quickly cast the charm on him and them. After checking to make sure the corridor was clear, they quickly left the bathroom.

Snape led the teens to one of the unused classrooms where he cancelled the Disillusion Charm. With a wave of his wand, he cleaned the room and then told them to go.

Harry and Draco left the room almost at a rush, while Cory and Luna walked behind them at a normal pace, smiles on their faces. Snape left seconds after they did, his regular scowl on his face and his robes billowing about him.

~…~

The moment they got on the seventh floor, Draco grabbed Harry and slammed him against the wall. He stepped close, pressing his body against Harry’s and kissed him, hard.

Harry moaned into the kiss, cock hardening instantly and brought his arms up to rest on Draco’s waist. He angled his head and licked at the blond’s lips, begging entrance.

Draco opened his mouth and groaned when Harry’s tongue entered, tasting him and then tangling with his own. Blood filled his dick, thickening it as he rubbed Harry’s hardened cock. He pulled his lips away, smirking at the whimper that escaped the brunet, and trailed kisses up to his ear. He bit the lobe, sucked it into his mouth and bit it again.

“I want to taste you so bad,” Draco whispered in Harry’s ear. “I want to suck your cock, swallow you whole and make you cum,” Draco’s right hand drifted down Harry’s body with teasing, light touches, until he reached his goal; his palm settled over engorged member. He stroked it twice before he pulled the zipper down and slipped his hand inside. He groaned when he felt the silk-like hardening length beneath the boxers and he wrapped his hand around it.

Harry cursed and arched into Draco’s hand when he felt the blond cup his erection. His hand drifted down, fondling the blond’s ass briefly, and grabbed Draco’s leg, pulling it up and over his hip. He rocked his hips forward, trapping the blond’s hand between their groins.

“Shit!” Draco cursed and pulled back from Harry.

“I need you…now!” Harry hissed. He could feel the need to take the blond in front of him and his control was close to snapping.
Draco looked at Harry and saw that his pupils were blown wide with lust, only a sliver of green remaining. He could read the dark promises in his boyfriend’s eyes and a shiver ran through his body as images filled his mind. He clenched his hands into fists to stop himself from jumping the brunet right there.

Shaking his head, Draco whispered, “not here.” He turned and started walking towards the Room of Requirement. He gasped when he felt Harry’s arms wrap around his waist and he pressed back against the cock pushing against his ass.

“Draco,” Harry growled, his voice saturated in longing. His cocked ached with the need to be inside the blond’s ass. Involuntarily, his hips moved forward once, and then he did it again and again and again.

Draco started panting at the frottage. He could feel his willpower going and knew he had to get them inside the room and now. He forcefully pulled himself away and hurried over to where the entrance would be. He paced three times, each time saying in his mind what he wanted.

After the third pace, the door appeared. He had just opened it when he felt Harry at his back. He hurried inside, the door slamming close behind the two. A quick glance around the room showed a canopy bed with Slytherin green covers, a lush, forest green carpet and lanterns hovering strategically around the room, lights dimmed. But the boys ignored that.

Draco pushed Harry towards the bed, smirking when the brunet sat down. He grabbed his wand from its hidden position and banished Harry’s shirt.

“Scoot up,” Draco ordered softly, his voice tinged with desire.

Harry did as he was told without question, his body sliding sensually across the sheet. His head came to rest on the pillow and he looked back at his boyfriend.

“Raise your hands,” Draco told him, eyes gleaming with anticipation. When Harry did as he was told, he silently asked the room to bind Harry’s hands to the headboard.

“Dray,” Harry whispered as he felt his hands become bound.

“Tonight,” Draco’s grin was feral, “you’re mine; mine to own, mine to tease, mine to do as I please. Tonight, you’re going to be the one begging.”

Licking his lips, Harry shifted his hips, trying to ease the sudden ache in his cock. He wanted to rip the bonds off and take Draco, but he was curious as to what the blond was up to. “Get on with it then.”

Toeing off his shoes, Draco crawled onto the bed, moving up over Harry’s body. He stopped at his waist, his hands reaching out to the belt; he unbuckled it and released the trouser button. The zipper was still down from earlier. His eyes locked with Harry’s and he smirked when he saw the brunet breathing heavily.

‘Let’s see you lose control,’ Draco thought deviously. Slowly, he pulled the trousers, and boxers, down Harry’s body, enjoying the hiss the brunet let out as his cock was freed from the confines of. Tossing the pants over his shoulder, he looked back at Harry and stopped; hunger rushed through his body at the sight. Harry was tied down, his body heaving with his pants, his cocked rock hard, dripping pre-cum, arching towards his flat stomach from its nest of dark curls. He was a wet dream come true. Draco planned to enjoy every minute of it.

Harry looked up and saw Draco staring at him as if he were his last meal. He could read the hunger
on the blond’s face and let it feed his own. He wanted the blond.

“Why don’t you sit that pretty little arse of yours on my lap,” Harry’s voice was low and husky when he spoke.

The words snapped Draco out of his dream. “You’d like that, wouldn’t you?” he moved to stand on the bed, his darkened grey eyes travelling Harry’s body, resting on his erection. His hand came up and he unbuttoned his shirt, a button at a time.

As each section of skin was revealed, Harry’s hunger grew.

“You really want it that bad,” Draco taunted, “to be inside me; do you remember how tight it felt around your cock? How my arse squeezed you, how it milked you as you shot loads and loads of cum in me?” as he spoke, Draco slipped his shirt off his shoulders; his hands drifted over his body, stopping at his nipples, twisting and rubbing them. He moaned.

“Merlin, the feel of your lips on me, as you bit and nibbled my nipples, how you teased me as your tongue trailed a hot path down my stomach,” his fingers mimicked the movement his words were saying, “and how it felt when your lips wrapped around my cock.”

Draco’s hand moved down and gently grabbed hold of his cock, before he pushed his trousers down his hips, removing them completely. His hand came back up, wrapping around his cock, and his thumb brushed the slit, smearing the wetness around. A deep groan escaped him as he moved his hand up and down.

“Draco,” Harry growled. He licked his lips as he watched the blond spread the pre-cum around the head of his cock. “Let me taste you.”

Smirking, Draco dropped to his knees and crawled over Harry’s body, straddling his legs. He reached out to hold the brunet’s cock, enjoying the tortured groan that escaped his lips. His grip was gentle, but firm as he slowly moved his hand up and down, his thumb brushing against the slit.

With each movement, Harry whimpered and his hips lifted slightly, pumping into his boyfriend’s hand.

Draco settled his hand at the base, and leaned forward, his breath ghosting over the head of the member. “You know what?” his tongue darted out, swiping at the pre-cum oozing out, moaning at the taste yet smirking at the gasp from Harry. “I think I’ll taste you.”

With that, he closed his mouth over Harry’s cock, sucking at the head, his tongue dipping into the slit.

“!” Harry’s hips shot off the bed. The feel of the blond’s mouth on his cock was almost as amazing as being inside him.

Draco lifted his head and ran his tongue down the length, pressing kisses and nibbling bites along the way. He sucked at the underside of the head before lowering his mouth over it once more, sinking down until half was buried in his mouth. He moaned as the taste exploded on his tongue; he would never get tired of tasting the unique flavour. Hollowing his cheeks, he bobbed his head up and down.

Harry tugged at the bonds at his wrists, desperate to touch his boyfriend. Draco’s mouth felt so good, so hot and wet. A shudder wracked his body as he felt a tingle start at the base of his cock. He was going to cum.

“D-D-Draco,” he stuttered out between moans, “I’m gonna...I’m gonna c-cum.”
Ignoring the warning, Draco doubled his efforts. He sucked harder as his free hand drifted down towards Harry’s balls. He squeezed them gently, before rolling them around in his hand. His thumb slipped down and pressed against the spot right behind as he gave a hard suck.

“FUCK!” Harry shouted as his eyes rolled back into his head at the intense pleasure. His nerves were singing, his blood boiling as his body wracked with pleasure. His body tensed, his balls tightening at his eminent release.

Sensing it, Draco gave one last suck before he pulled off with a pop and removed his hand.

Harry’s eyes shot open and he growled low in his throat when he felt the pressure stop. He looked down at his boyfriend, breathing harshly. “Why’d you stop? I was so close.”

“I know,” Draco panted out, giving Harry a blowjob had turned him on more than anything and he desperately needed to cum, but he wanted Harry inside of him when they both fell over the edge. Summoning his wand, he quickly cast Cleansing, Lubricating and Stretching Charms before he straddled Harry’s hips. He grabbed the thick, hardened cock beneath him and guided it towards his entrance. The head slipped inside and he moaned low.

Harry gritted his teeth as he felt the scorching heat surrounded his erection. He could feel his cock twitch and he took a deep breath and staved off his need to cum.

Draco removed his hand and leaned forward, breathing heavily through his mouth. He braced his hands on Harry’s chest and captured his lips in a sweet yet passionate kiss.

“Release me,” Harry growled and tugged at the bonds.

“No,” Draco shook his head. A moan escaped him as he shifted his hips, sending the cock head deeper.

“I want to touch you,” Harry pleaded, “let me touch you.”

In response, Draco gave a trembling smirk and sank down slowly, one torturous inch at a time until he settled fully on Harry’s hips.

“Oh Merlin,” Harry moaned at the heat surrounding his erection. He could feel his cock twitch and he took a deep breath and staved off his need to cum.

Draco removed his hand and leaned forward, breathing heavily through his mouth. He braced his hands on Harry’s chest and captured his lips in a sweet yet passionate kiss.

“Release me,” Harry growled and tugged at the bonds.

“No,” Draco shook his head. A moan escaped him as he shifted his hips, sending the cock head deeper.

“I want to touch you,” Harry pleaded, “let me touch you.”

In response, Draco gave a trembling smirk and sank down slowly, one torturous inch at a time until he settled fully on Harry’s hips.

“Oh Merlin,” Harry moaned at the heat surrounding his cock. He didn’t think it was possible, but it felt hotter and tighter than before. He was being squeezed deliciously by the blond and it had him seeing stars.

Draco straightened up, his eyes widening on a gasp as Harry sank even deeper inside of him. His head fell forward and his eyes locked onto Harry’s. He saw the storm of hunger brewing in the darkened eyes and smirked. He slowly rose up, clenching his muscles as he did so, relishing in the deep groan he got from Harry, and slid back down.

“You feel so fucking good,” Draco moaned as he continued his actions. He felt so full. Whimpering, he increased his pace, loving the thickness and the way the cock rubbed his inner walls.

“You love it, don’t you?” Harry gritted out, trying to control the urge to cum. He had been to the edge from the blowjob and was coming close again. “The feel of me inside you…you don’t want slow.” He thrust his hips upwards the same moment the blond was sinking down, sending his cock deeper causing Draco to moan. “That’s what you want.” He did it again. “You want it hard and fast. You want me to fuck you raw.” Another thrust. “You want to feel the burn as I ram my cock into that sweet, hot arse of yours over and over again.”

Every word that came from Harry fuelled Draco’s lust. His control spiralled and his movements
became erratic as he bounced up and down on Harry’s cock. His back arched at a hard thrust and his cock jutted forward.

Harry licked his lips as he took in the sight of his boyfriend; his blond hair messy, his skin flushed with arousal and coated with sweat, grey eyes darkened with desire, the movement of his hips as he rode him and his cock, all hard and purpled, with pre-cum dripping. He wanted a taste.

“Dray,” He panted out, “let me go…let me take you how you want to be taken.” His body jerked and twisted in ecstasy from the blond’s movements. He saw the pleasure and frustration on his boyfriend’s face and almost grinned, instead, he moaned. “It’s not enough, isn’t it? You don’t want this…you want a fucking...you want more.”

Draco moaned as the words washed over him and he knew it was true. As good as it felt, he needed more. He fell forward, and reached out shaking hands to remove the bonds.

Harry felt the bonds loosen and his hands shot out to grab Draco’s hips. He lifted him until only the tip of his cock was inside the blond, and slammed him back down at the same time he thrust his hips up.

“FUCK!” the word exploded from Draco as he threw his head back. He grabbed his head, running his hands through his hair as moan after moan escaped his lips. Every thrust from Harry hit his sweet spot and had him flying closer and closer to the edge. One hand left his hair, moving down and he sucked a finger into his mouth before moving on to his nipples. He played with them briefly and continued his path down his belly; his fingers dipped into his navel before going down to wrap around his cock. Moaning, his strokes started slow and then picked up speed, soon matching the pace Harry was setting.

Harry arched his back as he slammed Draco down onto his cock. He looked back at the blonde, completely taken in by how tousled and aroused he looked. He loved being inside him, loved feeling his arse tighten around him as he pulled out, but…it wasn’t enough. Lifting Draco completely off his erection, he flipped him onto his hand and knees.

Draco started at the movement, whimpering at the sudden emptiness inside him. He braced his hands on the bed, anticipation coursing through for Harry to slam back into him.

Spreading the blond’s arse cheeks, Harry groaned at the sight of the puckered muscles clenching and unclenching as the lube dripped out. His dick throbbed with the need to be back inside, but an idea came to him and he forced the urge away. Summoning his wand, he pointed at the leaking entrance, charming the lube to be cherry flavoured. Staring at the ring of muscles, he licked his lips and bent his head, his tongue tracing a path along the crease of the blond’s arse.

“FUCKING HELL!” Draco cried out at the first swipe of Harry’s tongue. He threw a glance over his shoulder and moaned when he saw the dark head bent over his arse. “H-Harry…what are--” his words gurgled as his brain turned to mush when he felt the tongue press against his entrance before slipping in.

Harry moaned as the cherry flavour mixed with Draco’s own taste hit his tongue; what he was doing, it was so forbidden and so naughty that it made it even more intoxicating. Holding Draco’s arse cheeks apart, he stabbed his tongue deep inside, moving it around, tasting and swiping the inner walls.

Incoherent mumblings poured out of Draco’s mouth. His legs shook from the jolts of pleasure shooting through his body at the rimming he was getting. Whimpers, groans and moans mixed with pleas for more and faster tumbled from his lips. He was painfully hard and so close to exploding.
Harry reluctantly pulled away from feasting on the blond. He kissed his way up Draco’s spine, his hands moving over his body as he went and moved to entangle with the blond’s. Kissing his way up to Draco’s ear, he moved their joined hands to the headboard and wrapped Draco’s own around it.

“Hold on tight,” Harry whispered as he kissed and nibbled the blond’s ear. “I’m gonna take you… hard and fast.”

“Oh Merlin,” Draco moaned as his body quivered in anticipation. He eagerly spread his legs wider, allowing Harry to fit more snugly against him, and a loud moan escaped him when he felt the leaking member pressing against his entrance.

Harry leaned back, his hands holding on to Draco’s waist. He lined up his cock and looked back up at the blond.

Draco looked over his shoulder, seeing Harry just staring at him. “What are you waiting for?” he pushed back against him, impatient for the brunet to take him.

“Minx!” Harry snarled as he tightened his grips on Draco’s waist and with one shove, he bottomed out. He didn’t even stop; he quickly pulled out, leaving only the tip of his cock and slammed back in. His pace was fast as he drove into the blond over and over again.

Draco screamed at the first hard thrust and tightened his grip on the headboard as Harry took him just like he said; hard and fast. His back arched, his head back as Harry lunged into him over and over.

“That’s what you wanted isn’t it?” Harry grunted. “Me taking you like this…like a bitch in heat. Sweet Salazar you feel so good.”

“I-is t-that a-all you c-can do?” Draco stuttered out between moans. He knew that his words would cause Harry’s control to snap and he wanted that. “Can b-barely f-feel you.”

True to his words, an animalistic growl escaped Harry’s lips as he spread Draco’s legs even wider and increased his pace; this time, each brutal movement sent his cock directly into the blond’s pleasure button.

“MERLIN YES!” Draco shouted out. His prostate was getting hammered by each thrust from his boyfriend and he could feel his body tightening up as he got closer and closer to the edge, his release imminent.

“So close…f-fuck!” Harry growled. He could feel the coil of pleasure tightening inside him, just ready to be released, but he needed the blond to go over the edge with him. Removing a hand from the hip he was holding, he reached out, wrapped his arm around Draco’s neck, pulling him up and backwards, until they were pressed chest to back. He licked a path up to Draco’s ear and hissed.

{Cum for me}

The Parseltongue pushed Draco over edge and with a scream, he shot his load; streams of cum splattered his chest and the bed below.

Feeling the already tight muscles become vice-like around his cock, Harry let out a strangle groan as he exploded, his cum coating Draco’s inner walls.

Draco tightened his muscles reflexively around Harry, milking him. Spent, the two collapsed onto the bed.

Moving carefully, Harry pulled out of Draco’s body and rolled onto his back. “That…was…
bloody…amazing.”

Draco chuckled weakly and moved into Harry’s body, his head resting on the brunet’s chest. “Better than before.”

“I thought so too,” Harry replied, still trying to get his breathing under control.

Draco shifted, rolling onto Harry’s chest, resting his chin on his folded arms.

“What is it?” Harry asked as he reached up a hand and moved the blond hair out of Draco’s face, cupping his cheek.

Draco’s eyes roamed Harry’s features, taking in the satisfied expression on his face, the slight curve of his lips and the happiness in his green eyes. He leaned into the hand on his cheek for a few seconds before looking back at Harry. “Do you think it’ll ever change between us?”

“What?” Harry’s eyebrows pulled together in a thoughtful frown.

“The sex?” Draco grinned, waggling his eyebrows, “think we’ll always have out-of-this-world sex?”

“Dray,” Harry grinned in response, “if there’s one thing we definitely won’t have to worry about, it’s sex.”

“Good,” Draco nodded, his grey eyes sparkling with happiness.

Harry pulled Draco down for a kiss. “I love you.”

“Love you too,” Draco smiled before he pushed himself up, moving off of Harry’s body. “Now come on, as much as I would love to lay here with you, we have to get back to our common rooms.”

“No,” Harry moaned. “I don’t wanna.”

Draco laughed and grabbed his wand, casting a Cleaning Charm on himself and the brunet. “Get up, you whiny child.”

“Insult me,” Harry sniffed as he rolled off the bed, “after I had a sex with you.”

Not saying anything, Draco asked the room for a pillow and threw it at Harry’s head.

Harry ducked and laughed at the blond before getting dressed himself. The two left the room, immediately checking to make sure they weren’t seen, and hurried down the hallway. When they came to the corridor that would split into the towers and the dungeons, they stopped.

Draco turned to face Harry. “Not to sound like an extremely sappy Hufflepuff, but, stay with me tonight. I miss sleeping next to you and waking up in your arms.”

Harry cocked his head to the side and stared at the blond. “That doesn’t sound like a Hufflepuff at all. Of course I’ll stay with you Draco. To be honest, I’ve missed waking up with my arms wrapped around you.”

“It’s settled then,” Draco nodded. “Let’s go.”

The two boys turned towards the corridor that would lead them to the dungeons. They walked in silence, just enjoying each other’s presence. As they got closer to the dungeons, they heard a female voice.
“Where is he?” the voice raged, “he’s not up in the common room and LeStrange was back from detention ages ago.”

Pulling Harry, Draco ducked into an alcove, quickly casting a Disillusion Charm over the two of them. With baited breath, they watched as Ginny came around the corner.

“I bet he’s with that ferret,” Ginny scowled darkly as she walked up the corridor. “He doesn’t belong with him, he belongs with me!”

Raising an eyebrow, Harry looked at Draco before looking back at the redhead. Pulling his wand out, he pointed it at her, smiling in satisfaction when the witch glowed briefly none the wiser. The moment she was gone, the two stepped out, cancelled the charm and continued on their way.

“What do you reckon she was doing down here?” Draco asked, casting a glance at Harry.

“You heard her,” Harry snorted, “sounds like she was looking for me. Though, what she planned to do I really don’t know.”

“I always thought Weaselette was too obsessed with you,” Draco commented, “what spell did you hit her with?”

Harry grinned. “A revenge spell; every time she’s mean to someone, or she gets jealous, she’ll get boils all over her face, kinda like acne. And if she tries to use a glamour spell, or spell them away, it’ll get worse.”

“Will anyone be able to remove it, or just you?” Draco asked, his mind going back to the night they were introduced to the Death Eaters and what Harry had done to Gibbons.

“Just me,” Harry chuckled.

“You are so devious,” Draco smirked, loving the darkness that Harry showed now and again.

“And you love it,” Harry grinned.

“Never said I didn’t,” Draco teased. The two continued their walk until they came to the entrance to the Slytherin common room. Draco gave the password and watched as the door opened.

“Welcome to the Snake den,” Draco drawled as he stepped inside the doorway, Harry following.

The moment they entered the room, all talking ceased as all eyes turned towards the two of them. Eyes widened when they saw Harry standing there.

“Never thought I’d see the day,” Blaise’s voice disturbed the silence as he sat up from where he was lying on the couch to look at the two boys, “Harry Potter in the Slytherin common room.” He got up and walked over to the two, coming to a stop in front of Harry. He then bowed. “I am honoured that the Chosen One has deemed us worthy enough to be in his presence.”

Harry shoved him, “Piss off you wanker.”

Blaise laughed as he stumbled. “What? You didn’t like it?”

At the sight of the playful banter between the two, the slightly tensed atmosphere in the room disappeared and everyone relaxed and continued with what they were doing, though their attention was focused on the Gryffindor in their midst.

Draco shook his head and headed to his customary seat, the students moving to allow him to pass.
He sat down in his chair and immediately, Crabbe and Goyle took up their positions behind him.

Harry ignored Blaise as he followed the blond, his eyes moving around the room, taking in everything, including the students. “So this is the Slytherin common room. Nice.”

“Glad you like it,” Nicole grinned at him from her spot on the couch.

“And you would be?” Harry turned to her.

“Nicole Vaisey,” the girl replied.

“Pleased to meet you,” Harry smiled at her, causing the girl to blush, as well as a few other girls and some of the boys. “Harry Potter.”

“So Harry,” Nicole threw a glance at Draco before looking back at the brunet, “there is something that we would like to know.”

“Who’s we?” Harry asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Mostly us girls,” Nicole smiled.

“What is it?” Harry tilted his head to the side.

Nicole bit her lip when she saw him tilt his head. She wondered if he realized just how adorable and sexy he looked like that. Something no person should be at the same time.

“So Harry,” Draco spoke up, casting a playful glare at Nicole and the rest of the Slytherin girls. “Don’t answer that; they’re all a bunch of perverts.”

“We are not!” Millicent protested, though the grin on her face belied her words.

“If you’re anything like Pansy,” Harry chuckled.

“And what if they are?” Said girl asked as she stepped into the room from the dormitory stairs. She had a grin on her face as she walked over to Harry. “

“Then they’re gonna suffer,” Harry grinned and he moved around the dark haired girl and headed to where Draco was sitting. The blond made to shift in the chair so that he could sit, but Harry shook his head and sat down on the carpet in front of him.

Draco shifted his legs, opening them on either side of Harry, allowing the brunet to relax further, his head resting near the blond’s thigh. Draco couldn’t resist and dropped a hand down to run through the raven coloured locks.

The girls sighed when they saw it.

“Adorable, aren’t they?” Pansy smiled as she took a seat on the couch nearest to Harry, Blaise following her.

\Sesshomaru?\n
<Yes Harry?>

\Would you like to sleep next to Yasha tonight?>

<I have missed the pup curling up around me. Shall I come to you or do I go directly to him?>
You can come to me if you want, or you can go directly to Yasha.

<I shall come to you. It has been a while since I spent a relaxing time in your company. I long for the days of the manor.>

Ok then.

The mental conversation had barely ended when the white light appeared in the common room. The students smiled when they saw the white pup on Harry’s lap. Before anyone could say anything, they heard excited yips as Yasha ran into the room, heading straight for Harry’s lap.

Sesshomaru moved from Harry, just in time for Yasha to tackle him, sending both to the floor. Soon, the room was filled with playful yips and growls as the two pups played.

“Oh they’re so cute!” a girl squeaked out and that seemed to be the permission the other girls needed as they rushed to the two pups.

Harry watched as most of the girls fawned over the two pups. His gaze then flitted around the room, taking in the ease in which the students were with each other; some were playing Exploding Snap, others playing chess and the rest were either doing homework or talking.

“It’s a bit surprising, isn’t it?” Pansy said softly, gaining his attention. When he looked at her, she continued, “seeing everyone so warm and relaxed around each other.”

“Not really surprising,” Harry told her, seeing an older student help a younger one with something, “because you know I know better than anyone the masks Slytherins have to wear and the image they have to portray to the school.”

“Then what is it?” Blaise asked, looking from Harry to the other students.

“The way the other houses,” Harry answered, “make Slytherins out to be cold, calculating, unfeeling students who care for no one but themselves. You guys are cold and calculating when you want to be, but if they could see you in here, they’d see you’re just like everyone else.” He stopped, paused briefly and smiled. “But that’s the point, isn’t it? To show them what they want to see so that they would be unprepared for what you do next. Kinda like a poker player.”

“How so?” Draco asked, looking down at Harry.

“What’s poker?” Harper Rivers, a male fifth asked when he heard Harry’s words.

“Well,” Harry explained, “poker is a card game that Muggles play; to some it’s complicated and to others it’s easy. I really couldn’t give you the intricacies of the game as I have never played it. But to answer Draco’s question, a poker player holds their cards close, not wanting the other players to know what they have until they’re ready for them to know and their expression are always hard to read, so you can’t know if they are excited or dismayed at the cards they do hold.”

“Interesting theory,” Tracy commented, a slight frown on her face.

“Sounds like it would’ve been a good game to learn over the summer,” Pansy smiled.

“You would’ve played a Muggle game?” Herbert Runcorn Jr., a fifth year male, was aghast at her words.

“Yes.” Draco, Blaise and Pansy all answered as one.
“But why?” Harper questioned. “It’s a Muggle invention.”

“Let me tell you something about Muggle inventions,” Harry said and then he launched into an explanation, with input from Draco, Blaise, Pansy and Gabriella.

As they spoke, every student in the common room stopped what they were doing to listen. Later, when their Head of House entered for a final check-up, he was a bit surprised to see Harry sitting next to Draco with the Slytherins’ attention on him, and was even more astonished when he heard just what his students were discussing. Pride filled him as he watched his Snakes and he left the room without saying anything.

~…~

Over the course of the next few days, the students and teachers settled into their routines and the school year. Things had been normal, as normal as can be for Hogwarts, and the easy atmosphere of summer was still lingering in the halls.

The spell that Harry had cast on Ginny hadn’t been noticed until the day after when she had insulted a second year. The girl hadn’t even noticed anything amiss and had become extremely annoyed at the whispers and points she had gotten. It wasn’t until Hermione had transfigured a spoon into a mirror did she realize what was wrong. She had immediately tried to remove the spell, but to the redhead’s horror and the school’s delight, the spell hadn’t been able to be removed and no one had any idea as to who had done it. Ginny had taken to eating her meals in the Hospital Wing.

Ron had avoided the Slytherin gang, Harry included, and had taken to glaring at the brunet instead. Harry himself ignored the redhead.

It was now Saturday and excitement filled the air. For the students, it was their first weekend at school and they planned to take advantage of it; for Harry, it was because today, not only would he be attending the lessons with Dumbledore, he would also be heading to France with Draco, Lucius and Voldemort. Now, Harry was on his way to the Headmaster’s office for their first lesson. He was curious as to what the Old Man was up to as he knew without a doubt the man had no intention of teaching him anything spell wise; such as defensive and offensive spells.

He got to the entrance and gave the password—Jolly Rancher—to the Gargoyle. When it moved away, he hurried up the spiral staircase, taking them two at a time. When he got to the door, he knocked.

“Come in,” the Headmaster called out and he opened the door and went in.

“Good evening sir,” Harry greeted politely as he walked over to the chair in front of the desk and sat down.

“Good evening my boy,” Albus smiled. “Would you like a sherbet lemon or a cup of tea?”

‘I’m not your boy.’ Harry sneered mentally. ‘Let’s just get this started so I can leave.’ “No thank you Headmaster. What are we doing today sir? Do we start with the defensive spells or something else?”

“Something else,” Albus said as he sat down in his own chair. “Before I begin to train you to defeat Voldemort, you need to know about the man.”

‘I know everything about him already, on account of the fact that we spent almost the entire summer together,’ Harry snorted mentally, but he knew he couldn’t say that. The Headmaster was expecting something else. “He killed my parents and terrorized me, so as far as I’m concerned, I know all I need to about the so-called Dark Lord.”
Albus gave a mental cheer and pleasure filled him. “I understand that, however, I feel if you were to know who Tom Riddle was, then you would better understand how Voldemort came to be.”

“Alright sir,” Harry conceded with a nod, “If you think that’s best.”

“I do,” Albus nodded, happy that the teen believed him and was willing to do what he said. He stood up from his chair and then walked over to the bookcase. Pulling out his wand, he began tapping it in a sequence on some of the books. The books moved away and an opening appeared; in it, was a very large Pencieve. After clearing his desk, he levitated the Pencieve on top of it and turned back to the opening, this time, retrieving a couple of vials.

“What are those, sir?” Harry asked after he saw the Headmaster place the vials on the desk next to the Pencieve.

“Memories Harry,” Albus explained, “memories given from various people connected to Voldemort. Now,” he grabbed one of the vials, “the first memory we’re going to see is from Bob Ogden and it is before Tom was born.”

Removing the vial’s cork, he tipped it over the Pencieve, allowing the memory strand to flow out. When the vial was empty, he placed it back on the desk and motioned for Harry to get up and join him.

“Here we go,” Albus said as he grabbed Harry’s arm and entered the memory.

~…~

Meanwhile, at the twins’ shop, Fred and George were talking; they were at the counter and there were no customers, so they took advantage of it.

“So,” Fred turned to his brother, “you’ll take Harry’s place for the rest of the day, and then tomorrow, we’ll switch off and I’ll take his place.”

“Yes,” George nodded, his dark hair falling over his eyes. He brushed it back absentmindedly. “We’ve spent more than enough time with Harry to be able to impersonate him and he’s already caught us up on what has been going on so far.”

“Especially about Ginerva and Ronald,” Fred scowled, his sea-green eyes flashing angrily. When he and George had seen what the Daily Prophet had said, they had been outraged; they had been mollified by Harry and the others who had already promised retribution to Ron. When they read about the spell Harry had put on Ginny, they had collapsed with laughter, knowing the redhead had deserved it.

“You know,” George smirked, “I think it’s time we tested a few products on our former siblings.”

“Brother dear, I love how you think,” Fred grinned, “and after all, Harry didn’t say we couldn’t prank them, now did he?”

“No,” George laughed, suddenly excited about the switch. “So when Harry sends his message, I’ll head over to the Shrieking Shack and we’ll switch.”

“Good,” Fred nodded and the conversation stopped when the doors opened and customers came in.

~…~

Harry and Albus exited the Pencieve and retook their seats. Harry had a pensive look on his face.
while Albus watched the teen with calculating eyes.

Harry was just a little shocked seeing just how Voldemort’s grandparents were and the way they treated their daughter. But that shock soon gave way to understanding; just from observing how Marvolo treated his son Morfin, and his daughter Merope—especially Merope—he knew that Voldemort had no chance of ever having a normal childhood. A grandfather who was abusive to his daughter, and the daughter, desperate for love, resorted to drugging a man to love her.

Fawkes, who was sleeping, woke up, shook himself off and flew from his perch to Harry’s lap.

Harry looked down at the phoenix and smiled when the bird started trilling softly. He reached up a hand and gently ran his knuckles across the bird’s chest. The trilling helped him relax. “Thanks for that. I needed it after what I just saw.”

<You’re welcome young one> Fawkes trilled again, ruffling his feathers slightly.

“Are you ok my boy?” Albus questioned, hoping that the teen’s compassionate streak would not overwhelm him; he did not need a pawn that cared about the enemy.

“Yeah,” Harry looked up at the man.

Fawkes straightened up a bit to look at Harry. <He’s worried about you being too sympathetic and empathetic towards the one called Voldemort>

Knowing what the man wanted to hear, he steeled himself and let determination fill his eyes. “It was shocking to see Voldemort’s family like that, but other than the shock, all I feel is pity. His mother’s life was one no person should go through.”

‘Excellent!’ Albus chuckled to himself. “I agree.”

Wanting to leave, but not wanting to seem eager, Harry asked, “Are we going to view more sir?”

“We’ve spent quite a bit of time on that one memory,” Albus said, “I think that was good for today. I do not want to overwhelm you and it is such a nice day out.”

“It is,” Harry agreed, “you were right sir, these memories will help me understand Voldemort better. The more I understand what makes him tick, the closer I get to destroying the supposed Dark Lord.” He looked down at Fawkes, gently shooing the bird from his lap and stood up. “Headmaster, if that’s all, I’d like to go now. Learning something new about Voldemort, even this, always seems to throw me for a loop.”

“Understandable,” Albus nodded, “you may go. Don’t spend all of your time thinking about the man, for that is all he is, but do try and enjoy the rest of the day.”

“I will,” Harry nodded, “Good day sir.”

“Good day to you as well,” Albus dipped his head in a slight bow and watched as the teen left his office. The moment the door closed, his blues shined maliciously at how his plans were progressing.

“Everything is going according to plan,” Albus smirked to himself, “soon, not only will Voldemort be no more, but so will the brat and then, I will be the most powerful and revered wizard alive.”

Fawkes let out a sad and mournful trill from his perch. He couldn’t believe how the man couldn’t see just how far down the dark path he was spiralling.
Harry quickened his steps as he headed to Gryffindor tower. A quick *Tempus* showed that it was just a little after nine, which meant he had spent just over an hour with Dumbledore.

‘I can’t believe that that’s actually his plan,’ Harry thought to himself, ‘I wonder if that’s what all his “lessons” will be like? Him showing me memories of Voldemort’s past. I’ll have to let him know when I see him.’

He still couldn’t believe the trip, he, Lucius, Draco and Voldemort were going on today; he knew it was important, and that it would help with the Dark Lord’s plans for the future and was completely ecstatic and humbled that he was going with.

Shaking his head, he looked up and realized he was standing in front the Gryffindor portrait.

“Hello Harry dear,” the Fat Lady greeted, smiling at him.

“Good morning madam,” Harry grinned at her.

“Oh,” the Fat Lady fluttered her fan, “such manners. You don’t see that much often with this lot.”

“It’s too bad,” Harry smiled, “And how are you this fine day?”

“I’m very well, it was kind of you to ask,” the Fat Lady smiled, “For you my dear, there is no need for a password.” With that, she swung the portrait door open.

“Thank you,” Harry gave a little wave and headed inside. He glanced at the common room, waving at Lavender, Parvati, Dean and Seamus, and headed up the stairs to the dorm.

“Hey Cory,” Harry greeted when he got inside. He walked over to his trunk.

“Hey Harry,” Cory smiled up at his friend. Glancing around, he made sure they were alone, pulled out his wand and cast a Silencing Charm. “What was the lesson about? Did he actually teach you anything?”

Harry sat down on his bed, smiling briefly when Sesshomaru walked over and propped himself on his lap. “His lessons are memories. He has memories of our Lord’s family life before and after he was born and he’s showing them to me because he wants me to better understand how Voldemort came to be.”

“So that’s his plan?” Cory raised an eyebrow. “That’s his big lessons that he’s gonna teach you?”

“Yeah,” Harry snorted. He shifted his pup back to the bed and stood up. “But whatever, we’ve already been shown or taught how to defend ourselves and we do know how to fight.”

He walked over to his trunk, took a small duffle bag and placed it on his bed; turning back to his trunk, he took some clothes out and placed them in the bag before zipping it close and shrinking it before placing it in his pocket. He then turned back to Cory. “Let’s go for a walk.”

Cocking his head to the side, Cory looked at his friend; seconds later, recognition lit up his eyes. “Should we take Kilala and Sesshomaru with us? I think they’ll like it.”

“Let’s,” Harry grinned as he placed Sesshomaru on the floor, as Cory held his kitten in his hand.

A bright light surrounded Sesshomaru and when it disappeared, he was taller than before. Now, he came to a stop just below Harry’s knees.
“Ok, let’s go,” Cory smiled and the two left the dormitory. Bypassing the others in the common room, they headed through the portrait and down the corridor. They didn’t say anything, just enjoyed each other’s presence as they walked.

As if sharing each other’s thoughts, they both turned to head towards the Black Lake. When they were away from the students, they finally spoke.

“How is this going to work?” Cory asked. “I mean, does Lucius have a valid reason for taking Draco?”

“I think he gave a family excuse,” Harry said, “It is a weekend and as a teacher and Lord, I don’t think they can stop him.”

“What about you?” Cory looked over at his friend. “How are you going to explain being gone for the weekend?”

“With help from his brother, of course,” Luna’s voice sounded from behind them and they turned to see the blonde sitting on a rock, Kirara playing at her feet.

“Do I even want to know just how you got there without us noticing?” Cory folded his arms as he looked at his girlfriend.

“It’s simple silly,” Luna giggled, “I was playing with Kirara and the Snorkacks told me to be outside. The Merpeople were a little lonely, so Kirara and I came to talk with them and then that pretty flower told me you were coming, so I waited.”

“Of course,” Harry laughed while Cory rolled his eyes and walked over to sit next to her.

“George is waiting Harry,” Luna said. She then leaned into Cory and started humming.

\Hedwig?\
\|Yes Harry?|\
\Can you go to George? It’s time. He’ll know when he sees you. Take him to the Shrieking Shack and then come back for me.\
\|Alright|\

“Hedwig’s gone to get George,” Harry told the two.

~…~

Fred was in the back of the shop when Hedwig flashed in. She trilled to get his attention.

“Hey beautiful,” Fred smiled as he walked over to her, “You here for George?”

Hedwig spread her wings and shook herself off before giving a confirmed trill.

“I’ll get him for you,” Fred said. He headed to the front where his brother was tending to a customer. “Hey Forge.”

“Yeah Gred?” George turned to look at his twin.

“Our brother sent his message,” Fred said softly. “It’s in the back.”
George nodded and immediately left his post. Walking into the back, he saw Hedwig and smiled at her. “He’s ready?”

Hedwig nodded.

“Alright,” George walked over to the phoenix. “Let’s go.”

Trilling, Hedwig flew to land on George’s shoulder and the two disappeared in a flash of fire.

~…~

Harry was sitting with Luna and Cory when Hedwig flashed onto his shoulder.

“I’ll see you guys,” Harry said, “should be back by Sunday night.”

“Allright,” Luna smiled, “tell Bill I said hi and tell Fleur she should tell him; he’ll be more pleased than she thinks.”


“Bye,” Cory said.

With that, Harry and Hedwig flashed out.

~…~

They appeared in the Shrieking Shack, startling George, who was relaxing against the overturned dresser.

“Blimey Harry,” George gasped. “Give a bloke some warning.”

“Sorry,” Harry laughed, “ok. Hedwig will take you back to where Cory and Luna are.”

“Allright,” George nodded, “is she going to take you to meet the others?”

“Yes,” Harry nodded, “then she’s going to come back here and then shift to her owl form and fly back to the school. I’ll be back Sunday night; I’ll send a message to meet somewhere where we’ll switch.” He reached up to his head and plucked out a hair.

“Sounds like a plan,” George nodded and pulled the vial of Polyjuice potion from his pockets.

“Do you need the whole hair? Or will this be enough?” asked Harry.

“Yeah, it’s fine. We tested Polyjuice with different hairs. It works also with a cut up, half or quarter piece if it’s really long hair, but it must be the lower part; the part with the hair root,” George answered. “In this vial is enough Polyjuice for about thirty-six hours, which would be until late Sunday night, just in case you have some kind of problem coming back on time Sunday evening.”

Harry nodded. “That’s good. I’ll give you another hair just in case. I don’t expect any problems, but well, you know my luck…” he smirked and shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t look for trouble, but somehow…”

“…trouble finds you little brother,” George finished the sentence with a wry grin.

He uncorked the vial, gingerly eased the hair inside, replaced the cork and shook it carefully. He then opened it again and took one swallow—not too much—because he had tested this also in advance.
He breathed out and relaxed his body; seconds later, his face contorted into a slight grimace as his body shifted and changed. Within a minute, Harry was looking into his own face.

“Nice,” George grinned, “ok. Let’s go.”

“Wait, clothes?” Harry asked when he saw they were still wearing their own clothes.

“Whoops!” laughed George, flushing a bit.

Both of them looked at each other for a moment, and then they each turned to walk into a corner of the room and stripped down to his boxers. George summoned Harry’s school uniform and dressed quickly, laying his own clothes into the dresser—after casting a cleaning charm on it.

Meanwhile, Harry took a new outfit from his duffle bag—something befitting a Dark pure-blood heir. Elegant, tailored, dark forest green silk robes accentuated his shoulders and slender waist, with beautiful, delicate golden and silver decorations only on the lapels and hems, depicting feisty golden Nundus—a type of large leopard—pouncing after nimble, silver unicorns in an unending loop. Underneath he would wear a simple white Egyptian cotton shirt, fine dark grey, supple suede leather trousers and polished, dark grey dragon hide boots.

Voldemort and Lucius had advised him on the proper dress code to meet with the pure-blooded French Ministry officials. Harry knew he couldn’t turn up clad in faded Muggle jeans and a T-shirt or in Hogwarts school robes, all of which would be a terrible faux pas.

His colour scheme was coordinated with the clothes the others would wear; it was done so that they would make a spectacular impression of unity and power. Lucius had ordered all the outfits from the same tailor in Rome for them. At first, they had debated to order the robes from Twillfit and Tatting's in Diagon Alley, or the French tailor that Lucius usually preferred, but the need to keep this operation secret and at the same time to make a striking appearance in the latest fashion led to the decision to contact Fabio’s from Rome. He had guaranteed them the best materials and craftsmanship money could buy—he cooperated with Brioni, one of the most exclusive Muggle high class Italian fashion designers.

When Harry finished dressing, he turned around to face George, straightening out to his full height. He squared his shoulders, put his chin up and with his face a blank mask, he looked haughtily down upon him.

George was pleasantly shocked. In front of him stood, not the Gryffindor school boy, or his friend, but the arising new Dark Lord Potter.

Harry cocked a brow and smirked at him. “Bye, have fun!”

Before George could say anything, Hedwig grabbed onto his shoulder and flashed him out, returning seconds later to grab Harry and flash him out as well.

~…~

The duo appeared in a library at Malfoy Manor, alerting Draco, Lucius and Voldemort who were sitting on the couches near the fire.

“Harry,” Draco smiled as he stood up. “Good to see you made it.” His eyes travelled his boyfriend’s body, appreciation lighting up the grey orbs. “Wow, you look splendid!”

“Of course,” Harry grinned. “And thanks, you look fine too.” He looked up at Hedwig. “Thanks for the lift girl. You can go now.”
Hedwig ruffled her feathers and trilled. *You don’t have to thank, but it is appreciated. Be careful… all of you…and good luck.*

With that, she flashed out.

Harry turned back to the others and took in their appearance, noticing that they had donned new robes as well; Lucius and Draco both had the same fair complexion and platinum hair, so Lucius had chosen light grey robes decorated with silver winged snakes chasing pure white unicorns, combing with a dark grey vest, black trousers and black dragonhide boots for his ensemble. Draco’s robes sparkled in the same silver, white and light grey, combined with dark grey, the exact shade of grey in Harry’s boots and trousers.

The black colour appeared again in Voldemort’s outfit to accentuate that they belonged together; the Grey and the Darkness.

The two black haired men had agreed to dress similar to show everyone that they were not enemies, but rather, allies. Voldemort’s robes were the same dark, solid forest green colour as Harry, but combined with silver in the accents and black in the lining, a silver vest and his black trousers and dragonhide boots to showcase his status as Slytherin’s heir. So that meant, Harry was the only one with something bright golden on his robes, a subtle allusion to his publically perceived status as Dumbledore’s Gold Gryffindor Boy. And instead of the gold showing a lion, which would be the symbol of Gryffindor, Dumbledore and the Light fraction, it was the Nundu—the darkest and deadliest of all large cats—that was golden with black spots; the giant leopard was currently chasing and occasionally biting and killing the silver unicorn only to get up again and pounce after another fleeing prey.

The decorations on Voldemort’s robes fit the theme of the others; the silver snake of Slytherin, slithering and undulating—not hastily—but leisurely along the lapels and hem, sure of its superiority. It would now and then snap its jaws and devour a flapping, struggling red and muted golden bird—a rendition of a phoenix—next to a unicorn, a well-known symbol of the Light side. For the French, or any other European diplomats they would meet, these attires would be an obvious declaration of their alliance.

Combined with his black hair and Avada Kedavra green eyes, accentuated by the darker forest green robes, Harry knew he looked splendid and handsome, but dangerous. Many people would more than likely get the impression that he was one of two things; the Dark Lord’s apprentice, or his Consort.

“I take it everything is worked out perfectly with whoever took your place?” Lucius question as he stood up as well.

“Yeah,” Harry nodded, “George is taking my place. He and Fred are going to switch off, so that the twins are seen, even if it is separately, and Cory and Luna know, so they’re going to help.”

“Excellent,” Voldemort nodded as he stood up as well.

“So, how are we getting to wherever we’re going?” Harry asked as he walked over to where Draco stood.

“Portkey,” Voldemort answered as he held up a grass green book. “Gather ‘round, it will activate in.” He glanced at a decorative, baroque clock, with two rearing unicorns in the middle looking at each other, on top of a bookcase, “five minutes.”

The other three stepped close; Lucius placed a hand on his son’s shoulder while Draco held on to Harry’s waist and Voldemort placed a hand on Harry’s shoulder. Their free hands were placed on
Harry tried to read what the book’s title was, which was a bit difficult with all of the fingers on it. He tilted his head a bit and nudged against Draco’s fingers. There! It was a picture of a castle, and Green Guide Fla—Pi—Paris Reg—it was a travel guide to Paris region!

His heart skipped a beat as excitement filled him. He knew they would be in France, Luna’s message helped a lot and from what he knew of the trip, but he didn’t think they would actually be in Paris. It was his first ever trip abroad. He looked first to his right and grinned at Draco, then straight ahead at Lucius, who smiled indulgently at him, and last to his left. He beamed up at the Dark Lord, who smirked back and squeezed his shoulder briefly.

“Soon, hold on,” Voldemort said.

A minute later, the portkey activated and the four felt the sensation as if there was a hook behind their navels that pulled them abruptly upwards; they disappeared from the room.

~...~

Harry stumbled a bit when he landed, but straightened immediately.

“Nice,” Draco chuckled as he held on to him.

“Shut up,” Harry replied with a small grin. He looked around, taking in the sight; they were standing high up on a balcony, overlooking a large city sprawling in all directions. Not flat and boring, but hilly, houses and gables, smaller and taller buildings, tall churches, a gleaming river running through it, many bridges and also, some patches of green sprinkled in between. It was a city like nothing he’d ever seen before. Light coloured and vibrant, he could hear the busy Muggle traffic, and a kind of excited humming in the air—it was the sound of tens of thousands of people talking and laughing at the same time all around him.

“Where are we?” Harry asked as he looked around, wondering if they were in a hotel or a mansion or something else. His eyes caught and stopped on the Eiffel Tower and a look of pure awe engulfed his features. “I can’t believe I’m actually here.”

“Welcome to France, Mr. Potter,” Lucius grinned.
As Voldemort and Lucius headed into the room, Harry stayed out on the balcony. He still couldn’t believe he was in Paris, France. Still fascinated, he looked around. “Where are we?”

“In a private suite on the top floor of a five star Muggle Luxury Hotel,” Draco replied, “it’s situated in a historic mansion right in the heart of Paris.”

Harry stared around wide-eyed, taking in all the expanse of light, mostly yellow-white, coloured stone buildings with many dark grey or green tarnished gables and rooftops. A few roofs or facades were decorated with animals, or magical creatures like lions or gargoyles. Everything looked scrubbed clean, cheerful, grand and beautiful.

Paris was a sprawling city, but there seemed to be certain logic to it; a kind of spiralling form, which grew gradually out from a point to the east on that island in the middle of the river.

He noted how much green was interspaced between the buildings of the city as there seemed to be a lot of parks scattered over the area, and the streets were lined with long alleys of trees in the middle or on both sides. Most of the buildings he could see appeared to be of the same height—about four to seven floors—with a few notable exceptions. The elegant metal structure of the Eifel Tower climbed into the sky artfully directly in front of him. It was as if he could reach it if he only stretched his hand out a bit further.

Suddenly, he had a longing to jump on his broom and whiz around it.

Down on the street, throngs of people were walking along the sidewalks, chattering away. Looking
back and forth, he could see that the long, straight, wide boulevards were littered with cafés and shops, attracting an ever-changing stream of visitors. He could make out a circular place to the side with a statue of a horse and rider on a stone pedestal in the middle.

When he gazed in the other direction, he noticed a huge white, stone archway in the middle. There was also something standing tall, slender and sharp exactly on the centre point, sparkling golden at the top.

All of the roundabouts had wide avenues running towards them, reminding him of the spokes of a wheel. Muggle cars and buses whirled along these streets like and endless, colourful river. And then, Harry of course followed the course of the real river Seine with his eyes as it glittered and meandered through the middle of the city with smaller and larger boats cruising up and down.

Everything seemed to vibrate with energy. Wow.

As he stared out at the city, Harry couldn’t help but to remember when he had flown over London twice before; back in second year when he and Ron had stolen Mr Weasley car and then again summer of ’95, but that was but that was in the night. Like Paris, London was huge, and he could tell there were some similarities in the design of the two cities.

Just slightly behind, staring at his boyfriend, Draco had a huge smile on his face. He loved seeing the animated expression on Harry’s face as he took in his first look at Paris. A scowl appeared briefly as he thought on what he knew of Harry’s home life and he knew that if he ever met the Dursleys, they would pay for what they had done.

Shaking his head to bring himself back to the present, he chuckled softly when Harry eagerly leaned over the rail of the balcony so that he could see the crowds better. Grinning, he stepped closer to the teen and nudged him, pointing to the one rooftop further away with an especially ugly pair of gargoyles.

Harry turned and looked to where the blond was gesturing, only to blink in surprise. The ‘thing’ had moved! So, they were not a couple of stone sculptures like he had first thought, but actually magical creatures! And well camouflaged so the Muggles below didn’t notice a thing.

Seriously, how cool was that?

Harry laughed incredulously. He felt giddy with happiness, “Ok. Wow! Now, what is that over there? That bell shaped golden dome? And that dark skyscraper? I recognized the Eiffel Tower of course, I’ve seen photos before, but I didn’t know there was a park there.”

“Ok, look,” Draco pointed, “that is the Hotel des Invalides. Inside is Napoleon’s tomb.” He pointed to another spot, “Over there is the Montparnasse tower. And the area right behind the Eiffel Tower is called the Champ de Mars, or the Field of Mars.”

Harry nodded. It all looked so grand. He then nudged Draco and pointed in another direction, “And what is that great place over there? With that—that column or whatever? And the big archway or gate, what is that?”

“Place de la Concorde,” answered Draco, “The grandest and most famous square in Paris. Look, to the west are the Arc de Triomphe and the famous Champs Elysees. Place de la Concorde used to be called Place Louis XV, but then it became the Place de Revolution and the site of the guillotine.”

“Ge-you-tene? What’s that?” Harry asked, slightly embarrassed that he didn’t know anything. He had left his Muggle primary school when he was only eleven years old. So, how should he know
anything about French History or geography? That was Granger’s forte.

“It’s Gi-yo-teen,” Draco pronounced slowly, patience colouring his tone. “The French, like the Spanish, always pronounces double ‘L’s like a ‘y’. The Guillotine was a contraception invented to kill many people most quickly, cleanly and efficiently by beheading them. As far as I remember, nearly 3000 Muggles were executed that way. After the Reign of Terror, the Place de Revolution was renamed Place de la Concorde. All this happened during a violent period of Muggle history called the French Revolution.”

“Sounds like it was an awful time,” Harry commented, “but I guess the Dark Lord would love such a machine to get rid of Muggles efficiently.” His gaze caught another structure, “And what about that pillar, the stone needle standing in the middle?”

“That is the ‘Obelisque de Louxor’,” Draco said, “it’s over 3000 years old.”

“An Obelisk?” Harry’s eyes widened just a bit, “You mean, an ancient Egyptian artefact? Like those old tombs of the ancient kings where Bill crawls around, searching for treasures?”

“Yes, exactly,” Draco nodded. “It is decorated with hieroglyphics and is topped with a gold and bronze pyramid cap.”


“Yes, it’s made from one solid block of granite,” Draco explained. “The French received it as a present from Egypt over a hundred years ago. I suppose it was transported to France by some Muggle ship.”

“Okay,” Harry nodded, looking back over his shoulder. “That big gate in the middle of the roundabout, what’s that? You said ‘arcthethrumph.’”

Draco chuckled, “Arc de Triomphe, and it was commissioned by Napoleon as a memorial for the French Army. The place was formerly called the star place or the Place de l’Étoile. Now it’s called Place Charles-de-Gaulle. It’s at the centre of twelve avenues. You can tell by the amount of Muggle cars in the area.”

“Cool,” Harry nodded.

Draco smiled and then gently turned Harry by his shoulders, “Do you see that green park and the U-shaped large building in the other direction?”

“Yeah,” Harry nodded as his eyes caught what the blonde was talking about.

“Well that’s the Tuilleries Gardens and the Louvre to the east,” Draco said.

“The Louvre!” Harry grinned, happy he recognized the name, “that’s that famous museum, isn’t it? It was once a palace.”

“Yes,” Draco nodded, “it’s awesome. Even if we see nothing else, we have to go there.” He turned slightly to face Harry, “how come you know about this, but almost no other Paris landmarks?”

Harry remained quiet for a few seconds. It’s not that he didn’t want to say anything as he wasn’t ashamed of his childhood, but rather, he knew how the blond was and didn’t want Draco to waste any more anger over something that couldn’t be changed. In the end, he decided to be honest. “As a kid at the Dursleys, I once watched a TV programme while I was doing chores.”
Draco’s eyes narrowed and his hands clenched into fists at the thought of those blasted Muggles once again.

“Draco, it’s ok,” Harry soothed. “It was a long time ago and things have changed now.”

Taking a deep breath, the blond nodded, “You’re right. It’s just, I get so angry—

“I know,” Harry cut him off gently, “but it’s in the past. Nothing you can do except focus on the here and now and the future.”

Deciding to distract the blond, he walked along the balcony, his gaze travelling over all the roofs. Far away, on top of a hill, a white building—like a dome of fine sugar—flashed in the sun, rising tall above the surrounding roof tops, “So what’s that? That white sugar dome?”

“Sacre Coeur,” Draco answered, “it’s a Muggle church. It’s build on top of Montmatre—a hill that was already considered to be special; holy by the Ancient Gauls and Romans. From there, you have a superb view all over the city. Of course the best view is from on top of the Eiffel Tower.”

“Can we get up there somehow? Or fly around it?” Harry asked, “That would be fun, don’t you think?”

Draco grinned. It did sound like fun, “I suppose father will allow us to do that as long as we’re concealed under the Disillusion Charm, or maybe late at night when all the Muggle visitors are gone.” He put his hand in his pocket and took out the Omnicular and gave it to Harry, “Look; you can see how they look, like ants, crawling around below and all over the tower.”

“Thanks!” Harry was delighted as he took the Omnicular, similar to those from the Quidditch World Cup. Eagerly, he raised it to his eyes and adjusted the controls. “I see what you mean. But, how do they get up on those platforms? Oh, wait, I see. There’re elevators and stairs. Okay then, but sweet Merlin, look how long those queues are! There must be hundreds and hundreds of people standing there and all of them waiting.”

“They do have to stand in line for hours,” Draco said as he took the Omnicular from Harry, “but the spectacular view is really worth it. Father took me up there to the third, the highest platform once before.”

Harry felt arms around his waist and he leaned back into the chest pressing against his back.

“You ok?” Draco asked as he rested his chin on Harry’s shoulder.

Harry smiled as he brought up a hand to hold onto Draco’s arms. “I’m fine. I’m just taking it all in. This is the first time I’ve been to France.” He paused and let out a rueful chuckle, “first time I’ve been anywhere really. Well, besides our visits to London this summer and to Abbotsbury to get Slughorn. I don’t count that weird road trip with the Dursleys before first year. Oh, and then there was the Quidditch World Cup…”

Draco’s arms tightened briefly, “when this is all over, when our Lord has won over the Wizarding World, you and I are going to travel.” He was determined to give Harry everything those wretched Dursleys had not.

Harry liked that idea. “Just the two of us?”

Draco grinned, “Well, I don’t think Luna would forgive us if we left her behind.”

“That is true,” Harry laughed, “so, it’ll be me, you, Luna girl, Cory and let me guess, Blaise and
Pansy too?"

“Yes,” Draco nodded, rocking Harry’s shoulder a bit, “and I’m sure if things continue to progress how they seem to be, then we’ll end up having Seamus, Dean, Lavender, Parvati and Gabriella as well.”

Harry laughed again, unknowingly drawing looks from both Lucius and Voldemort. “Why don’t we do it when we finish Hogwarts? Kind of like a We-won-the-war-and-actually-survived-school celebration? Or, we can do it during the next summer, as a celebration before we start our seventh year.”

“Sounds like a plan,” Draco smiled. “You know, many pure-blood wizards used to go on a yearlong journey after leaving school, to see the world, learn about interesting people, places, and foreign, fascinating magic. It was tradition.” He leaned his head to the side to see the expression on the teen better, “I love you.”

Harry turned his head and captured the blond’s lips in a brief kiss, “I love you too.”

After a while, Harry looked around the balcony again. From the windows and other balconies, he could see that there were quite a few rooms up there. “You said this is a hotel? I would’ve thought we would come to some Malfoy place, not a Muggle hotel?”

Draco smirked. “Actually, this is both. This building was once a palace for French royalty, Muggle of course, then it was converted into a discreet, luxurious and sophisticated private residence. In the middle of the nineteenth century, my great-granduncle bought this apartment for our family. They had to, because the old, ancient Malfoy townhouse was somewhere over there,” he pointed to the east, “in an area that was designated to be demolished and completely rebuild on a grand scale. Great-granduncle Yvain was ordered by the French Ministry of Magic to give up his house and move elsewhere.”

Harry looked at Draco completely astonished, “Oh. Why?”

“The old Paris was a regular warren, full of dilapidated buildings and dense and irregular medieval alleyways. This meant increasing problems for the Muggles, like blocked traffic and poor hygiene in these old, over-populated districts,” Draco explained. “Imagine, the city’s population had reached over one million Muggles. Only one in five houses had any running water. Of these, most only had plumbing on the ground floor. The streets had no pavements for the pedestrians; you had to walk in mud and muck. Absolutely disgusting! The French king, Napoleon the third, and the city prefect Baron Haussmann wanted to change that. The king had been to London and had been very impressed. So impressed he wanted to create a capital just as modern, or even better. Haussmann understood the desperate need to reorganize the city as he had grown up during the cholera epidemic of Paris which had killed, like maybe twenty thousand Muggles. They developed grand plans to completely restructure and modernize Paris. However, that meant that many of the old houses had to be pulled down first and the rubble cleared away, before they could even begin building new streets and new, modern houses. Without magic, it was quite the undertaking for the Muggles.”

“Hmmm, okay,” Harry nodded, completely intrigued by what he was hearing.

“Now, Yvain Malfoy was a proud pure-blood wizard,” Draco continued, “he wanted to simply strengthen the Anti-Muggle charms and wards around his house and curse or kill all the Muggles working nearby. However, the Ministry of Magic was of the opinion that it was better to get all the wizard houses, shops, bars and workshops on the Ile de Cite out of the way, to relocate to another area in Paris to avoid possible hassle with the Muggles. I was told Yvain protested and raged, as did a lot of other, older wizards. They didn’t want to yield to the Muggle government’s plans, but in the
end, the Ministry convinced the protesters that it was more important to adhere to secrecy. The Ministry offered Yvain this apartment for a very reasonable price and a hefty sum to renovate the Malfoy Manor out in the country by way of compensation.”

Harry listened, his intrigue turning to astonishment. The city of Lights below him looked so grand, so fantastic, but he had never dreamed to consider just how this city came about or what it might have meant for the people living here over a hundred years ago.

“You have to admit though that he got a good deal out of it,” Draco pointed out, “this location is superb and the new apartment was very modern and comfortable compared to the old, dilapidated house that was only held up by magic anyway.”

“Okay sure, but, what about the Muggles in the rest of this house?” Harry questioned, “Don’t they wonder why they can’t get into this part of the building?”

“No they don’t,” Draco smirked, “See, when this was house was modernized and turned into a Muggle hotel some forty years ago, grandfather Abraxas and granduncle Sebastian renewed the Muggle repelling charms plus those charms that ensured adequate heating, water supply, plumbing and all that stuff. Nowadays, father and uncle Celestin have to check that regularly and recast the spells every now and then and make adjustments as necessary. If the Muggle management of the hotel thinks about this floor, they are under the impression that there are four luxurious suites up here and that number three is permanently reserved for the use of an eccentric, old money Muggle family that values discretion and privacy.”

Harry couldn’t help but to chuckle. He should’ve known that the Malfoy family would’ve figured something out. When it came to their family and privacy, he hadn’t met anyone that was as serious about as the Malfoys were.

“What?” Draco grinned, “Well we are a bit eccentric, aren’t we? We usually come and go without crossing through the main lobby or using the elevators. Most of the time, there’s nobody here. Father and mother visit a few times per year and the French Malfoy clan use this apartment perhaps once a month. It’s nice to have the option, you know?”

“I suppose,” Harry nodded, “And these charms work on everyone, right? Like say, maids or other guests?”

“Yes,” Draco smiled, “there’s only one door connecting to the very end of the hallway and it has all sorts of charms on it. Whenever someone, say a Muggle maid, comes near, they get confounded and believe that someone else has already cleaned up, so there is nothing for them to do. As for the guests, should they approach the door, it works the same way; they immediately believe there is nothing to see here and that they want to go elsewhere right away.”

“Clever, very clever,” Harry commented, “of course I expected nothing less from a Malfoy. And what about some snacks? Or breakfast, lunch, dinner?”

Draco looked at him, “Are you hungry?”

“Well, we are a bit eccentric, aren’t we? We usually come and go without crossing through the main lobby or using the elevators. Most of the time, there’s nobody here. Father and mother visit a few times per year and the French Malfoy clan use this apartment perhaps once a month. It’s nice to have the option, you know?”

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Draco looked at him, “Are you hungry?”

“No really,” Harry shook his head, “I’m just curious as to how this works.”

“We go out to dine usually when we’re in town,” Draco said, “and there’s also a very fine hotel restaurant downstairs.” He saw the shocked look on Harry’s face and chuckled, “Don’t look so shocked, these French Muggles do know how to cook. Even father or mother can’t find anything to condemn them. Or, we can send our house elf to fetch refreshments or menus we would like from a selection of restaurants operated by wizards. Gigi prepares petite dejeuner or small snacks or tea in
the kitchenette for us.”

Upon hearing that, Harry’s stomach chose that moment to remind him with a low growl that he was a bit hungry, “Oops,” he grinned at Draco.

“Guess someone likes the sound of the French cuisine and wants a taste after all,” Draco teased.

Before either one could say more, they were interrupted.

“Harry, Draco,” Voldemort called out to them, “come here.”

The two boys separated and headed into the suite. Harry didn’t know what to expect because the only hotel room he had ever seen had been that dingy hotel in Cokeworth the day before his eleventh birthday with the Dursleys. This hotel was as different from that hotel—as Malfoy and Potter Manor were different from the Weasleys’ or Dursleys’ house—in that it was simply gorgeous.

They were in a large, tastefully furnished and lavishly decorated living room, with ivory coloured walls, featuring lots of marble, gilded mirrors and beautiful mouldings. A sparkling crystal chandelier hung overhead. The furniture looked elegant, antique and expensive to Harry. Panoramic bay windows offered views of the Eiffel Tower and the bridges over the River Seine. There were a few doors and a hallway branching off the room and Harry supposed that that’s where the bedrooms and bathrooms would be. Draco had mentioned a kitchenette and dining room as well.

Voldemort indicated to the couch opposite the one he was sitting in, “Sit…both of you.”

“Is something the matter?” Harry asked as he and Draco sat down.

“No,” Voldemort smiled briefly, “We wanted to recap our plan of action prior to the arrival of William Weasley. You should both be aware of all of the relevant information.”

Draco nodded in agreement as his father joined them, “Sounds reasonable.”

“We are going to stay here until Sunday afternoon,” Voldemort continued, “this apartment consists of this drawing room, a dining room, a kitchenette and I believe four bedrooms.”

He exchanged a quick glance with Lucius, who nodded, drawling, “I suggest you two take the sapphire room as we have already chosen the beryl and ruby room.”

Draco nodded while Harry was curious as to how different the bedrooms were decorated and how comfortable the beds were. Judging by the very nice furniture in this room, he knew the beds wouldn’t disappoint him. He did hope to find plenty of free time to cuddle and fool around with Draco though.

Voldemort cast a quick Tempus. “In one hour we have our first meeting scheduled with Weasley and Marcellin Delacour down in one of the smaller meeting rooms of the Muggle hotel. It is to ensure everything went according to our previous planning. If nothing has changed, then we will depart for the Delacour Manoir via a Portkey that Delacour has promised to provide.”

“Okay,” nodded Harry.

“Madame Delacour and her two daughters, Fleur and Gabrielle, shall await our arrival at their Manor,” said Lucius, “You should keep in mind that this is a family visit and at the same time the hors d’oeuvre, the entrée to our diplomatic mission. William Weasley wants to introduce—or better, reintroduce, his good friend Harry Potter officially to his fiancées family. And because Harry now considers us,” he made a gesture encompassing himself, Draco and Voldemort, “as a part of his new
life, this is the perfect time to accompany him.”

“Okay,” Draco nodded, however, Harry frowned.

“I thought we were here to meet some French diplomats to discuss a treaty or something? Why did you say ‘ordoves’?”

Draco shook his head with a smile, “Hors d’oeuvre.” He pronounced carefully and fluently in French. “That means the first course of a meal. Entrée, like to enter, or an entrance.”

Harry nodded, though he was still a little lost.

Seeing that, Lucius explained further, “We shall talk about plenty of politics this weekend. However, diplomacy, especially with the French, is like a complicated dance—one that has many subtle entwined back and forward movements. You do not just walk up to them and demand what you want immediately as that would be discourteous and it would antagonize the other party right from the start, making future dealings to be very difficult.”

Harry nodded as he was starting to understand what was going to happen. He stayed quiet though as he saw that Lucius and Voldemort both seemed about to be slipping into their mentor modes.

“First, we have to get to know each other better and that means simply spending time together in a neutral environment, such as dining together, and not talk about serious topics,” explained Voldemort who sneered at the last part.

“It might seem like a waste of time at first glance, but it is vital to establish a foundation, a basis, for diplomacy. I am certainly an impatient man often enough, however, I now desire something important from the French and other nations on the continent.” Voldemort continued, “and that is, non-intervention should Cornelius Fudge, Rufus Scrimgeour or Albus Dumbledore Floo call them for help. I’m planning a coup d’état against our current Ministry for Magic, but I do not want to wage a war against the whole Wizarding World. I do not want to order my Death Eaters to fight against Aurors from other nations. I do not want to have their blood on my hands if that could be avoided. So, I have to convince the French Ministry that staying neutral in this internal conflict of Britain is in their best interests. If the French agree, then the other countries, like Germany, will follow their lead.”

Harry nodded as that made sense.

Lucius took over the explanations, “We—and I mean all of us in this room—have to counter Dumbledore’s propaganda in the ICW. We need to prove to our French hosts and the French Ministry of Magic that the Dark Lord is not on a mindless, murderous rampage out to kill everybody he comes across. We have to convince them that yes, there is a civil war brewing in Britain and that yes, there is a conflict between different opinions in our society—point in case, magical education and tradition versus so called progress, or what rights magical creatures and beings should have and especially how to deal with the Muggles and Mudbloods—but that it is not the goal of the British Dark side to attack any other nation or to completely destroy the British Wizarding or the Muggle World, as Dumbledore has been telling them since the seventies.”

Harry and Draco exchanged a glance and nodded, but neither one said anything.

“Weasley, Delacour and I have done a great amount of work here already to further our understanding,” Lucius declared as he continued with his explanation, “fortunately for us, there is some common ground between us and the French magical community concerning general politics towards Muggles—to keep the magical world safe and keep magic alive—and how minorities are
treated or should be treated; for example half-breeds between wizards and Magical beings such as Veela, Goblins, Vampires and Werewolves. The French Wizarding community is disturbed by the negative climate in Britain; all that distrust, prejudice and prosecution concerning these beings, like the Anti-Werewolf Legislation that Umbridge pushed through.”

Harry nodded, “I understand now. So, I’m going to visit the Delacours as a friend of Bill’s and you tag along to sweet talk with not only the Delacours but some other blokes from the French Ministry.”

He paused, “I met the Delacours back in fourth year, but I never talked much to Fleur or her sister. In fact, as I recall, the longest conversation I’ve had with them is after the second task when I got little Gabrielle out of the Black Lake. I remember them being very grateful that I had gotten her out alive.”

“Exactly Harry,” Voldemort agreed, “this gratitude they feel towards you for rescuing their younger daughter was the door opener that William used to start talking with the family about you. He carefully probed where they stood in this conflict over in Britain. They were astonished of course to learn that William had his own opinions and that he did not follow Dumbledore blindly just because he is a Weasley. They know that Dumbledore tried, and continues to do so, to get allies in France.”

“You mean like Madame Maxime?” Harry injected.

“Precisely,” Voldemort nodded, “As you know Olympe Maxime accompanied Rubeus Hagrid on that failed mission last summer to persuade the giants to fight for Dumbledore’s side. William told me that the Delacours have talked with Madame Maxime and other staff members from Beauxbatons in the meantime. She likes Hagrid. It is why she had agreed to accompany him on that trip. However, she does not like the current political and public climate in Britain at all. Because you Harry were allowed—or forced depending on one’s viewpoint—to participate and because Fleur Delacour and Viktor Krum were cursed during the third task, the Delacours and Madame Maxime are very wary of Dumbledore and the British Ministry for Magic in general. They do not know what really happened. They are sceptical of Dumbledore’s explanations by the way, and I do not intend to enlighten them.”

Harry grimaced slightly. He didn’t like this reminder either.

“They feel that the Beauxbaton and Durmstrang participants of the tournament were treated unfairly. They believe that the whole tournament was rigged, which I admit freely that it was, but they do not need to know why or how exactly,” Voldemort continued. “I merely suggested to William that he should try to soothe their ruffled feathers. He apologized for the inconvenience of how their innocent champion was caught up in a purely British conflict in the battle for control between Dumbledore, the Ministry and the Dark Lord.”

Harry listened and nodded as this made sense to him. He remembered the talk he and Bill had had during the summer after the eldest Weasley had joined their side. Everything Voldemort had just said had pretty much been the topic of his and Bill’s conversation and he knew that it was those conversations with the Delacours that had made it possible for Voldemort to meet with them now to talk negotiations.

“From there,” Lucius picked up, “it was not such a big step for William to talk with Marcellin and Apolline about the political situation in Britain, France and on the continent in general, and next, to introduce them to the outrageous and seemingly impossible idea that you and the Dark Lord have resolved your differences.

“Since the Tri-Wizard tournament, Harry Potter,” Lucius especially emphasized Harry’s name, “is perceived as a strong willed character by the French, as inertly good, brave, just and fair. If you can find common ground with Draco Malfoy, your former school rival, and the Dark Lord, the one who murdered your parents, all by yourself without being coerced and agree with at least some of his goals, then the Dark Lord cannot be all that evil in conclusion.”
Harry grimaced. He hated to be described like that, but he understood that it was necessary for their success that he played a variation of the role of the Boy-Who-Lived.

Knowing the cause for the grimace, Voldemort smirked before taking over the explanations once again, “Fortunately for us, Monsieur Delacour works as the senior Undersecretary in the French Department for Magical Cooperation. Louvel Beauchene is the Head of this Department. During the past weeks, Delacour had already talked a few times with his superior about the situation in Britain, hinting that he has special insight into the situation because of a British contact. He explained that what Dumbledore or the British Ministry of Magic tells the press, or the ICW, is not the whole truth. That, in fact, there are many people in Britain who support the Dark side; not because they are homicidal, but because they believe in our cause for a good reason. An example of those would such wizards and witches that have been harassed or harmed by Muggles in the past.

“Beauchene was also told that almost all wizards with some magical being heritage supported me because of the rampant prejudice and persecution that the French, and other countries, already criticize. William told that it went very well and that when Marcellin Delacour revealed that he could probably arrange a meeting with the leader of the ‘other’ side of Wizarding Britain, the Dark Lord, Beauchene was wary but intrigued and curious and so was the French Minister for Magic, whose name by the way is Durand.

“Now, the Delacours have heard from William that you are perfectly fine and healthy,” Voldemort smirked. “He assured them that you are not forced or coerced to support me in any way and that you are not held under the Imperius curse either. Nevertheless, they want to see you for themselves before they are ready to believe that William was not merely hoodwinked or confounded by myself or one of my Death Eaters.”

“That makes sense,” Harry nodded. “Of course they would be suspicious at first. Why are they so willing to listen to a different opinion, though?”

“Compared to the style of the Daily Prophet, the French press has reported, astonishingly accurate, what has been happening in Britain,” replied Lucius, “Of course if a French reporter tries to interview random people in Diagon Alley, all he usually receives is the bleating of frightened sheep. Most Dark side supporters do not dare openly come out and say that they wish that the Dark Lord would win and cleanse the Ministry of Magic, change laws, push back the influence of all those half-bloods and Mudbloods and tackle all the problems of our corrupt society. Nevertheless, the French newspapers have reported that not everybody is fond of Dumbledore or of his policy or how he runs Hogwarts.”

“Tonight the Delacours have conveniently invited Monsieur Beauchene and his junior assistant Aristide Géroux, to attend an informal dinner,” Voldemort looked at Harry, a smirk on his face, “Well, to them and the Malfoys, it will be in an informal dinner; however, in reality, this affair will be quite formal. Hence our matching formal dress robes to make a good first impression.”

Harry had a thoughtful expression on his face as he listened attentively. The thoughtful looked turned into a frown when he saw the mischievous smirks and glances that were exchanged and then, he caught on.

“You’re going to have a laugh at my expense, won’t you?” he groaned, “What will they serve? Snails or that fish soup—some ‘Bolabaise’ or whatever—that Fleur had liked so much? Or will it be oysters or some other slimy thing that is a French delicacy?”

He paused as he realized something else. A formal dinner; this could be just like the Yule Ball, or worse. He blanched, “Bloody hell! This is going to be another dinner with wine glasses and tiny forks and little spoons for different things. And what in Merlin’s world am I going to talk to them
about? I don’t speak French, at all and I know nothing about French history or their politics. I really
don’t want to look like a fool in front of these Ministry guests or offend Bill’s new family and ruin
everything.”

Draco couldn’t help it; he burst laughing loudly while his father and Voldemort managed to only grin
as if they were two sharks playing at Cheshire cats. They did love to rile Harry up.

Harry huffed and pouted, even as he crossed his arms defensively over his chest. He bit his lip to
stop the smile that threatened to escape at the joy and relaxed aura he could feel from the other three.

Draco managed to contain his laughter and leaned over, pecking a quick kiss on the brunet’s cheek.
“Don’t worry; it won’t be that bad at all. They know you speak only English, and for hearing, I
 suppose father can cast the translator spell on your ears.”

Harry glanced over to Lucius who inclined his head regally.

“You’ll love their Manor and the food and wine,” Draco continued, “Snails broiled in butter, herbs
and garlic is okay. There is so much more to French cuisine than those, so don’t be prejudiced. Just
try a bite of everything. There’ll be fresh bread on the table—you can always count on that. And
when it comes to the silverware, just look at what fork or whatever I use and you’ll manage just
fine.” A thoughtful crease appeared, “I suppose the two of us will be seated next to, or opposite,
either Fleur or her sister Gabrielle, so you can ask them for help should you need to. And if you do
happen to make a faux pas, I’m sure everyone will just smile indulgently. You are Harry Potter after
all.”

Draco grinned and then continued on in an exaggerated sweet voice, ‘Madame Delacour and the
girls will most definitely coo all over you. Those gorgeous green eyes, the charming personality and
bashful smile; they’ll say how handsome and adorable you are.”

Harry’s arms fell to his side and he stared at his boyfriend truly horrified, “I am NOT adorable! Oh
sweet merciful Merlin! What if Gabrielle has some silly crush on me and is obsessed with hero
worship?” he grimaced as he remembered Ginny Weasley and a few other girls back at Hogwarts.

“Then that is something you will have to put up with,” Voldemort injected smoothly, cutting through
the boys’ antics. The tone in his voice was dangerous and wiped all mirth away, “Need I remind you
as to the true purpose of this visit? If you have to be adorable, or the young Delacour daughter is
obsessed with hero worship as you fear, then you will allow it. I shall not allow anything to prevent
this mission from being a success. Have I made myself clear?”

“Yes my Lord,” Harry and Draco replied as one, with the blond reaching out to grab Harry’s hand in
a reassuring grip.

“Harry,” Lucius came to the boy’s aide in an attempt to not only soothe him, but to diffuse the
suddenly tensed atmosphere, “Don’t worry so much, really. Just be yourself; be polite and make
small talk. Tell them what you told us; that this summer was the best of your life; that you finally feel
comfortable in your skin and that you are happier now than you’ve ever been, now that you no
longer dance to every tune that Dumbledore plays. And if that young girl harbours some secret crush
on you, it doesn’t matter. No one expects you to propose to young Mademoiselle Delacour. William
has already divulged that you do not have any interest in young ladies at present.”

“And they are okay with this?” Harry asked as he entwined his and Draco’s fingers, “I mean, I know
that any family would love to have Harry Potter as a son-in-law and add to the fact that I chose a
male as the one to spend the rest of my life with.”
“True,” Lucius nodded, “but they really are okay with it. They are an old French pure-blood family. You seem to forget that Apolline Delacour is a half Veela. And the Headmistress of Beauxbaton is a half-giantess! The French are not as prejudiced as many so-called Light wizards of Britain are. Consequently, these wizards do not harbour any stupid Muggle prejudices against same sex couples. Most are what I believe young Muggles call ‘Bi’ anyway. Love and sex are nothing to be ashamed about, especially not here in Paris!”

“Oh…okay,” Harry let out a sigh as he fiddled with the hem of his sleeve, “So, um, sorry, is there anything special I need to be aware of? Any specific French customs or anything? I wasn’t raised the same way Draco was and I really don’t want to make a mess of things.”

Voldemort, Lucius and Draco exchanged looks. In front of them wasn’t the usually confident young man, but instead an insecure teen. The prospect of a formal dinner, charming the French Ministry representative and enduring the possible adoration of the Delacour family seemed to scare him much more than facing werewolves or dragons.

What they didn’t understand was that it wasn’t that he was scared of those, but of messing up. He knew how important it was to get the French on their side and he also knew just how pure-bloods, especially those very important and high in society had a low tolerance for anything not up to their standards. Just look at the Malfoys. He really wanted everything to work out perfectly.

“Well,” Draco started, falling back on the etiquette lessons he had received as a young boy, “their habits are not so different. Madame and Monsieur Delacour might offer you to call them by their given names because you’re such a close friend of Bill’s and also because you helped their daughters. Whereas they’ll expect us,” he gestured to himself, his father and the Dark Lord, “to address them with Madame or Monsieur Delacour and their daughters as Mademoiselles. The Minister of Magic is addressed as Monsieur le Ministre Durand, I believe. If you’re invited to dinner, it’s normal to bring something—chocolate of flowers are acceptable gifts, however, bringing wine is not. By doing that, it’s as if you’re saying that the host’s wine is worthless, which it most certainly is not.

“Politics and philosophy are perfectly acceptable and normal subjects for conversation in France and the French like to engage in long and sometimes heated discussions about them. You should only be careful what you say regarding Dumbledore and your reasons for changing sides. Basically, give them an edited version of the truth.

“And about the possible number of plates, cutlery and glasses, it really is nothing as sinister as you imagine. It won’t be any different from how we decorate our table at Malfoy Manor, or what the elves do at Potter Manor. If something is served that you absolutely don’t like, then just stick to bread; there will be plenty. Also, watch how much wine you drink. You need to keep your wits about you. I expect there’ll be a glass of champagne first, then white wine with the soup, salad or fish course, and later, a selection of superb red wines with the chateaubriand or similar red meat. Allow the house elves to always refill your water glass, but say ‘non merci’—and do it firmly—when they try to ply you with more wine. One glass of each kind per course is enough. If they are trained well, it’s sufficient if you tell them only once.”

Harry nodded, not completely placed at ease, but a little reassured. He was determined to do this right and not screw up.

Intent on getting them back on track, Voldemort cleared his throat to continue, “Monsieur Delacour will introduce our party to Monsieur Beauchene. After explaining the current state of affairs in Britain, we shall discuss our plans for the future of the British Wizarding world.”

“Okay,” Harry nodded, “And how long do you think that’ll take?”
“If all goes smoothly, he will agree to see us again tomorrow at noon either at the Delacour mansion or somewhere else here in Paris to hash out some details,” clarified Voldemort, “I cannot predict how quickly these negotiations will proceed. Beauchene, Delacour and Géroux will have to report back to their superior, the French Minister of Magic, Olivier Durand. At some point, the Minister will most likely want to meet both of us, but otherwise, I don’t believe you and Draco will have to accompany Lucius and myself all the time.”

Harry and Draco perked up at that. As interesting as their upcoming foray into diplomacy would be, they wanted some time for other things too.

Voldemort smirked as he understood their restlessness. “William has said that he, Fleur and Gabrielle would like to show you around Paris. It is possible that we will attend a concert, a show or an opera tomorrow evening, followed by a dinner somewhere here in ‘la Ville des lumieres’. Ideal would be if they, Minister Durand and Monsieur Beauchene, agreed to come here on Saturday; we can order dinner and talk privately without having to worry about wizarding news reporters spotting us or any eavesdropping spells. However that would require an unusual amount of trust, which I do not anticipate to build up so quickly. Well, we shall see. On Sunday at lunch, I hope to be able to meet them again to finalize the terms of our agreement and sign the contract of ‘Non Intergriere’. The both of you shall return to Hogwarts as planned on Sunday evening.”

“Well, I understand,” Harry nodded. “Will you mention your change on the Muggle situation?”

“Yes,” Voldemort nodded as he shifted in his seat, “To succeed, I will have to reveal that my intentions towards Muggles are not as homicidal as they once were. Actually, William warned me in his most recent letter than the French are expecting me to prove this. They will test me, test us.”

Harry tilted his head in question and Draco and Lucius looked curiously at Voldemort with their typical arched eyebrow expression.

“I believe I mentioned tentative plans to meet for lunch, or dinner tomorrow, and a visit to a theatre or similar entertainment?” Voldemort sneered and shifted in his seat, again. He did not squirm. Dark Lords don’t squirm.

“Yeah,” Harry nodded, “So what?”

“William anticipated that they shall want to observe how my delegation and I conduct us in a wizard and a Muggle environment,” Voldemort explained, clearly not enthusiastic, but resigned to face this likely ordeal for the sake of achieving progress with the negotiations.

“Meaning that they want to see if I am able to endure Muggles all around me without causing a scene and throwing the Killing Curse around at the crowds,” he continued, “and if my wizard companions or possible body guards, as if I needed body guards, are trained well enough to not cause unwanted attention and necessitate the interference of an Obliviator squad.”

“Oh. Oh! So that’s why you decided to take me and the Malfoys along instead of someone like Bellatrix?” Harry reasoned.

Voldemort inclined his head. “Indeed. Bella is a skilled warrior, however, when it comes to situations like this, she is not best suited.”

Harry chuckled as Draco and Lucius smirked. “No, not really.”

“Wait,” said Harry after moment of pondering on what Voldemort had explained. “Does that mean that Aurors will follow and watch over us all the time? That’d be a nuisance.”
Voldemort and Lucius exchanged a brief glance before Voldemort answered. “Maybe not all the time, but I expect that we will be under frequent scrutiny and observation whenever we leave this apartment. Aurors could attempt to shadow us, Disillusioned, or otherwise disguised, or under Invisibility cloaks. So we all should take care how we act and what we talk about.”

The sudden appearance of a Malfoy house elf a pace away from Lucius, clad in a neatly pressed tea owl bearing a large M and the Malfoy crest, stopped any further conversations.

“Votre bagage a été mis là, comme vous instruit Gigi. Y a-t-il quelque chose de que Gigi peut faire pour vous, maître Malfoy?” (Your luggage has been put away, as you instructed Gigi. Is there anything Gigi can do for you Master Malfoy?)

Lucius looked around at the others. “Do you need something before we meet with Mr. Weasley and Mr. Delacour?”

“Can I get something to drink?” asked Harry. “And I would like to go to the loo and also, check out our room for a moment.”

“I think that’s a good idea,” Draco chimed in, “Father, would you excuse us for five minutes?”

Lucius and Voldemort exchanged another glance. It was clear they were a bit miffed, but amusement won out. It was obvious that the boys had enough of all the talking, and that especially Harry wanted a short break to relax with his boyfriend before he had to play his role as the ‘tarnished but still honourable Golden Boy’ to perfection and charm their French hosts.

Lucius waved them away, “Very well.”

With obvious relief, the two teens jumped up and headed towards the hallway like a flash, Draco leading the way.

Quickly casting a Tempus, Lucius checked the time. He called after them sternly, “You have fifteen minutes, alright? We need to tell you something else before William and Delacour arrive!”

“Yes sir!” and “Yes father!” chorused Harry and Draco over their shoulders before they disappeared from view.

“Gigi,” directed Lucius, “serve the boys some water and juice in the sapphire room and bring mineral water and a cup of coffee.” He waited a second for a nod from Voldemort, “two coffees, here for us.”

“Yes Master,” Gigi nodded before she disappeared to do as was told.

~…~

The moment the boys entered the so-called sapphire bedroom, Harry stopped and stared in amazement. A large white-bluish marble fireplace dominated one wall, and on the opposite wall, a door led him to a bathroom with matching luxurious Italian white and blue marble tiles, a huge soaking tub and a wash basin.

The wallpaper, the hangings, bedspreads, upholstery and cushions, everything was done in harmonious shades of sky and dark blue, combined with hints of amethyst and warm beige. The large, thick, royal blue and beige Oriental rug on the floor invited him to slip off his shoes and to bury his toes in the soft carpet.

The very heavy and solid-looking furniture was made from gilded, ornately carved dark woods.
‘Probably mahogany,’ Harry thought as he walked closer and let his fingers run over the wood, which was decorated with eagles, sphinxes and laurels.

A pair of Bergères together with a chaise lounge were arranged around the fireplace and near the window, and a large double bed with a gilded headboard beckoned to him under a gilded canopy.

A crystal chandelier hung from the ceiling. The room’s windows were decorated with swaged, silky fabrics in heavy layers and the curtain panels were edged with gold tassels and fringe.

The walls and ceilings featured lavish decorations and ornamentation with moulded or painted figures. The motifs were such as stars, eagles, chimeras, sphinxes, griffons, strong men, slender, sprite-like dancing women, the acanthus leaf, honeysuckle, pineapples, rosettes, palm branches and wreaths of laurel. Depictions of sculptured torches or slim drop garlands separated the different parts of the motifs.

On the walls, Harry noticed two large gold-framed mirrors. On the side was a cabinet that had a pair of gilded girandoles with two proud golden lions resting to the left and right side.

Done with checking out the room, they focused on the bed. Sharing a grin, they ran towards it and jumped on, bouncing a little as they did so.

“Oh,” Harry moaned out as he fell against the pillows. “This bed is so comfortable.”

“I know,” Draco smirked as he followed.

“I wonder if we could take it back with us,” Harry mused.

Draco chuckled and very quickly moved to straddle Harry. “I’m not sure, besides, I rather like the bed back at Potter Manor.”

“Oh really?” Harry grinned as he reached up and pulled the blond’s head towards him. “I wonder why?”

Draco never got the chance to reply as his mouth was suddenly occupied in a kiss.

At first, the kiss was playful and tame as no tongues were involved; just lips. It quickly turned heated as mouths opened and tongues fought with each other.

Harry buried his hand in Draco’s blond locks and tightened his grip on the blond, pulling him even closer.

Draco moaned and shifted his hips, moaning again when he felt the growing erection beneath him.

“No,” Harry pulled away, panting heavily. “We can’t.”

“Why not?” Draco whined as he tried to resume their kiss. When that didn’t work, he started rolling his hips.

“Fuck!” Harry hissed. He dropped his hands to the blond’s waist, stopping his movements. “Draco…stop…your father told us fifteen minutes. We can’t.”

Draco groaned and buried his head in Harry’s shoulder. “Damnit.”

“I know,” Harry chuckled. “If we had more time, I’d be buried in you right now.”

The blond whimpered at the words, “Harry, you can’t expect me to behave and then say things like
“I’m sorry,” Harry said as he rubbed Draco’s back.

Sighing, the blond rose up and kissed his boyfriend once more. “I love you and I really wished we had more time right now.”

“Same here,” Harry replied after he ended the kiss. He shifted the blond off of him, but pulled him close, tucking him into his side.

“Draco?” asked Harry after a minute of silence.

“Hmmm?”

“Does this décor style have a name?” Harry asked, gaze once again taking in the room.

Draco blinked. “I guess Neoclassical Empire; lots of gild and the motifs are reminiscent of Roman and Greek design.”

Harry looked over to the wall on the other side of the bed. There was a scene of two fine-looking, well-built men with pale skin, painted on the wall. One was standing relaxed with a spear upright in his hand, and the other was facing him, leaning against twin palm trees. Both were depicted almost in the nude, just with a piece of long cloth draped over one shoulder and barely hiding their crotch.

“You fit right in, you know?” Harry mused. “If you stood naked and still in that corner, everybody would take you for another expensive decoration.”

Draco chuckled. “I know; I’m that gorgeous. Just wait until tomorrow, when we visit the Louvre and the Tuileries.”

The two fell quiet as they relaxed and enjoyed each other’s presence.

~…~

While Harry and Draco were ‘inspecting’ their new accommodations, Voldemort and Lucius relaxed with water and coffee. They discussed how best to present their group, how to stay safe and how to avoid a potential blood bath.

They were aware that Monsieur Delacour would be nervous, wary and sceptical when he met their group. Considering what he had heard so far about Lord Voldemort, it was understandable. After all, this could be a trap; Lucius or Voldemort could have cursed Harry during the summer holidays, and then used him to get to Bill and then have sent the Curse breaker to France to deceive the Delacour family and now, they could attempt to put Marcellin under the Imperius to gain access to his manor and to the French Ministry of Magic. Additionally, Marcellin Delacour would be worried about the safety of his family and of his other guests, Messieurs Beauchene and Géroux.

Likewise, they could walk into a trap, an ambush. After all, it was possible that as soon as they entered that meeting room downstairs, or later, when the Portkey to the Delacour Manoir drops them off, they would find themselves surrounded by French and British Aurors. Or, there could be poisoned drinks that were offered with a false smile. It might affront their host if they cast scanners on everything they were about to drink or eat, but they would not risk not doing otherwise.

Voldemort and Lucius were confident that they would be able to fight back and escape an ambush, but what about the boys? And such a fight would be a disaster on all diplomatic fronts. Taking Muggles or the Delacour women as hostages would be the absolute last resort. They wanted to trust
that William would not betray them and Harry on purpose, but one never knows. Delacour’s superiors might not truly believe what he told them. The French Minister could be inclined to believe a—until recently—well respected ancient wizard like Dumbledore over the words of a young English Curse Breaker.

Five minutes later, the boys returned.

“What did you have to tell us?” Harry asked as he and Draco sat down.

Voldemort explained his, and Lucius’, concerns and both boys sobered up.

“Bill would never betray me,” Harry protested.

“We know,” Lucius nodded, “however, they are valid concerns.”

Harry conceded with a nod.

In the end, they decided to watch each other’s backs and to keep their wands at the ready. To be able to instantly summon them with a flick of their wrists, the wands were placed in a wand holster hidden inside their right sleeve. But they would not walk through the Muggle part of this hotel or enter the meeting room with wands drawn—that would not only look odd and suspicious to the Muggles that were surely milling about in the hallways, but it might provoke an aggressive reaction from the French wizards. This whole endeavour was a huge risk, but the potential outcome was worth placing themselves in a certain amount of danger.

“Come here; stretch out both your left and right hand,” Voldemort gestured the boys closer.

Both complied, watching intrigued as the elder wizard whispered something in Parseltongue under his breath as he tapped his wand first to each of their right hand fingers and then twice on one of the small silver buttons on first Harry’s, then Draco’s left shirt cuffs. The polished, round metal disks were now two emergency Portkeys.

“Take care not to set this off accidentally,” he cautioned. “This Portkey shall react to a quick double tap of one of your fingers, with no need to say ‘Portus’ or another word, in case you cannot—or do not—want to speak out loud. It will take you back here, into the Malfoy suite, should you need it. You have to firmly double tap and not just brush your fingertip over it, alright?”

“Yes sir, and thank you,” both boys muttered, lowering their arms again to their sides. They fidgeted.

Harry thought that it was strange, but if you were told not to touch or fiddle with something, you ended up doing just that.

Voldemort and Lucius exchanged a glance and then looked at the young men somberly.

“If we are betrayed,” started Voldemort, only to be interrupted by Harry.

“We won’t!” the teen insisted. “Bill wouldn’t!”

A crimson glare, and a brief intense surge of the powerful wizard’s aura, silenced Harry’s indignant protest. Draco shuddered and lowered his eyes, intimidated.

“If we are betrayed,” Voldemort emphasized, “If there are Aurors attacking us when we arrive at Delacour Manoir, or anything similar happens during this weekend, I want you to be able to escape. Do you understand? Do not hesitate and do not play the heron. Lucius and I will manage. In case we do not follow immediately, or contact you within ten minutes time, call Gigi. Tell her to pack up
everything we brought along and get out of Paris right away! Take the other Portkey back to Malfoy Manor, find the LeStranges and contact Severus and tell them what happened. That book is now set so that it will activate anytime when you touch it and utter the words ‘Vade mecum’, alright?"

He gestured over to a side board, on which lay the same grass green book on a silver platter, the Michelin Green Guide Flanders, Picardy and Paris, which had brought them here.

Neither teen had noticed it before.

“Alright, we’ll be careful,” acknowledged Harry with a nod of his head.

As there was no need to go over their warnings and reminders once more, they left the suite. As there was no Floo connection set up to a fireplace on the ground floor, they had decided to get to the meeting room Muggle style, using the elevator instead of side-along Apparition.

They got there ten minutes early and saw that the hotel had organised everything as had been specified; there was an oval shaped meeting table at one end of the rectangular room, seating eight, set up like for a Muggle conference, with mineral water, glasses, notepads and biros. At the other side of the room were a couple of bergère chairs and canapés arranged in a U-form, to provide a more casual, relaxed place to sit and talk. The overall colour scheme was striped beige and dark brown with gold accents; a sombre, neutral tone. The wand mouldings, drapes, gilded mirrors, chandeliers and the matching elegant furniture were all period.

Voldemort and Lucius exchanged looks, pleased that everything had gone as they had requested. A smartly dressed Muggle waiter came in and greeted them, asking in French if they needed anything else, but Lucius dismissed him in a polite tone.

As soon as the Muggle left them alone, Lucius prudently cast a temporary Muggle repelling charm on the outside of the door to assure privacy for the upcoming meeting. Then he walked back into the middle of the room and took up a position slightly to the right and in front of the Dark Lord.

Both whipped out their wands and voicelessly cast an array of scanning spells, such as *Homenum Revelio*, around the room, speedily checking for any hidden persons, animals, Animagni, monitoring charms or listening devices.

Lucius also cast a few charms to check the water bottles and glasses standing on the table for common poisons. He found nothing suspicious, which was good.

“All clear,” Lucius remarked quietly.

Voldemort nodded almost imperceptibly, concentrating on the closed wooden door and the hallway beyond, stretching out his senses to pick up the slightest indication that another magical person was entering the hotel entrance hall, hallway, or the floor above or below them. At the same time, he took care to continue cloaking the presence of his own, immensely powerful magical aura.

While Voldemort and Lucius stayed close to each other facing the door, Harry and Draco moved around the room, trying to quell their nerves. They looked out of the large bay window onto a grand place with a fountain and statues. There were a few tourists from Asia walking by, but Harry couldn’t tell if they were Japanese, Chinese or Korean. Again, he promised himself to go travelling next year, or the year after, so that he would know the difference.

The two boys went back to stand to the left of Voldemort. They positioned themselves with a little bit of distance to each other; Harry closer than Draco next to the Dark Lord. All four of them were standing visibly tall, proud and straight, but flexible in the knees, so that each of them would be able
to instantly fall into a defensive position, guarding each other’s backs should the worst happen; something they all clearly hoped would not.

Harry concentrated on breathing steadily, calmly in and out, to centre himself like the others did. He had understood Voldemort’s earlier order, but he knew he would disobey. Should any attack happen, he would instantly bring up a large, powerful shield to cover all of them. He would not Portkey away if he wasn’t a hundred per cent sure that Draco was OK and able to use his Portkey too.

None of the British wizards spoke. They had gone over all their plans and eventualities often enough. They could only wait.

Finally, Voldemort whispered. “They are coming.”

A few seconds later, they could all see the door handle moving down.

“Good evening my Lord, Mr Malfoy. Hello Harry, Draco!” rang out the clear tenor as the redhead walked inside, holding the heavy door open for the wizard following him.

Five minutes past the appointed time, Bill Weasley and Monsieur Delacour had arrived.

Neither Voldemort nor Lucius were annoyed as they knew it was a French custom; better to be a little late than to come before the appointed time. However, both wizards were not alone. They were accompanied by two other men; the older, a tall and broad shouldered, blond, self-confident man, and the younger one slender, olive-skinned and dark haired—he walked at the rear of the little group, visibly nervous.

The four new arrivals came to a stop four paces away from the waiting British wizards. The blond gave off the impression of a trained fighter, moving smoothly, efficiently, scanning the room and its inhabitants quickly for any threat. His right hand seemed to be just itching to draw out his wand. The cut and the slight golden embellishment of his form fitting, no nonsense dark blue, dragon hide battle robe told Lucius and Voldemort that he was a high ranking French Auror.

Neither Voldemort nor Lucius was surprised by the Auror’s presence. They knew that they would want to check and make sure Harry wasn’t under the *Imperius*, or *Compulsion* charms or clear of any other control.

Bill stepped forward and at the same time to the side, figuratively opening up the way between the two groups.

“My Lord, gentlemen,” he said formally with a short, curt bow, “may I present to you Monsieur Marcellin Delacour, the Undersecretary from the French Department of International Magical Cooperation. He is accompanied by Auror Roger LeBlanc. Monsieur LeBlanc is here as a representative of the French DMLE. And this is Artiste Géroux,” he indicated the younger, dark-haired wizard. “Monsieur Géroux is the junior assistant to Monsieur Beauchene, the Head of the Department of International Magical Cooperation.”

The French were clearly nervous, holding their distance in a way that was unusual for them. They inclined their heads in greeting, but none of them tried to step closer and shake hands with Lucius, Voldemort or one of the boys. Their eyes flitted warily back and forth over the four British wizards, taking in their looks, demeanour and clothes.

“Monsieur Delacour, Mister Weasley, Auror LeBlanc, Monsieur Géroux, a pleasure to meet you. My name is Lucius Malfoy,” Lucius replied with a thin smile, “Allow me to introduce the Dark Lord of Britain, Lord Voldemort,” with these words, he turned a bit sidewise, presenting Voldemort with
an elegant gesture, “and Harry Potter.” He nodded towards Delacour and the Auror, ignoring the younger, dark-haired man for now, who had come to a stop slightly behind and to the side of Delacour in a mirror stance of Harry and Draco.

At last, Lucius looked over to Draco. “And this is my son, Draco Malfoy.”

At both Harry and Voldemort’s names, the tension in the room went up just a bit more, and additionally, a fleeting impression of disbelieving surprise flashed over the faces of the French. It was as if they couldn’t believe they were truly in the presence of the infamous He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.

Someone who, according to Dumbledore, was some kind of abnormally tall, skeletal thin, white skinned, red-eyed, inhuman, half-snake-half-demon being, immensely powerful, but corrupted and completely insane and evil.

They certainly hadn’t expected a tall, dark, handsome wizard in the prime of life, who stood perfectly calm and poised next to two good looking, politely smiling younger men. He radiated a dark, oppressive magical power all right, which he obviously cloaked expertly; his eyes were an eerie colour, brown and crimson, but Lord Voldemort didn’t appear especially menacing or aggressive to them.

And right next to him stood the famous Boy-Who-Lived, who appeared much more grownup than the pictures they had seen of him so far, or how Monsieur Delacour remembered Harry Potter from the Tri-Wizard Tournament. The glasses were missing, the jet black hair was longer, and they could only vaguely make out the form of the infamous lightening bold shaped scar on his forehead, not that they were as rude as to stare overtly at him. That young man was powerful in his own right; they could literally feel his presence next to the Dark Lord.

The four British wizards looked so stunning!

Light and dark stood next to each other; a symphony of complementing colours. The deep green of the ancient forests of the old times intermingled with silver and gold, black, light and charcoal grey, set off perfectly by twice black in the middle and platinum blond hair on the outsides of the quartet.

Voldemort and Harry nodded towards the others, but otherwise stood perfectly still, their hands open at their sides, clearly visibly unarmed. Draco copied this slight nod when his father said his name.

The men all nodded their heads at each other and exchanged the usual greeting formulas (“nice/pleased to meet you”, “how do you do?” to which the response was, “I’m fine, thank you, how are you?” or something similar) but they didn’t say anything further, each grasping around in his head what best to say to overcome the awkwardness and mistrust palpable between them.

LeBlanc was the Head of Security, responsible for the safety of the Minister and the Heads of the various Departments of the French Ministry for Magic. Louvel Beauchene had insisted that LeBlanc accompany Messieurs Delacour and Géroux, to evaluate the possible threat and to protect the other two as a bodyguard.

To stand suddenly in front of the British Dark Lord, a wizard rumoured to be responsible for hundreds or probably thousands of violent deaths during the period between 1970 and 1981; a wizard that was acclaimed and feared because he had delved deeply into the Dark Arts, was a bit much for LeBlanc, Delacour and especially young Géroux, despite all the reassuring talks that Bill had done to prepare Delacour for this encounter.

Before someone could comment on the beautiful French weather in comparison to the supposedly
dismal British weather (which the British wizards would have most likely vehemently denied out of stubborn patriotic pride) Harry decided to break rank and simply do something in typical Harry Potter fashion, diplomatic protocols be damned.

Hoping to break the tension, he walked over to Bill. “So, Luna’s prediction.”

Bill laughed, “Yeah…I admit I was surprised, but, she was right.” A proud smile came on his face, “I asked her to marry me and she said yes.”

“What?” Harry laughed as he hugged Bill. “Congratulations.”

Everybody watched them. Marcellin Delacour smiled at Bill and Harry, whereas LeBlanc kept his focus on evaluating Lord Voldemort and Lucius Malfoy, clearly not believing them to be harmless or trustworthy at all.

“Gentlemen,” Voldemort spoke up, cutting off Bill and Harry’s celebration and drawing everyone’s attention. “If it will appease you, I would be willing to swear a vow for the duration of the weekend to not harm or betray anyone.”

The men exchanged looks. The French side was stunned that the Dark Lord would willingly do something like that. They still expected him to start threatening or blackmailing them any minute.

After glances full of unspoken communication between LeBlanc and Delacour, they nodded in agreement. “That is acceptable.”

So, after some deliberation to get the wording right, the vow was cast. All eight wizards took the Vow of Truce, swearing not to harm or betray each other and to not disclose each other’s secrets to any third party not present in this room, or at the dinner at the Delacour Manoir without explicit consent of the other.

Harry turned to the Auror, “Monsieur LeBlanc, if you still have any misgivings on whether or not you’re being tricked, I’ll allow you to check me for any spells or curses.”

Assessing the intention and sincerity of the younger man, LeBlanc swept a scrutinizing look at Harry before he stepped up to the teen, waving his wand over him and murmuring incantations, checking him for any spells. He didn’t let on that he noticed out of the corner of his eye, just how warily not only the Boy-Who-Lived, but both Malfoys and also the Dark Lord, watched his every move. The dark wizard radiated immense protectiveness and possessiveness, the same as the younger Malfoy. They looked as if they would kill him on the spot, should he try and harm Potter in any way.

Now that was interesting; interesting indeed. He made a mental note to watch them over the course of the evening and the next two days. Just what kind of relationship did the famous Harry Potter have with the Dark Lord and the Malfoys?

“He is clean,” LeBlanc said after a moment, stepping back from Harry.

“Now that that is out of the way,” Marcellin stepped forward, “We can head to dinner at my family home.”

He held out a blue and yellow silken scarf that he had formerly carried in his robes’ pocket. Everyone stepped close, each of them grabbing the Portkey. With a whispered word, they disappeared.
The French Connection Part Two

Chapter Notes

A/N: here is the new chapter. Hope you guys like it.

Disclaimer: I own nothing…if I did, Ginny would have died in the CoS, Dumbledore would have choked on his lemon drops and Harry would have stood up for himself against Molly and Dumbledore.

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“Talking”
Thinking’
|Hedwig’s mental speak|
-Sesshomaru/Fawkes’ mental speak-
|Harry’s mental speak|
Letter or commentary/introduction and flashback
{Parsseltongue}~…~ indicates scene change

Last time on RDA:

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“Now that that is out of the way,” Marcellin stepped forward, “We can head to dinner at my family home.”

He held out a blue and yellow silken scarf that he had formerly carried in his robes’ pocket. Everyone stepped close, each of them grabbing the Portkey. With a whispered word, they disappeared.

They reappeared in the foyer at Delacour Mansion. Voldemort, Lucius, Harry and Draco righted themselves quickly and instinctively stood close together; shoulder to shoulder, back to back, each scanning a quadrant of the entrance hall for any potential threat.

“Welcome to my home,” Marcellin stated as he gestured for them to follow him, completely ignoring their defensive stance. He and Bill thought it best to carry on as if everything was alright, which it was. There were no Aurors supposedly lurking in the corners, waiting to attack the British group.

“Please.” Marcellin cast a pointed glance at LeBlanc and Aristide, shooing them forward and out of the way.

“Come along Harry,” Bill said.

“This is very beautiful,” Harry said as he looked around.
“Thank you,” Marcellin said, “the Manor has been in my family for two hundred and fifty years. It was initially a hunting lodge before the French Revolution.”

The eight of them stepped into the drawing room, drawing the attention of the room’s occupants.

“’Arry!” Fleur was all smiles as she got up from her seat and headed towards the teen, pulling him into a hug. “’Ow are you?”

“I’m fine,” Harry grinned as he squeezed her briefly before letting go. “I heard congratulations are in order.”

Fleur looked from him to Bill and back before she laughed, “Yes, zey are. Come. You remember Gabrielle.”

“’Ello ’Arry,” the girl smiled shyly at him but didn’t move any closer. She was a little awestruck as she remembered that he had saved her life just two years ago.

“Gabrielle,” Harry nodded. He turned back and gestured for Draco to come to him, “I’m sure you remember Draco Malfoy.”

Fleur turned to the blond and gave him two kisses, one on each cheek, “Yes. I remember. So, you two are together, no?”

“Yes,” Draco nodded with a smile as he slipped his hand into Harry’s. “We got together over the summer.”

“You must tell me all about it,” Fleur grinned as she stepped between the boys, wrapping an arm around each of them, “Come, come. We eat and zen, we talk.”

With that, she led them to the dining room, leaving everyone else to follow.

Lucius and Voldemort exchanged smirks, each remembering how nervous Harry had been but seeing nothing of said nerves now. They turned to courteously greet Apolline Delacour, who had just entered the dining room through another door from the garden terrace, along with a cheerful, portly wizard, clad in flamboyant robes. In contrast, Madame Delacour was sophisticated, nonchalant elegance in a dream of dark blue silk.

~…~

The dinner was delicious and went off without any troubles. They had been joined by Louvel Beauchene, the Head of the Department for International Magical Cooperation, and despite the obvious tensions, everything had been okay.

Harry’s fears were unfounded as Draco had been right; he had been seated next to Fleur, who was only happy to help him with his silverware.

After dinner was over, while Harry, Draco Aristide and Lucius stayed with the Delacour women, venturing outside to admire the beautiful garden, Voldemort, Marcellin, Louvel and Roger, retired to Marcellin’s study to talk business.

~…~

“Forgive me your Lordship,” Louvel Beauchene said, eying Voldemort warily, “but it is quite difficult to fathom that you now want anything like peaceful negotiations and that you claim to be working to change the British magical government only for the best intentions. After all, that is what
the instigators of a coup d’État always say, no? During the seventies, you acted not only like a revolutionist, but more like a terrorist leader who was intent on destroying the status quo in Britain, threatening to expose the magical community.”

Voldemort sat quietly, only arching an eyebrow. He wanted to wait and see where this would go.

“Is it not true that your Death Eaters attacked and killed random Muggles and Muggle-born wizards and witches?” Beauchene continued to list the crimes of the Dark Lord and his followers in the first war, “that you and your warriors were using the Imperius curse and blackmail to gain secret servants in high places, intending to destabilise the British Ministry of Magic? That you used Giants to attack England, and that your warriors, the so called Death Eaters, massacred hundreds of pure-bloodes?”

Voldemort nodded gravely. He had no intention of denying what he had done. “Indeed. It is true that I planned, and continue to plan, a revolution against the British Ministry of Magic and especially Albus Dumbledore and his followers. But,” he pointedly raised his right index finger, “it is a Light side myth, a lie, that I or my Death Eaters murdered hundreds of pure-blood wizards and witches. We did no such thing! I believe we are responsible for eradicating a few hundred Muggles, Muggle-borns and half-bloods over a period of ten, almost eleven, years. As far as I remember, I only killed one pure-blood wizard intentionally and that was James Potter. He and his Muggle-born wife were also Order of the Phoenix members, constantly attacking my people. Despite this, I was willing to spare them before October 1981. I first asked them to join our cause; when they refused, I gave them both two chances in combat situations to escape. They were very obstinate, very fanatical and completely loyal to Dumbledore. Those young fools, it was a shame, such a waste of magical potential.”

He shook his head and added contemplatively, “Well, I was a fool too, to walk into that death trap as I did.”

“Order of the what?” inquired Beauchene, unnerved by the casual attitude of the Dark Lord, who appeared to be only disappointed that he had had to kill the Potters, then next alluded—astonishingly frank—to that mysterious night when he lost his powers. The man in front of him, Voldemort, had seemed slightly angry at the fact that the British Ministry and media accused him of too many murdered pure-bloids when he had obviously not done so.

“Ah,” Voldemort tilted his head in question. “You do not know that term?”

Marcellin answered. “Bill explained it to me, but I got the impression…” he trailed off.

Beauchene looked back and forth between the two other wizards, clearly not happy that his employee had withheld information.

LeBlanc frowned. He didn’t know this term; Order of the what? Phoenix?

Voldemort clarified, “This information is restricted for a reason. Dumbledore keeps his chicken club a secret from the public, so it is prudent not to let anyone know that you know as that could impair William Weasley’s cover. Is that understood?”

Beauchene nodded, “Certainly.”

LeBlanc also nodded affirmative.

“You see Monsieur Beauchene, back in the seventies, my forces and I mainly fought with members of Dumbledore’s own army. They call themselves the Order of the Phoenix, which is a secret organisation that he founded and led to defeat me. They aspire to protect all Muggles, Muggle-borns
and Half-bloods and to fight against dark magic in general. We strove to eradicate the Mudbloods and Muggles if they either represented a threat to the magical community, or they had harmed wizards on an earlier occasion. The Order of the Phoenix tried to stop us. They also searched some of my people out and attacked them in an ambush. In most cases, completely unprovoked I might add. Then, we retaliated, and sought them out ourselves. We killed a few of them, maybe five or six in total. And that’s it,” Voldemort explained, locking eyes with the uneasy Head of the French Department of International Magical Cooperation.

The portly wizard seemed to fight the urge to draw his wand, or to stand up and make a signified retreat. “So you do not deny that you killed some wizards?”

Voldemort smirked and emphasized, “Three pure-bloods on purpose in the first war. The Prewett twins were killed by a group of my followers because they were Order of the Phoenix members, Dumbledore’s warriors, and had become truly irksome. I personally fought and eventually killed James Potter, who was one of the main, full time warriors of the Order of the Phoenix. Three pure-blood wizards, not hundreds.”

As if killing a few hundred Muggles, Muggle-borns, half-bloods and only three pure-bloods wasn’t so bad. Well, to pure-bloods it wasn’t. Not really.

Voldemort continued, “Do not forget that Aurors led by Mad-Eye Moody killed two of my best men, young pure-bloods whose names were Rosier and Wilkens. And several Black family members, of course all pure-bloods, were killed too during the last war, most unfortunately. The last direct heir, Sirius Black fell recently through the Veil of Death; although Madam LeStrange did not intend to kill her cousin. But, that is all in the past.”

LeBlanc was not to be deterred however. “And what about Madam Bones? Didn’t you recently assassinate her? And do you deny responsibility for damaging that bridge, so that a couple of Muggles lost their lives? Dumbledore claims you are responsible for murdering several people, for example Igor Karkarov and Hestia Jones.”

Voldemort made a move with his hand, as if to chase a fly away. “Alright; last year and this year, we did kill a few more, but not a large number and only if really necessary. Or, to make a point of what we could do, if Fudge didn’t step down and yield to my demands. Now, Ms Jones was an Order of the Phoenix member, a warrior, therefore not an innocent casualty. Igor was a spineless traitor, so I sent my people to hunt him down. But, as they say, that is all in the past.”

He stopped speaking and took a sip of his exquisite Tessoron cognac. Setting his tulip glass down, he laced his fingers below his chin, looking intently at both Louvel Beauchene and Marcellin Delacour. “My goal has not changed so much, but my methods have due to certain information that has come to my attention. What has not changed is that I have huge numbers at my command, once again, and not just witches and wizards, but all manner of Dark creatures. Several Vampire Clans and all of the British Werewolves have pledged themselves to me; they will fight...if necessary.”

The two French wizards listened, curious as to what new information and methods the British Dark Lord meant, and registering the impressive force this wizard could lead into battle.

Voldemort sat back, crossing one leg over the other. He smiled a thin smile. “Now, I have to admit that I behaved officiously during the seventies. My followers acted rashly in their fervent desire to stop the destruction of our world, so rashly that we almost destroyed it ourselves. We were overzealous, hasty, and rued that bitterly. After my near death experience at the hands of Mr Potter’s dear mother, I had a decade to observe and contemplate as I could do nothing else. After I returned, I started to rebuild my forces. I was lucky that Mr Potter decided to approach me. Our discussions led to a re-evaluation of my goals and plans.”
“Could you elaborate on that please?” Roger LeBlanc asked, hiding his astonishment well.

“Certainly,” Voldemort nodded, “my intentions towards Muggles are not as homicidal as they once were. I have come to the realization that it is not feasible to bring the wizards out of hiding to rule the Muggles and the Muggle-borns, like I envisioned the new order during the seventies; at least, not for a long while.”

“Oh?” Marcellin asked, “And may I ask what changed your opinion?”

“This summer, Mr Potter and the young Mr Malfoy conveyed a survey of the modern Muggle world. They drew my attention to the extraordinary power of modern Muggle weapons,” Voldemort explained, “the existence of satellites surveying Earth from space, and video cameras surveying Muggle shops, banks and all kinds of public Muggle venues and traffic.”

Both French wizards nodded gravely. They did not look as shocked and surprised as Voldemort’s followers did when he had told them about the Muggle technology; so he concluded that the French wizards, or at least these Ministry employees, were well aware of the Muggles immense technological progress.

“I understand now that open warfare against them, like Grindelwald did, or I attempted, is suicide,” Voldemort continued. “Their numbers are simply too great to eradicate or to subjugate them. The threat they pose to us if they ever discovered the magical people is immense. For the foreseeable future, we have to adhere to the Statute of Secrecy. Once the British Wizarding world is under my control, and we have established a new working government, I plan to encourage research of further options with the ultimate goal of ensuring a safe world for all magical beings and creatures.”

“That sounds reasonable your Lordship,” Beauchene nodded. “Could you give me an example of your current and future methods and the reasons you employ them? Why do you believe Muggle-borns pose a threat at all?”

“For the time being, we have to solve the problem of too many Muggles in Britain knowing too much about the Magical world. Any operations against Muggles connected to Mud—Muggle-borns, and half-bloods that spread the knowledge about magic must be clandestine operations, disguised as accidents,” Voldemort said. “Their science, medicine and surveillance technology are developing so fast. It is only a question of time until some Muggle crime or military researcher finds incontrovertible evidence of magic and gets his—or her—hands on some stupid Muggle-born who tells them all about us; about our strengths and weaknesses.

“Imagine what would happen when Muggles realize that most wizards are helpless without their wands? Alternatively, imagine how magical people shall be treated when Muggles try to study us? How will wizard children or adults suffer when the Muggle government attempts to persuade, or rather, force them to aid the Muggles in their everyday chores, businesses, healing endeavours or even their armed conflicts with other Muggles?”

Louvel Beauchene was taken aback. “Excusez-moi?!” he exclaimed incredulously, “My government was under the impression that only the British Prime Minister was informed by your Minister for Magic that magic is real and that occasionally, he is appraised of what happens in our world.”

“That is not the case,” replied Voldemort, shaking his head minimally. “Well, in theory, you are correct of course. You see, Monsieur Beauchene, through the neglect and carelessness of the British Ministry for Magic that magic is real and that occasionally, he is appraised of what happens in our world.”

“That is not the case,” replied Voldemort, shaking his head minimally. “Well, in theory, you are correct of course. You see, Monsieur Beauchene, through the neglect and carelessness of the British Ministry for Magic, and deliberately through the exaggerated Pro-Muggle attitude of Albus Dumbledore in his function as the Headmaster of Hogwarts, not only are many Muggle parents and the siblings of Muggle-borns or half-bloods aware of our world, but also some of their close relatives, good friends or even work colleagues.”
That statement was met with incredulous exclamations.

“What?!”

“Pardon?!”

The three French wizards were aghast at hearing these facts and looked at Voldemort with disbelief and dismay, which pleased the Dark Lord immensely. This was what he was hoping for.

Voldemort continued to explain in a casual tone, “For now, all my people can do is identify and find these Muggle-borns or half-bloods and their families. They research all connections to friends, colleagues at work and any others they have told anything about magic, and eradicate the potential risk of discovery before this situation becomes uncontrollable. They do this in a circumspect way, not like in the first war. No burned houses with the Dark Mark cast in the sky above to cause panic. That would be counterproductive.”

“I see,” said Beauchene. “Couldn’t you just—oh, of course not. How unfortunate that so many Muggles lose their lives, but now I understand why you do it. Not that I agree, mind you. And-and your Ministry does not try to control the Muggles? Your DLME has a squad of Obliviators. Why do they not nip this problem in the bud?”

“No they do not. They do send Obliviators out to control the sighting of magic, but it is more in the cases of accidental magic. Mr Potter could tell you about an unpleasant incident three years ago at his Muggle home, for instance. Obliviator squads are also sent out when magical creatures have been sighted, like when a dragon sweeps down over a beach like it happened in Wales, or in cases where some wizard plays a prank on Muggles, which happens rather frequently,” explained Voldemort.

“And what do you plan to do once you have won this war and gathered the control over the Ministry and the British Wizengamot?” Marcellin asked.

“One immediate step towards more safety shall be a changed approach of Muggle-borns or Muggle raised half-blood children, like Mr Potter, that are about to start Hogwarts in the next year or years,” Voldemort said.

“What do you have in mind, your Lordship?” Beauchene asked.

“Instead of executing them all, as was my former approach, I want to improve the methods of first contact,” Voldemort explained, “I plan to send out better prepared, better trained wizards to make this crucial first contact with these Muggle-born children and their parents or guardians.”

Beauchene frowned. “I am delighted to hear that you plan to refrain from murdering innocents, but why do you deem it necessary to change how the future students are approached?”

“I do not know things are done here in France,” Voldemort said calmly, “but, are you aware that all magical children of the appropriate age to start Hogwarts on the first of September, meaning all eleven year olds, get an invitation by owl post the previous summer? And that British Wizarding parents are seriously discouraged to teach their children any magic before they come to Hogwarts as a first year?”

The French wizards frowned. They were not aware of that and could not understand why the British wizarding world would allow that to happen.

“But, why so late?” Marcellin asked.

“That is just the way it is in Britain,” Voldemort sneered his voice fairly dripped of contempt.
“Peoples like Dumbledore and former Minister Fudge argued that all children should enjoy their childhood and that their magical core is too weak to train them with a wand in serious magic anyway. Dumbledore and his followers are of the opinion that it would not be fair if wizard-born, or pure-blood, children have already learned to cast simple magic at home. They felt that the Muggle-borns, and the Muggle raised half-bloods, would be at a disadvantage.”

Beauchene, LeBlanc and Marcellin exchanged exasperated glances and shook their heads at the idiocy of Dumbledore and Fudge.

Voldemort went on to explain how things were handled currently by the Hogwarts staff. “Sometime sooner, or later, depending on the whims of the Headmaster, and the time schedule of the Heads of Houses, a professor from Hogwarts visits this Muggle family and they explain briefly about magic and Hogwarts. They then accompany the Muggle-born child, and usually the Muggle parents also, for a first outing to Diagon Alley, our main Wizarding district. This is a hidden area, in the heart of Muggle London, near Leicester square, accessible from Charing Cross Road. There, they will buy the necessary school supplies.”

At this point, the French wizards nodded, but they also frowned. Beauchene and Delacour had both visited Diagon Alley during the summer two years before, and LeBlanc had at least heard of the street. Diagon Alley was in their mind, a weak copy of the obviously superior Rue Magique here in Paris, which was hidden in the Latin Quarter. Of course someone had to show the young wizard or witch where to get there school supplies; if it was organized that way in Britain. However, they were a bit astonished at hearing the Muggle parents actually going along to Diagon Alley.

“During this visit, the Muggles are shown to Gringotts to exchange their Muggle British Pounds into galleons,” Voldemort continued, “So, they now know where Diagon Alley is and how to find the entrance, the Leaky Cauldron, if they accompany a magical person like their child. In theory, they can tell others. Of course, most of these Muggles keep quiet; they simply tell their neighbours that their child has been accepted at a school for the especially gifted. But some, however, are not so careful. Mr. Potter can tell you more, especially that in his house—Gryffindor House—the security is extremely, criminally lax. To my mind, it is imperative to ensure that these Muggles do not spread word about the magical world.”

Marcellin exclaimed, “But, this is—is—irresponsible!”

Beauchene commented, “Are you sure it is handled this way by the Hogwarts staff?”

Voldemort simply inclined his head. “Absolutely. I shall swear it is the truth. If you do not believe me, go and ask the Malfoys and Potter.”

“But why?” wondered LeBlanc. To him, this seemed not only strange, but absurd. Why risk the safety and security of the British wizarding world like that?

The French wizards were appalled and very worried.

“Certainly Muggles should not witness so much,” Beauchene remarked, “and they should not be able to talk freely about our world.”

“In all our dealings with our counterparts in the British Ministry,” Marcellin said, “we have never been informed about this problem.”

“We have spent days negotiating about the best way to ensure that Muggle civilians travelling in airplanes, or Muggle soldiers flying their training sessions in Tornado jets do not see a glimpse of the Winged horses or cause a terrible accident,” said Beauchene. “We worry about the dangers that the
superfast, modern Muggle ships, or the huge gas or oil drilling platforms pose to the Sea Serpents and Merpeople. All of that is important, of course. But it is nothing compared to the danger of actually allowing an increasing number of Muggles to become aware of the magical world!”

“Yes of course,” Voldemort agreed immediately. “Do you begin to see that we, the Dark side, do not oppose the current British administration just out of spite or a misguided sense of clinging to some barbaric ‘Old Ways’ traditions? Can you accept that there is more at stake here than my personal quest to eradicate all Muggles, just because I am simply the incarnate evil, as you have been led to believe?”

Beauchene sighed, “Merde. I beg your pardon, but—

“It is alright, that is a superb word to describe the current situation in Britain,” Voldemort said grimly. “There is something else, something equally important.”

Beauchene exchanged a look with his two companions and muttered, “What else? This is already a most appalling state of affairs.”

Voldemort frowned at the interruption, but was pleased nonetheless with the trepidation on the French wizard’s faces. He shifted in his seat, leaning back and crossing one leg over the other, the relaxed pose in stark contrast to the gravity of his words. The men hung on his lips, waiting what new calamity the Dark Lord would disclose.

“Many Muggles do not react favourably to a magical child, be it a Muggleborn or a half-blood. In the past and present, these innocent children were, or are, often neglected, abused and suffer. It is cruel to deny them to stay in the magical world during summer holidays. Currently, the Headmaster of Hogwarts insists that such students are forced back to their Muggle families or guardians, who abhor, loath and fear them, because he believes that they will benefit from the experience of staying in contact with their ‘Muggle side.’” Voldemort sneered at this, showing his disgust and exasperation, but not letting on that once upon a time, he had been one of these unfortunate students.

The trio of French Ministry representatives glared at him incredulous, aghast, disgusted and shocked, uttering a variety of swearwords under their breath that he didn’t catch.

“In Britain, all magical children are forbidden to use any magic during the holidays, so they cannot defend themselves or at least threaten any Muggle trying to hurt them with magic. This has to be resolved,” Voldemort continued, “I want the Hogwarts professors, or other wizards that interact with Muggle families, additionally trained to recognize the first signs of abusive behaviour. I want to change the law so that such adult wizards are allowed to intervene and remove those children a once from the abusive situation.”

“Oh mon dieu!” exclaimed Marcellin. He was horrified at what he had just heard. Children were sacred, especially wizarding children, and to hear of them being treated so horribly. “You have my complete support Lord Voldemort.”

He stopped speaking for a second, wondering how to correctly address the man in front of him. Should he say Your Lordship, like Beauchene did? But that was a bit pretentious, wasn’t it? This Lord Voldemort was after all self-styled, as far as Marcellin knew, but of course this dark wizard was the most magically powerful person he had ever encountered.

He forgot his hesitation almost immediately when he imagined how an innocent magical child could be forced back into the care of a Muggle family that did not want the child and where the child did not want to stay. Why ever were these students not properly cared for in Britain? Why did Albus Dumbledore always talk about progress at ICW conferences, and more understanding between
Muggles and wizards? That was an illusion, wishful thinking! It was possible on a small scale certainly; there were some decent Muggles around. But the masses were dangerous, prejudiced and only too ready to point their fingers at any scapegoat they found.

“This is horrible! Bill Weasley had already talked about this topic to me,” Marcellin resumed speaking, “but I did not fully understand just how dangerous it was or that the British Ministry and Mr Dumbledore are acting so irresponsibly.”

Beauchene began speaking animatedly and gesturing with his hand in enthusiasm, “Here in France, we do have such a programme. It is sponsored by our Ministry for Magic. All Muggle-borns and half-bloods are searched out and evaluated early on. We do not wait until they are eleven years old. Seven is the age by which most experts agree that magic will have revealed itself, if present, in the child.”

He shook his head in disbelief at the idea that they would leave magical children on their own for that long. “It is the general consensus in the French wizarding community that wizard children living in the Muggle world are not safe there. There are some notable exceptions of course, as there are decent, intelligent and tolerant Muggles out there. Nevertheless, all wizard children do experience small incidents of magic, accidental magic, as they develop. They make flowers grow faster, or let a ball hover in the air, or summon toys or banish food they dislike.”

Marcellin, LeBlanc and Voldemort nodded in agreement.

Beauchene continued, “I remember my son when he was age three, four, five and the temper tantrums he would get; tantrums that came with accidental magic. That would’ve been impossible to hide from the Muggles, and it would scare the child and of course the parents or any friends witnessing such a magical outburst if no one had told them what to expect.”

“So our goal is to find magical children growing up in the Muggle world as early as possible and to remove them if necessary,” Marcellin explained, “A Ministry of Magic representative from the Department of Childcare would arrive to speak with the family. If the circumstances that the child live in fails our Ministry’s standards, the child would be removed immediately and given into the temporary care of a group home until a suitable foster family has made its choice. The Muggles in the know would be obliviated; the Department engineers a convincing cover story for the Muggle police and newspapers depending on the age of the child. It is astounding how many young Muggle children suffer fatal traffic accidents, or drowning in lakes or rivers, you know?”

“Yes, I know that Muggles suffer all kinds of ‘accidents’,” Voldemort replied, sharing a conspiring smirk with the French wizard. “You mentioned ‘to remove them if necessary’. What did you mean?”

“Well, if the family environment is understanding and supportive, they may keep the child,” Beauchene clarified, “but the family is then entered into a mentoring programme. There are monthly visits to ensure the quality of education and necessary care, and that the Muggles do not talk about the magical world. We place a special hex, which is a blend of the Confundus charm and the Imperius curse, on the parents and any Muggle siblings so that they literally are unable to utter words like magic, sorcery, magical school, witch, wizard, Beauxbatons in connection with their child’s person or school when speaking to people not already in the know.”

“Creative,” commented Voldemort, “And as it should be.”

“And in the first place,” Marcellin pointed out, “French Muggle parents do not know as much about us as your British families do know about you. What I mean is; there is no need for the Muggle parents to go along to Rue Magique to shop for supplies or to Gringotts Paris to exchange their funds, like you described are common for British Muggles.”
“Oh?” Voldemort raised an eyebrow in surprise. “How so?”

Marcellin smiled, proud to be able to explain their system, which was far superior to the British in his opinion. “In France, the magical school also sends them a letter—however not by owl, but by regular Muggle post—with a list of equipment their child is going to receive or use at school, and how high the cost of school is, including everything; boarding, education, school robes, cauldrons, quills, parchment and so on for seven years. The parents then give a modest, monthly pay cheque in Francs to a Muggle bank account at Crédit Lyonnais, which is secretly charmed to transfer this Muggle money to Gringotts Paris and as galleons into the school’s vault; very ingenious of the goblins, and an easy way to ensure more secrecy and security.

“And, of course, the initial letter is charmed so that any other Muggles besides the parents, or guardians, of this specific Muggle-born first year reading it won’t get suspicious.”

“I see; ingenious,” Voldemort nodded thoughtfully. Why ever had nobody in Britain come up with a similar idea? Maybe Dumbledore and those idiotic, like-minded Light wizards actually wanted the Muggle-borns or half-bloods and their Muggle parents, siblings, spouses visiting Diagon Alley each summer to further more interaction between them and to show off the fantastical magical world to them?

“And how do the children get their supplies?” he asked.

“On the day before the first day of school, the first years are all assembled at the Beauxbaton School,” Marcellin explained, “All children that have grown up in the wizarding world went to Rue Magique with their wizard parents or guardians in advance during the month of August, so they should have all the necessary supplies already. They prefects check to make sure.

“The very few new Muggle-borns or half-bloods that still live with their Muggle families get their outfits at school. The shops in Rue Magique provide a starter package for the beginning of term. During their first year, they get introductory lectures to our world, building upon what they have already been taught during the past years in the mentoring programme. A teacher together with one or two prefects shows them how to use the Floo network and accompanies this group on visits to the wizarding district. They are shown where the entrance from the Muggle side is only later, when they have grown accustomed to our world, have come to love magic, and have it drummed into them how important secrecy is.”

“That is fascinating!” Voldemort was stunned, though he didn’t show it. He knew that the British wizarding world was behind when it came to certain things, but he had had no idea just how behind they were. This, this! is what they should be doing, and should have been doing from the start!

“So he asked, “Do you know how this situation is handled in other countries? For example, Germany perhaps?”

“In Germany and other countries in the European Union, they have similar procedures. Such abused children as you mentioned tend to try to defend themselves with burst of uncontrolled, accidental magic. That is cause for concern as such incidents alarm the Muggles, and alert them to the existence of something “supernatural”.” Beauchene mimed quotation marks with his fingertips on that last word, “Many Muggles are not as oblivious as the British wizards believe they are. I personally know quite a few open-minded Muggles that do consider the possibility of supernatural beings or powers as not only fictional. I met some who actually can feel magic to an extent; they are able to correctly identify magical items, plants, or places with strong, natural environmental magic. Like in some old forests, or so called holly wells, or what I believe they call the crossings of Ley Lines in English. We surely do not want to encourage that!”
“No we wouldn’t,” Voldemort agreed. He noticed Madame Delacour standing in the doorway looking inquiringly towards their group, and the tall, black haired wizard rose from his place on the sofa.

Showing his respect and appreciation by nodding to both of them, he spoke sincerely, “Thank you Messieurs, for listening to my arguments, and in turn explaining this topic so thoroughly. I shall endeavour to employ your methods in Britain as soon as possible. I am sure you could arrange to compile a manual with all of these details for my future administration. It shall save hundreds of lives.”

“You are very welcome Lord Voldemort,” Beauchene nodded in reply. “I am pleased we came to an understanding. It was an interesting experience to say the least and I am glad that my misgivings were cleared.”

“Thank you,” Voldemort replied. He waved a hand towards Madame Delacour, “Shall we re-join the charming ladies?”

The men agreed and they all followed Apolline back to where Harry and the others were.

The rest of the night passed and the atmosphere was a lot more relaxed than it was at the start; something that everyone was happy about it and they spent the time talking about nothing and everything.

~…~

The next day, Bill, Fleur and Gabrielle showed up by Floo travel early in the morning to take Harry and Draco out and about Paris while Voldemort and Lucius were supposed to sleep in.

Bill had of course gained permission for this outing from the adults at Delacour Manoir the previous evening, so he knew Lucius would set a charm up that opened the otherwise strictly warded Floo connection at precisely five minutes to eight to allow him and the Delacour girls access to the Malfoy suite. When they arrived, Draco and Harry were already alert and half-dressed…well…somewhat.

Bill laughed when he saw them, “Should we have come back at a later time?”

Harry scowled at his friend. “No. We’re ready. Just give us a few minutes.”

He dragged Draco back into the bedroom. Five minutes later, they returned, this time, both were fully dressed.

“So what are we doing today?” Harry asked as he looked at them.

“Well,” Draco spoke up, “Bill and I thought we’d give you kind of an overview of the city.”

Harry turned confused eyes to his boyfriend, “What do you mean?”

Bill grinned, “He means fly. We thought we’d use broomsticks and fly over the city for a while.”

Harry’s eyes lit up, “Yes! I’m all for that.”

Gabrielle and Fleur giggled while Bill laughed and Draco shook his head with a smile at his boyfriend’s enthusiasm.

“Great!” Fleur grinned after she got her giggles under control. “It ‘as been a vile since I last flew.”

Gabrielle looked at her big sister, “You flew just yesterday afternoon.”
Harry laughed as Fleur flushed and playfully smacked her sister’s shoulder, “On my side…not against me.”

Draco turned to Harry, “Hurry up and eat so we can go.”

Harry nodded and quickly downed his breakfast—buttered croissant and a large café au lait—and soon enough, the five of them were ready to leave.

Bill cast Disillusion Charms on all of them and the broomsticks too. “Ok. We’re going to fly in a hawk formation. Keep away from the Eiffel Tower at least two hundred yards. Also, no loud noises or exclamations of surprise.” He turned to grin at Harry, “And please, no wild stunts or anything. We don’t want any Muggle to notice us.”

Harry huffed, “Why are you looking at me? And anyways, how would they notice us considering you just put us under the Disillusion Charm?”

“Better safe than sorry,” Bill remarked as he lightly cuffed Harry on his shoulder.

Harry grumbled good-naturedly but couldn’t stop the grin from taking over. Not only was he going flying, but he was spending the day visiting one of the most romantic places in the world with the young man he loved and friends he cared about.

“Let’s go!” Harry bounced on his feet prompting the others to laugh.

Soon enough the quintet was in the air. As they flew from the building, Bill got another idea. Quickly, and discreetly, pulling out his wand, he cast another charm over the five broomsticks. This time it was a charm that worked similarly to the way a flock of birds maintained their formation. His broom was the leader and with the way the charm worked, if he curved to the right, sped up or slowed down, then the other brooms would follow his own in direction and speed.

With that out of the way, the group truly took off.

For Fleur and Gabrielle who’s lived in France their whole lives, and Draco who’s visited with his parents more times than he could count, and for Bill who’s visited Fleur enough times, although they’ve all seen Paris before, somehow, knowing that they were with Harry, who has never been on a trip like this before, made them feel as if they were about to experience the place for the first time, the way he would be.

Harry had the widest grin and he thought that it would never fade or that the fireflies buzzing in his stomach and heart would jump out of his chest. Everything was so bloody fantastic! Seeing all those places…he couldn’t remember the last time he truly enjoyed himself this much.

After about twenty minutes of sightseeing, the quintet landed on the balcony of the Malfoy suite again. They quietly returned the brooms to the wardrobe. Since they had no intention of disturbing neither the Dark Lord nor the elder Malfoy as both wizards had a meeting scheduled for eleven o’clock with Louvel Beauchene and Marcellin Delacour, they slipped out the entrance door into the Muggle part of the hotel.

“So where to now?” Harry asked as he looked around.

Fleur looped her arm through his and suggested that they took a walk along the grand boulevards like the Muggle tourists did.

“Zat way,” Fleur explained, “you could entrench yourself into Paris’ lively atmosphere.”
“Sounds fun!” Harry grinned. “Let’s do it.”

With a few flicks of her wand, Fleur changed all their clothes into what was the latest trend amongst well-to-do Muggle teenagers so that they would only standout in the crowds positively.

“Oh we go!” Bill gestured forward and the five proceeded with their walk.

Their first stop was the Louvre Palace and the vastness and grandeur completely overwhelmed Harry. Their next stops after that were the gardens, the Jardin des Tuileries. They were composed of many different structured parts, with perfectly tended lawns and artfully arranged flowerbeds. There was an octagonal water basin sixty metres in diameter with a fountain in the centre, some labyrinths and a fan of low hedges radiating from the arch of triumph in the square.

The scent of the flowers was just about everywhere and Harry closed his eyes and took a deep breath to further take it in.

“You ok?” Draco whispered in his boyfriend’s ear when he saw his eyes closed.

Harry reopened his eyes and turned to look at the blond. “Yeah, I’m fine…I’m just taking it in. it’s so amazing!”

Gabrielle giggled at his enthusiasm and delight. It really was infectious.

The day was sunny and beautiful, and it seemed as if everyone had decided that the Tuileries gardens were the place to go as it was full of Parisians and thousands of Muggle tourists, all laughing and just enjoying themselves.

Harry looked around, eyes bright with wonder, “You know, for such a large place, it seems a bit, I don’t know—

“Intimate?” Draco supplied.

“Yeah,” Harry nodded. “So, how did they build it?”

“It was created by Catherine de Medicis in 1564,” Fleur answered as she walked next to him. “Zey first opened it to ze public in 1667 and zen, after ze French revolution, it became a public park.”

“Amazing,” Harry breathed. He was truly enjoying himself.

As they walked by the statues, Fleur explained to Harry how they were many copies and the originals were exhibited inside the Louvre museum. She told him that most of them were hew or carved entirely by Muggles, but she—as well as Draco—pointed out a few that they knew had been created by magic.

Harry was captured by the statues that he was seeing. He found just a little hard to understand just how Muggles had been able to form solid stone—such as marble, granite, bronze—into such life-like sculptures. There was one of a galloping centaur carrying off a captured young woman—a nymph—but it was nothing like the real life centaurs he had seen in the Forbidden Forest back at Hogwarts.

And if that wasn’t enough to hold his attention, then the sculptures of humans did. Many of them were of the male form and they were beautiful and erotic.

After walking for another half an hour, Bill thought they should stop for lunch.

“Where are we going to eat?” Harry asked as he looked around, trying to find a restaurant.
“What about Café Rennard?” Gabrielle suggested.

“Where’s that?” Harry asked.

“It’s in the Grand Couvert,” Draco replied. “It’s over there in that area covered by trees.”

Harry shrugged and grabbed Draco’s hand, “Alright. Let’s go.”

The quintet took off for the café, talking amongst themselves.

After a short lunch, they walked some more until they came to the Louvre Pyramid, which was in the centre of the Napoleon Courtyard of the Palais.

If Harry thought the statues in the garden were captivating, then it was nothing compared to when he they got to the museum. The entrance itself was stunning.

As they walked around the vast courtyard, Harry took in the carved pilasters, arches and pediments of the imposing buildings.

They went down the spiral stairway to the underground lobby, so that they were underneath the famous steel-and-glass pyramid. There, Gabrielle took Harry’s hand, pulling him along; she wanted to show him something she thought was really special.


Having a hold of Harry’s hand, the younger girl led him and the others to the La Pyramide Inversée, which was a skylight constructed in the Carrousel du Louvre shopping mall.

The moment he took in the pyramid, Harry was in awe. To him, the pyramid felt very magical, somehow, as if the power of the Earth and of Ancient times connected straight with the heavens above and the future beyond. Still in awe, he looked around and saw the same expression on the faces of the hundreds of Muggle tourists around them.

Giggling, Fleur grabbed Harry’s arm, steering him around the masses of Muggles milling about.

“So ‘Arry,” Fleur grinned as she led him to the entrance, “You liked the statues outside, no?”

“They were amazing,” Harry breathed out with a nod.

“Good,” Fleur smiled, “zen you vill like zis. Zere are many more inside. You love Draco, so you vill love zese.”

Harry looked at her, taking in the knowing smirk on her face and her tone, but didn’t dispute her words. Instead, he raised an eyebrow, “What does me loving Draco have to do with anything?”

Fleur just grinned, “You vill see.”

They bypassed the Egyptian antiquities and most of the countless oil paintings of modern artists and headed straight to the ground floor of the Denon wing, which held Italian sculpture.

As they walked, Fleur prattled on about how the Louvre held thousands of the finest works of erotic art in the world, celebrating the glory of the male and female body.

In the corner of the fourth room, they stopped as Fleur wanted to admire her favourite sculpture.

Bill groaned as he stood next to his fiancée. “Really? This again? Haven’t you seen it enough times
“now?”

Fleur smacked him on his chest with her free arm, “’ush you. I love it. It is my favourite.”

“I know,” Bill pressed a quick kiss to her cheek.

“I can see why,” Harry said as he reached out and grabbed Draco’s hand, tangling their fingers together.

The sculpture was of a winged young man and a swooning woman in a tender embrace, their lips about to join in a kiss.

“It’s *Pysche and Cupid* by Antonio Canova,” Gabrielle said.

“It’s beautiful,” Harry said, “you can practically feel the love between the two of them.”

He turned to say something to Draco, but something caught his eye.

“What is that?” the question came out almost breathlessly and as if in a trance, Harry walked over what had caught his attention.

There stood two different figures, but they were similar in a way that he could guess that the same artist had crafted them. They were made from marble, and were over two meters tall. One, known as the Dying Slave, was superbly young and handsome and seemed to be in a trance or deep sleep; the other, titled Rebellious Slave, was a coarser figure with bulging muscles, whose body seemed engaged in a violent struggle, trying to break free from his restraints.

“Who’s it from?” Harry asked, unable to tear his gaze away.

“It was crafted by Michelangelo five hundred years ago,” Draco told him. His gaze however, wasn’t on the sculpture, but rather, on his boyfriend. “They are called the chained slaves, but that isn’t really an accurate name. This one over here, he is a warrior, a fight—possibly a gladiator—engaged in a fight to the death against a rider charging upon him. He strains his muscles, ready to wield his weapons.”

Harry didn’t reply to the blond’s words. He was too transfixed by the sculptures. Both spoke to him deeply, on an emotional level—one that perhaps only Voldemort or Snape could fully understand. Feeling overwhelmed, he tightened his grip on Draco and pulled him close in an almost desperate embrace; he just held him, breathing in his scent and feeling his warmth.

He thought he was done with these feelings—that he was over them. He wasn’t chained anymore in a role he despised, or forced to go to sleep forever, to die young as a human sacrifice because Dumbledore thought it was the best thing for everybody. He had discovered a way to free himself, and by proxy Voldemort, from the strings of Dumbledore’s manipulations. If he hadn’t found his powers and the courage to do what was necessary, then…

When Harry pulled him into his arms, Draco had been startled, but he quickly wrapped his arms around the dark haired teen’s neck. He could sense that his boyfriend was disturbed by the sculptures and he had a feeling as to what his thoughts were like.

There was nothing he could say right now; he just had to let Harry work through his emotions and that he was here if he needed him.

“You ok?” the blond asked.
“I will be,” Harry mumbled into Draco’s neck.

“Good,” Draco pressed a kiss to the side of the teen’s head before pulling back. “Come on.”

He led him away to look at other sculptures—beautiful, perfectly proportioned, sweet, innocent virgin girls that didn’t look so tormented or sorrowful.

Fleur, Gabrielle and Bill exchanged worried glances, though Bill felt that he might have had inkling as to what Harry had been thinking about, and they followed the two boys.

As they continued on with their tour, admiring centuries of male and female seduction in countless statues and sculptures, Harry had wondered just how Fleur and Gabrielle didn’t blush once, to which both girls promptly explained that they had seen it before and that they focused more on the artisanship and incredible craftsmanship instead of the forms themselves.

After two hours had passed, they left the Louvre.

Fleur led the way out of the alcove of Denon wing, and after making sure no Muggles were near, she pulled out her wand and tapped a cornerstone (one that had looked absolutely ordinary to Harry). An instant later, the faint outline of a doorway appeared. Without any sound, it swung open to reveal a small stone chamber.

“In ve go,” Fleur said cheerily as she stepped inside. The others followed, and once all of them were in, the door swung shut behind them.

A large fireplace, high enough for a tall man to stand inside, revealed itself.

Fleur walked over to the mantle where a golden box was resting. She grabbed a handful of Floo powder, enough for the five of them, and then they were off with a short swirl that brought them to a cozy wizard pub on Rue de Ursins. They had arrived right on the island in the middle of the stream—called Ile de la Cité—the same one that Harry had noticed the day before from the balcony and again this morning from the air.

After a short visit of the island, and admiring Notre Dame, the walked across the Pont de l’Archevêché towards the Latin Quarter—one of the oldest areas of Paris after the island in the middle of the Seine herself, where Paris had been founded twenty-three hundred years ago.

The Delacour sisters exchanged looks and giggles. They were extremely excited to show off Rue Magique to the others, especially Harry.

Because their group was walking along the Quai de Montebello, Bill lead them to where the entrance for the Muggle-borns or half-bloods that couldn’t use Apparition or the Floo network for some reason.

They stopped in front of a narrow, black wrought iron gate decorated with two gilded medallions in the guise of a lion’s head. It was set in the wall of an otherwise ordinary yellow stone house. Apparently, this gate was charmed with a kind of Notice-Me-Not just like the entrance to the Leaky Cauldron on Charing Cross road, so that it was overlooked by the Parisians or tourists walking along the lively Rue Saint-Andrés des Arts.

Harry watched a couple of Muggles; not one of them tried to approach the gate.

“So does this work like the one back in London?” he asked. “I mean, do I tap my wand against this in some kind of pattern?”
“No,” Gabrielle laughed and walked forward, going straight through the gate. Or rather, the black, straight horizontal rods seemed to bend gracefully to the right and left like willow branches, allowing her to pass without a scratch.

Suddenly, Harry could see a cobblestone alleyway with brightly lit shop windows and pubs beckoning him to enter.

Harry gaped after her, but he wasn’t the only one.

“Ze door is charmed in a vay zat it is easily opened by any magical person,” Fleur explained. “Come; let’s go.”

She stepped through, gesturing the boys after her. The three followed and when they were through, Draco and Harry stopped abruptly to stare wide-eyed at the impressive shopping venue.

Fleur laughed in sheer delight at the looks on their faces. She moved around them proudly, arms spread out wide, and whirled around in joy. “Zis, zis is ze original. Your Diagon Alley is just a copy!”

“Is that,” Harry pointed to a huge, beautiful carved marble fireplace—one that was high and wide enough that a whole family group could arrive or leave without stumbling or trampling over each other.

“Yes,” Fleur nodded, “Zat is the ze Floo. Trés magnifique, no?”

“Come on!” Gabrielle suddenly ran up to them and grabbed her sister’s arm. “Let’s go!”

Fleur laughed and allowed her sister to drag her off.

The three boys exchanged looks and followed the two girls. The quintet walked from store to store, Fleur and Gabrielle taking delight in showing the three British boys the—in their opinion—original Parisian version of Diagon Alley.

After almost an hour of walking, they decided to take a break. Or rather, Bill and Harry decided to take a break while Fleur and Gabrielle took a very enthusiastic Draco through a couple of fashion boutiques.

The two ended up sitting in a street café, both enjoying café au lait and crepes with whipped cream and fresh fruit.

“This was amazing,” Harry said. His gaze was on Fleur, Draco and Gabrielle and he smiled when he saw how much fun his boyfriend was having.

“And it must’ve been even better with no one being able to recognize you,” Bill added on with a grin.

Before they had left the hotel earlier in the morning, Harry had cast a simple glamour on his hair; it wasn’t a big change or anything. He’d lightened it enough that it came off as dirty blond, and without his glasses and his trademark scar having faded, he looked nothing like the Gryffindor ‘Harry Potter’ that had been in wizarding newspapers—French and British alike—and so, was virtually unrecognizable.

Harry laughed, “Of course. It’s nice to be able to walk down the street without people staring at me.”

“I bet,” Bill murmured and wondered if he should tell Harry that he was still getting stares. The teen
was very attractive and if it wasn’t for the fact that he wasn’t gay, and completely in love in Fleur, and saw Harry as a little brother, and afraid of the wrath of Draco Malfoy if he moved on his territory, if it wasn’t for all that, he’d be staring too.

The conversation shifted to Quidditch and the two delved into about friendly discussion about their Quidditch careers throughout Hogwarts, which prompted Bill to talk about Charlie and his talent at the sport before the younger Weasley had fallen for Dragons and working with them.

Half an hour later, Draco, Fleur and Gabrielle re-joined them.

“Did you buy out the stores?” Harry teased the trio.

“No,” Draco grinned as he pressed his lips against Harry’s cheek in a quick kiss. “Almost though; it was a close call.”

“So where to now?” Bill asked looking from his fiancée to the others.

The others looked at each other.

“I’m actually a little exhausted,” Harry admitted. “We’ve been to so many places today, all of them amazing, but right now, I just want to relax.”

“How about we go back to the hotel and just hang out by the pool?” Draco suggested.

“Zat sounds like a good idea,” Fleur nodded.

“Je vais rentrer à la maison,” Gabrielle said to her sister. *(I’m going to go home.)*

Fleur turned to face the young girl with a raised eyebrow, “Pourquoi?” *(Why?)*

“Parce que Marie-Claude et moi tenions une soirée pyjama,” Gabrielle explained. *(Because Marie-Claude and I are having a sleepover.)*

“Ahh,” Fleur nodded, “Alright.” She turned back to the boys. “Gabrielle ‘as to leave, so she cannot come with, but I vill.”

“Alright,” Draco nodded. “Our suite has anti-Apparation charms on it, but we have a Portkey to take us back there. Let’s get to a safe spot and then we can leave.”

“Wait,” Harry said, “Since Gabrielle has to go home, why don’t we Apparate back to the Delacour manor and then we can either Floo or Portkey back to the hotel from there?”

The others exchanged looks.

“Sounds good,” Bill nodded.

They quickly made their way Apparation point and within minutes, they left Rue Magique.

They reappeared back the Manor and after dropping Gabrielle off and Fleur explaining her plans to her parents, Draco used his Portkey and the quartet left Manor and went back to the hotel.

After conversing a bit with Lucius and Voldemort, the four made their way down to the hotel pool to relax. It was the perfect end to an amazing day.

~…~
It was Sunday night, and it was soon time for them to return to England. As they were packing up to leave, Harry decided now was the time to talk to Voldemort about his idea regarding Dumbledore.

He wasn’t sure how the older man would take it, but he had to at least let him know. So, sighing, he left the bedroom and made his way out to where the older wizard was.

He found him sitting on the couch and sat down on the sofa opposite to him.

“Marvolo?” he questioned, “If you’re not too busy, I wanted to talk to you about something. It’s an idea I have in mind regarding Dumbledore.”

“Oh?” Voldemort turned to give the teen his full attention.

“We both know that if we just outright kill him, it would create too much of a panic,” Harry explained, “and in any case, a quick death would be too merciful.”

“What did you have in mind?” Voldemort asked, curious as to where Harry was going.

“Well,” Harry shifted in his seat. “What if we let the people know about the things he has done? Dumbledore thrives on the fact that so many people look up to him. If we were to remove that, it would damage him. People would pull their support from him. I’ve talked to Luna, who spoke to her father at the Quibbler, and he’s willing to interview me and print what I say word for word.”

Voldemort’s brows drew together as he thought on that.

“My Lord?” Lucius called softly as he walked over to the two. He had entered the room just in time to hear Harry’s words. “If I may?”

“What do you think Lucius?” Voldemort asked.

“I agree with Harry,” Lucius said, “While he is going to die, destroying his reputation and his image would impart more damage and it would make it easier for you to take over.”

Voldemort stared at the two men as he thought over their words. The more he thought about it, the more he was intrigued. He thought of Dumbledore and what he knew about the man; he loved appearing as this kind person, this protector of the innocent and defender of the people. His reputation really was a big part of who he was.

Harry’s plan, it was actually, very Slytherin. Voldemort smirked. “You have my permission.”

Harry grinned and looked at Lucius and the elder Malfoy raised an eyebrow in amusement. “Great! And, if you want, I can have Mr Lovegood send a copy of the interview over to you before he prints it.”

“That would be acceptable,” Voldemort nodded.

Beyond pleased that his idea had been received so well, Harry grinned once more at the two men and then got up and headed back to the room to finish getting ready.

“The boy is becoming more and more Slytherin every day,” Lucius commented.

“I agree,” Voldemort said, “And that is an advantage for us.”

“Yes it is,” Lucius agreed.

No more was said between the two men and they went back to finish up.
Half an hour later, the four were ready to head back to England. The trip had been a complete success and they couldn’t wait to go forward with the rest of their plans to secure their future and their rightful place in the Wizarding World.
A/N: here is the new chapter. Hope you guys like it.

Disclaimer: I own nothing…if I did, Ginny would have died in the CoS, Dumbledore would have choked on his lemon drops and Harry would have stood up for himself against Molly and Dumbledore.

Disclaimer 2: this story is based on characters and situations created and owned by JK Rowling and Bloomsbury/Scholastic. No money is being made and no copyright or trademark infringement is intended.

“Talking”

Thinking’

|Hedwig’s mental speak|

-Sesshomaru/Fawkes’ mental speak-

\Harry’s mental speak\

Letter or commentary/introduction and flashback

{Parseseltongue}

~…~ indicates scene change

L ast time on RDA:

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(At Hogwarts)

Back at Hogwarts, Hedwig had just dropped off George—polyjuiced as Harry—to where Luna and Cory were.

“Hi George,” Luna grinned up at her brother as Hedwig shifted into her owl form before flying off.

“Hi Luna girl,” George smiled, using the nickname Harry had for the blonde, and turned to the boy next to her, “Hey Cory.”

“Hey,” Cory replied with a nod, “so I take it things are moving along?”

“Yes,” George nodded, “Harry left already, and he’ll be back on Sunday night with Draco and Mr
“Cool,” Cory said, “I hope everything goes well for them.”

“It will,” Luna hummed as she looked around. “Let’s take a walk.”

“Ok,” Cory and George nodded and the trio set off.

Sesshoumaru nudged at George’s leg, causing the teen to look down. “You know I’m not him.”

Sesshoumaru gave a nod and a slightly soft bark.

“Ok,” George nodded, “I’ll need you to work with me. No one can know I’m not Harry.”

Sesshoumaru stared at him; his face held a ‘how-stupid-do-you-think-I-am?’ look and had George wondering if the pup was taking lessons from Snape on how to make you feel stupid with just a look.

“Right,” George nodded, ignoring the giggles and chuckles from Luna and Cory. He turned back to the two with a sheepish smile on his face. “What?”


“So,” George smirked, “Harry told me about Ginny and Ron.”

Cory laughed, “You’re planning on pranking them, aren’t you?”

“Maybe not Ginny,” George grinned, “as from what I gathered, Harry’s already done a fine job of doing that. Now Ron however, he’s fair game.”

“I suppose Harry told you just what it is he had scared Ronald with?” Luna turned questioning eyes on him.

“He did,” George nodded, “And I think it’s bloody brilliant.”

“It’s going to be bad, isn’t it? For Ron at least?” Cory raised an eyebrow at his friend.

George looked over at him, green eyes lighting up with a devious light and a dark grin spread across his face. “Of course it is. Ronald is going to regret the day he messed with a Potter.”

“This is going to be a fun two days,” Luna laughed.

“I couldn’t agree with you more,” George chuckled and the trio launched into a discussion about the different ways they could get back at Ron.

~…~

A couple of hours later, Cory, Luna and George entered the Great Hall for lunch. As they headed to the Gryffindor table, George’s eyes sought out Ron’s and when he locked eyes with the redhead, he allowed a malicious smirk to spread across his face. The smirk became a predatory grin when he saw Ron pale.

“When are you going to start?” Cory asked as they took their seats.

“Right now,” George grinned. He discretely pulled out his wand and also pulled a candy out of his pocket. Making sure no one was looking, he tapped his wand against the candy, slipped his wand
back into the secured and covered holder and placed the candy in his mouth under his tongue.

He then stood up, exchanged a grin with Cory and then headed to where his former brother was sitting. He was aware of the students watching his move and mentally rolled his eyes. Really, the Hogwarts students were too nosy.

“Hello Ronald,” George greeted as he stopped next to Ron. He threw a glance at the student sitting next to Ron. “You mind shifting down a bit?”

“No,” the student, a male fourth year, shook his head and moved.

“Thanks,” George grinned at the student before he sat down and then turned to Ron. “So, how’re things going?”

“What do you want Potter?” Ron spat, angry and a little wary.

“What?” George raised an eyebrow, “can’t I come visit an old friend?”

“What are you doing here Harry?” Hermione asked as she looked at teen. A part of her was shocked, yet hopeful that maybe he was changing his mind and finally coming back to them. But another part was very wary; she hadn’t forgotten Harry’s words to Ron a few days ago after the Daily Prophet debacle and she wondered if he was up to something, but Harry’s demeanour didn’t scream anything but relaxed, open and friendly.

George looked at Hermione and had to fight the urge to scowl at her. He was still angry over the girl blaming Harry for Sirius’ death and for everything she had done to his little brother. Even if Harry forgave her, he never would.

“Just visiting,” George grinned. He reached out and grabbed Ron’s pumpkin juice. “Mind if I take a sip? I was out walking with Luna and Cory and I’m a little bit thirsty.” Without waiting for a reply from Ron, he brought the glass to his lips. Allowing some juice into his mouth, he slipped the candy out from under his tongue and into the glass. He pretended to take another sip before he placed the glass back on the table, smiling at Ron.

“Refreshing,” George grinned. “So what are your plans for today Ron?”

“Like I’m going to tell you,” Ron scowled as he grabbed his juice, pulling it out of the dark-haired teen’s reach.

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to,” George shrugged, “just thought I’d ask, you know, since it’s the polite thing to do.” He looked around, noting that even though the students had gone back to eating, they were stealing glances at the three of them.

“Where’s Ginny?” George turned back to Ron, his eyes flaring slightly with a dark satisfaction when he saw the redhead lift his glass to his lips, taking big gulps of the juice. “Is she still in the hospital wing?”

“Why do you care?” Hermione frowned. “From your actions, you don’t like Ginny and you couldn’t care less if anything happened to her, so why are you asking?”

“Just curious,” George smiled, “have they figured out who cursed her yet? Or how to remove it?”

“No,” Hermione shook her head, suspicion rising in her. ‘No…it couldn’t be…Harry wouldn’t do something like that. I know him, he’s not that malicious. You mean you knew him. He’s changed, you’ve seen that and he hasn’t forgotten the betrayals from you, Ron and Ginny. But…’
George could see the suspicions in the girl’s eyes and almost grinned. Almost. Instead, he raised an eyebrow at her. “I know what you’re thinking Hermione, but I hardly see the girl as I spend the majority of my time with either, Luna and Cory or, with Draco, Blaise and Pansy. When would I have had the time to curse her?”

Hermione had to concede that he was right. Harry spent so much time with the Slytherins or with Luna and Cory that he really wouldn’t have had the time.

George could see the moment Hermione agreed with him and he mentally shook his head at her naiveté. ‘For being known as ‘the supposed brightest witch of her age’, she sure as hell is gullible and very stupid.’

“Why don’t you leave?” Ron glared at the teen as he finished off the pumpkin juice. As much as he knew they were supposed to be trying to bring Harry back to their side, under their control, his jealousy and rage made it hard to control himself around the teen.

“Fine,” George shook his head as he stood up, “I think I overstayed my welcome anyways. Besides, wouldn’t want anyone to think we were friends again.”

Hermione’s heart sank at the words and she looked away. She hated that she had lost her friendship with Harry, but she had no idea what to do now. And from Harry’s words, it didn’t sound like she was ever going to get it back and that really hurt her.

George saw the hope deflate in Hermione’s eyes and smiled before he turned and walked away. He got closer to where Luna and Cory were sitting and saw Lavender, Parvati and Romilda sitting with them.

“Hey girls,” George smiled as he retook his seat next to Luna.

“Hi Harry,” all three girls said as one.

“Where did Sesshoumaru go?” George asked as he looked around for the pup.

“I told him Yasha was a little lonely,” Luna smiled, “so he went down to the dungeons.”

“Alright,” George smiled. He was amused that the two pups were as close as their owners were.

“So Harry,” Lavender grinned over at him, “When is Draco coming back?”

“Tomorrow night,” George answered. He mentally shook his head, wondering how it was no one could tell that he wasn’t Harry. ‘Then again, that is a good thing. Whatever plan our Lord has would definitely go to hell if anyone figured out I wasn’t Harry. Although, I’m proud that I know my little brother so well that I can copy him exactly.’

“Is it weird?” Romilda asked, cocking her head and looking at him.

“Is what weird?” George asked as he grabbed the glass of pumpkin juice and took a sip from it.

“Being with Draco,” Romilda continued, “I mean, I know you told us that he has changed, but you have to admit, you guys have been fighting some pretty awful fights against each other since first year.”

George looked at her for a few seconds before he smiled slightly. He was beyond thankful that he was one of the few people Harry trusted completely as he knew just how Harry felt about Draco all these years. Of course, even without Harry telling him he had known seeing as how he and Fred had
spent the last five years looking out for Harry.

“I’ll be honest,” George started, “I never hated Draco. I was always intrigued by him, but I was and am a Gryffindor and at the time, seeing as how I was friends with Granger and Weasley and they seemed to have this intense dislike for him, I had to as well.”

“Well,” Cory grinned, “it didn’t surprise me, that’s for sure. Out of everyone in this school, I’ve never seen any two people rile each other up as much as you and Draco did. It’s like you guys went out of your way to attack each other; almost like you needed to have the other’s attention and that was the only way you knew how.”

George laughed, as did Luna, while the three girls looked pensive.

“You know,” Parvati shook her head with a smile, “I never even realized it, but if you do think back to all the confrontations, it does make sense.”

“Pulling pigtails,” Lavender giggled, “I can’t believe we didn’t notice it before.”

“Shut up,” George smiled, causing the girls to giggle even harder.

“Let’s go,” Luna said suddenly, drawing the group’s attention. She stood, the others following, and led the way out of the Great Hall. As they passed the Slytherin table, Blaise, Pansy and Gabriella stood and joined them.

“What’s going on?” Pansy asked as she moved to walk next to Luna.

“Just a little retribution,” Luna grinned and it was so predatory that Gabriella stared at the blonde in shock, having never seen such an expression on her normally serene face.

Noticing the look on Gabi’s face, Pansy grinned. “Don’t worry, you’ll get used to it.” She turned back to Luna. “So, what’s the plan?”

George grinned and pulled out his wand. He focused his thoughts on Ron and muttered an incantation.

“What did you just do?” Blaise raised an eyebrow at the teen.

“You’ll find out soon enough,” George chuckled.

~…~

Back inside the Great Hall, while Hermione was staring at the entrance where Harry and the others had left, Ron had turned back to his lunch. He had just taken a bite out of a sandwich when he froze. With wide eyes, Ron glanced up and down the table, paling as each second passed.

Hermione shook her head and turned back to her lunch, but stopped when she caught sight of Ron’s pale face. “Ron, what is it? Are you ok?”

Ron didn’t answer; he was too caught up in the horror that he was seeing on the lunch table.

“S-s-sp-spi-d-ders,” Ron stuttered out, his voice and body trembling with fear.

“What?” Hermione looked around, seeing nothing, and turned back to Ron. “What are you talking about? There’re no spiders here.”

Ron didn’t reply to that as he was too busy staring in horror at the spiders that were coming closer.
He tried to move but found himself frozen in fear to his seat. He felt a funny feeling on his arm and a whimper escaped his lips before he forced himself to look down. He saw some spiders crawling over his arm. His mouth fell open, before the message got to his brain and—

“AHHHH!” Ron jumped from his seat, startling everyone else in the hall into silence. He moved around, batting at his hand with the other, trying to remove the spiders from his arm.

“Get them off! Get them off!” Ron screamed as he looked around.

“Ron!” Hermione stood up from her seat and went to him. “Get what off? Ron, are you ok?”

“The spiders,” Ron said, his voice trembling from fear, “they’re all over me.”

“There’re no spiders,” Hermione repeated her earlier words.

Ron looked up at his girlfriend, and instead of seeing Hermione’s face, he saw a spider’s head on her body. “AHHHH!”

Hermione jumped at the scream and took another step towards him, confused when he stepped back.

By now, the other students had gotten over the shock and confusion of seeing Ron behaving that way, and soon, chuckles and giggles started up.

Ron looked around the hall and saw instead of the students faces, they all had spider heads. He turned back to Hermione, letting out a breath of relief when he saw her normal head, but after a few seconds, her head morphed again into a spider head and she started towards him. Ron screamed and ran from the hall, laughter following him.

Outside the Hall, George and the others had just reached the main entrance when they heard the screaming. They looked back and saw Ron running in the opposite.

“Was that Weasley?” Blaise asked looking at the red head’s retreating form.

“Yes,” George grinned.

“What did you do?” Lavender asked, curiosity colouring her voice. She loved the fact she was being included in whatever Harry was doing and that the teen saw her as more than a giggly girl with nothing more on her mind than boys, fashion and make-up. People had always looked down on her because of the way she acted; Hermione especially seemed to take pleasure in snubbing her, but not Harry. He was treating her as if she was a regular person, like he wasn’t bothered by her girly acts and that in turn made her act more and more like herself and less like the persona she had created.

“Weasley’s afraid of spiders,” George chuckled, “George and Fred created a candy that causes the eater to see their worst fears. It’s kinda like what Boggarts do, but on a less serious level.”

“Cool,” Romilda grinned. “So how long is it going to last?”

“Not sure,” George shrugged, “the maximum time is twenty-four hours and the minimum is an hour and a half.”

“So Weasley’s stuck like that for almost two hours?” Gabriella grinned, “Sweet.”

The teens laughed and continued on their walk.

~…~
Over the course of the day, things were moving along just fine. To George’s and the others delight, the spell on Ron had lasted more than the minimum time and they hoped it would go on to the maximum predicted time. Like with Ginny, some of the teachers tried to remove whatever spell was on him, but found that they couldn’t.

Of course most, if not all, of the students suspected Harry—George—but no one was able to prove that he actually did anything. The Slytherins seemed to be having more fun with Ron’s condition than the other students; which was proven that night at dinner.

When Ron walked into the Great Hall that night, Theo pulled out his wand and tapped his glass, transfiguring it into a spider and he made it levitate in the air. Satisfied, he turned to Ron. “Hey Weasley!” when the redhead looked over, he threw the spider in Ron’s direction.

“AHHH!” Ron screamed and jumped back, falling onto a Gryffindor third year. The Hall burst into laughter and Ron once again ran from the room.

“That was hilarious,” Blaise laughed and slapped Theo’s shoulder.

Over at the Gryffindor table, George grinned in satisfaction.

~…~

Later that night, George left the common room with Sesshoumaru, saying he was going for a walk. They ended up in one of the unused classrooms on the second floor, just a short distance away from Myrtle’s bathroom.

Closing the door behind him, George pulled out his wand and cast Locking and Warding charms.

“Hedwig,” He called out when he was done, “I’m ready.”

The phoenix flashed into the room, landing on his shoulder.

“Hey girl,” George smiled as he rubbed her breast. “You can go get Fred.”

Hedwig trilled and rubbed her head against his before disappearing in a flash of fire, reappearing minutes later, Fred in tow.

“Hey bro,” Fred grinned, “so, did things go ok?”

“Yeah,” George smiled, “with the exception of Luna and Cory, no one knew I wasn’t really Harry.”

“Good,” Fred nodded. “So, how did our latest product work out?”

George laughed and Sesshoumaru and Hedwig barked and trilled as well. “It was perfect. Worked exactly how we wanted. Of course I had to use our dear former brother as the test subject.”

“Of course,” Fred smirked. “And I do have an idea of my own.”

“Care to share oh brother of mine?” George raised an eyebrow, sea-green eyes flashing with curiosity.

Fred grinned and did just that. When he was done, George was holding his stomach and laughing.

“Oh Merlin,” George said between laughter, “I can see it now. The little bint will fall for it hook, line and sinker. I wish I could see her face. When are you going to do it?”
“Tomorrow,” Fred replied, “maybe around lunch. I’ll tell Harry about it, so that he can know what’s going on.”

“Ok,” George said after he got himself under control. “You need to see everything that’s happened today.” He lowered his shields and gestured for his brother to enter his mind as he pulled the memories forward.

“Can’t believe Granger actually thought you were trying to rebuild your friendship with her and Ron,” Fred snickered when he left George’s mind.

“I know right,” George smiled, “so, you have the potion, right?”

“Yeah,” Fred pulled the vial of Polyjuice potion from his pocket.

“Take it,” George instructed, “so we can swap.”

“Thank Merlin Snape had been able to improve the Polyjuice potion to last longer,” Fred said.

“I know,” George nodded, “things would’ve been different if the potion lasted its usual hour. Having to sneak off every minute would’ve been too suspicious. This last one I took should be wearing off any minute now.”

“Well,” Fred said as he raised the vial to his lips, “bottoms up.” He downed it, grimacing slightly as he did so.

Almost simultaneously, while Fred started shifting into Harry, George was shifting back into his own body.

“I will never get used to that,” George sighed and looked over at his twin who was now looking like their brother. “You have extra vials to last until tomorrow night?”

“Yep,” Fred patted his pocket.

“Good,” George nodded, “Let’s go Hedwig.” He looked over at the phoenix.

Hedwig trilled and flew to his shoulder and he turned back to Fred. “Have fun.”

“I intend to,” Fred grinned. “See ya.”

“See ya,” George smirked and he and Hedwig flashed out.

“So,” Fred looked down at Sesshoumaru, “interested in causing mayhem?”

The pup barked and his golden eyes gleamed at the prospect.

“Yeah,” Fred laughed as he removed the Locking and Warding charms and opened the door, “you really are his.”

The pup barked again and the two left the room and made their way back to Gryffindor Tower.

~…~

During lunch the next day, Fred sat at Ravenclaw table with Luna, Cory, Blaise, Pansy and Gabriella. By now, everyone was used to their group switching between the three houses, so most of the students ignored them, while some talked to them.
Cho Chang was sitting a good distance away, but her gaze kept straying to Harry. After seeing the Asian girl glance their way for what seemed like the millionth time, Luna got up from her seat and walked over to the girl. They had no idea what she was saying, but they saw Cho’s eyes went wide before she paled and nodded.

Smiling, Luna walked back over to them.

“Do we even want to know what you told her?” Gabriella asked.

“No,” Luna giggled as she retook her seat.

“Hey guys.” They looked up and saw majority of the Gryffindor students coming in. Seamus had called out to them.

Seamus, Dean, Lavender, Romilda, Parvati and Padma who was with her sister, broke off from the rest of the students and headed over to the Ravenclaw table where they were sitting. Smiling, the teens shifted so that they would have enough room.

“You guys are late,” Pansy commented, “is it a Gryffindor trait to be eternally late?”

“Hey!” All the Gryffindors looked at her.

“Oh you guys know she’s telling the truth,” Luna giggled.

The Gryffindors looked at each other before laughing.

“She is right.” Lavender nodded with a smile. She saw Ron and Hermione walk into the Hall and looked back at her friends. “So, who do you think put that spell on Weasley?”

Almost as one, everyone turned to look at their green-eyed, black haired friend.

“What?” Fred looked at all of them. “Why is everyone looking at me?”

“Son of a Marauder,” Parvati cocked her head to the side, “Godson of another.”

“Son of the brightest witch Hogwarts has ever seen,” Romilda added on with a smirk. “And then you add in the warning you gave to Weasley last week…”

“I can honestly say that it wasn’t me that put that spell on Weasley,” Fred smirked. And it was the truth; it wasn’t him, it was George.

Cory grinned and Luna giggled at his words.

“Oh huh,” Seamus shook his head with a grin, “Whatever you say.”

“It’s too bad the spell ended so quickly,” Padma said, “I always thought Weasley needed to be knocked down a peg or two.”

They all had a laugh at that and soon, their talk shifted from Ron to other things.

~…~

It was later that afternoon, around three, that Fred decided to put his plan into action. He was outside with Luna, Cory, Blaise and Pansy—the others had gone off to do their own things—enjoying the day. He knew he had to be careful, as no one should see him because it would ruin everything, so he was being quiet and thinking things over.
“Harry,” Luna stopped walking and turned to him. “Walk with me?”

“Always Luna-girl,” Fred smiled, and like his brother, he used Harry’s nickname for the blonde.

Luna looped her arm through his and the two walked away, leaving their friends watching them with smiles.

“Do you have it with you?” Luna asked when they were a certain distance away. She didn’t want the others to hear. It’s not that she didn’t trust them, but, this way, if for any reason what Fred was going to do didn’t go according to plan, then they could claim plausible deniability.

“Folded and in my pocket,” Fred replied as he untangled their arms and threw his own around her shoulders.

“Good.” Luna nodded as she snuggled into her brother’s side. She missed Harry, she really did, but she knew that what he was doing was very important, so she wasn’t going to complain. It wasn’t that she didn’t love Fred or George—because she adored her big brothers—but there was just something about Harry. She didn’t know if it was because he had been the first to see past her “Looney” persona and see the person she really was, but he always had a way of making her feel special.

“She’s alone right now,” Luna continued speaking, a smile on her face. “No one really wants to be near her.”

“Hospital wing?” Fred asked, glancing at her.

“Yes,” Luna’s smile became a full blown grin, “Madame Pomfrey had to step out to St. Mungo’s for a consultation. You will have, at the very least, fifteen minutes of uninterrupted time.”

“Nice,” Fred nodded, “should leave right about now, shouldn’t I?”

“I think Hedwig needs to stretch her wings,” Luna giggled as she gestured upwards.

Fred looked in the direction she was pointing and saw said bird flying towards them in her owl form. She landed on Luna’s shoulder and trilled a few times.

“You up for some mischief?” Fred grinned at the phoenix in her snow owl form, chuckling when she bobbed her head. “Good. Our victim of choice today is in the Hospital Wing. I’ll call you when I’m ready to come back, ok?”

Hedwig trilled in affirmation.

Fred looked back at Luna. “Let the games begin.” He pulled Harry’s cloak from his pocket and threw it on, instantly disappearing from sight.

Humming to herself, Luna turned around and started skipping back to where her boyfriend and friends were.

~…~

Fred made his way up to the Hospital Wing, being as careful as ever. He made sure to avoid not only bumping into any students, but Dumbledore as well as he knew the man could discover him under the cloak with the *Homenum Revalio* charm should he become suspicious for any reason. Excitement had him giddy as he thought of his plan. It was brilliant and evil and genius.

Easing open the door, he quickly got inside, letting the door close softly behind him. He spotted
Ginny lying on a bed almost in the far corner, her back to the door and smirked to himself. Removing the cloak, he folded it, shrunk and put it in his pocket and then he made his way over to where she was lying.

“Hey Ginny,” Fred greeted as he took a seat in the chair next to the bed.

Ginny flinched and whirled around, eyes wide in disbelief, which soon turned to pleasure. “Harry! What are you doing here?”

“I came to see you,” Fred replied. “I wanted to see how you were doing with the spell and all.”

Ginny, pleased to see Harry talking to her and showing concern, scowled at his words. “I feel awful. I don’t know who cast the spell, but if it’s anything, I bet it was Ma--” she stopped talking and looked at him, knowing he was dating the blond Slytherin, though she hated it.

“You were going to say Malfoy, weren’t you?” Fred asked. “It’s ok. I don’t blame you.”

“You’re dating him though,” Ginny sneered the words at him. “Why aren’t you angry that I’m blaming him? And why are you talking to me now? I remember the last time you called me a slut and said you wanted nothing to do with me. Why are you here?”

Fred wasn’t surprised by her words, as he had known before he came to see her that she would ask them or questions along those lines. He was prepared. Placing a contrite expression on his face, he ran a hand through his hair—like Harry would do—and spoke in a slightly soft voice. “Ginny, about what I said that first night here; the thing of it is, I was just so angry at Ron and Hermione that I snapped at you too. It was wrong of me to do that and I’m sorry.”

Ginny felt her heart pounding at his words. Never did she think this would happen and she wasn’t going to throw away the chance he was giving to her. But she still needed to know something. “What about Malfoy? You’re still with the ferret.”

Fred was glad his hands were out of her sight so she couldn’t see the way they had clenched into fists at her words. ‘Keep calm. Don’t hex the bint. You need to continue with your plan.’ “To be honest, with Draco gone this weekend, it left me time to think. You see, I have a duty, to not only myself, but to my Family Line and that is to carry it on. Your brother and his girlfriend really hurt me and I went with Malfoy because I know he’s your brother’s rival and I knew it would stick it to Ron. But now, I realized that I hurt the one person that loved me the most.”

“Oh Harry,” Ginny whispered feeling her heart fill with joy. “I do love you. I’ve loved you for as long as I could remember. I always dreamed I’d be with you.”

“Well, if for some reason we didn’t know she was a Boy-Who-Lived fan, then her own words just confirmed it,’ Fred snorted mentally. “I’m only with Draco because I have to. We don’t trust him or his father so I have to keep an eye on him. Don’t worry, it’s you I want, and when we find out he’s up to no good, then we can expose him.”

“So can we be together?” Ginny asked.

“Yes,” Fred nodded. When Ginny squealed and leaned towards him, he pulled back, “But, we can’t let anyone know. We have to keep this a secret.”

“OK,” Ginny agreed. “Wait till Ron and Hermione-”

“NO!” Fred said forcefully, causing her to jump. “We can’t tell them either. It has to stay between us.”
“I understand.” Ginny nodded. She smirked at the thought of knowing something Hermione didn’t. More often than, Hermione’s attitude irritated and she loved having one up on the bushy haired girl. It was why she often made sexual remarks at her.

“I have to go now,” Fred stood up, “Remember, not a word to anyone, it’ll be our secret.”

“Ok,” Ginny nodded and pouted. “Do you really have to leave?”

‘Merlin yes! If I stay here I’ll be too tempted to rearrange your body.’ “Yes, I do. Goodbye Ginny.”

With that, Fred walked out the Hospital Wing. He opened and closed the door behind him, and after making sure no one was there, he called Hedwig.

The phoenix flashed onto his shoulder.

“Hey girl,” Fred reached up a hand to rub her breast, “Back to Luna and the others.”

Hedwig trilled before flashing the two out.

~…~

Luna had moved the group to a more secluded spot on the ground; one where they could still see the school and the students, but no one could see them. They had been at that spot for just over ten minutes when Hedwig flashed into the middle of the group.

“You’re back,” Pansy smiled.

“I am,” Fred grinned and after pulling a treat from his pocket, he gave it to Hedwig and watched as the bird flew off.

“How did it go?” Luna turned to look at him.

“Perfectly!” Fred grinned and sat down next to Cory.

“Good,” Luna nodded and then she turned away and started humming.

The friends talked softly amongst each other, not wanting to disrupt the peaceful aura that had settled over them.

The rest of the day passed by relatively normal and just before dinner that night, after getting a note from Harry via Hedwig, Fred made his way once again back to the classroom he had used earlier. The moment he was there, Hedwig flashed him out and back to the Shrieking Shack where he and Harry would switch. When he got there, he saw Harry waiting for him.

“Hey, how was it?” Fred asked as he grinned at him.

Hedwig flew from Fred to her master and trilled as she rubbed her head against his.

“Hey girl, you miss me?” he turned to Fred, “It was brilliant,” Harry chuckled, “Not only did our Lord accomplish what he wanted, but I had fun. Draco took me all over the place. Oh and Bill says to tell you guys ‘hello’ and that he’ll see you guys sometime soon. He and Fleur are planning a trip to England.”

“It’d be good to see them,” Fred nodded.

“How long do you have left on the Polyjuice?” Harry asked.
Casting a quick *Tempus*, Fred looked at his brother. “About fifteen minutes, which is good ‘cause I was on the last one.”

“Ok, so, are you gonna go straight back to the shop or home?” Harry asked.

“Home,” Fred said as he moved to relax against the old table. “George should have no problem locking up. He’ll send a Patronus if he needs help.”

“Alright,” Harry nodded and then he grinned at his brother, “so what all did I miss?”

With a laugh, Fred told Harry just what he and George had done for the weekend. He took great glee in retelling about what he did to Ron and couldn’t stop the laughter when he told what he said to Ginny.

“She actually believed you?” Harry raised an eyebrow as he started removing his clothes, Fred following. When he was down to his boxers, he held out the clothes to Fred.

“’Course she did,” Fred chuckled as he took the clothes and handed over those he was wearing. “By the way, that spell you have on her, you should remove it. Not because I pity her, but before the professors, Dumbledore especially, become desperate.” He paused, “Although, they didn’t do a bloody thing really this weekend. I think they gave up hope of removing it, or they think it’s a prank by one of our products.”

“I was planning on taking it off tonight anyways,” Harry told him, “I really don’t want to spend any more time on her. After this, she could be on fire for all I care. Well, Draco and his father should be back in school by now, just in time for dinner. I should probably get back too.”

“Alright,” Fred nodded and he straightened up, “First Hogsmeade weekend, you better come to the store.”

“Of course I will,” Harry smiled. He went up to Fred and pulled him into a hug. “Thanks.”

“You’re welcome,” Fred tightened the hug briefly before letting go and stepping back. “I’m ready Hedwig.”

The phoenix flew to him and flashed the two of them out. Minutes later, she returned and flashed her and Harry back into Hogwarts to the same classroom she and Fred had been in. After spending a few minutes with his bird, Harry left the room, pausing and smiling when he saw Luna twirling around giggling.

“Luna-girl,” Harry jogged over to her.

“Harry,” Luna stopped twirling and skipped to meet him, throwing her arms around his neck when she did so. “I’m glad our Lord is pleased with the trip.”

“So am I,” Harry grinned as he pulled back from the hug. He wrapped his arm around her shoulder and the two turned and headed in the direction of the Great Hall. “That letter that I received from your father, I mentioned it to Him.”

Luna glanced up at him, “and what was his answer?”

“He thinks it’s brilliant of course,” Harry replied, “Well, actually, he was a little sceptical at first, but after I explained everything—with the help of Draco and Lucius—he agreed to it; said it was actually a very Slytherin move.”
Luna giggled and snuggled further into his embrace. “Of course it is.”

“So,” Harry squeezed her briefly, “what all happened while I was gone?”

“I’m sure Fred and George told you,” Luna smiled.

“I know,” Harry nodded, “but I know that you have something else to add…something to do with Cho?”

Luna laughed and then, she proceeded to tell him everything.

~…~

Cory and the others were sitting at the end of the Slytherin table, closer to the entrance, eating and talking as they looked out for Luna.

“Guys look,” Seamus gestured to the Head Table. “Mr Malfoy’s back.”

They looked up and saw the elder Malfoy heading to his seat next to Snape.

“So then,” Lavender asked after she swallowed the piece of chicken she was chewing, “where’s Draco?”

On cue, Draco walked into the Hall, grey eyes darting around until he landed on them. They watched as the blond smirked before making his way towards them. Almost immediately, the students shifted, allowing Draco to sit between Blaise and Goyle.

“Well isn’t this something,” Draco said as he sat down, looking around the Gryffindors and Ravenclaw.

“You don’t mind, do you?” Padma asked, not wanting to incur the wrath of the Slytherin Prince himself.

“Pad,” Parvati rolled her eyes at her sister, “I told you, it’s cool. We’ve been eating with Draco all last week at all three tables except Hufflepuff. I don’t think he’d mind you joining us.”

“And even if he did,” Lavender smirked at the blonde, “Harry might have something to say about it.”

“Where is Harry by the way?” Parvati asked as she looked around for their green-eyed friend.

“Probably with Luna,” Cory shook his head with a grin.

“Isn’t he always?” Draco chuckled. He looked up and a smile graced his face. “Speak of the devil.”

Harry entered the Great Hall, with Luna and as always, his arm was around her shoulder and the blonde was snuggled into his side. The sight never failed to generate sighs and jealousy in the students. The two ignored everyone, as usual, and made their way over to the Slytherin table. Luna broke off from under Harry’s arm and moved to sit between Cory and Seamus while Harry sat between Draco and Blaise.

“Where have you guys been?” Dean asked as he picked up a spoonful of rice.

“Walking,” Luna replied airily as she piled food on a plate.

“Of course,” Dean muttered dryly while the others laughed. Soon, conversations erupted amongst the teens as they all enjoyed each other’s company and their dinner.
Over the course of the next few days, nothing too out of the way happened; the students settled even further into their school life, Harry and the others still continued to showcase their knowledge in their classes, easily becoming the top students, surpassing Hermione and drawing praises and looks of approval from their Heads of House, and to the shock of the other teachers—exception being Snape—Lucius’ DADA classes were quickly becoming a class that was looked forward to by almost all of the students, no matter the year.

Dumbledore especially was shocked. He had been hoping and searching for an excuse—any excuse—to lodge a complaint to the Board of Governors and Minister for Magic and have the Lord Malfoy removed, but he could find nothing. At every time, whenever he questioned students, they all seemed to have the same answer; they all enjoyed the man’s class, they loved the way he interacted with them and actually seemed willing for them to learn something, which was something the upper years were grateful for as they hadn’t had a decent DADA class except for Remus Lupin and “Alastor Moody”.

Even the Muggle-borns, those who had heard of Malfoy’s views on all things Muggle and who had been wary about being in his class, were slowly warming up to him. And what was more, Harry’s speech that night in the Common room about the Creeveys and the reason behind the Statute of Secrecy was still going around the school. It was one of the many topics discussed between the students and it opened their minds.

To Snape and Lucius, they were in awe at what was happening. They had hoped that things would be ok, but even they had had doubts as to what impact they would have on the students, but their worries seemed unfounded.

It was Wednesday, and everyone was in the Great Hall for lunch. Harry had removed the spell off of Ginny Sunday night, and had avoided the redhead until now, but that hadn’t stopped her from throwing smiles and smug looks in his and Draco’s direction. He had told Cory and Draco about what Fred had done and the two had found it amusing and couldn’t wait to see how things would play out and as such, their gazes kept drifting to the entrance to the Hall, waiting for the redhead. They didn’t have to wait long.

“Hey,” Cory nudged Harry when he saw the female Weasley walk into the Hall. “Look who it is.”

Harry looked up, as did Draco, Luna and the others. They watched as Ginny walked further into the Hall and immediately, her gaze flitted around until she spotted Harry.

Harry saw Ginny smiling at him and he smiled at her in return. He knew she would take it as encouragement to come to him.

Ginny, couldn’t contain the pleased look as she walked—sauntered—over to the Slytherin table. She was still giddy from what Harry had told her on Sunday and couldn’t wait to be with him. She hated that Malfoy was sitting next to him, and for the last couple of days, she had had to stop herself from going off on the blond and blowing Harry’s plans, but today, she was determined to at least eat lunch with Harry.

“Hello Harry,” Ginny smiled at the dark haired teen as she stopped behind Dean and Seamus.

Harry raised his eyes from the table, well aware that the conversations around the Hall had died down as everyone became interested in what was happening. He shifted his expression from open
and easy-going to blank and raised an eyebrow at her.

“Why exactly are you talking to me?” Harry asked in a cold voice, making Ginny flinch. “As I recall, I specifically told you and that brother of yours as well as his know-it-all girlfriend to stay away from me, so again, I ask, why are you talking to me?”

Ginny was confused and it showed on her face. She couldn’t understand why Harry was treating her that way. She wanted to snap at him, but then, she paused as she remembered his words from Sunday and her body relaxed as she thought that he was just keeping up appearances.

“Oh,” Ginny shook her head, “Sorry…I forgot.” She turned to Draco and sneered at him, “I hope you’re enjoying yourself ferret, because it won’t last long.”

“Says who? You?” Draco snickered at her, “get over yourself Weaselette. Harry and I are together and that’s how it’s going to stay and there’s nothing neither you nor anyone else can do to change that.”

Ginny’s hand clenched into fists as her eyes narrowed into slits, growing darker with her anger. Malfoy has always managed to get under her skin. She hated him. Their family had been feuding for as long as she could remember and whenever she was around him, it never failed to make her beyond angry. She hated the way he walked, the way he talked and the way he looked at her like she was scum, like she was beneath him. And it was that anger—that hatred—that drove her to say her next words.

“You think you’re something else Malfoy,” Ginny hissed, “but you’re not.” Her stance shifted and a smug smile graced her face. “I can’t believe you actually thought Harry really felt anything for you. You’re so stupid.”

Everyone gasped, and those at the Slytherin table glared at Ginny. To the redhead’s surprise, instead of being irritated or angry over what she was saying, the blond smiled and his grey eyes gleamed with something, but she didn’t know what.

“What are you smiling about?” Ginny demanded, angry that he had not reacted how she had expected him to.

“I know exactly how Harry feels about me,” Draco leaned back and looked at her. “He tells me all the time, especially when we’re…alone.”

Ginny fumed at his implications. She looked at Harry and saw the same cold look on his face and she couldn’t understand why he was looking at her that way.

“Run along Weaselette,” Draco sneered at her, “your obvious attempts at trying to break Harry and me apart are pathetic. It’s quite clear that your time in the hospital wing separated from the everyday norm has left you delusional.”

“You should probably get that checked out,” Cory injected with a smile, “I hear St. Mungo’s has a ward for delusions of grandeur.”

Laughter echoed around them and Ginny flushed with embarrassment and anger. “You’re the one who’s pathetic. You don’t know Harry’s just using you. He doesn’t trust you and is only acting like he does with you because it’s a trick. He loves me.”

The Slytherin table looked at each other, more specifically at Harry and his group of friends, before they all laughed, even harder than before.
Ginny turned flashing blue eyes to Harry. “Tell him the truth Harry. You don’t have to do this anymore. Just forget about it and leave him. I’m sure we can find out what he’s up to some other way.”

Harry crossed his arms and raised an eye brow at Ginny. “Ok, I have no idea what the hell you’re talking about.”

“Don’t you remember?” Ginny asked, “You told me that you were just playing with Malfoy. That you really loved me and you wanted to be with me.”

Harry laughed. “Oh sweet Merlin, are you kidding me right now? When did I tell you that and why the hell would I say something like that? I love Draco. Everyone knows it, just like they all know I would never touch you, not willingly anyways. I don’t know what plan you’re talking about, but I would never hurt Draco. I’d die before I do that.”

Ginny was at a loss. “But—

“When exactly did we have this conversation where I supposedly told you I was only with Draco as a plan and I only wanted to be with you and no one else?” Harry asked.

“You came to see me in the Hospital Wing Sunday night,” Ginny glared at him, “you said it had to be kept a secret.”

“Well,” Luna spoke up, drawing everyone’s attention, “it seems we have arrived at the truth at last. You see, Ginerva, there is no way Harry spoke to you Sunday night due to the fact that he was with me, Cory, Blaise, and Pansy all afternoon at the lake.”

“She’s right,” Pansy agreed. She knew that Luna and Harry had left them for a while, but, she was enjoying herself too much to say anything and even then, Harry was her friend, and never would she go against him. “I think you were being played Weasley. Someone pretended to be Harry and told you all those things.”

Ginny’s gaze danced between the group. “No. I know it was Harry I talked to.”

“How are you so sure?” Blaise asked. “Everyone in this school knows how Harry feels about Draco and how he’s not friends anymore with you, your brother and his girlfriend. What reason would Harry have in coming to you and telling you he loves you? None. But, if someone wanted to play a mean trick, or to try and discredit Harry and create problems between him and Draco…” at his words, most of eyes went over to the Gryffindor table where Ron and Hermione were sitting.

“I’m not lying and I know who I spoke to!” Ginny insisted, though her voice lacked the conviction it did when she had first appeared at the table.

“Geez can you sound any more desperate?” Seamus called out, prompting everyone to laugh again. “Oh Harry loves me! Harry wants to be with me and not Malfoy! Oh, poor me!”

Seamus’ voice had gone high-pitched. Students were laughing so hard they were holding their sides.

Ginny’s face became almost the same colour as her hair and her hand clenched into fists.

“Oh…once again for the slow person,” Harry spoke before she could, “I don’t know who came to you, but it wasn’t me. I sure as hell wouldn’t tell you I love you or that I was only playing with Draco. Get this through your thick skull; you mean nothing to me. I don’t want you, I have never wanted you, and I never will. Draco and I are in this for the long haul and nothing and no one is going to change that; especially not you. So please…leave us alone.”
When he was done, Harry dropped his gaze and started talking to Luna, effectively and abruptly dismissing Ginny.

Humiliated and angry, Ginny ran from the Hall.

“Someone really did a number on her,” Theo mused.

“Yeah,” Harry nodded, “and they dragged me into it too. I’m cursed.”

This started the others laughing again and lunch continued on without any more interruptions.

Harry smiled and glanced around, noticing almost everyone smiling and talking. His gaze caught the Headmaster’s, and he saw the frown on the man’s face and had to hold back his smirk.

~…~

The next two days passed with no disturbance. On Friday, they learned that Stan Shunpike had been arrested, but the students didn’t pay all that much attention to the information. It was now Saturday, and as was the norm, most everyone was outside.

Harry was at the pitch with some Gryffindor students, as it was the try-outs for the Quidditch team. Among the students were Ron, Ginny, Cormac McLaggen and Katie, who had been shocked—as well as the others—when she was told she was to be the new team captain.

“Allright, listen up people!” Katie shouted, the seriousness in her voice bringing everyone to a halt.

“As you know, this is the try-outs for the new team. All positions, with the exception of mine, are open, and yes, that includes Harry’s though I know he’ll reclaim it. Just because I’m friends and I know you, doesn’t mean I will choose you. The decision to make you a part of this team will be based on two things only; one, your skills, and two, your sportsmanship and ability to be a team player.”

“That’s three things,” Harry injected cheekily.

Katie didn’t even look at him as she grabbed her broom with the intention of smacking him, but Harry ducked away with a laugh, “Ok, everyone relax and those going for the Chaser position in the air.”

Harry mounted his broom and was ready to take off when Katie stopped him.

“What are you doing?” Katie asked, turning fully to look at him.

“I’m just gonna do a few laps in the air,” Harry smiled, “make sure I’m not getting rusty.”

Katie snorted, “The day you get rusty in the air is the day I become bald.”

Harry cocked his head to the side and stared at her.

“Why are you staring at me?” Katie asked, exasperation colouring her voice.

“Just imagining you bald,” Harry replied with a grin.

“Get!” Katie pointed to the air as she tried, and failed, to stop the laughter from coming out.

Harry laughed and took off into the air. He did a few loops and swirls in the air before he made his way over to where Luna and Cory were sitting.
“Hey guys,” Harry called out as he hovered near them.

“Hey Harry,” Cory smiled. “Aren’t you going to try out too? I hear Ginny wants the Seeker position.”

“Please,” Luna hummed. “Everyone knows she can’t compare to our Harry.”

“True,” Cory grinned, “So, who do you think’s gonna make the team?”

“I don’t know yet,” Harry said as he shifted to face the players. “I know who won’t make it though.”

Cory looked over at Harry. “Ron.”

“Yeah,” Harry nodded, “Weasley will spend more time being nervous than to do any work at all.”

“It’s his turn now,” Luna smiled as her gaze focused on the pitch.

They watched as Ron rose in the air and couldn’t help but to laugh when they saw him lose his grip on his broom more than once. Their laughter increased when they saw the redhead fumble to catch the Quaffle and failing every time. By the end of his session, Ron had only managed to stop two Quaffles.

Harry watched with glee as the redhead flew dejectedly back to the ground and Cormac took his position in the sky. The teen flew with a grace and played with considerable skill as he effortlessly blocked every Quaffle that came his way. He straightened up when he saw Cormac fumble. ‘What the hell? He was playing perfectly just a second ago, why’s he messing up now?’

Again, Cormac fumbled; he missed the next few Quaffles, allowing Katie to score against him. Frowning, Harry looked around and his gaze narrowed on where Hermione was sitting. He saw her holding her wand discretely while she covered her mouth with her hand.

“Luna,” Harry said softly, his green eyes narrowed into slits.

“I see her,” Luna said, “don’t worry. I know exactly how to take care of it.”

“What’s going on?” Cory asked as he looked between his girlfriend and his best friend.

“Granger jinxed McLaggen so that he would lose,” Harry told him. “My guess is, she did it so that Weasley could win.”

“Are you serious?” Cory looked over at Hermione.

“Very much so,” Luna said as she stood up.

“Where are you going?” Harry asked.

“To take care of it, of course,” Luna smiled, and it was a smile full of mischief, “don’t worry dear brother, Granger will get the surprise of her life and you will love it.”

“Why do I get the feeling trouble’s about to be caused?” Cory groaned as he stood up.

“That’s ‘cause you’re paranoid,” Harry quipped with a grin.

“It’s the good kind,” Luna said to her boyfriend, “trust me, you’ll enjoy this.” she motioned Harry to come forward and when he did, she kissed his cheek. “Show Ginerva why you’re the best at what you do.”
Their eyes met, green locking on to blue and Luna’s slow, uncurling smile was dark. “No mercy.”

Harry grinned and his eyes flashed darkly in response, “Never intended any.”

“Let’s go Cory,” Luna said before she made her way off the stands.

“See you after practice,” Cory smiled and waved as he followed his girlfriend.

~…~

Almost twenty minutes later, Harry was making his way into the Great Hall. Practice had finished ten minutes ago and he had taken a quick shower in the locker rooms. Just like he knew, he had retained his position as Seeker, while Ginny was the reserve, which really meant, she would only play if he couldn’t. Due to Cormac’s mess, Ron had been given the position as Keeper, which had the redhead dazed and amazed, but left his girlfriend happy for him, even if her smiles were tinged with guilt.

As he entered the Hall, he saw his friends, and boyfriend, sitting at Gryffindor table and made his way over to them. As he walked, he could hear the whispers and could make out Granger’s name, as well as Weasley’s and Cormac’s and the word cheating and suddenly, he knew just what his devious little sister had been up to.

“Hey guys,” Harry said as he dropped into the open space next to Draco. “So, what’s all the buzz about?”

Lavender’s eyes gleamed as she leaned across the table to talk, “everyone’s talking about what happened at the Gryffindor practice today.”

“What do you mean?” Harry feigned ignorance as he snagged a grape from Draco’s plate.

“Weren’t you there?” Draco raised an eyebrow at his boyfriend.

“Yes,” Harry nodded as he swallowed his bite, “but, I was in the air mostly and I wasn’t really paying attention to anyone else. So, what’s going on?”

Just as Lavender was about to answer, all conversations ceased the moment Hermione and Ron walked into the Great Hall.

Ron seemed oblivious to the looks; he was feeling too proud and smug about winning the position, but Hermione’s eyes darted around as she noticed the stares on them. They had barely gotten anywhere, when they were stopped. But it wasn’t by a person per se; instead, it was a comment.

“Hey Weasley,” a student shouted out, “I thought you were the man in the relationship? I didn’t know you had your girlfriend do everything for you!”

Laughter echoed throughout the hall and Hermione winced at the words, even as she wondered what was going on.

“What?” Ron whirled around to look at the student. “What the bloody hell are you on about?”

Lavender stood up from her seat, a smug grin on her face and her arms folded across her chest, “Your girlfriend is such a hypocrite. She’s always on everyone’s case about following the rules, and she doesn’t do it herself.”

Hermione rolled her eyes and folded her arms across her chest, mirroring Lavender’s pose. “You
know Lavender, I really don’t have time for whatever dribble you’re about to spit.”

“But you had time to fix it so that Weasley would get the Keeper position, didn’t you?” Lavender responded.

Hermione froze at the girl’s words. “What?”

Lavender took a step closer to Hermione and smirked, “It’s strange isn’t it? How Cormac played so well and then, all of a sudden, he started missing the Quaffle, he started fumbling and Weasley here, started catching his.”

Ron scowled at Lavender and stepped closer to his girlfriend, “Why is that so strange? I obviously did better than McLaggen did. It’s no one’s fault he messed up at try-outs.”

“Are you quite sure about that?” Lavender said, “Why don’t you ask your girlfriend what she did to McLaggen?”

“What are you talking about?” Ron demanded, “Hermione didn’t do anything. You’re just trying to cause trouble Lavender.” He then turned to Hermione. “Tell her you didn’t do anything.”

Hermione looked away as her arms fell from her chest. Her gaze flitted around the Hall and she saw everyone looking at them, her specifically. She could read the accusation in their faces as well as the glee on some students’ faces, like the Slytherins, at the idea that she had cheated.

“Hermione?” Ron called out when she remained silent.

McGonagall walked over to the trio. “I heard the rumours myself, but I didn’t believe them. However, I’m guessing by your reaction, there is some truth in it. So tell me Miss Granger; is it true? Did you really jinx Mr McLaggen so that he would fail at try-outs and so that Mr Weasley would get the position instead?”

Hermione looked up at Ron and then at her Head of House and Lavender before looking back at McGonagall. “I did. I wanted Ron to get the position because I knew how much it meant to him, so I used the Confundus charm on Cormac to make sure he didn’t do well.”

Whispers erupted into the Hall at Hermione’s confession and said girl turned red in embarrassment and shame.

“Hermione,” Ron stared at her, unable to say anything more.

McGonagall looked at her student, her face set in a frown, disappointment radiating from her in waves, “I am shocked Miss Granger, by your actions. Twenty points from Gryffindor for cheating,” She turned to Ron. “Unfortunately for you Mr Weasley, you will have to relinquish the Keeper position.”

“What?” Ron near shouted, but the look on his Head’s face had him keeping his voice low, “Why do I have to?”

“The position was gained through cheating Mr Weasley,” McGonagall said sternly, “by all accounts, Mr McLaggen performed much better than you, and if not for Miss Granger’s spell, he would be the Keeper, not you.”

“The professor’s right.” Katie stood up, a scowl on her face, “I’m sorry Ron, but I’m going to have to remove you from the team.” She turned to where Cormac was sitting, “Looks like you’re the new Keeper.”
Cormac smiled as his friends patted him on his back.

“I must say Miss Granger,” McGonagall spoke, “I am very disappointed. I never expected such deceit from you.” With that, the woman headed to the staff table.

Hermione’s eyes filled with tears as she looked around the Hall. The students were all staring at her.

“Cheater!” someone shouted and that was the catalyst for the others as they all started shouting out insults.

Humiliated, Hermione turned and ran from the Hall, the jeers and catcalls following her.

Ron turned to watch her go before he turned back to Lavender, blue eyes flashing with anger. “You did this! You bitch!”

Lavender took a step back at the rage on the redhead’s face and Harry, Draco, Cory, Blaise, Dean and Seamus all stood up.

“Ten points from Gryffindor and detention tomorrow and Monday night for that display of vulgarity and disrespect,” Snape called out, his voice filled with glee.

Ron’s face turned red and his hands balled into fists as he turned and left the Hall, heading after his girlfriend.

As Harry and the others sat back down, said guy turned to look at Luna sitting across from him. He waited for her to look at him and when she did, he raised an eyebrow in her direction.

Luna smiled and gave a slight shrug in response and Harry shook his head with a sigh before he grinned at her, causing her to giggle.

“If the silent conversation is over,” Blaise interrupted with a smile.

“Piss off Blaise,” Harry said.

“Love you too Harry,” Blaise grinned as the others laughed. “I must say, seeing the look on Granger’s face just now will forever be associated as a happy memory.”

“I still can’t believe she did that though,” Dean shook his head, “Hermione Granger, breaking a rule.”

“Just goes to show you,” Harry said as he took a slice of apple from Draco, “even those placed on a high pedestal can still fall off. You just have to be careful, and Granger wasn’t.”

Murmurs of agreement sounded from the friends and then, the conversation shifted to more pleasant topics. Twenty minutes later, the group finished with their meal and got up from the table, deciding to go outside.

They made their way to one of the trees in the courtyard and the boys climbed the tree while Pansy transfigured a napkin into a blanket for the girls to sit on. After a few minutes, Harry jumped from the tree just as Luna stood up.

“Let’s take a walk,” Luna smiled and held out her arm and as he stepped closer, she slipped it around his waist in their customary move.

“Don’t take too long,” Draco called from where he was lounging on a branch.
Harry looked over his shoulder at him with a smile. “We won’t.”

The group watched the two leave before Gabriella turned to Cory and Draco, “I don’t want to step on any toes or anything, but, I have to ask.”

“What?” Cory asked as he looked at her.

“Does it bother you—either one of you—that sometimes the two of them just go off together?” Gabriella asked; it’s something she wondered about ever since she started at the school and hanging out with them. Back in America, at the school she went to, things like that didn’t happen. Girls would freak if they saw their boyfriend or girlfriend, always spending a lot of time with someone else and boys were the same way. But neither Draco nor Cory had displayed any hint of jealousy and she was really curious.

Lavender, Padma and Parvati giggled while the others smiled.

“What?” Gabriella looked at the two girls.

“It doesn’t bother me,” Cory shrugged with a grin and he looked over at Draco, “and I know it doesn’t bother Draco.”

“But why?” Gabriella asked, needing to understand how they were so cool with it. “If I didn’t know any of you, I would say that Harry and Luna were the couple and not Harry and Draco or Cory and Luna.”

“It’s just how they are,” Lavender laughed, “We’ve known Harry for six years now, and we Gryffindors shared a common room with him and we know for a fact that Harry wasn’t a very people person.”

“He didn’t like to be touched,” Parvati continued, “and seemed to only tolerate Granger doing the touching; like hugging or hand holding.”

“And in Ravenclaw,” Padma added on, “No one really paid much attention to Luna when she started here. To be honest, some people bullied her; they loved to pick on her and were always hiding her things.”

“Harry lost his parents when he was a baby and Luna lost her mom when she was a little girl,” Cory said, “and I know Luna’s dad loved her and all, but friend-wise, neither one of them had friends to begin with. I know some others went through the friendless phase, but for Harry and Luna it was worse because of their home situation.”

“What do you mean?” Gabriella asked and even the others, with the exception of Draco, looked interested.

“Luna’s dad for all that he loves her, is a bit, um, eccentric,” Cory explained, “and because of that, she wasn’t raised in the same manner that most, if not all, pure-blood children were raised and Harry, his family didn’t really care for him.”

“So,” Gabriella bit her lip as her brows pulled together in a thoughtful expression, “basically, in a way, they were both neglected as children.”

“Yes,” Draco nodded, “and every year since they started Hogwarts, they’d had to deal with a lot of heckle from other students, myself included, except for this year. They can finally be themselves.”

“I think they recognize themselves in each other,” Cory continued on with a thoughtful look, “in a
way, they’re both lost souls yet somehow, they’ve still manage to retain some childlike quality and with each other, they can express or balance it or something, I don’t know.” he finished with a chuckle.

“Look,” Draco grinned at his friend, “we don’t worry because there’s no reason to. The two of them can read each other so good that they know when the other has an idea; they go off together and try to work through it. When they do, they come back and explain everything to us. I trust Harry with everything in me. Luna is his little sister.”

“Same for me,” Cory nodded, “I love Luna and if I had to choose someone to be there for her and protect her, it’s Harry.”

“Oh,” Gabriella said after a few minutes of silence. “Thanks for clearing that up for me then. I didn’t want to say anything because I wasn’t sure how it’d be taken. I just wondered is all.”

“Understood,” Draco nodded. He could see how an outsider would view the friendship between the two teens and truth be told, he had already expected Gabriella to say something. He had seen the looks the girl had thrown Harry and Luna over the last few days.

He was just surprised she held this long.

~…~

Luna and Harry had ended up at the lake; they sat on one of the large rocks, watching the colours the sun was casting off over the horizon.

“What do you plan to do?” Luna broke the silence after a while and turned her head slightly to look at Harry.

“Discredit him,” Harry replied. “He is going to die, but not before we take away the most important thing in his life.”

“The love and respect of his followers,” Luna said, “you know his most loyal followers will not believe so easily.”

“I know,” Harry nodded, “but the majority will, and those that still have their doubts, they’ll lose them when the phoenix situation come to light.”

“True,” Luna rested her head on his shoulder, “He’s been in position too long and have done too much damage. He needs to be removed.”

“He will be,” Harry said, “his end is coming.”

Luna hummed and snuggled further into his embrace.

~…~

A few days passed and the main topic throughout the corridors of the school was still the Gryffindor team try-outs where Hermione cheated for Ron. Everywhere the redhead went, he was treated to jeers and mocking. Students had been sent to the infirmary after being hexed by him. As for Hermione, the jeers and catcalls were even worse and the humiliation had her eating away from the eyes of her classmates. She couldn’t stand the ridicule or the disappointment in McGonagall’s eyes.

Which is why, while everyone was in the Great Hall for lunch, she was sitting in an unused classroom, tears flowing down her cheeks like a river. Frustrated and needing comfort, she had
written home to her mother the day after everything had happened. She had told her everything, leaving nothing out. Earlier today, she had received her mother’s response and it was not what she had expected.

Holding back a sob, Hermione reached down and picked up the letter lying next to her. Eyes shining with tears, she read it once more.

_Hermione,_

_I was overwhelmed, concerned and in complete disbelief when I read your letter. I reread it about five times simply because my eyes couldn’t believe what they were seeing. Hermione, how could you?_

_From the moment you were born, I knew you were special. I could feel it. And then, you started doing things, making things happen and even though I was scared, I knew it was harmless. And you were my little girl and nothing was going to change how I thought about you; so I just chalked up your accidental outbursts of magic to there just being something extremely special about you. Then that woman, McGonagall, showed up here when you turned eleven and she explained everything and as scared as I was about losing you, I could see the light in your eyes when she said you were a witch and that you could be a part of the magical community and I knew I’d had to let you go._

_I worried of course, about you making friends, because I knew that during your time at primary school, you barely had any as kids were too intimidated by your brains, and for the first couple of months, I thought my worry was just and as I made the decision to take you away, you wrote home about meeting a boy; a boy that risked his life to save yours. From that moment on, I knew that Harry Potter would come to mean something to you and not because of his status, even then, as the Saviour—which I still think is complete rubbish. Imagine, grown adults relying on a boy to save them all!_

_Your letters from that point on were always about Harry, even though you had made friends with that boy Ronald as well, you wrote more about Harry. I remember reading about how he treated you normal, how he wasn’t intimidated by your genius but rather in awe of it, how he came to rely on you knowing something that he didn’t know. I knew then you had found a friend for life. And the letters over the next few school years did nothing to disprove that thought, they only strengthened it._

_I admit that a part of me had hoped that you would eventually write about the friendship between you and Harry developing into more, but I understood that you saw him as your best friend, as your brother and from what you told of him, he saw the same of you. However, what I never got, was both of your friendships with that redhead boy Ronald Weasley and your subsequent relationship either._

_From the start, I knew that boy was no good; for you or Harry. Everything you ever told about him just screams rude and inconsiderate and his actions showed he was nothing more than a brat who always wanted things handed to him, always looked for the easy way out, was too jealous of his supposed best friend’s talents and gifts, and was greedy and jealous for the fame and wealth that Harry has._

_Hermione, we always raised you to do the right thing, and to also stand up for what you believe in. I told you to hang on to your friendship to Harry because true friends like that are a rarity, but now, what you’re telling me…I still can’t believe it._

_Why Hermione? Why would you do such a thing? Why would you go against your best friend like that? Harry has always stood up for you and not once has he ever made you feel like you’re inferior, so why would you choose others over him when you have never done so? And all for what? A place_
in the Wizarding World? An in with a Wizarding family? To feel important because of your status as a, a Muggle-born witch? You betrayed the one person you could always count on for stupid things. It makes you no more than a slut selling herself for her body. The thing of it is, what makes it seem infinitely worse, is that, you gave up everything you are—your principles, your morals, your friend—not for sex, but for a position.

I never thought I’d ever say these words to you, but I am deeply ashamed and disappointed in you. I do not know who you are, because the girl that I know, the girl that I raised, she never would’ve done this. And to make matters worse, you were caught cheating. Cheating! You once again went against your principles to help that boy secure a position on his House team, a position he rightfully didn’t deserve. You knew that and you still helped him anyways. What were you thinking?!

And the things you said to Harry, throwing his Godfather’s death in his face, telling him it was his fault…I can’t even begin to touch on that point. That’s how upset I am! Are you so desperate for acceptance that you would go against your beliefs? That you would turn on the one true friend you had? Hermione, I don’t think you fully realized just what it is you have thrown away.

You’re angry over Harry and the way he’s been treating you for the last few weeks, but, I agree with him. Why should he be the fool and accept your apology when it was as false as me being a witch? The apology was only given because that daft, manipulative uncaring fool of a man that calls himself the Headmaster, persuaded you to do it. Harry’s actions regarding you, that boy, the Headmaster and everyone else was his way of saying he was done. He was done being the whipping boy, done acting stupid and done doing what was best for everyone and not what was best for him. And I applaud him for it.

Harry hasn’t changed Hermione; he grew up. And unfortunately, you haven’t. You are a genius Hermione, smarter than anyone I know, and yet, right now, you, you are monumentally stupid. Your actions, your words…it doesn’t scream genius, it screams stupid and selfish and makes you look like a puppet, a puppet moving to the tune that the Weasley boy and Dumbledore sing.

You’re angry because the twins turned their backs on their family because of what they did to Harry. You shouldn’t. What they did, that was brave; to go against your family for a boy you’ve only known for five years, that’s true loyalty. Sirius was right when he said you were just like the man that betrayed Harry’s parents; Harry trusted you and you sold him out.

You’re my daughter, and I will always love you, but right now, I don’t like you. When you find the girl who stood up for her friends, the girl who defied everyone to stand by and protect a boy who needed it, the girl that stood by her principles and who was willing to do the right thing even if sometimes it was the hardest thing to do and it meant going against everyone, when you find her, tell her I miss her and I want her back and I would love to talk to her, but until then, I have nothing more to say to you.

Your Mother,
Margaret

P.S. if you think appealing to your father to understand your side of the story will work, it won’t. He is just as disappointed and ashamed in you as I am.

The letter fell from her hands and fluttered to the floor as a sob tore free from her throat. She raised her hands, shaky as they were, and pressed them against her lips, but it did nothing to stop the sounds from escaping. Soon enough, she broke down, her body shaking with the force of her emotions being released.

She cried for what seemed like forever as images after images assaulted her mind. It finally hit her;
what she did and what she lost. Harry was the first person to befriend her, to not treat her like she
had the plague; he treated her normal, became her very first and best friend and what did she do? She
tossed it away. She let others fill her head with promises of being someone important, when she
already had that. She had had a position that a lot of people envied and would have killed for; she
was Harry’s best friend, someone he trusted explicitly, someone he confided in and she had ruined
that.

“W-W-W-What have I-I-I done?” Hermione cried. She kept crying and soon, her cries became
wheezes.

She felt like she was at the lowest of low points and knew there was no one to blame but herself.
Dumbledore and the other Weasleys may have placed the suggestions in her head and told her to do
what she did, but it was her choice to actually do them. She could’ve said no, she could’ve told them
she wasn’t going to go against her best friend like that, but she didn’t and now, not only had she
been caught cheating, she had disappointed her Head of House, had made her parents ashamed of
her and had lost the one person she knew she could always count on. And all for what?

Her cries slowly died down and when they stopped, Hermione fell back against the wall. After
taking a couple shuddering breaths to get herself under control, she stared blankly across the room.

‘I-I can’t do this anymore. Mum is right; I sold out. I destroyed my friendship with Harry all because
I listened to Dumbledore and the Weasleys. And now, the whole school thinks I’m a cheater. How
could I have been so stupid?’

She brought up a hand, noticing how shaky it was, and wiped her remaining tears away. Her glance
fell back to the letter and suddenly, she knew what she had to do.

“I’m done,” she whispered. “I’m not doing this anymore. Nothing matters. I gave up my best friend,
all because I wanted to be close to a Wizarding family, all because Dumbledore promised me I could
have an important position in life. But none of that matters anymore.”

Letting out a sigh, Hermione grabbed the letter and stood up. She brushed the dust off her clothes
and left the classroom. As she walked down the hallway, she knew that she wasn’t up to facing any
of the other students so she headed straight for the common room.

When she got there, she was surprised to see Ron sitting in one of the chairs near the fireplace.

“Ron,” Hermione asked as she walked over to him, “what are you doing here?”

“I was looking for you,” Ron replied, “you weren’t at lunch. Hermione, I still can’t believe you did
what you did.”

Hermione looked away with a sigh before she sat down. “I can’t either. It was a stupid thing to do
and I never should’ve done it in the first place. It was a wrong thing to do.” Hermione bit her lip,
“Ron, we need to talk.”

“‘Bout what?” Ron’s brows furrowed into a frown.

“About us,” Hermione answered. She took a deep breath to settle her nerves. “Ron, I don’t want to
be with you anymore.”

“What?!” Ron growled out as he looked at her in disbelief. “What are you playing at Hermione?”

“I’m not playing at anything,” Hermione shook her head, “I can’t do this anymore Ron. I-I’ve
become someone I don’t recognize, someone my own parents want nothing to do with and I don’t
like it.” She closed her eyes briefly and when she reopened them, though they were sad, they were filled with determination. “I want to break up.”

“What?!” Ron flew up from his seat and glared down at her. He couldn’t understand why she was breaking up with him. He loved her, and she loved him, and they belonged together. Everyone said so.

Hermione knew he would be angry, and he would try to change her mind, but she was determined to see this through. She was done with everything; being Dumbledore’s puppet, Ginny’s friend, Ron’s girlfriend, all of it. She had lost her parents’ respect and Harry’s friendship, and no position in the world was worth that. She knew she had to make amends with Harry, and this was the start of it.

“You can’t be serious!” Ron’s angry glare died down to a pleading one. “Is it because of what you did at practice? Hermione, it’s ok. I forgive you because I know you did it because you love me.”

“No Ron,” Hermione shook her head, “I’m not doing this because of that. Well actually, a part of this is because of that, but I’m mostly doing it because it’s the right thing to do. I messed up when I agreed to spy on Harry and to make him compliant and do whatever it is people wanted of him. My parents are angry at me, Harry’s not talking to me, and now everyone in school thinks I’m a cheater. I thought that being with you would be perfect because I had liked you for so long, but it’s not. I can’t be with you, not anymore, and not if being with you means I lose myself.”

“What is that supposed to mean?” Ron asked.

Hermione sighed. She had hoped he wouldn’t make things harder than needed, but it seems her hopes were in vain, “It means what it sounds like Ron. I can’t be with you. I don’t want to be with you. We’re over Ron.” With that, she got up and walked away.

“Hermione?” Ron turned to watch her leave and called after her, but got no reply.

~…~

By dinner, everyone knew that Hermione had broken up with Ron and like any news that became known in Hogwarts, it was the topic of all the gossip.

Harry and the others were sitting at the end of the Slytherin table talking about said gossip.

“Do you believe it?” Lavender asked as she placed a fork full of chicken in her mouth.

“Judging by Weasley’s posture and expression,” Pansy said as she gestured to where Ron was sitting, “I would say that yes, Granger really did end her relationship with him.”

Ron was sitting at the Gryffindor table, facing them, with his shoulders hunched over and a pinched expression on his face. The other students seemed to be giving him a wide berth as the seats on opposite sides of him were empty and his sister sat across from him.

“You don’t seem that surprised Harry,” Parvati said, looking at the teen.

Harry shrugged, “I’m not.” He leaned down and picked up Sesshoumaru, who had chosen to be the size of a small puppy, and placed him in his lap, feeding him some of steak from his plate, “I was her best friend for the last five years and I know her. I knew that despite the fact that she had followed Weasley’s lead and turned against me, there was still a part of her that hated what she was becoming. And like I told Cory, it was only a matter of time before she broke.”

Conversations around the Hall died to whispers and Parvati, Seamus, Dean and Lavender looked up
to see Hermione standing at the entrance.

Hermione looked around, ignoring the way everyone was looking at her, and paused when her gaze landed on the Slytherin table. Breaking up with Ron and cutting ties with him was the start of finding herself, but this, this was the something she needed to do. She had to try and make things right with Harry, even though she knew without a shadow of a doubt that she would never regain his friendship, but she could only hope. Taking a deep breath, she steeled her nerves and walked over to the Slytherin table, intensely aware of the fact that all eyes were on her. The closer she got, the others looked up at her and she almost turned around and walked back out, but she didn’t.

She stopped behind Harry, ignoring the fact that Draco’s grey eyes were boring into her. “Harry?”

Harry stopped feeding Sesshoumaru and looked at her, his face expressionless and his green eyes blank. “Is there something I can help you with?”

“I know I don’t have the right to ask,” Hermione swallowed, “But I was wondering if I could talk to you.”

Harry stared at her and then, he slowly shifted his gaze to Luna. Green locked on to blue and held for a few minutes before Harry turned back to Hermione. “Alright.”

Harry stood up, shifting Sesshoumaru to Draco’s lap where the pup nuzzled Yasha. He looked back to Luna and jerked his head to the side. When she stood up, he turned back to Hermione. “Lead the way.”

Hermione turned and walked out the Hall, Harry and Luna following her.

~…~

Up at the staff table, Minerva sighed as she looked at her Gryffindors.

“Is something the matter Minerva?” Filius asked.

“My Gryffindors,” Minerva turned slightly to look at him. “Never before have I seen such discord among them. With the friendship between Mr Potter, Mr Weasley and Miss Granger severed; the fiasco with Miss Weasley; Mr LeStrange and Mr Potter’s friendship, and now, the ending of Miss Granger and Mr Weasley’s relationship, my entire house seems to have been turned upside down.”

“I rather thought those situations could all be considered good things,” Snape injected, drawing looks of surprise from the other teachers as they knew he never involved himself in the students’ affairs unless it had to with his Slytherins.

“However do you mean Severus?” Sinistra asked.

Snape’s brows furrowed slightly as his gaze shifted from his colleagues to the students; his dark eyes moved from where Ron was sitting, to over where Harry and the others were. “Ronald Weasley is a destructive force and a very jealous and greedy boy. From day one, his friendship with Mr Potter had been all about how it could benefit him. He used his position as Mr Potter’s best friend to his advantage and more often than not, it was him that led Mr Potter to trouble.”

He saw the looks on the teachers’ faces at his obvious defence of Harry and near scowled. “Mr Potter and I may have had our differences in the past, but I am not above myself to admit that I may have judged him too harshly simply based on the fact that he favours his father in looks. I have come to understand that Mr Potter is more like his mother.”
The professors who knew Lily Potter nodded as they thought on the dead woman and her son.

“As I was saying,” Snape continued, “it was often Mr Weasley who instigated everything; from the fights with other students to rushing headlong into trouble. I do believe that Mr Potter’s friendship with Mr Weasley held him back rather than push him forward. For now, without Mr Weasley’s influence, Mr Potter has thrived in all of his classes.”

“That is true,” Minerva said and the teachers who had Harry as a student nodded in agreement, “The Mr Potter in my class this year, is vastly different to the student I have been teaching the last five years. He understands and grasps the knowledge of the subject far better than previously shown.”

“I agree,” Filius near bounced in his seat from excitement. “He reminds me so much of his mother. Her talent at Charms was always astounding, but Mr Potter, his talent is surpassing his mother’s. There is an ease to him to the way he performs his spells that wasn’t there before.”

“It is the same in my class,” Snape added, “his potions skill has improved greatly and it too reminded me of Lily, and her talent for the subject. When I asked Mr Potter about it, what he confessed confirmed my suspicions about Mr Weasley’s influence.”

“What was that?” Sinistra asked, shifting to look at the Potions Master even more.

“He told me that without Mr Weasley to distract him by whispering how horrible the class is,” Snape said, “or by whispering such other nonsense, he can concentrate completely on what he is doing.”

“And what of the other stuff you said?” Pomona asked. It was very rare to hear Severus Snape offer his thoughts on a subject without scorn or cynicism, so she was very intrigued to hear the Potions Master’s thoughts on the shifts in the most famous friendships in the school.

“Mr Potter displayed his true nature when the truth surrounding Mr LeStrange’s family was revealed,” Snape continued, “while other students would have shunned the boy due to who his parents were, Mr Potter didn’t. He accepted the information and continued on as if nothing had changed, and for him, nothing had. As far as he was concerned, Corvus LeStrange was still Neville Longbottom; the only difference was a change in name. And as for Mr LeStrange, Harry’s continued friendship with him, allowed him to accept who he came from and it created a surge in his confidence and his schoolwork; though Potions will more than likely always be trouble for him.”

The teachers’ all had amused smiles on their faces at his words.

Lucius sat on the other side of Snape and had to fight the urge to showcase his glee at the discussion. He knew that some of the professors would be a hard sell to come over to his Lord’s side, but he was sure that there were those that would welcome the change as long as it meant the students were safe. He suspected that deep down, most of them didn’t completely follow Dumbledore like lost sheep, and that if given the choice to better their world, and their students, they would take it.

“And Miss Granger’s relationship with Mr Weasley?” Audrey Dering, the Muggle Studies professor asked.

“Severus,” Lucius injected smoothly, “if I may?”

“Certainly,” Snape nodded and allowed his companion and friend the floor, so to speak.

“You have just started here and as such, you are not familiar with the relationship between the two,” Lucius said, “I myself have only started teaching here, but, I am very familiar and I must say I agree with Severus. Miss Granger ending their relationship was the very best thing she could’ve done for
herself. Mr Weasley to me, all family discord aside, has always presented himself as someone who was not willing to work harder for anything, and would like it if everything was handed to him on a silver platter. He is also a bully.”

Most of the teachers gave him sceptical looks and some scoffed.

“I know what you are thinking,” Lucius smiled, “how can I say that, considering who my son is? Here is how; my son, for all his faults, has never once reduced a person he was supposedly interested in to tears, nor has he ever made them feel as if they are to be ashamed of whom they are. Yes, he may have done it to others—like say Mr Potter, or Ms Granger—but never to someone he has shown an interest in. Mr Weasley on the other hand, has done exactly that.” he raised an eyebrow at the teachers. “Does the Yule Ball fourth year come to mind?”

The professors that had been there winced in remembrance.

“What happened?” Professor Dering asked.

“Throughout the entirety of the ball, Mr Weasley showcased his jealousy and at the end of the night, it culminated in Miss Granger crying due to the harsh words dealt by the redhead teen,” Snape explained.

“He insults her intelligence,” Lucius continued, “and then, goes after her to help with schoolwork. Mr Weasley is no more than a user. I dare say Miss Granger will better off without him.”

“Well I for one have never seen Miss Lovegood as relaxed and even more comfortable in her own skin,” Filius squeaked out.

“With the dissolution of the friendship between the “Golden Trio”,” Lucius said, “the possibility for more friendships has opened up. Take for instance, my son’s relationship with Mr Potter. Do you believe that if Harry had kept his friendship with Mr Weasley, someone who has openly declared that he hates all Slytherins and my family, he would be with Draco, or be friends with Miss Parkinson, Mr Zabini and Miss Garibaldi, or any other Slytherin for that matter? And what of his friendship with Mr LeStrange? Would he have remained friends with the former Mr Longbottom?”

The professors looked speculative, but before either one of them could comment, they all caught sight of Hermione walking over to the Slytherin table where Harry and the others were sitting.

“I wonder what that is all about?” Pomona said. “Are we about to see a reunion between the two of them?”

Snape and Lucius exchanged looks, knowing from Harry himself that such a thing would never happen.

“I very much doubt that,” Snape said, the tiniest grin on his face.

~…~

Harry leaned against the wall outside the Great Hall, and watched Hermione. Luna moved close, leaning against him, almost curling into his embrace.

“What did you want to talk about?” Harry asked.

Hermione watched the way Luna all but snuggled into Harry’s side and she couldn’t help the jealousy that flared up in her. ‘That could’ve been me…that used to be me. I wish it still was.’ Taking a deep breath, Hermione shifted her eyes to Harry. “I wanted to apologize.’
“For what?” Harry asked, though Harry knew exactly what she was talking about.

“For everything,” Hermione said, “for the way I treated you, the things I said to you, how I reacted after Sirius died, blaming you for it when it wasn’t your fault, that letter I sent to you and how I acted in Potions, but mostly, for the fact that I turned on you, that I betrayed you.” She swallowed, “Harry, you were my best friend; the one person I could count on and I betrayed you. Looking back, the reason seems so stupid and I can’t believe I did it, but I did and I am so sorry. I was wrong.

“It’s not your fault that Sirius died, and I shouldn’t have blamed you for it. Nor should I have blamed you for getting hurt at the Department of Mysteries. You had tried to get us to stay back, even going so far as to say you could handle it on your own, but we—I didn’t listen. I told you we were in it together and then, I did what I did.”

Hermione paused and took a few breaths and then, she continued, “I never should’ve allowed Dumbledore and Mrs Weasley and Mr Weasley and Ron and Ginny to influence me into betraying you. You trusted me and I foolishly threw it away. I am so sorry Harry. I know I won’t, and can’t, get your friendship back, but, do you think,” she stopped and her eyes moved away from his as tears filled them. Swallowing back the tears that threatened to fall, she looked back at Harry, “I don’t have the right to ask, not after what I did, but, can you ever forgive me?”

Harry remained silent as he looked at her. Her words were exactly what he had expected, so he wasn’t surprised at them; what he was surprised at, was that she had broken so quickly. He had honestly thought it would’ve taken her longer to get to this point. He shifted and looked down at Luna, nudging her gently so that she would look at him.

Luna kept her gaze on Hermione; she knew the brunette was telling the truth. She could feel it. Unlike Harry, she wasn’t surprised that girl had broken so quickly; she attributed the quick breakdown to the letter she knew for a fact Hermione had received from her mother. Whatever the woman had told her, had brought home all of her actions and made her finally open her eyes and see what was wrong, that what she was doing and had done was not the person she was or wanted or could be. She shook her head when she felt the nudge and she looked up at Harry. She could see the question in his eyes and she gave a small smile and a barely perceptible nod to let him that Hermione wasn’t trying to trick him.

Harry shifted his gaze from Luna back to Hermione. “You’re right, you know? You don’t deserve to ask, and you definitely don’t deserve it.”

Hermione flinched and bowed her head, her tears finally falling. ‘I knew there was a possibility I wouldn’t be forgiven, but I never thought it would hurt this much to not have it. I have no one to blame but myself.’

Harry saw her reaction and had to stifle his chuckles. Luna noticed and rolled her eyes at him with a smirk.

“Hermione,” Harry said. She didn’t look up, so he tried again, “Hermione.”

Luna smirked and then, she snapped out, “Granger!”

Hermione jumped at Luna’s sharp tone and looked up at the two quickly. “Yes?”

“You don’t deserve my forgiveness,” Harry repeated. “But, that doesn’t mean you’re not getting it.”

“What?” Hermione was shocked. She didn’t expect him to forgive her at all, and now, he was telling her that he did.
“I forgive you,” Harry said, “for everything.”

Hermione wiped the tears that fell and gave a shaky smile. “Thank you.”

“Just because I forgive you,” Harry continued, “it doesn’t mean I want to rebuild our friendship. I meant it when I said I was done being friends with you. From this point onwards, you mean nothing to me. What that means is, I won’t go out of my way to do harm to you, but I won’t go out of my way to help you either. Where you’re concerned, I won’t have any feelings; no anger, no hate, no wistfulness, no regrets, no nothing. Do you understand?”

This time, Hermione didn’t even bother wiping the tears that fell. “I-I do.”

Harry nodded and leaned off the wall. He pulled Luna in even closer as he wrapped an arm around her shoulders, and the two headed back into the Great Hall.

Hermione watched them go before she turned and made her way to the common room. When she got there, she went directly to her bed, where she drew the curtains, cast a Silencing Charm and cried her heart out.

She had lost her very first friend, and the most important person in the world to her, other than her parents and the worst thing about it was, it was all her fault and there was nothing she could do to change it.
It’s been a few days since Harry and Hermione’s talk. Right now, Harry was on his way to meet Snape. He had some ideas on how to get rid of Dumbledore and he wanted the man’s input; not only was he a Death Eater and spy for the last twenty years, which meant he had extensive knowledge on how to rid oneself on an enemy with or without a trace, but because Voldemort had told him Snape would want to be included and be of help.

He was so preoccupied with thoughts on how to kill Dumbledore that he didn’t see who was coming towards him.

“Wotcher Harry.”

Harry looked up and saw Tonks, “Hey Tonks. What are you doing here?”

“Just came to talk to Dumbledore,” Tonks replied as she stopped next to him, “Where were you just now? You looked miles away.”

“Just thinking about something,” Harry replied vaguely. He stared at the woman in front of him. He remembered Sirius’ words from the will reading and he wondered if the woman really was completely devoted to Dumbledore’s cause or if she actually thought for herself.

‘Only one way to find out.’

“So Tonks,” Harry said casually as he started walking again, forcing the witch to follow him, “I saw you at Grimmauld Place last summer and I’ve been meaning to ask you something.”

Tonks shifted slightly to look at the teen, “What’s that Harry?”
“You have a boyfriend or something?” Harry asked casually.

Tonks froze for a split second before continuing on, “Why do you ask?” she tripped over her feet and would’ve fallen if Harry hadn’t caught her.

“Well,” Harry grinned as he straightened up and simultaneously pulling her close, “You’re a beautiful witch.”

Tonks’ face flushed pink as her hair flashed red before settling back into her normal colour, “Oh?”

‘Draco’s gonna kill me if he ever finds out about this,’ Harry thought as he pulled the witch into an empty, and abandoned, classroom. He closed the door behind them and threw up a Locking and Silencing charm.

“Yeah,” Harry continued as he guided Tonks backwards until her back hit the wall. “Can I ask you something?” he leaned in and pressed his nose into her neck, grinning mentally at the shiver that ran through her.

‘Oh sweet Merlin, Harry Potter is nuzzling my neck,’ Tonks thought with a daze. It was a little hard to concentrate on the conversation they were having. “What do you want to know?” she breathed out.

“Well,” Harry pressed a kiss to her pulse point, “How do you feel about being an Auror?”

The question puzzled the witch, but she answered anyway, “It’s rewarding. Knowing that I’m helping to keep our lives safe and removing dark witches and wizards,” she gasped when she felt teeth scraping her pulse point and took a few seconds before continuing, “You-Know-Who’s Death Eaters, from the public is satisfying.”

Harry felt a flash of anger, but pushed it down, “And what about Dumbledore? Do you like working for him?”

“D-Dumbledore is a great man,” Tonks breathed out, “He’s doing what is best for our country.”

“What you’re doing, do you think it makes sense?” Harry asked. “I mean, is it impacting the future in any way?”

Tonks felt confusion; she wondered why Harry was asking her that, but before she could voice the thought, she felt his lips against her pulse and all thoughts fled.

“Well?” Harry asked as he pulled back to look at her.

Tonks looked at him, “What?”

Barely refraining from rolling his eyes, Harry repeated the question.

“Oh,” Tonks nodded, “yes I do. Like I said, Dumbledore is doing what’s best for us. And by doing my job—reporting on suspicious wizards and witches and watching the Death Eaters—I’m helping him do that.”

She reached out to pull him back to her, but he pulled away.

“I can’t,” Harry shook his head, “I’m with someone.”

Tonks gasped in disbelief, “then why’d you kiss me just now?”
“I’ve always wondered about it,” Harry lied, “But I’d never got the chance. When I saw you tonight, I figured it was the only opportunity I’d get. I’m sorry.”

Tonks wanted to be mad at him, she really did, but she wasn’t. Instead, she pushed the anger away and smiled, “It’s ok Harry. I’m a little angry, don’t get me wrong, but, I understand.”

“It’s just that,” Harry continued as though she hadn’t said anything, “I can’t even behave like a normal teen, you know? Everyone expects me to be an Auror and to defeat You-Know-Who, but, nobody ever asked me what I wanted.”

“What do you mean?” Tonks asked.

“I don’t want to fight this war,” Harry said, “There’s so much pressure on me; from Dumbledore, from my friends, even the Wizarding World. I know I have to fight him, but why me? Why do I have to be the one to fight him? Why can’t someone else do it?”

“Because the prophecy said only you could,” Tonks looked at him in sympathy.

Harry froze; he hadn’t thought she’d know about that, but then again, she was a member of the Order, so Dumbledore could’ve told them about it. The thing was to find out how much about the prophecy did she know. “You know about the prophecy?”

Tonks nodded, “I do.”

“And do you know what it says?” Harry asked.

“No,” Tonks shook her head, “Dumbledore never told us what it said exactly. All he told us was that there had been a prophecy saying you would be the one to destroy You-Know-Who.”

“And you think that’s fair?” Harry asked, “Putting all that pressure on me?”

“Well,” Tonks shifted against the wall, “you really can’t argue with a prophecy, can you?”

“But,” Harry pressed, “I’m asking if it’s fair. I’m just sixteen years old. I’m not even finished with school as yet. How can everyone expect a teenager to fight against an older wizard, one with a lot of power, and win? Tell me, is that fair?”

Tonks frowned, “No, I suppose it isn’t fair. I mean, you’ve barely just started coming into your adult years, but, you’re Harry Potter. You’re powerful. Grown witches and wizards have trouble even casting a corporeal Patronus and you cast a full Patronus when you were just thirteen!”

Harry sighed and looked away, “I wish everyone would just stop. How fair is it of Dumbledore to put that kind of weight on my shoulders? Why can’t he do this himself? He’s Albus Dumbledore after all.”

“But Harry, the prop—”

“I don’t care about the prophecy!” Harry cut her off. “Prophecies are only real if you believe in them. Dumbledore believed in this stupid prophecy so much that he was willing to sacrifice a child to get what he wanted. All he cared about was getting a “Saviour”.”

“Now that’s not true,” Tonks frowned at him. Anger was starting to build, “Dumbledore is a good man.”

“Really?” Harry scoffed, “Would a good man place a fifteen month old baby on a doorstep in the
freezing cold at night?”

Tonks let out a gasp at that. Children were sacred in the Wizarding World. With the exception of the Weasleys, most families had only one child and as such, the children were cared for.

“Would a good man let an innocent man go to Azkaban—without a trial—for twelve years for a crime he didn’t commit?” Harry continued. “And don’t tell me Dumbledore didn’t know or he couldn’t have done anything! From what I know, he’s the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamont, which means, he could’ve gone above Barty Crouch and Minister Bagnold’s head and ordered a trial for Sirius, but he didn’t!”

Tonks shifted uncomfortably at that. Ever since the will reading and the scolding that she had received from her mother, the topic of Sirius and his innocence and subsequent death had been a sore topic. Andromeda had been angry that she had known the truth and had done nothing about it…all on Dumbledore’s orders.

“Would a good man sentence a child to live with a family that hated his very existence?” Harry continued. He hated talking about his childhood; not because it bothered him, but because he had put it all behind him and just wanted to forget about it. But, right now, talking about it was part of his plan.

“What do you mean?” Tonks’ eyes narrowed.

“My family hated me,” Harry told her, “I was beaten, starved and neglected. I was treated worse than the Crouch’s elf.”

Tonks gasped in horror and disbelief, “No,” she shook her head, “Dumbledore wouldn’t have done that. He’s not like that monster that’s trying to destroy this world.”

“Oh wake up!” Harry snapped, “He did do that! He left me with them, and not once did he think to check on me. Me; his precious tool to destroy Voldemort! And if that wasn’t bad enough, everything he’s done since I started here; planting the Sorcerer’s Stone here knowing Voldemort was after it, the Chamber of Secrets, the Tri-Wizard Tournament, last year…the man has done nothing but manipulate my life to suit his needs.”

Tonks glared at him, “I don’t know what you think you know, but Albus Dumbledore is a great man. He would not do those things you’re accusing him of.”

Harry had known going into this that it would’ve been hard to convince the Auror to switch sides, but he hadn’t counted on her being so far into Dumbledore’s clutches that she’d refuse to see the truth.

‘Merlin, her head is so far up his arse that she can’t see anything but his bloody intestines!’ Harry thought furiously. He didn’t want to hurt her, but by the way things were going, he knew he’d have to do something if she attacked. He hoped she didn’t, but then, he did. Some part of him wanted to test his training, especially against an Auror.

Deciding, to give it one last shot, he gave semi-details of not only his childhood, but of everything that had happened since he started Hogwarts. When he was done, he added on his final point, “Even Remus, Charlie and Bill agree with me.”

“What?” Tonks looked at him in shock.

“Yeah,” Harry nodded. He knew that she had a fondness for the three men, well, maybe more than fondness for Remus, not that anything would ever happen between her and Remus; not only was
Lucius a Malfoy—and there was no one in the world more possessive of something they considered theirs than the Malfoys—but Remus’ wolf side already claimed Lucius as a mate and neither man would be willing to share.

Not that Tonks would ever know about the two men, well, unless she did join their side, then she’d find out that way. It would be amazing if Voldemort stole another one of Dumbledore’s trusted Order members right from under his nose.

Mentally shaking his head, Harry refocused back on the witch in front of him. He could see the waver in her eyes and decided to press his advantage, “Dumbledore is not a good man. He acts as if all he wants is equal rights for everyone while destroying the biggest threat to Wizarding World, but he doesn’t realize that he’s the biggest threat, not the Dark Lord.”

Tonks narrowed her eyes at him, “The Dark Lord? Why would you call him that? Only Death Eaters--” she stopped and stared at him with wide and horrified eyes as realization crashed through, “No.”

Harry shook his head and raised his sleeve on his left hand, baring his arm to her.

Tonks stared down at the empty arm and looked back at Harry in confusion, “But, then why--” she shook her head, “Harry, from what you said just a minute ago, it sounds like you’re on You-Know-Who’s side.”

“So what if I am?” Harry raised an eyebrow, “Voldemort has been nothing but honest about his intentions for the Wizarding World and to be honest, I agree with what he wants. Dumbledore wants there to be an open relationship between Muggles and Wizard kind, but he doesn’t know that that cannot happen. Muggles fear what they don’t understand and that fear easily becomes hatred and a need to eradicate the abnormal. And if they didn’t want to go down that path, then they’d want to lock us up in labs to study us and find out just how we can do magic.

“I think we should separate Muggle-born witches and wizards from their parents at a young age or if not, then give them a choice when they have graduated from here to either stay in our world, or go back. If they choose to leave this world and live in the Muggle world, then they have to either leave their wands behind or take a vow that would prevent them from doing any magic in front of Muggles or spilling anything about Wizards.”

“But that’s barbaric!” Tonks glared at him, “And I can’t believe you’d think that it’s ok to take a child from its parents.”

“And you think what Dumbledore is doing, or has done isn’t barbaric?” Harry asked, “Leaving a wizard child with magic hating Muggles; leaving said child to be beaten and starved and neglected? And he does nothing to stop it, but instead encourages it for whatever reason? Or how about the fact that he’s responsible for the darkest Dark Lord this world has seen? If Dumbledore had listened to Voldemort when he was still at Hogwarts, the man wouldn’t have endured all that he had. So in response to your earlier statement, no I don’t have the Dark Mark and I’m not a Death Eater, but—

Tonks stared at him aghast, even as she took a step back, her face paling rapidly. “What?” she whispered, unable to believe what she had just heard, “You can’t be serious! Did you forget everything he did?! How could you support that madman? Are you crazy Harry?” she shook her head, “A-And Bill and Charlie, Remus too? No!”

‘Oh shit!’ flashed through Harry’s mind.

Tonks was white in the face, her chest heaving rapidly in growing agitation. Her hands were
clenched into tight, white-knuckled fists. Her hair revolved through several colours in quick succession—pink, green, purple, brown, black—displaying her inner turmoil.

Suddenly, she shook her head and pivoted around, moving her wrist at the same moment to draw her wand, ready to disarm, attack, run off, she didn’t know. All she knew was that she had to get away; she had to get to Dumbledore. She still couldn’t believe it; Remus, Charlie, Bill and Harry, they had joined You-Know-Who’s side.

Harry saw her decision in her eyes and knew he had to stop her. He couldn’t allow her to go to Dumbledore and tell him what just happened; it would ruin everything. Summoning his razor sharp dagger from its hidden holder, he jumped at her and snaked his arm around her body, plunging the point of the dagger into the space above her clavicle.

Tonks, caught off guard by the jump, froze for a split second before she screamed in pain as blood spurted from the wound. Her Auror training kicked in and she twisted in the embrace, trying to shake him off. When that didn’t work, she grabbed her wand and pointed it over her shoulder, shouting out, “Expelliarmus!”

The moment he saw the wand in her hand, Harry twisted to the side, but kept his hold on the struggling witch. The move had him stumbling to the ground—the disarming spell flying harmlessly behind them—but he held on tight and brought her down with him. His left hand shot forward and grabbed her wand hand, brutally banging onto the stone floor.

Uncaring if he broke her fingers, he viciously twisted the dagger with his other hand; he aimed for the arteries in the right side of her neck and then dragged the dagger across the trachea.

Blood sprayed all over them and the floor in rapid pulses, gushing from the deep wound like a hot crimson geyser.

The witch bucked, hands desperately trying to get to the wounds in her neck, but unable to break Harry’s hold as the rapid blood loss weakened her. She sobbed, rasped and gurgled, unable to scream because of her slit throat, and her body convulsed as she quickly lost the fight for her life.

“I’m sorry,” Harry murmured soothingly into her left ear, holding her gently, almost like a lover, until he was sure she had lost consciousness.

Moving quickly, he sat up and watched as Tonks’ body shook for a long moment before it finally stilled. She was dead.

Hastily stumbling to his feet, Harry almost slipped in the blood. With wide eyes, his took in the mess; blood was all over the place—his hair, his hands, his face. He felt hot and sticky covered in it.

“Completely disgusting,” he murmured. Taking a few deep breaths to steady himself, he drew his wand to cast a succession of cleaning charms on himself his dagger, the corpse and the floor.

He stared impassively at Tonks’ body when he was done. He supposed he should’ve felt sad or something as he looked at the dead witch, but he couldn’t muster up the emotion. To be honest, he had been much more upset when he had murdered Dennis; that boy was helpless and his death had been a learning experience. No, he felt nothing, nothing except pity; she was a formidable witch and would’ve made a good addition to his Lord’s ranks, but she was too far gone in Dumbledore’s clutches, she proved that earlier.

She had to go; especially after he had revealed the information about Bill, Charlie, Remus and himself joining Voldemort.
“Now, what the bloody hell am I gonna do with her body?” Harry asked. [Hedwig, can you come to me please?]

The phoenix flashed into the room, landing on her master’s shoulder. [What is it?]

Harry gestured to the body on the floor, “I need an idea of how to get rid of her; preferably without casting suspicions on myself.”

Hedwig looked at Tonks before shifting to look at Harry, [What did you do?]

“It’s not my fault!” Harry protested.

The phoenix gave him a look.

“Ok so maybe it is,” Harry huffed, “I shouldn’t have told her anything, especially without having you check her. What’s done is done. Now, I need to get rid of her body.”

[You know you’re going to have to tell Marvolo, don’t you?]

[I know, but first things first, help me.]

Hedwig trilled before flashing out the room.

“Hey!” Harry barely had time to say anything else when she flashed back in, this time, she had Snape with her.

“Harry,” Snape looked at his student before freezing as his eyes caught sight of the witch on the floor. His gaze snapped back over to Harry and he strode forward.

“Explain yourself!” he hissed.

Harry did as was told, shifting slightly on his feet. When he was done, he looked at his teacher. “So? What do I do now? I can’t leave her here, but I can’t let her be found either.”

Snape turned his gaze back to the dead witch, still unable to believe what he was seeing. ‘Only you Potter could end up in a situation like this.’

Hedwig trilled, [Sesshomaru]

Harry looked at her in confusion.

“What did she say?” Snape took his gaze off the witch to look from the phoenix to her master.

“Sesshomaru,” Harry repeated before staring blankly at his bird.

Hedwig trilled in annoyance before reminding him of what the shopkeeper had told him about the pup and his powers.

“Oh!” Harry’s eyes went wide in understanding before a grin split his face, “That’s perfect.”

[Sesshomaru?]

-Yes?-

[Can you come here please?]
Within seconds, a ball of light appeared in the room and when it cleared, the pup stood there.

“Enlighten those of us the dark,” Snape snapped. He was still agitated that not only had Harry killed an Auror, but it was one of Dumbledore’s pets and right in the school.

“Sesshomaru,” Harry explained as he gathered the pup in his arms, “has poison flowing in him. One drop of it can kill you.”

“I suspect there was a different reason why Hedwig brought that specific talent to your attention?” Snape raised an eyebrow.

“Yes,” Harry nodded, “the poison is pretty much similar to acid, but much more powerful.”

Understanding made Snape’s eyes bright.

“Yep,” Harry grinned as he glanced at his familiar. [Do you think you can get rid of that body? If anyone finds her, I’ll be in a lot of trouble.]

Sesshomaru stared at the body, wrinkling his nose slightly in disgust. Getting rid of it would be no problem for him. Jumping from his master’s arms, he shifted into a bigger form and stood over the witch. Calling on his poison, he let it pool in his mouth and then let it drizzle out over the body.

All four watched as the flesh sizzled as the poison touched it and slowly burned away until there was nothing but a hole in the floor.

With a grin, he knelt next to the pup, “That’s my Sesshomaru. Good job.”

Pulling his wand, Snape cast a quick Reparo, and then turned to the teen, “You are aware that He will have to know?”

Harry sighed and nodded as he stood up, “I know; Hedwig said the same thing earlier. I was already planning on doing it anyways.”

Snape turned and headed for the door, “Come along. You can do it from my office. It is a lot more secure than this room.”

Harry praised both his familiars once more and sent them off before following Snape. “I made sure to cast a Silencing and Locking Charm on the room after we entered and you know that it’s next to impossible for someone to disable one of my spells.”

“Be that as it may,” Snape intoned even as he gestured for Harry to unlock the door, “Anyone could have witnessed you and Tonks entering this room. These walls talk Harry, and the Headmaster is the listener.”

Harry blanched slightly at the words. He tried to remember if any portraits had been around when he had ran into Tonks, but couldn’t. Sighing, he unlocked the door, “I didn’t even think about that.”

“Let us pray your luck holds true once more,” Snape said as he left the room, robes billowing around him. “Follow me.”

Harry did, amusement colouring his face as he watched the man move through the halls. ‘I would love to know how he does that.’

~…~

The two arrived at Snape’s office without any problems.
“I guess my luck did come through,” Harry grinned as he sat in one of the chairs next to the fireplace.

Snape said nothing; he removed his robes before turning to face his student, an eyebrow raised questioningly as he stared at the teen.

Harry stared back but after a few minutes, he started fidgeting slightly. Why was it this man that had the ability to make him squirm like a naughty child who had dipped his hands in the cookie jar with just one look? No one else could do that.

“Alright! I was careless,” Harry blurted out, “I should’ve paid more attention to my surroundings. I shouldn’t have forgotten that right now, I am on Dumbledore’s turf.”

Snape’s eyes glinted with amusement and his lips twitched as if to smile, but it never came out. He moved to sit in the chair opposite Harry, “The reason you were roaming the hallway.”

“I was actually coming to see you,” Harry told him.

“Oh?” Snape raised an eyebrow, “And the reason that brought you to my doors?”

“Dumbledore’s death is mine,” Harry started, “I don’t care who wants a go at him, but the final blow is mine.”

“Understandable,” Snape nodded.

“I spoke to Marvolo on how to get rid of him,” Harry continued, “or at least incapacitate him enough where we can get him where we want him, and he suggested I turn to you and I agree.”

Snape was surprised, though he didn’t show it and he was also curious and pleased at the praise and trust in his skills from his lover, but still, “Why did you agree?”

Harry snorted, “Severus, you’ve been a spy for the last sixteen years and the Old Fool has no idea where you really are. On top of that, you’ve created your own spells and your skills in Potions are unrivalled. You know how to get close to your enemy and dispatch them with or without a trace.”

If Snape was one prone to blushing, he would be, instead, all he did was nod at the acknowledgement of his skills, “I suppose you have some ideas on how to succeed in your task?”

Harry nodded, “I do. I know Dumbledore has to die, and he will, but I fear that if we outright kill him, then it’ll do more harm than good towards our cause.”

“Dumbledore is too much of a figure head and has too much trust from the people,” Snape agreed. He stared at Harry, his dark eyes boring into the teen, “What exactly is developing in that mind of yours?”

“What is most important to Dumbledore?” Harry asked.

“His reputation,” Snape answered immediately, “He relishes the knowledge that everyone believes and trusts in him. He needs their praise.”

“Exactly,” Harry smirked, “What I plan to do is, remove Dumbledore as the figurehead of the Light, as someone to look up to.”

“And how do you hope to accomplish that?” Snape raised an eyebrow.

Harry’s eyes shined with a dangerous gleam as a dark smirk settled on his face, “By destroying his
reputation. Reveal the truth about what Dumbledore has done and what he plans to do.”

Snape nodded, “very Slytherin of you. However, before we delve any further into the machinations of Dumbledore’s destruction, Marvolo needs to know about what happened tonight.”

Harry grimaced, “Crap. I was hoping you’d forgotten that.”

Snape stopped the chuckle but his onyx eyes gleamed with amusement.

Sighing, Harry called Hedwig, [Hedwig, I need you.]

The phoenix flashed into the room landing on the arm of the chair Harry was sitting in.

“Hey girl,” Harry reached out to rub her breast, “Sorry to disturb you again, but I need you to take a message to Marvolo for me.”

*I was wondering if you weren’t going to tell him anything!* Hedwig trilled.

“I forgot actually,” Harry grinned sheepishly at his owl.

“Here brat,” Snape held out parchment and quill.

“Thanks,” Harry muttered as he took the items. He quickly penned a note and gave it to Hedwig.

Not even five minutes later, he felt his pocket burn as the mirror activated.

“Explain everything,” Voldemort said once he saw Harry’s face.

Withholding a sigh, Harry explained about running into Tonks, their conversation and then her death and body disposal. When he was done, he stayed quiet as he waited for Voldemort to say something.

“So there is no trace of her body?” Voldemort asked.

“None,” Harry shook his head, “Sesshoumaru took care of it completely.”

“You do know that what you did was completely reckless and dangerous?” Voldemort asked.

“I know,” Harry sighed, “I do.” He threw a glance towards the potions master. “Severus already gave me the third degree about it.”

Voldemort smirked. He knew the sharp tongue his lover had and knew that the man was a force to be reckoned with. “Good. Now, you are not going to say anything. Act like nothing happened. Unless the Old Fool comes directly to you and ask about the witch, you know nothing, you say nothing.”

“I know,” Harry nodded, “No one saw us, but I’m not going to go about my day thinking that I’m safe. Dumbledore has spies all over, so there is still the possibility that some painting saw us and reported to him. But until he comes to with any accusations, or I should say his subtle probing, I never saw her.”

“Excellent,” Voldemort nodded, “Now I trust that the reason you are at Severus’ pertains to our discussion in Paris?”

“Yes,” Harry revealed, “We were just about to talk when he reminded me that I had to tell you about Tonks.”
“Very well,” Voldemort said, “You may proceed to do so, but do keep me updated.”

“I will,” Harry nodded. “Goodnight.”

“Goodnight,” Voldemort replied before ending the connection.

“Now that that is over with,” Snape said, “your plans for the Headmaster. How do you hope to accomplish that?”

“Luna’s dad,” Harry revealed, “He owns The Quibbler and he’s agreed to do an interview. The offer was made after Weasley gave that stupid interview to The Daily Prophet, but Luna and I talked and I realized I can use it. While I can give my side of the story about Weasley’s accusations, I can little by little reveal Dumbledore’s manipulations.”

Snape nodded. “Excellent. Why use The Quibbler?”

“Because I know that what I say will be printed word for word,” Harry said, “Rita Skeeter loves to twist her interviews the way that she wants it and I don’t want that. Besides, I think it’s time everyone read something other than the trash that is The Daily Prophet.”

“What do you plan to reveal first?” Snape asked.

“Well,” Harry shifted slightly in his seat as a thoughtful look appeared on his face, “Like I said, first, I’ll explain my side of things concerning Draco and Cory.”

“I am not quite positive that either Lucius or the LeStranges would be…comfortable…with their personal business out in the open,” Snape interrupted as he sipped his scotch.

Harry nodded in agreement, “I know, but I got permission from both families to reveal how much information I feel is necessary. I’m not going to go into details. I’ll just repeat what I told Dumbledore; that Cory found out his family history quite by accident, that I met Draco and spoke with him, that we were able to put aside our differences and so forth; just the bare bones—nothing that gives too much away about either family or their stances in the war.”

Snape had a pleased looked on his face, “Attack without directly revealing that is what you are doing.”

“Exactly,” Harry grinned, pleased that the man approved of his plan.

Snape’s glance shifted to the fireplace for a few seconds before focusing back on Harry, “I would assume that Marvolo disclosed what was appropriate to give information on.”

Harry nodded, “He did. After our meeting in Paris, I had thought about repeating some of the information I found out, but then I realized that it may actually reveal more than I wanted about that and that Dumbledore would find out that I had somehow gotten to Paris.”

Snape raised an eyebrow, “And what did happen in Paris?”

Knowing that Marvolo wouldn’t mind that Severus knew, Harry told him what the Dark Lord had told him about his meeting with Fleur’s dad and the ministry people.

Snape went quiet as he thought over the conversation. He could definitely see Harry’s hesitation to repeat any part of that conversation, but there was something he overlooked. It was a way to use that information without actually incriminating himself or the others.
“I do believe the information can be utilized,” Snape commented.

Harry’s brows drew together, “What do you mean?”

“It is no secret that the Malfoy family are acclimated with the French customs,” Snape explained, “you can include the information Marvolo gained but attribute the credit to your relationship to Draco and the knowledge he himself holds from his father. You have already explained to the Gryffindors that you researched over the summer about the Statute of Secrecy, so it will not be a hardship to say the same here.”

Harry looked thoughtful for a few minutes before he smiled. “You’re right.”

“When exactly will this interview occur?” Snape asked.

“I was thinking in a few days,” Harry revealed, “This Saturday actually. I know it’s not a Hogsmeade weekend, but I want to get started on this sooner rather than later.”

Snape nodded, “An excellent idea.”

“Thought you would think so,” Harry grinned and then, stood up, “Well, I suppose I should back to the Tower.”

“Very well,” Snape stood up as well, “Do not hesitate to ask should you be in need of assistance and do not put yourself in a situation to the one with Tonks earlier. The last thing we need is Dumbledore somehow figuring out what is truly going on and where your loyalties lie.”

Harry gave a nod, “I know; I was careless. It was a mistake and one I won’t make again. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Good night brat,” Snape remarked.

Harry grinned and left the room with a cheery wave.

~…~

Harry entered the Gryffindor common room to see a few students hanging around. Dean and Seamus were over in the corner talking and both waved when they saw him. With a smile, he waved back.

Ron was sitting by himself near the fireplace and he looked up when he heard Dean and Seamus’ greeting. He saw Harry standing there and scowled. He just knew that it was his fault that Hermione dumped him. Just like everything else was his fault.

There had to be some way to make him pay.

Harry felt the eyes boring into him and looked over to see Ron glaring. He raised an eyebrow in questioning and then smirked at the redhead.

Shaking his head, Harry turned and headed up the stairs to the boys’ dormitory.

Walking into the sixth year boys’ room, he saw Cory on the bed with Kirara.

“Hey Cory,” he greeted.

“Hey Harry,” Cory nodded in return, “What’s up?”

Harry walked over to his bed, and after casting a Silencing Charm, he told Cory everything that had
happened earlier with Tonks.

When he was done, Cory’s eyes were wide.

“So she’s gone?” Cory asked, unable to believe what he had just heard.

“Yeah,” Harry nodded as he changed into his pyjamas. “That was not how I had planned it to happen. Thank Merlin for Sesshomaru.”

Said pup perked up its head from where he was resting on Harry’s bed.

Cory chuckled as he looked at the pup, “Yeah, it’s a good thing you have him.”

Harry let out a yawn, “Merlin I’m tired.”

“Well you had a big day,” Cory grinned as he settled into bed, “What with getting rid of one of Dumbledore’s pets.”

“Shut up,” Harry mock glared at him before he too settled into bed.

“Love you too,” Cory laughed.


“Night Harry,” Cory returned.

~…~

The next day, Harry was walking to the Great Hall for breakfast with Cory. The two were talking quietly with each other when Dean and Seamus caught up to them.

“Hey guys,” Dean smiled tiredly.

Cory looked at them in surprise, “You guys are up early.”

Seamus groaned, “I know! But it was the only way to avoid Ron. I’m really not in the mood to hear him go on and on about Hermione or anything else really.”

“So we figured we’d start getting up earlier to come to breakfast with you guys,” Dean added.

“Cool,” Harry shrugged and the four boys made their way inside. They automatically turned to go the Slytherin table and sat down, gathering their breakfast as they waited for the others to arrive.

“Mr Potter?” Minerva walked over to her students.

Harry looked up at his Head of House, “Yes ma’am?”

Minerva’s lips eyes softened slightly at the politeness, “The Headmaster would like to speak with you during lunch today.”

“Ok,” Harry nodded, “Would he like me to bring anything? I know last time he wanted me to bring Acid Pops.”

Minerva nodded, “Liquorice.”

“Alright,” Harry smiled, “thanks professor.”
“You’re welcome,” Minerva nodded and started towards the Head table, but stopped and turned back to her students.

“Is something wrong professor?” Cory asked seeing his Head turn to them.

“No Mr LeStrange,” Minerva shook her head, “my reason for stopping was to offer praise to you, all of you, for the improvement in not only your studies, but in your characters as well. It warms my heart to see my Lions showing the maturity that I always knew you held.”

Seamus grinned, “Thanks professor.”

Minerva gave a slight nod of the head and then continued on her way.

“That was a little surprising,” Dean commented.

“What was?” Draco asked as he and the other Slytherins joined them.

“McGonagall,” Cory answered.

“Hey love,” Harry smiled at the blond as he shifted to make room for him.

Draco smiled in response as he started to put his breakfast plate together.

“Morning,” Pansy smiled at the Gryffindor boys, as did Blaise and Gabriella.

“I take it Luna’s going to be joining soon?” Blaise asked.

“Probably,” Cory nodded. “She might have something to do or not.”

“Lavender and Parvati are sure taking their sweet time,” Gabriella said, “I wanted to talk to them about something.”

“What about?” Pansy asked as she looked at her friend.

“Fashion,” Gabriella replied.

“What about fashion?” Lavender asked as she and Parvati joined them. “Morning guys.”

“Morning,” came the reply.

Gabriella launched into her discussion with the two girls, with Pansy offering her input now and again.

A short time later, Luna joined, and the group continued talking until it was time to get to class.

~…~

Later that day, Harry was making his way to Dumbledore’s office while the others headed to lunch. He was curious as to what the Old Man wanted, though he had a pretty good idea of what it was about.

Giving the password to the gargoyle, he ascended the stairs, knocking on the door when he got to the top.

“Come in!” Albus called out.

Harry opened the door and walked inside, letting the door close behind him.
“Harry my boy!” Albus greeted jovially, “Come in, come in!”

‘I’m already in you senile old fool.’ “Good afternoon professor,” Harry greeted as he took a seat.

“Lemon drop?” Albus offered, gesturing to the bowl of candies on his desk.

“No thank you,” Harry declined politely. ‘Alright. Get on with it. Get into why you really called me here.’

“So Harry how has things been going?” Albus asked. “Classes are going fine?”

Harry cocked his head to the side, “Yes sir. It’s a lot of work, but that’s understandable considering this is sixth year and we only have one more year of school, but it’s ok. I’m doing well in all my classes.”

“Good, good,” Albus nodded, “Now, I’m sure you have been aware of what has been happening to Ginerva and Ronald Weasley?”

“Yes sir,” Harry nodded.

“There are rumours flying around of course,” Albus continued.

“Professor I think I know what you’re going to ask,” Harry interrupted, “And I can honestly tell you I had nothing to do with what happened to them. I mean, I’ve been spending most of my time with Draco or Cory and Luna, I have other things to do than prank either Weasleys.”

Albus stared at Harry for a few minutes. He contemplated using magic, but he couldn’t as he knew that the boy was able to tell when magic was being used on him. Instead, he nodded.

“I did want to ask you about your class,” he continued, “one in particular.”

Harry shifted in his seat, “I take it your talking about Mr Malfoy’s DADA class?”

“Yes,” Albus nodded, “How is that class proceeding? I trust you are not having any problems?”

‘You’d like that, wouldn’t you? ’ “No sir,” Harry shook his head, “This is truthfully the best DADA class I’ve had. We’re actually learning useful stuff in here. We actually have a competent teacher that is willing to teach us everything and actually knows what he’s teaching. Last time we had that was with Remus and the fake Moody.”

‘Damnit! I was hoping to have something to get the Board to remove Lucius.’ Though he was angry, Albus didn’t show it. Instead, he gave a nod, “And you haven’t had any visions?”

“No sir,” Harry shook his head, “Maybe Voldemort is being quiet with his plans.”

Albus sighed, “Very well. That is all.”

Harry stood up. ‘Take that you old arse. I bet you were hoping to get rid of Lucius, but no dice old man.’ “Professor, when are we going to start my training?”

“Soon my boy,” Albus said, “but I want you to know more about Voldemort before we do so. After all, to beat him, you have to know him.”

“Ok,” Harry nodded,

Fawkes chose that moment to wake up. He saw Harry and flew from his perch to the teen’s
shoulder, rubbing his head briefly before trilling. **Hello Harry**-

“Hello Fawkes,” Harry smiled as he reached up a hand to rub the phoenix’s breast, “Good nap?”

--- **As good as can be given the circumstances**---

Harry couldn’t say what he wanted without tipping the Headmaster off, so instead he nodded and smiled, “That’s good. We’ll have to chat some more, if Dumbledore doesn’t mind you coming with me of course.”

Albus smiled, “Well Fawkes definitely seems to enjoy your company. I don’t see why not.”

“Thanks sir,” Harry smiled, “Well, I should get going. Fawkes, I’ll see you later.”

The phoenix trilled in response, **I look forward to it Harry**- and flew back to his perch.

Harry waved at the Headmaster and then gave a look and a smile to the phoenix before leaving. The moment the door closed behind him, he lost his smile and shook his head.

Dumbledore was so obvious some times.

His stomach rumbled, so Harry hurried down the stairs and down the hallway to get to the Great Hall.

As he neared the entrance, he saw a sight that brought a genuine and happy smile to his face; Draco, Cory and Luna were leaning against the wall, talking, with the pets at their feet.

Sesshomaru was the first to spot him and gave a bark before running over to him.

Draco smirked when he saw Harry and leaned off the wall to walk over to him, Cory and Luna following when they realized where he was going.

Harry grabbed Sesshomaru when the pup jumped into his arms and he smiled at his boyfriend and friends.

“That was fast,” Draco commented as he drew closer.

Harry rolled his eyes, “It wasn’t much of a meeting. Did you guys eat already?”

“Yes,” Cory nodded.

Harry’s stomach chose that moment to growl.

Draco laughed, “We can go back in.”

“No,” Harry shook his head, “Come on.”

He led them down to the kitchens.

“Master Harry Potter!” Dobby squealed as he ran over to Harry, hugging his leg tightly.

Sesshomaru growled, eyes flashing red, from his position in Harry’s arms.

Dobby squeaked and jumped back with fear.

“It’s ok Dobby,” Harry soothed the elf, and then turned his attention to his pup. **He’s harmless. Stop**
growling...you’re scaring him]

-Good-

Harry could hear the satisfaction in the pup’s voice and he refrained from rolling his eyes. [If you
don’t knock it off, I’ll ban you from Yasha for a week.]

Sesshomaru shifted to stare Harry in the eyes. –You wouldn’t-

[Wouldn’t I?] Harry raised an eyebrow.

The pup let out a whine and raised up to lick Harry’s chin. –Fine…I will behave- there’s no way he
was risking not being around Yasha.

“It’s ok Dobby,” Luna spoke as she took a seat, “Sesshomaru was just being protective. He won’t
hurt you.”

Dobby looked sceptical, but nodded and smiled, “What can Dobby be doing for Harry Potter and
friends?”

Harry grinned, “I’m kinda hungry, actually.”

“Dobby will bring food,” Dobby grinned and dashed away. The other elves gave the group a wide
berth, none of them wanting to aggravate the pets.

Dobby brought the food to Harry and quickly retreated.

The four friends sat together and talked, as Harry ate, with the three occasionally taking something
from the plate, making Harry mock scowl at them.

They finished eating, and left the kitchens. It wasn’t until Harry was almost out the door, when as he
turned to wave goodbye to Dobby, he froze.

“Harry?” Draco frowned as he touched the teen’s shoulder.

Cory and Luna were already going down the hallway, but both had stopped when they noticed their
friends weren’t with them and had looked back.

Cory looked confused while Luna had her ever present smile on her face.

Harry looked briefly at Draco before turning his attention back to Dobby. He quickly stepped away
from the blond and headed over to the elf.

“Dobby,” Harry said softly, his voice tinged with slight urgency, “Do you remember back in second
year when I gave you the book with the sock in it?”

Dobby’s eyes went wide. “Oh yes Harry Potter. Dobby does remember.”

Harry’s heart pounded in his chest, “Do you still have it?”

Dobby nodded and popped out the room. Seconds later, he popped back in, a very familiar book in
his hands.

Harry licked his lips as his eyes caught sight of the book, “Can I have it Dobby?”

Dobby grinned as he held out the book to Harry, “Here Master Harry.”
Harry took the book and smiled at the elf, “Thanks Dobby. I promise I’ll bring something back in exchange for you giving this back to me. Oh and Dobby? Could you not tell anyone—anyone—that I gave you this and you gave it back?”

Dobby had no trouble agreeing to Harry’s demands and waved enthusiastically before going back to his work.

“What’s that?” Draco asked, seeing how Harry was responding to the book. It was black, reminding him of a diary his father once had. Unlike that one, this was had a hole in the middle and its pages were stained with black ink.

“Something I had thought was lost because I had completely forgotten about this and that M wants,” Harry told him.

Draco knew who he was referring to with the ‘M’; it was the code they—meaning the four of them—had chosen to use when talking about the Dark Lord in public.

He pulled a handkerchief from his pocket, as well as his wand from its secret holder, and transfigured the handkerchief into a piece of paper and conjured a pen, holding both out to Harry. “Here.”

“Thanks,” Harry smiled and wrote a quick note, sticking it on the top of the diary. He then turned to Sesshomaru. “I need you to deliver this to M for me. Can you do it?”

Sesshomaru cocked his head to the side, staring from his master to the book, before giving a single nod.

“Thank you,” Harry grinned and gave the book to the pup. He rubbed his head and said softly, “I had no intention of ever keeping you from Yasha.”

Sesshomaru rubbed his head against his master’s touch. -Brat-

Harry let out a chuckle as the pup disappeared in a ball of light. He stood up and turned back to walk over to Draco.

“I take it that was important?” Draco asked as they left the kitchen.

“Very,” Harry nodded.

They caught up to Luna and Cory and Harry gave a look to blonde Ravenclaw. “Luna girl, can you ask your father if this Saturday will work for the interview?”

“It will be no problem,” Luna nodded, “but I’ll write him just to be sure.”

“Alright,” Harry nodded in agreement and the four continued on.

Lunch was just about over, so they all went to their classes for the rest of the afternoon.

~…~

It was the end of the day and classes were over, and Harry, Draco and the rest of the Slytherin-Gryffindor group were heading towards the Great Hall for dinner.

When Harry turned to say something to Draco, movement in his peripheral vision drew his attention and he looked up, spotting two students leaning against the wall.

By the colours, he saw that they were Hufflepuffs, probably fourth year or so. They weren’t doing
anything out of the way; just a boy and his girlfriend. He couldn’t help but to smile when he saw when he saw the boy put some food on a spoon and hold out it for the girl to take.

As he watched them, Harry came to a startling realization. He hadn’t spent any real time with Draco in a while. Paris, as fun as it was, didn’t count because they had been with Bill and the Delacour girls. When was the last time it was just the two of them? For that matter, when was the last time he showed his boyfriend how much he meant to him?

He ran through his memories and realized it was probably back at the start of school. He needed to fix that. Draco was the most important person in his life and he had gotten so caught up in completing the tasks for Voldemort that he had forgotten that.

He had been a crappy boyfriend as of late. He knew the blond wouldn’t complain about as what he was doing for Voldemort was extremely important, but still.

“You ok?” Draco asked softly, breaking Harry from his thoughts, but not wanting to draw anyone’s attention.

Harry smiled at him, “I’m fine. I’m just thinking about a problem, but, I think I’ve figured out a way to fix it.”

“If I can help, let me know,” Draco said.

“I will,” Harry nodded.

Draco gave a smile and turned back to his conversation, but Harry’s mind was whirling. He had to do something to show the blond just how much he meant to him.

~…~

The next day, Thursday, Harry had decided to implement a part of his plan regarding the interview.

So, that lunch hour, when he entered the Great Hall, instead of going to Slytherin table where the others were, he made his way up to the Head table where his Head of House was sitting along with other professors.

Of course his movements drew the attention of the students already in the Hall.

“Is there something the matter Mr Potter?” Minerva asked when her lion stopped in front of her.

“No professor,” Harry shook his head, “at least, I hope not. I was actually wondering if I could possibly ask a favour.”

“Oh?” Minerva raised an eyebrow, “And what kind of a favour would that be?”

“Well,” Harry said, “I’m sure you remember the debacle that was the article that Rita Skeeter wrote for The Daily Prophet and her accusations.”

“I do,” Minerva nodded, silently wondering where he was going with it. “Not that I gave any credence to that…woman’s words.”

Harry smiled briefly, “Thank you for saying that professor. But the thing is, even if you didn’t believe it, and I know my friends didn’t either, I’m sure a lot of people out there did. Rita has been writing crap about me ever since fourth year with the Tri-Wizard tournament and I’m sick of it.”

He took a deep breath, “I’m tired of Rita writing whatever she wants and people believing it, so I
decided to tell my side of the story; kinda taking the power from Rita so to speak. Now, I don’t trust neither Rita nor The Daily Prophet, so I asked Luna if her dad would be willing to do an interview with me, and he agreed. It’s set up for this Saturday. I know it’s not a Hogsmeade weekend, but I was wondering if I could get a pass to go.”

Minerva stared at her student with some shock, and admiration, as did the other professors. She couldn’t believe that Harry had undergone such a drastic change, but as she recalled Severus’ words, she realized he was right. This change was for the better as the young man standing in front of her was more matured than the man she knew the years before.

“That is an admirable thing to do Mr Potter considering I know how much you dislike being in the spotlight,” Minerva said. “And while I am not questioning Ms Lovegood’s friendship to you nor her father’s loyalty to her, you are still the Harry Potter and any reporter would be thrilled to report on you. What I mean to say is, Mr Lovegood could quite possibly forget that you are his daughter’s friend and remember that you are seen as the Saviour of the Wizarding World and react accordingly. What guarantee do you have that his methods would be vastly different from Ms Skeeter’s?”

Harry remained silent as he thought on his Head’s words. He wasn’t angry, as he knew it was a valid concern, but he trusted Luna and if she said her father could be trusted, then he believed her.

“I trust Luna,” Harry said. “And she trusts her father. However, if it’ll make you feel better, I can take someone with me. If professor Snape doesn’t mind, I’d like him to accompany me.”

That drew some shock from the professors present, including the man himself.

“Why Snape?” Professor Dering asked. “Correct me if I’m wrong, but I was under the impression that while the two of you are civil to each other, there was no love lost.”

“Ok,” Harry nodded, “You’re wrong. Yes, professor Snape and I had disagreements in the past, but we overcame them. I trust him.” He looked at his Head, “the reason I chose him and not you professor is because I didn’t want anyone to accuse you of favouritism or accusing you of coaching me to say what I say. Everyone outside of Hogwarts still believe that Snape and I can’t stand each other, so while people will be surprised that he’s with me, no one will accuse him of forcing me to say anything.”

No one could find fault with his logic and down at their end, Snape and Lucius exchanged looks, both awed by the Slytherin way Harry was playing everything.

After a short silence, Minerva nodded, “Very astute Mr Potter. I find no fault with what you’ve said.”

“So does that mean,” Harry started.

“Yes Mr Potter it does,” Minerva said, “I’ll grant you the pass.”

Harry smiled, “Thank you professor.”

“You are welcome,” Minerva said, “Now I suggest you go and get something to eat before lunch is over.”

“Alright,” Harry grinned and headed back down to the Slytherin table where the others had already arrived.

“What was that about?” Blaise asked when he had sat down.
“Just securing something,” Harry replied. When the Italian teen turned back to his conversation with Gabriella and Dean, Harry leaned in close to Draco, “I’ll tell you later.”

It’s not that he didn’t trust Blaise, but they were in the Great Hall and it was not something that he needed everyone to know…at least not until after Saturday.

~…~

Friday after classes, Draco was at the library doing some research for his Ancient Runes class when Hedwig flew through the window and landed on the table in front of him.

“Hello beautiful,” Draco greeted the disguised phoenix. He gently rubbed her breast, smiling when she let out a soft trill and stepped closer to him. He chuckled, but didn’t stop.

Hedwig shook herself out of the pleasurable haze—she really did love it when one of her charges rubbed her down—and held out her leg to the blond.

Draco noticed the paper attached and hummed as he removed it. “Thanks Hedwig.”

Hedwig leaned forward to touch her beak against the blond’s cheek before taking off back through the window.”

Draco smiled after the bird and then turned his attention back to the note.

_I am formally inviting you to attend a date with me_

_Please be ready at seven-thirty in your dorm room._

_At the appointed time, Hedwig will arrive and she will bring you to me_

_And dress to impress_

_Yours faithfully,

HJP_

Draco’s cheeks flushed and he couldn’t stop the grin that built on his face. A quick Tempus showed him that it was just a little after five. He had two hours to get ready.

A rush of pleasure and excitement filled him and he hurriedly—but still with the grace and dignity of a Malfoy—gathered his books and made his way down to the dungeons.

When he entered the Slytherin common room, he saw Pansy, Blaise and Gabriella sitting together and walked over to them, nodding to a few students on his way.

“Hey Draco,” Gabriella greeted as she was the first to notice him.

“Hey,” Draco responded.

“I didn’t see Harry at dinner,” Pansy frowned at her friend, “nor you for that matter.”

“I was at the library getting some notes done for class,” Draco replied. “And I don’t know why Harry wasn’t at dinner.” He smiled as he remembered the note, “but I’ll probably find out.”

Blaise raised an eyebrow, “What do you mean?”
“I’ll tell you guys later,” Draco said and turned to go up to his dorm room. “I’ve got to go and get ready.”

“Ready for what?” Pansy asked.

Draco said nothing; he just smiled and continued walking.

“Draco?” Gabriella called after the blond, “Oh come on; tell us!”

Chuckling to himself, Draco quickly climbed the stairs to the boys’ dormitory and made his way to the sixth boys’ corridor and down to his room.

He undressed and then got in the shower, quickly going through his routine. When he got out, he went to his wardrobe and sorted through his clothes. He needed to find something good to wear.

Not that all his clothes weren’t good, but somehow, tonight felt special. Maybe because it was a date, their first date, he didn’t know; all he knew was that he wanted to look the part.

Finally settling on a set of clothes he had bought in Paris, Draco grinned to himself and got dressed.

When he was completely ready, he cast a quick Tempus and saw that he had finished with about five minutes to spare.

So he took the time to straighten out his room.

Hedwig flashed into the room just as he was done.

“Hey beautiful,” Draco greeted the phoenix.

Hedwig trilled as she flew over to land on the blond’s shoulder.

Automatically, Draco’s hand came up to rub her breast before he took the note from her beak.

Just knock

“Right,” Draco folded it and threw it on his bed before shifting his attention to the phoenix. “So, I don’t suppose you can give me a clue on what’s going on or where you’re taking me?”

Hedwig trilled and nipped his ear gently.

“Right,” Draco sighed, “I’ll take that as a ‘no’.”

He glanced up at the phoenix and could swear she was laughing at him.

“You’re laughing at me, I know it,” Draco grinned at her. “It’s ok. Take me to your master.”

Trilling once, Hedwig flashed out of the room.

She reappeared on the seventh floor, right in front of the entrance to the Room of Requirement.

After nipping the blond’s ear once more, Hedwig switched back to her owl form and flew off.

Draco watched the bird go before walking over to the door. He knocked and waited.

The door opened in, and he stepped inside, turning to close the door. When he turned back around, he froze and took in the scene in front of him.
The room had been changed to be night time, with the roof resembling the open sky, stars twinkling brightly; candles were hovering in the air and flowers were scattered around the place. In the centre was a table covered in a green table cloth.

On the table, in the centre, was a thin glass that held pink roses, two plates on both ends, and a bottle of what Draco recognized as Pellegrino.

And to top it all off, Harry was standing next to the table in a green sweater that clung to his frame and dark blue jeans. His hair, normally held back, was hanging loose around his face.

“Hey,” Harry said softly.

“Hi,” Draco smiled as he made his way over to his boyfriend, “What is all this?”

“Well I realized something,” Harry said, “I’ve been sort of a crappy boyfriend lately. I know plans need to be fulfilled and whatnot, but that’s no excuse for neglecting the most important person in my life.”

“Harry,” Draco started.

“No let me finish,” Harry cut him off, “You are my boyfriend and as such, you deserve to be above everyone else. I know I’ve been spending a lot of time with Luna, and I know that you understand that, but I also know that it could’ve been avoided because I neglected you. We’re a team and you should’ve been included from the get go.

“As much as I love Luna and as much as I love how we can understand each other’s thought process, it should be the same with us as we’ve known each other longer. Not only that, but I’ve always felt a connection with you and I should’ve done everything to nourish that, but I didn’t. And I’m sorry for that.”

Draco said nothing, because what could he say? Harry was right; he had been feeling a little neglected, but he knew that it wasn’t intentional on Harry’s part, nor Luna. He still stood by the words he had said to Gabriella, but that didn’t mean that he still hadn’t felt hurt that he had no idea what was going through his boyfriend’s mind until after he talked to Luna.

It had hurt.

Draco dropped his eyes, “You’re right; it had hurt to see you developing this bond with Luna, and while I got, and understood, that she was your sister and what was going on, I felt like it should’ve been me because I’m your boyfriend.”

He took a step closer to Harry, “But I never hated you for it because I know it was for a good cause.” He smiled, well smirked actually, “So, what do you plan to do to make it all up to me?”

Harry grinned and kissed the blond quickly before pulling away, “Well first there’s this.” he grabbed Draco’s hand and led him to the table, pulling out his chair for him.

He poured some of the Pellegrino into the two glasses before taking his own seat. “Dobby.”

The elf popped into the room with a huge grin.

“We’re ready Dobby,” Harry told the elf.

The elf nodded, “Ok Master Harry Potter.” Dobby popped out, returning in seconds with food. He bowed to Harry and to Draco—much to the blond’s surprise—before popping back out.
Draco looked at the food, lasagna di formaggio con pollo e pasta al forno pollo —his favourite dish—and then at Harry, “I can’t believe you did all this.” (cheese lasagne with chicken and baked pasta)

“I told you,” Harry smiled at him, “I’m making up for lost time. Now, eat.”

Draco chuckled and did just that, moaning at the first taste of the Italian dish.

Harry shifted slightly in his seat at the sound, but resolutely pushed all thoughts of ravishing the blond away.

“This is so good,” Draco commented as he swallowed a bite. He grabbed his glass and took a sip of the drink, “So why the Pellegrino?”

“Well I didn’t want us to be drunk or even tipsy for the rest of the evening,” Harry said, “and this ensured that. We’re having a fancy drink without the alcoholic downfall.”

“Nice,” Draco nodded.

The conversation after that flowed easily, as it always does, between the two. Harry explained everything that had happened in the last few weeks that Draco didn’t know, including what had happened with Tonks and what his plans for the interview and Dumbledore were.

Draco offered his input and between the two of them, they worked out the kinks of the interview and of the Tonks situation.

After their dinner, Harry called Dobby once more, who came with dessert; cannoli.

“I still can’t believe no one knows about Tonks,” Draco said as he bit into his dessert.

“I can,” Harry replied as he too ate the cannoli, “Dumbledore is all about image, and how do you think it’ll look to know that he lost a member of his Order, and not even the Order, but an Auror? He doesn’t want any backlash, so he’ll keep her death a secret, although, he doesn’t know she’s dead. He more than likely suspects she’s been kidnapped.”

“Has he had any Order meetings as of yet?” Draco asked, “I’m surprised if he hasn’t, considering the members would want to talk about the fact that one of them is missing.”

Harry frowned, “No, at least I don’t think so. I told him that I wanted to be included and that meant being at Order meetings. So I don’t think he has any, or maybe he has. I don’t know. I suppose I can ask next time we meet.”

“I would,” Draco nodded.

“Ok, enough talk about the Old Man and his problems,” Harry said as he stood up, “Tonight is about us. Come on.” He held out a hand to the blond.

Draco smiled and took the offered hand, allowing his boyfriend to pull him up.

Immediately, the table disappeared and the room shifted into a ballroom. Music started playing and Draco looked at Harry.

“May I have this dance?” Harry bowed and held out a hand.

Smiling, Draco nodded, “You may.”
Harry grinned and led Draco into a waltz.

As they danced around the room, Draco felt pleasure and warmth and excitement. He’s always had to be the one in charge, the one his peers looked to for guidance and always had to be strong; he couldn’t show weakness in public. It felt completely amazing to give it all up; to be the one taken care of, to not be so in control all the time.

People might argue that he was the “girl” in the relationship, especially if they could see them now, but he didn’t care because he knew it wasn’t true. And he knew Harry didn’t feel that way either.

“What are you thinking about?” Harry asked, seeing the pensive look on his boyfriend’s face.

“How much I love you,” Draco replied honestly, “And how lucky I am that I have you, considering all the crap I pulled over the years.”

“Hey I gave as good as I got,” Harry chided, “but none of that; our past is just that, our past. It’s important yes, but I don’t focus on it because there’s nothing we can change about it as it has already happened. What I’m more focused on is our present and our future.”

Harry paused and closed his eyes briefly. When he opened them to stare at the blond, his green eyes intense and filled with love and lust, “I want you to make love to me.”

It took a few seconds for Draco to register the words and the meaning behind them, but when he did, he stared at his boyfriend, “You mean?”

Harry nodded, “Yeah; I want you in me Dray. I want to give my other virginity to you.”

Draco could feel his heart pounding in his chest. He couldn’t believe what Harry had asked of him. It’s not that he hadn’t thought about it, because he had, but he loved feeling Harry in him so he hadn’t had any more thoughts to what it would be like on the other end.

But now, Harry was offering it to him.

“Dray say something,” Harry shuffled a little nervously. “If you don’t want to do this, then just—

Draco kissed him, “Are you absolutely sure about this?”

Harry grinned and kissed him once more, “If I wasn’t, I wouldn’t have offered. I really want this.”

Draco concentrated and the room shifted from the ballroom to a bedroom; similar to the one they had used the night they had been to the Chamber.

Smiling, Draco led Harry backwards until the brunet’s knees hit the bed and then gently pushed him down.

Both boys were giddy with anticipation, but they were determined not to rush.

Draco slowly stripped Harry, kissing his body every time he removed clothes. When Harry was naked, his grey eyes darkened completely.

“Merlin I love you,” Draco breathed out as he stared at his boyfriend.

“I love you too,” Harry smiled in response, paying no attention at the moment to the fact that his cock was completely hard and aching.

Draco grinned and leaned over Harry’s body, kissing him. After a few seconds of no tongue, he
licked Harry’s bottom lip and when his mouth opened, his tongue slipped inside.

The two wrestled for dominance, but Harry surrendered and let Draco take control of the kiss.

It turned heated quickly and soon enough, both boys were moaning into each other’s mouth.

“Fuck,” Draco whispered as he pulled back, panting harshly. “I need you.”

“So take me,” Harry responded with another toe-curling kiss.

Draco pulled away again, licking his lips. He kissed a line down Harry’s neck, sucking on his pulse point as Harry’s head tipped back, giving the blond more access.

Said blond continued on his path, kissing down Harry’s chest. He sucked on Harry’s left nipple while his hand came up to play with the other. He bit, nipped, licked and sucked both nipples, reducing his boyfriend to a moaning mess on the bed.

“Fuck Dray,” Harry panted out as his back arched slightly. He could feel the heat slowly fill his body as the sensation of Draco’s mouth on him drove his body wild.

Draco grinned to himself as he moved down Harry’s stomach. He got the hardened cock and stared at it, feeling his mouth water.

Harry lifted his head, green eyes going cloudy with desire, and groaned when he saw his boyfriend doing nothing more than staring at his cock. That’s not what he wanted.

“Draco,” he moaned out, “please.”

The plea snapped Draco out of his trance, and he raised darkened grey eyes to look at Harry, “Please what?”

He blew a gust of air at the tip of the cock, feeling his own throb at the low growl that Harry let out.

“For fucks sake Draco!” Harry panted out, “Suck me! Put your lips on my cock…please!”

“All you had to do was ask,” Draco grinned. He wrapped a hand around the brunet’s length at the same time he dropped his mouth down over the head. He sucked on the tip, drawing moans from his boyfriend before sinking down lower. He got halfway, but he didn’t let that stop him.

He hollowed his cheeks and slowly pulled up, sucking as he did so.

“Fuck!” Harry moaned as his head fell back and his hips moved forward. The hot, wet heat of the blond’s mouth was sending his senses in overdrive.

‘Soon,’ Draco thought lavishly as he hummed, pulling a deep groan from the brunet above him. He loved sucking Harry’s cock.

Harry reached a hand down to tangle in the blond locks, while the other gripped the sheets tightly.

“Draco…so fucking good!” Harry moaned.

The blond pulled off the hardened length, drawing a groan of dissention from his lover. He grinned, even as his hands kept moving.

“What?” Draco asked.
“You know what, you bastard,” Harry hissed, lifting his head to look down at his love.

“Sorry,” Draco replied, “my parents were already married when I was born.”

Deciding he’d done enough talking, Draco leaned forward and gave the head of Harry’s cock kitten licks, his tongue lapping at the pre-cum that oozed out. He kept a firm hold around the base of Harry’s cock and he bent over and sucked the head in his mouth.

“Fucking hell Draco!” Harry shouted out as his cock disappeared into his boyfriend’s mouth.

Draco held back his chuckle and instead, pumped the length of Harry’s cock up to where his lips were wrapped around the head and back. The heady rush of pleasure he always felt at being the one to reduce his powerful boyfriend to this state flowed through him.

But he needed more.

Almost reluctantly, he pulled his mouth from Harry’s cock.

Harry whined at the loss and lifted his head to look at the blond, “W-why’d you stop?”

“This,” Draco said as he summoned his wand and cast the Cleansing Charm on his boyfriend. He also summoned a jar of lube and cast a warming charm over it before discarding his wand once more.

Dipping his index and middle finger in the lube, Draco teased Harry’s entrance before slipping his index finger inside at the same time he sucked on the head of the brunet’s cock, making him moan at the duel pleasure. Circling his finger, he loosened the hole enough for his middle finger to slip in. His fingers circled and teased until they brushed against Harry’s prostate.

The intense pleasure that shot through Harry had him bearing down on the blond’s fingers, trying to fuck them, as more pre-cum spilled from his cock.

“Oh…Draco…don’t stop…oh sweet Merlin…fuck Dray!” Harry moaned out as he continued fucking himself on the blond’s fingers. The need to have the blond in him intensified, “I need you…”

Moaning, Draco pulled off of Harry’s cock and removed his fingers from the brunet’s ass.

Harry whimpered at the empty feeling, but knew that it would change soon. He raised up on his elbows and watched as Draco stripped out of his clothes. He licked his lips when each article of clothing was removed.

“See something you like?” Draco smirked, standing fully naked.

“Definitely,” Harry grinned. Reaching down a hand, he wrapped it around his cock, and slowly started moving his hand up and down, pumping his own cock.

Draco knelt on the bed next to Harry and slapped his hand away, “Enough of that.”

Grinning, Harry reached out and grabbed Draco’s hand, pulling the blond down onto him and attached his mouth to the blond’s.

The kiss became steamy quickly, and Harry brought his legs up to wrap around Draco’s waist. As the kiss prolonged, Harry arched his back, making his cock brush against Draco’s.

The feeling of the bare cocks rubbing against each other sent shock waves of pleasure through both
boys and soon enough, they were rutting against one another.

All too soon Draco felt himself drawing close and he stopped the movements of his hips, however reluctantly. He wanted to come inside Harry.

“Why’d you stop?” Harry groaned out, trying to continue, but whimpering when his boyfriend stopped his own hips from moving as well.

“Want to be inside you,” Draco panted out. He grabbed the lube and coated his cock before lining up to Harry’s entrance. He teased the hole for a few seconds, sending their lust soaring even higher.

“Come on Dray!” Harry panted out, “Stop teasing damnit! I want you in me!”

“It’s gonna hurt a little,” Draco replied, his body tense.

“Just do it,” Harry encouraged.

Nodding, Draco slowly pressed in, breaching Harry’s body. The head of his cock slipped in and the blond didn’t even bother to stifle the moan that erupted from him.

Harry winced at the pain and grabbed Draco’s arm. “W-wait.”

Draco froze and looked down at his boyfriend, “Are you ok?”

“Yeah,” Harry nodded, “just hurt a little is all.” He took some deep breaths to relax, “Ok…go on…just go slow.”

Draco nodded. He didn’t want to hurt Harry, but it took everything to slam into the brunet. So, he took a deep breath to calm himself and then, he continued. Inch by inch, he slowly rocked into Harry’s body until he had bottomed out.

“Can I move?” Draco asked, because he really, really wanted to.

“Give me a second,” Harry replied. It hurt, it really did, but he could feel the pain disappearing gradually and the pleasure settling in. He started shifting slightly, feeling that pleasurable burn and that need for movement that was growing by the second until he was completely impatient.

“Dray…move!” Harry groaned out, arching his back and clenching his muscles in hopes of propelling his boyfriend into movement.

“Fuck!” Draco cursed when he felt how tight Harry suddenly got.

“That’s the idea,” Harry teased, between heavy breaths, “Now get on with it.”

All the incentive Draco needed. He pulled out slowly, too slow for Harry if the whining is any indication, and then slammed back in hard and fast.

“Again!” Harry moaned out, loving the feel of the burn and friction of Draco’s cock dragging against his insides.

Draco did; he pulled out, just as slow and slammed back in.

“S-so good…Merlin Dray…ohhh…fuck me harder!” Harry panted, arching his back, sending Draco’s cock deeper.

The blond ignored the demand. He knew just how painful the first time was, and he didn’t want to
put Harry through any more pain. So, he kept his thrusts slow, but forceful.

“Damnit Draco!” Harry growled as he reached, wrapping an arm around the blond’s neck and pulling him down into a kiss.

It was harsh and full of lust and when it ended, both boys were breathing even heavier.

“I’m not gonna break Draco,” Harry said.

“The first time hurts,” Draco replied, still doing his slow pull and hard push.

Harry kissed him again. “That’s what pain potions are for. Now...fuck me hard and fast...like you fucking mean it!”

Draco’s already darkened grey eyes went completely black, leaving only a sliver of grey. Letting a snarl, he complied, slamming in and out of the brunet with a force that he was sure hurt and would leave bruises. But he couldn’t stop, and from the sounds of it, Harry didn’t want him to.

Harry let out a deep moan at the force and the pleasure as he started pushing back to meet Draco’s thrusts. He felt like he was burning up from the heat filling him, scorching him from the inside. He had thought being inside Draco was it, but this, this was just as good. Every thrust, every drag of Draco’s cock against his walls, had him crying out from the intensity.

Draco groaned at the feeling of Harry hot and tight around him. Every time he entered the brunet’s body was heaven. Nothing compared to feeling like this. He felt like he was drowning in intense pleasure. But being inside Harry wasn’t just all that was making him lose his mind; just hearing his boyfriend’s moans and noises and his reactions, all of it was sending him closer and closer to an orgasm.

Harry’s hand sneaks down between their bodies to grab his neglected cock. He could feel the end rushing up on him and he desperately wanted to meet it; he was dying to cum.

“Merlin Draco don’t stop!” Harry panted out, pushing back on the heavy cock in his ass and his own fist. “Don’t stop...keep fucking me...oh sweet Merlin...h-harder...d-deeper...”

“Fuck Harry!” Draco moaned, increasing his pace. He could feel his balls drawing up. They felt so full with cum and he was close to exploding. “S-so close...”

“Oh me too,” Harry moaned as he looked up at the blond above him. Draco’s hair was a mess, his face was scrunched up in pleasure and his skin was flushed and sweaty. He’d never looked more gorgeous to Harry.

Two thrusts directly against his prostate later, combined with him pumping his own cock, and Harry’s orgasm slammed into him and he covered their chests jets of white spunk.

Harry’s orgasm triggered Draco’s own. Not that the blond could’ve held it back anyways; the feel of Harry’s clenching, hot passage becoming even hotter and tighter around his cock, pulled it out of him.

Both boys moaned as their cocks finally stopped spurting and Draco collapsed on Harry.

“Oh fuck,” Harry chuckled, his breathing heavy, “that was—that was amazing.”

“I know,” Draco nodded.
The two stayed like that for a few more minutes, but the idea of dried cum sticking to them wasn’t pleasant, so reluctantly, Draco moved off of Harry, carefully pulling out, and Summoned his wand.

After casting a Cleansing charm, he fell back on the bed, pulling the covers back and easing under, pulling Harry with him.

Harry smiled and cuddled into his boyfriend, resting his head on the blond’s chest.

“So,” Draco started, running a hand up and down Harry’s arm, “do you think we can do that again?”

Harry shifted until he could fold his arms on the blond’s chest and rest his chin on his arms, “Oh definitely. It was so perfect and just... I mean, I love the other way around; I love being inside you and feeling you hot and tight and wet and clenching around me,”

At the words, Draco’s cock made a feeble attempt at getting hard.

Harry stifled a laugh as he could feel it.

“Shut up,” Draco muttered, though he was smiling.

“Anyways,” Harry grinned as he continued, “what I was saying was, while I do love being in you, I love having you in me too. So... I would definitely not object to do it this way again.”

Draco smiled and pulled Harry up so he could kiss him. “Good.” He paused, “but we’re still doing it the other way too right, because I feel the same; I love being in you just as much as I love having you in me.”

Harry laughed, “Yes Dray, we’re doing it the other way too. We’re gay, which means we have the option of going both ways. It’s not like we’ve decided who’s going to top all the time or who’s going to bottom. We can do both and we’re definitely doing both.”

“Alright then,” Draco smirked, “I’m all for that.”

Harry leaned up and whispered against Draco’s lips. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Draco replied, kissing his boyfriend brief, but deeply.

The kiss ended and the two settled down, giving into the call of sleep.

~...~

Harry and Draco weren’t the only couple enjoying some time together.

Down a few floors in an unused classroom, Cory and Luna were on their own date.

The classroom had been transfigured to look like a field of flowers, courtesy of Luna, and the duo was enjoying a picnic; the food had been prepared by the elves.

“This is great,” Cory smiled at his girlfriend.

Luna smiled in return and reached out to grab his hand, tangling their fingers together. “I know you’ve felt a bit neglected and I am sorry.”

Cory ducked his head briefly and then leaned in to kiss her. When he pulled back, his eyes were serious, “It’s ok. Yeah I didn’t really like it, but I understood and it wasn’t a huge problem.”
“I love you,” Luna said, “and I want you to talk to me the next you feel like this. I may be clairvoyant but even I need to be shown things. I do not want our relationship to fall to the wayside. Although, I do think a part of it stems from the fact that Harry and I are quite similar in some ways.”

Cory nodded, “I agree…completely.” He grinned, “I have to admit though, it’s kinda nice having my girlfriend all to myself.”

Luna bit her lip as her cheeks flushed pink with pleasure.

Cory grinned at the sight, but said nothing. Instead, he turned and dug back into the basket, bringing out some more food.

The picnic continued, with the two sharing conversations about themselves; since it was their date, they had decided to leave off topics that had anything to do with the Dark/Light side and just focused on each other.

At one point, Cory turned to Luna and froze. The light had cast a glow over her, and to him, he’d never seen anyone more beautiful.

“You’re so beautiful,” he said softly.

Luna turned to him and smiled before leaning over to kiss him.

Surprised, but pleased, Cory returned the kiss.

Luna shifted until she was sitting on his lap, straddling him, and her arms around his neck.

Cory deepened the kiss as he wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling her closer. He could feel himself growing hard and he moaned into the kiss.

Luna shivered at the sound of her boyfriend’s moan. She could feel his growing erection beneath her and it turned her on a lot to know that she was the reason for it. She’s never thought of herself as a sexual being or as someone who guys would be turned on by, but here was her proof that she was.

It made her feel wanted.

It made her feel bold.

She moved one of her hands from around Cory’s neck and trailed it down his body until she was palming his erection.

Cory pulled back from the kiss and moaned at the feel of Luna’s thin fingers tracing his cock. He tangled his hand in her hair and tilted her head so he could get to her neck as he gave a thrust up into her hand.

“Cory,” Luna moaned as she felt his lips on her neck. Things she’s never felt before filled her. She could feel a heat coursing her through, a warmth filling her womb and moving down to her entrance where she was slowly getting wet.

She moved her hand from his erection and brought it up to grip his hair, holding his head to her neck as she grounded her hips down on his lap.

“Fuck Luna!” Cory hissed as he thrust up against her.

“Cory,” Luna panted out, “I f-feel…ohhh…”
It took supreme effort for Cory to stop his actions. But he did. He gripped Luna’s hips and stopped her movements. “Luna…wait…stop.”

Luna was breathing heavily, her skin flushed with pleasure and pupils slightly dilated, as she looked at her boyfriend, “What is it? Why did you stop?”

Cory took a deep breath to calm himself down, “Because we haven’t really talked about this and I’m not sure I’m ready to go there yet.”

Luna closed her eyes and took some deep breaths to calm herself down as well. When she was sure she was sufficiently cooled down, she opened her eyes and smiled at her boyfriend, “You’re right of course. While it felt good, so good, I fear it would’ve gotten out of hand quickly and we wouldn’t have been able to stop. I’m not ready for that step either.”

Cory grinned, loving her even more, “We can still make out though, right?”

“Of course,” Luna grinned in reply.

Cory kissed her, “Good, because I did enjoy that part.”

Luna giggled and kissed him again, “So, should we continue our picnic?”

Cory looked up at her, “We can, I mean, unless you want to leave or something?”

“No,” Luna shook her head, “I want to finish our picnic.”

“Then we’ll do that,” Cory smiled as he gently lifted her off his lap, placing her next to him.

Luna leaned into him, smiling softly when he handed her some grapes.

Cory wrapped an arm around her shoulders and pressed a kiss to the top of her head, enjoying the moment and the girl in his arms.

After a few minutes of just enjoying the silence, they started up another conversation.

The rest of their evening was spent relaxing and enjoying their alone time and each other.

~…~

Saturday

That morning Harry made his way down to the dungeons to Snape’s office.

Snape had opened a secure Floo connection to Luna’s dad’s office at The Quibbler, so that’s how they were going there.

Harry entered the office, after providing the password, and sat down near the fireplace waiting for Severus to emerge.

The man came out five minutes later.

“You are ready?” Snape asked when he saw Harry sitting there.

“As I’ll ever be,” Harry grinned and jumped up. “I’m kind of excited actually.”

Snape’s dark eyes flashed with amusement and his lips twitched, “Of course you are. Well then, I
suppose we should be on our way.”

Grabbing the Floo powder, Snape activated the connection and with a flash of green, the two disappeared from the office.

They reappeared in Xenophilius’ office, drawing the man’s attention.

Xenophilius looked up from the papers he was going through and stood up, “Oh hello. Mr Potter, Mr Snape, welcome.”

“Mr Lovegood,” Harry gave a nod as he stepped forward to shake the man’s hand.

Xenophilius gestured to the two chairs, “Please, have a seat.”

“Thank you,” Harry said as he sat down, “And thank you for having me.”

“Oh I should be the one thanking you,” Xenophilius said, “I’m honoured that you’re here and that you chose The Quibbler to give your very first interview.”

“Well you’re Luna’s father and she trusts you,” Harry said, “And I trust her.”

“Before we begin,” Snape spoke up, “Mr Potter has agreed to this interview on a few conditions: one, you take an Unbreakable Vow that we will not be betrayed in any way shape or form; two, you will print Mr Potter’s exact response, word for word, no Quick Quills and no ad-libbing; three, a copy of the interview shall be sent to a third party and if deemed acceptable, then and only then will this interview be printed. Meet these conditions and this interview will proceed and we shall have no future problems.”

Xenophilius looked at the dark and foreboding man and nodded in agreement. There was no way he was risking not only Harry Potter’s wrath, but Severus Snape’s as well; the man had a reputation of his own and he was not someone to be crossed.

“Very well,” Snape nodded as he pulled out his wand, “Let us begin, shall we?”

The Vow was cast and then, the interview began. It took just over two hours, but it was done.

After, Snape waved his wand over the papers, creating a copy while Harry called Hedwig into the room.

The phoenix arrived with a flash of fire, startling Xenophilius.

“Hedwig,” Snape said as he sealed the papers and held it out the phoenix, “Take this to M will you please?”

Hedwig trilled, calming the frazzled man, and accepted the papers. She rubbed her head against Harry’s and flashed out.

“Sweet Merlin that was a phoenix!” Xenophilius exclaimed.

“It was,” Harry nodded, “And no one knows it, so I’d appreciate it if stayed that way. Although, if it does come out, I will know who it came from.”

Xenophilius paled at the veiled threat.

“Then I do suppose it is a very good thing a Vow was taken,” Snape injected silkily, “I would hate for the young Ms Lovegood to lose her father.”
She wouldn’t, but the man didn’t need to know that.

The three men waited patiently for Hedwig’s return.

Harry had gotten up from his seat and he and Snape stood in the corner talking quietly—though a Muffliato was still cast—amongst themselves.

Xenophilius would never admit it out loud, but was completely terrified of having the two men just waiting. He knew they wouldn’t hurt him, but it still did nothing to stop him from being relieved when they would leave.

~…~

In his private wing at Malfoy Manor, Voldemort sat in his main room going through some paperwork.

The flash of fire drew his attention and he looked up to see Hedwig. He smiled.

“Well hello there,” Voldemort greeted the phoenix as he stood up, “to what do I owe this pleasure?”

Hedwig trilled as she flew over to the desk.

Voldemort took the letter from her, and the phoenix flew to land on his shoulder.

The Dark Lord let out a chuckle and then turned his attention to the letter in his hands. As he read, a smirk appeared and his eyes flashed with satisfaction.

When he was done, he glanced up at the phoenix on his shoulder. “Your master really is as Slytherin as they come.”

Hedwig trilled and gently bit Voldemort’s ear before she flew off to land in front of the man, allowing him to return the letter.

“Tell him I approve,” Voldemort said to the bird.

Hedwig trilled once more and then flashed out of the room.

When she was gone, Voldemort relaxed back into his seat. He could admit that he had been slightly sceptical as he hadn’t been sure just how the interview would play out, but he could see he had had no cause to be worried.

The boy had handled the answers perfectly. And it wasn’t just the interview either; their mission to France, the way he handled that Auror Tonks, the way he had managed to make the Old Coot believe exactly what he wanted.

It all reminded him of himself, but there was something more about Harry Potter; something that the boy had that he did not.

“It’s a very good thing that he is now on my side,” Voldemort mused, “for I have no doubt that if Dumbledore had ever realized the potential in Harry, he would’ve treated him right and kept him close. However, he did not. And as I have said before, the Light’s folly is my gain.”

He started chuckling, and if anyone had heard it, they would’ve shivered and ran in fear from the pure evilness of it.

~…~
Back at Lovegood’s office, Hedwig reappeared, once again startling Xenophilius.

Both Harry and Snape ignored the man as they turned their attentions to the phoenix.

“What did he say?” Harry asked as he held out his arm for Hedwig to fly to.

Hedwig trilled as she flew to Harry’s lap instead.  *He approves. You have the go ahead to continue.*

Harry’s answering grin was wide as he looked up at Snape.

“Well?” Snape raised an eyebrow.

“It’s good,” Harry nodded as he removed the letter from Hedwig and held it out to his professor. “He approves of it.”

Snape’s lips twitched slightly. “Very well.” He took the letter from Harry’s hand, and after scanning it once more, he gave it to Xenophilius.

“Thank you,” Xenophilius whispered as he took the parchment.

“How soon can it be printed and sent out?” Harry asked.

“Well it usually takes us about a day to go through everything and get the amount of copies ready to,” Xenophilius started, but he stopped when he saw the looks on the men’s faces.

Snape looked at Harry. “Well, we would hate to have you rush through the process and in the end the result is not what we had hoped for. However, this is the Magical world and I am sure, there is some way to speed up the process.”

Harry grinned, “So, by lunch today?”

“That is ideal,” Snape nodded.

Xenophilius could hear the threat in the words even if it hadn’t been spoken and he knew, it would be out no later than today. So instead, he held back his words and gave a nod.


Harry moved to stand next to his professor.

“I look forward to reading the *Quibbler* at lunch,” Harry said.

With that, the phoenix and the two men flashed out of the room.

The moment they were gone, Xenophilius fell back in his seat with a heavy sigh filled with relief. The moment only lasted a few minutes before he was up and on his feet, rushing to his printers.

He had a paper to put out and a deadline to do it.

~…~

They reappeared in Snape’s office, and after fussing with Hedwig one last time, Harry allowed the phoenix to return to whatever it was she had been doing.

When the bird was gone, Harry turned to his professor, “What do you think is going to happen?”
“That Mr Potter is something you would undoubtedly require a Seer for,” Snape remarked, a teasing tone to his voice, “However, if one were to guess, then I would say that Albus Dumbledore will soon realize just how delicate the tower he’s standing on is and that it is about to crumble from beneath him.”

Harry grinned, “I can’t wait. I better go find Draco and the others.”

Snape nodded as he headed to his office. He had a certain Dark Lord to visit.

~…~

Harry left Snape’s office and then headed down to the dungeons where Draco had said he would be until he got back.

After giving the password to the Snake’s pit, he entered the common, immediately spotting his boyfriend in his normal seat with Pansy and the others, including Cory and Luna, around him.

“Hey!” Cory was the first to see him. “You’re back.”

Draco looked up and smirked when he saw his boyfriend. He shifted in his seat, providing enough space for Harry to join him.

“How’d it go?” Draco asked. He moved Harry’s arm so that it was pretty much around his shoulders and he could cuddle into his boyfriend.

“Perfectly,” Harry smiled and then he looked at Luna, “I think Professor Snape scared your dad a bit though.”

The group laughed at that.

“So how soon will we see your very first interview?” Gabriella asked.

“By noon,” Harry said and then chuckled, “I think Snape really scared him.”

Pansy looked around and then subtly cast a *Muffiliato* around the group. “Harry, this interview, what is going to happen with it? What is it about?”

Blaise nodded, “How bad is it going to be?”

Harry looked at them—Cory, Pansy, Blaise, Luna, Gabriella and Draco—and then smiled, “It’s going to be fine. I sent it off to our benefactor and he approved of it. Trust me guys. Yes it will cause backlash and looks, especially from Dumbledore, but I’m anticipating that, and I know how to handle it when it happens.”

The six looked at each other and then back at the teen.

“Tell me why exactly you were never in Slytherin from the beginning?” Gabriella raised an eyebrow as she smirked at him.

Harry chuckled at the girl but said nothing in response.

“How soon until lunch?” Luna asked from her position in Cory’s arms.

Casting a quick *Tempus*, Blaise answered, “It’s just after ten. So, lunch is in like an hour and a half.”
“So I guess we’re just relaxing here until then?” Harry asked.

“Unless there is somewhere else you have to be?” Pansy stared at the green-eyed teen.”

“No,” Harry shook his head, “I’m good here.”

“Good,” Pansy nodded, “it’s settled. We can just relax here until lunch.”

“So what were you guys talking about when I came in?” Harry asked as he settled more comfortably in his seat and settling Draco with him.

As one, topics were given and Harry laughed softly before joining in as the conversations continued.

~…~

At around noon, all over the Wizarding World, flocks of owls flew into homes, stores, and government offices. Each owl was carrying a Wizarding paper, and soon, people realized that it wasn’t the Daily Prophet, but rather, the Quibbler.

The owls dropped the papers in front of every person before taking back off.

One by one, each person opened the paper and they were shocked and surprised when they saw the headline:

Interview of a Saviour:

The Boy-Who-Lived Speaks Out!
A/N: here is the new chapter. Hope you guys like it.

Disclaimer: I own nothing…if I did, Ginny would have died in the CoS, Dumbledore would have choked on his lemon drops and Harry would have stood up for himself against Molly and Dumbledore.

Disclaimer 2: this story is based on characters and situations created and owned by JK Rowling and Bloomsbury/Scholastic. No money is being made and no copyright or trademark infringement is intended.

“Talking”

Thinking’

|Hedwig’s mental speak|

Sesshomaru/Fawkes’ mental speak

|Harry’s mental speak|

Letter or commentary/introduction and flashback

{Parsssel tonguе}

~….~ indicates scene change

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Last time on RDA:

At around noon, all over the Wizarding World, flocks of owls flew into homes, stores, and government offices. Each owl was carrying a Wizarding paper, and soon, people realized that it wasn’t the Daily Prophet, but rather, the Quibbler.

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Interview of a Saviour:
The Boy-Who-Lived Speaks Out!

While everyone in the Great Hall stared at the headline with wide and shock-filled eyes, Harry calmly served himself some lunch. And up at the Head Table, Snape did the same as well.

Even those that knew about the interview—Draco and the others—were staring as well.

“Go on,” Harry gestured to the paper in front of his friends. “I know you guys are dying to read it, so
With eager hands, Lavender snatched up the paper, sharing it between her and Parvati. That seemed to be the cue for the rest of the students as everyone else hurriedly grabbed papers.

_The Quibbler was very shocked and surprised when we were contacted by none other than our Saviour, Harry Potter, for his very first consensual interview._

_When asked why Mr Potter chose us, our Saviour had this to say:_

**Harry Potter:** Well, I wasn’t going to use the Daily Prophet. Ever since I re-entered this world, that paper has been writing crap about me and everyone seems to eat it up. I got the first real glimpse of just how that paper operated when Rita Skeeter did a so-called interview of me back in fourth year during the Tri-Wizard Tournament where she twisted my every word. And then, when Cedric Diggory died and I told the then Minister for Magic Cornelius Fudge that Voldemort was back, he and the paper ridiculed and slammed me. I’ve had enough of having my words getting twisted around.

I want people to hear my side of the story. From my own lips. Not from a reporter, or some so-called source, but from me. As for why I chose The Quibbler; well Luna is one of my best friends. The Quibbler belongs to her father and I trust it because she trusts him. I knew if I wanted my truth out there, my truth in my words, then it’d have to be with a paper I can trust and I just don’t trust the Daily Prophet.

Needless to say, we were grateful and pressured at the words. But, after ensuring Mr Potter that we would do as he asked and print nothing but his own words, the interview was able to continue. We were shocked by what we were told, and have no doubt that you readers will be shocked as well when you read this interview.

_The Quibbler:_ First thing to ask; why now? What made you decide to give an interview now?

**Harry Potter:** I am sure you recall the interview that Ronald Weasley had given to the Daily Prophet a few weeks ago; an interview that slammed not only myself but others I was close to as well. Mr Weasley’s account to the Daily Prophet was nothing more than jealousy speaking out, and I decided to set the record straight, so to speak.

_The Quibbler:_ Alright, so you said you were going to tell your side of the story. What exactly are we going to be talking about?

**Harry Potter:** We will address that horrid article from the Daily Prophet, and I will also explain a little about my relationship with Draco Malfoy and the now Corvus LeStrange. However, to understand my relationship with both boys, you need to understand who I am, and to do so, you need to know about my past; or some of it anyways. Now I know that people think that just because I’m Harry Potter, that that meant that I spent my years before, and maybe even during, Hogwarts in a life of pampered luxury. But that’s not true. In fact, it’s the opposite. See, contrary to what the Wizarding World believes, I was not pampered by my relatives. I was actually treated like a house elf, or worse.

At this, an interruption was much needed as it begged a question.

_The Quibbler:_ What do you mean you were treated like a house elf? How is that even possible? Magical children are protected and treasured.
Harry Potter: Yes well, not me. I was raised by magic hating Muggles. My relatives, the people that were supposed to protect and treasure me, actually starved and beat me. And all because I could do magic.

The Quibbler: Would you elaborate on that? Sincerely, no offense is meant Mr Potter, but, you have to admit that it is a little difficult to believe that your family would treat you so terribly.

At this point, Mr Potter paused and it was very easy to see that whatever information he was about to divulge next would be painful for him.

Harry Potter: I don’t like talking about my childhood, but I did say I was going to talk about my past, and I feel I must to make you understand my actions now. When I said my relatives hated magic, I meant it. Every time I did something that they considered “freaky”, I would be punished. I was beaten, I was starved and I was forced to do all the chores and sometimes I’d still have to the chores, which included cooking, cleaning the house and gardening, even if I was injured. I was never really taken to the hospital to get treated because they thought I didn’t deserve to be helped; that I deserved to be beaten because of my freakiness.

I had no idea what I was doing, nor how I was doing it. All I knew was that I would get punished every time my magic did something. The end result of that was that I was severely underweight and very malnourished as I hadn’t received proper nutrition growing up and that led to me being smaller than other people my age.

Which brings me to a point.

The Quibbler: And what point is that?

Harry Potter: well, I did some research on the Founders of Hogwarts and while I was interested in all of it, it was Salazar Slytherin who really captured my interest. I wanted to know why the man who started out with the other three trying to do something good was suddenly a villain.

The Quibbler: and what did you find out?

Harry Potter: I found the truth. It was rumoured that Salazar Slytherin had a disagreement with the other three when it came to Hogwarts as while the others were happy with all magical children, Salazar wanted only pure-bloods. That wasn’t true. What I found out was that Salazar had realized that not all Muggles would be open and accepting of their child or relative having magic and that their fear might lead them to harm the child, so his intentions were to separate magical children from their Muggle parents at a young age and get them acclimated to the Wizarding World. The other three, more specifically Rowena and Helena, thought that it was wrong to take a child from its parents, and it became a big disagreement between Salazar and them and so he left. Throughout the years, the truth got twisted until it is what we know it to be today.

When I learned what Salazar’s original intentions were, I agreed with him because he was right. Not every Muggle parent is completely accepting of their child having magic. I know that there are some families that are accepting, such as Hermione Granger’s parents, as well as Dean Thomas, but then there are also some that are so terrified of the magic that they mistreat the child, hoping to get rid of the freakiness. My own family was proof of that.
Salazar had good intentions, I just think he went about it the wrong way.

*The Quibbler:* What do you think the right way would be?

*Harry Potter:* I think that instead of taking the children away outright, research should be done. Meaning, if you know a family has a magical child, then search them out and make sure that the child is in good hands; make sure that the family have no intentions of abusing their child for having magic. And if you find that the child is ok, that the family is open-minded and willing to accept the child and the magical responsibilities that come with, then leave the child with the family; just maybe check in on them once in a while. And if you find that the child is being mistreated, or that the family cannot cope with the responsibilities of having a magical child, then the child is taken away and placed with another family; preferably a magical one, but an open-minded and accepting Muggle or Muggle-born family could work as well.

*The Quibbler:* You are really passionate about this.

A nod

*Harry Potter:* I am. Like I said, I grew up with magic hating Muggles, so I know just how bad things can be.

And then I found out I was a wizard and that there was this whole other world. My whole life I’d been told that what I was doing was unnatural and evil and that I was a freak for doing it, but then, I turn eleven and all of a sudden, there’s somebody else telling me that it actually meant something good; that I was a wizard.

*The Quibbler:* so the new information was clashing with what you had been told your entire life.

*Harry Potter:* Exactly! I was completely taken aback and seriously overwhelmed. I had no idea what was the right or wrong thing to do, what the customs and traditions were. And I can only imagine how other Half-Bloods who knew nothing of their heritage, as well as Muggle-borns, felt as well.

I wish I had had someone to tell me what was going on before I entered Hogwarts. Finding out on my birthday, just over a month before school started, is not enough time! Over the summer, I did some research into other Wizarding Cultures and I found that the British Wizarding world is pretty much the only one that does something like this. The French do not wait until a child is eleven and ready to head off to Beauxbatons; once they are certain a child is magical, they approach the family to not only let them know, but to also help them with the child’s magical outbursts and at a later age, but before age eleven, the child or children are enrolled in a sort of pre-school where they learn about how to control their magic and also the customs and traditions of the French Wizarding World. When I read that tidbit of information, I couldn’t believe it. I was like, well why aren’t the British doing the same thing?

*Harry paused and let out a sheepish grin.*

*Harry Potter:* I’m sorry, I’m completely going off on a tangent, aren’t I?

*The Quibbler:* oh no Mr Potter, it’s of no consequence. It’s actually quite interesting to hear your thoughts on such an issue in our world. And like you said, this interview is about you, finally expressing your thoughts, your side of the story, so that others may understand. It’s not about me, so
Harry Potter: well then, as I was saying; I wished our system was like the French. It’s so much better and people like me who are new to the Wizarding World, wouldn’t feel so overwhelmed. I mean, can you imagine; you’re just finding out that you have these magical powers and that there’s a whole secret world, and on top of that, you have to go away from your family and go to school.

Like I said, it would’ve been nice knowing about magic way before I got to Hogwarts. At least that way, I would’ve known what was going on, instead of being punished all the time whenever I had a magical outburst.

The Quibbler: it’s actually very interesting to hear your views on that issue and I assure you, while it hasn’t been something I have given much thought of in the past, it could definitely be something to look into changing. It does make better sense to approach a family a few years before the child is to arrive at Hogwarts, so that they may have a better understanding and grasp of their magic and not feel too overwhelmed when they do start at age eleven.

Now, Mr Potter, I’m afraid I need to ask. I’m still a bit stuck on you growing up with magic hating Muggles. How was that possible? Did no one know about what you were going through? And how did you end up with them in the first place? I’d assume that before placing you, our esteemed Saviour, with such people, that they would’ve done a search on the Muggles to know what they were like.

Harry Potter: you’d think that, but no. like I said, they’re my relatives. Petunia is my mother’s older sister and she married Vernon and they have a son named Dudley. And, I suppose I did try to tell Headmaster Dumbledore back in first year, but perhaps I wasn’t clear enough then. And then, in my second year, the Weasley boys had come to get me and when they did, they saw that I had bars on my windows and a cat-flap on the door. At the time, I had assumed that they had told their mother and she had told Dumbledore, but since nothing came of it, I just left it at that. I do recall trying again, I think around third year, and I think that’s when he told me that because my mother had sacrificed herself for me, it created a protection on me, one that would be strengthened as long as I was around family of that same blood; ergo, my Aunt Petunia. I honestly don’t know if Headmaster Dumbledore had researched more into my aunt and uncle before he placed me there. I know that no one checked up on me before I entered Hogwarts. Dumbledore didn’t check on me, and if he deliberately ignored my repeated pleas, then I don’t know why. You’d have to ask him.

The Quibbler: Are you comfortable giving details of what your childhood was like before Hogwarts? If you are not, then it’s fine and we can move on to other topics, I assure you there are a few, but if you don’t mind sharing…

Harry Potter: I don’t mind. I know some people might be sceptical as to what I could’ve meant when I said I was beaten and starved. So here’s the truth; for as long as I could remember, I’ve done everything for them and I had to do it right, or I’d get punished. And the punishments were even worse if I had any magical outburst.

My uncle Vernon had been the one in charge of punishments usually. Sometimes my aunt would hit, but she really left it to him. If I did magic, or I displeased him in some way, he’d beat me; sometimes with his belt, or with his fists. After a while, I guess he realized that he couldn’t continue to hit me without arousing suspicions from the neighbours, so he resorted to
verbal abuse. That was something that both he and my aunt excelled at.

I was always called freak or boy, never my real name and as a result of that, I didn’t know what my name actually was until I entered Muggle primary school at the age of five and my teacher was doing roll call.

I had to cook for them, and usually, I wouldn’t taste the fruit of those efforts. And when I was given food, it would either be scraps or leftovers, or if my aunt was in a particularly bad mood, I’d get soggy toast and spoilt milk or plain water. I had to clean the house and keep it clean. If it was a mess, I’d be punished for it and then I’d still be the one to clean it. My cousin Dudley used to love to make a mess and watch me get punished for it.

As for Dudley, he had his own ways. He and his friends loved to play this game called “Harry Hunting” where he and his friends would chase me down and beat me up if they caught me. The one upside to that particular game, I learned how to move very fast.

He laughed, and while the joke could be seen, it is horrifying to think on how it came about. To hear about this is actually daunting and while I would love to stop, I can’t stop the curiosity to know more.

The Quibbler: Did the abuse continue on even after you entered Hogwarts?

Harry Potter: No. I think when I got my letter at age eleven, they were scared. See, the letter was addressed to Mr Harry Potter, The Cupboard under the Stairs…

The Quibbler: Wait, the Cupboard? You lived in a cupboard?

Harry Potter: Yes I did. The cupboard under the stairs was actually my bedroom up until that point. After the letter came and they saw the way it was addressed, they were afraid someone knew and they didn’t want to be found out. So, they moved me from there and gave me Dudley’s second bedroom, the one he had for all the toys he never played with.

After that, the abuse pretty much tapered off, or I should say it just took a different turn. By that point, the physical abuse had already been stopped and it was just verbal. After the letter came, they pretty much just ignored me. Sometimes, verbal abuse would happen again, but compared to how it was in the earlier years, it was tame. They also started feeding me a bit more, but, like I said, my body had already suffered.

So, when I got to Hogwarts, and I realized that a madman was after me, I knew things had to change. People say all the time that my magic is pretty strong and powerful, but honestly, what’s the point in your magic being strong if your body can’t sustain it or you? I knew I had to build my body to what it was supposed to be, so I started reading books on how I could do that. I exercised and I ate food that would give my body the nutrition it needed along with drinks and potions.

The Quibbler: If that’s true, then how is it we didn’t see the changes until just this school year?

Harry Potter: I guess my magic reacted and decided to put on a powerful glamour until it felt I was prepared. I honestly don’t know.

The Quibbler: So, where does things stand with your family? If they came back wanting a
relationship and apologizing, would you give them a chance? And are you still living with them?

**Harry Potter:** Honestly, I don’t even care if they wanted to apologize or anything. I mean, I’d listen, but that’s it. If they wanted some type of relationship after all these years, it’s not going to happen. And I’m never going back there.

**The Quibbler:** Understandable. I have to admit Mr Potter, what I just learned about your childhood, it is shocking. The little details you have given already provided a dark picture, and I shudder to think what the more explicit details are actually like.

**Harry Potter:** They are not pleasant, I assure you. But, I’m over it now.

**The Quibbler:** It certainly looks that way. I must admit that you do not seem to be suffering from them anymore. And I do suppose it’s a good thing you have others to stand around you. Speaking of which, let’s talk about those that do stand around you.

He laughs, his green eyes twinkling with delight as I’m sure he figured out where I’m going.

**Harry Potter:** I suppose you want to talk about my relationships with certain people, more specifically the Malfoys and Corvus LeStrange, formally known as Neville Longbottom?

**The Quibbler:** Yes, that’s where I was going. The relationships with you and those young men have been a source of contention among the Wizarding folks, considering that neither of those families are accepted openly by the public. If you could please explain?

**Harry Potter:** That’s what this interview is about. So…explanations. I know that everyone thinks I hated Draco, but the truth is, I never did. I always admired Draco, I always found him intriguing, but because of who I was around, I couldn’t show it. My feelings for him didn’t change until about third year I think, but still I did nothing. Both Weasley and Granger, who were still my friends at the time, hated him and well, they pretty much controlled who I could be around and I knew that if I let my feelings about Draco be known, it would’ve caused a huge explosion.

**The Quibbler:** but it is my understanding that you are in a relationship with Mr Malfoy, and subsequently, you are no longer friends with Ronald Weasley and Hermione Granger. What changed?

**Harry Potter:** I lost someone close to me. Back in May, my godfather Sirius Black died. Now, I suppose you’re shocked by that information and possibly confused as to why I would care considering what he is to my family, but your assumptions are wrong. I know everyone thinks Sirius betrayed my parents because of that madman, but he didn’t. He was innocent, but no one knew that because he was thrown into Azkaban without a trial. I found out the truth when he broke into Hogwarts my third year to protect me from the true betrayer of my parents, Peter Pettigrew. Anyway, he died back in May and after that, it was like a switch flipped inside of me. My losing him made me realize that life was short and that I can’t afford to continue living for someone else. I’ve got to start living my life for me. And that included telling Draco how I felt about him.

It was difficult in the beginning considering our shared history, but we had the whole summer to get to know one another without all the pressure and expectations and influence of others and we became a couple. Of course, that didn’t sit well with some people, mainly Ronald and
Hermione, but that was because they believed that they knew what was best for me and wanted me to leave Draco. I wasn’t doing that and since they couldn’t accept it, I realized that I was going in a different direction than them and if they were finding my choices to not be what they like, then that was their problem.

_The Quibbler_: Yes, and not to be antagonistic, but I can see their point. As you said, your shared history with the young Mr Malfoy, but not only that, who his parents are must have had some factor on their reasoning.

_Harry Potter_: You can look at it that way I suppose. But I’m not dating Draco’s parents, I’m dating Draco. And in all honesty, I have no problem with Lord Malfoy. Well, I suppose I should say Professor Malfoy now.

_The Quibbler_: And how is that? Having Lord Malfoy as a professor. As I said, the rumours circulating about the man, and just who he is makes one a little cautious of being around him.

_Harry Potter_: I know people have their issues with Draco’s dad, and I don’t blame them. Rumours aside, the man is as Slytherin as they come and if you’re not cautious, even at first, then I’d question you’re judgement. The truth is, I was cautious around him as well, because as you’ve said, rumours. However, as I have never put much stock in what the Daily Prophet reported, especially considering how they loved to spread rumours about me, I decided I wouldn’t believe everything the paper reported. Why? Because personally, I didn’t know the man and I had no idea what he was like. Yes he’s a Slytherin, but as I have learned, being Slytherin doesn’t necessarily make you evil or a bad person.

When Draco and I got together, I learned things, things I’m not going to share. But what I can share is this: Lucius Malfoy is, or was, a Slytherin and one thing I learned about Slytherins is that they have two masks. One for the public and one for private, for just their family and closest acquaintances.

As for him as a professor, he is amazing. He’s quite possibly the best Defence Against the Dark Arts professor we’ve ever had. He doesn’t favour any student above another and actually treats us all the same no matter our House or blood. With him as a professor, I’m actually learning a lot. The difference between his teaching and previous DADA professors is that he doesn’t just teach us how to defend ourselves, but he teaches us the origins of what we are learning. How can we properly defend ourselves if we have no idea what we’re defending against? And that’s what he’s doing.

Another thing that I learned and that I actually liked and think is the best, is when he taught us that magic is as neutral as they come; it is neither good nor evil. What it all comes down to, is the intent of the witch or wizard. And that intent is what makes a spell Light or Dark. Consider for example Wingardium Leviosa. A simple spell that when taught in first year, was used to levitate a feather. Now, someone can use that same spell and levitate a boulder on someone, or they can levitate a person over a cliff or at a high enough altitude and then release the spell causing the person to drop to the ground resulting in either serious injuries or death.

_There is so much I want to ask about this. I want him to elaborate, but there are other things to talk about._

_The Quibbler_: And your friendship with the now Corvus LeStrange? It was quite shocking to read
that Neville Longbottom was actually the son of the most infamous Death Eater belonging to You-Know-Who and to hear of your continued friendship with him. Could you explain?

**Harry Potter:** Certainly. When he was still known as Neville Longbottom, Cory and I shared a dorm for five years. It was this summer that he found out the shocking truth. I’m not going to explain, as that part is not my story to tell, but, when he found out, he was completely scared out of his mind. And why wouldn’t he be? He had grown up believing his parents to be Aurors, and to find out that your parents are actually two of the most infamous Death Eaters? He had had no idea what was going on. So he wrote to me, scared, and asked to come over.

When he did, it was obvious he expected me turn him away, but I couldn’t do it. He was my friend before, and I decided a change in his parentage had no difference to me. He was still my friend. It took him a while to accept the truth, but he did. He’s my best friend and if anyone has a problem with that, they can answer to me.

But the one thing we realized was that, the madman that was responsible for my own crappy life, was the same madman behind his own situation. When we realized that, we bonded even more.

**The Quibbler:** That is a truly recommendable thing you’ve done Mr Potter. And while I must confess to the curiosity to know the full story behind that, I respect your decision to leave that part alone; as you’ve said, that part of the story is not yours to tell.

**Harry Potter:** Thank you.

**The Quibbler:** Now, I have to ask. Several times you have said “madman” instead of You-Know-Who.

**Harry Potter:** Because he is a madman. I don’t believe in monikers like that. I think it’s completely bollocks to give the man different names. If I don’t even like the ones they give to me, why would I tolerate those? Just like I believe the moniker The-Boy-Who-Lived is completely ridiculous, the monikers You-Know-Who and He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named are the same. The man responsible for my parents deaths, for Cory’s situation, for, well not everything, but he’s had a hand in a lot of death and heartache is a madman. He deceives his followers into believing that their needs are the same as his and that he looks out for them, when in truth, he’s all for himself. All he cares about is power and he only does things that benefit him and no one else. If you don’t fit into his plans, he gets rid of you. So, to me, he’s nothing more than a complete and utter madman and that’s how I’ll refer to him.

**The Quibbler:** I see. Just one last thing Mr Potter. There is a war brewing Mr Potter, no contention to that, but what do you expect, or hope the outcome to be? What do you see for the future?

**Harry Potter:** You’re right. There is a war brewing, one that is inevitable as both sides believe their own to be superior and the right way to go. What I expect, what I hope for is very simple; a life with Draco and all my friends and family safe and happy and living their lives how they see fit without someone dictating or manipulating them. I want the people I care about to survive, but not only them, but the Wizarding World as a whole. The victor of this war will determine the future path we will have to travel. And it is a path that will have to be filled with changes if we want to avoid the life of living that has been done ever since that madman came into power. Because in all honesty, this World is in desperate need of a change.
I think the British Wizarding World should adopt the policies of the Wizarding World in France, at least when it comes to schooling. Instead of waiting until a child is eleven years old to bring them to the Wizarding World, they should be acclimated at an earlier age. The reason for that being two fold. One, so that they are not completely overwhelmed when they enter Hogwarts. And two, so that they could better understand and grasp the concept of their magic and the Wizarding World as a whole. Doing that would tie in to Salazar Slytherin’s original plans which had been to research magical children to make sure that they are not being mistreated as a result of their magic and to also make sure that the parents or guardians are equipped to handle a magical child.

That’s what I see as the future of this world. The kind of change that would make a better place and not have the British Wizarding World be the one European Wizarding World that was still stuck in the past. Times are changing, and we need to change with it.

The Quibbler: Well Mr Potter, I have to thank for taking the time to sit down and give your side of the story. I was completely honoured that you chose The Quibbler as the paper to trust for you first interview.

Harry Potter: Well if I’m satisfied with the end results, then perhaps I’ll use this paper again in the future.

At that, the interview came to a close. Having Mr Potter sit down and give this interview was an amazing experience, and something that was appreciated, considering his past views on newspapers. So, it was an honour that he chose The Quibbler as the paper for his very first willing interview.

With that said, what was discussed within the interview definitely came as a shock. And I am sure it came as a shock to those reading this as well. To learn of Mr Potter’s childhood was unbelievably shocking. To think that a magical child was placed to live in such a hell, with no contact to our world and no one to look after him, leaving him with magic hating guardians.

It begs the question: what was Dumbledore thinking? I am sure he could’ve found some place else to leave our Saviour. Why would he leave a magical child with Muggles who feared and hated magic? So much so that they abused him over it? They being his relatives did not stop them from doing so.

And if this happened to our own Saviour, what if it happened to another child? Mr Potter was right. This shouldn’t be an issue. This should not be something that magical children have to experience. If the Wizarding World in France could find a way to prevent such incidences from occurring, why can’t we? Our children are important and to prevent anyone from experiencing what Mr Potter went through, future generations especially, this should be something that we could change.

Whispers echoed in the Hall as the students split their attention between the paper and the Slytherin table.

The only ones who seemed to be unaffected—besides Harry and Snape—were Cory and Luna. The rest of the Slytherins, more specifically, the ones that Harry was friends with, although they were shocked and intrigued, they didn’t really show the extent to which the other students were. Of course that didn’t shock the others as they knew that the Slytherins didn’t show much emotion or reaction in public.

Ignoring the reactions happening around him, Harry continued to finish his lunch, striking up a
conversation with Luna as he did so. Taking the cue from him, Draco and Cory did the same as well, and soon enough, so did Gabriella, Pansy and Blaise.

“Well, it is Saturday,” Draco said as he wiped his hands on a napkin, “What do you guys want to do today?”

“We could just walk around the grounds,” Cory shrugged.

“Sounds good to me,” Harry nodded in agreement.

Some minutes later, the teens finished lunch and left the Hall, leaving behind the chatter of the rest of the school.

~…~

Sometime later, when they teens were relaxed and enjoying being outside, an elf popped up with a note for Harry.

“What is it?” Pansy asked, looking at the teen with some curiosity.

Harry opened the note, briefly skimming it, before crumpling into a ball. “Dumbledore; he wants to meet.”

“Of course he does,” Draco nodded, “that doesn’t really surprise me. The article turned attention towards him, and not the kind the Old Fool particularly cares for either.”

“So,” Blaise started, brows furrowing together, “what exactly does he hope to accomplish with this meeting?”

“Well,” Gabriella spoke up, “I may not know Dumbledore, but I have lived in America and I do recognize this tactic. Dumbledore is calling this meeting for two reasons; he’s rather curious as to why you said the things you did, why you gave this interview without coming to him first so that he could make sure that you would say only what he wanted you to say, or he’s mad at the implications in the interview, and he wants to do damage control, which may or may not include forcing you to recant the aspersions you made on his character.”

Luna smiled, “Do you know what I love about Mother Nature? She is the epitome of the perfect balance of good and evil, of beauty and beast. She holds many aspects to her, and of all of them, an avalanche is quite possibly the only one that signifies that perfect balance between beauty and beast. It is a wondrous and amazing thing to behold and yet so dangerous because it’s one started it cannot be stopped until it runs its course.”

The message was understood; Harry’s interview was the catalyst to get everything going, and no matter how much Dumbledore tries, he will not be able to escape his fate.

Cory looked at his best friend, “So when does he want to meet?”

“Right now actually,” Harry replied. After staying put for a few more minutes, he finally stood up, brushing off his jeans as he did so. “Well, I’d best be going. I’ll see you guys later.”

“We’ll be at the library,” Luna told him. “So we’ll leave with you, and you can meet us there.”

Plans made, the group made their way inside. They talked, mostly Gabriella sharing some of her time in America, until they got to the turning point; while Harry headed on to Dumbledore’s office, the others headed to the library.
“You wanted to see me sir?” Harry asked as he stepped inside the office.

“Come in and close the door Harry,” Albus ordered. Though his tone was as gentle as ever, there was an edge to it.

“Is something the matter?” Harry asked as he sat down, keeping his face neutral and his shields in place.

“No my dear boy,” Albus replied, “I wouldn’t say that. I did however wanted to talk to you about that article.”

“What about it sir?” Harry asked. ‘Alright Old Man, let’s what you have up your sleeve.’

“Now Harry,” Albus leaned forward slightly to rest his elbows on his desk, lacing his fingers together and resting his chin on them. “I understand your need to circumscribe what the Daily Prophet has written about you over the past years, but was it really a wise idea to reveal the things you did?”

“Yes it was,” Harry nodded. He wasn’t going to placate Dumbledore, but he wasn’t going to be stupid either. “You may not agree with what was said during the interview, but it was the truth, my truth, and it needed to be said for people to understand where I’m coming from and what I’m about. I’m never going to please everybody sir, but I can please myself and I was quite pleased with the entire interview.”

‘The more time the boy is spending with those Slytherins, the more outspoken he is becoming. He is gaining too much backbone. I need him malleable.’ Albus fumed silently. ‘Maybe a little worry about the backlash of his words will bring him back in line.’

“I understand what you’re saying,” Albus continued, “But I do not believe in casting aspersions on others to get your own story out Mr Potter. The tales you told about your family, and by extension myself, have you no thought on what the consequences and repercussions of such actions will bring?”

‘I see what you’re trying to do Old Man, and it won’t work. I’m on to your games already.’ Harry thought. Shaking his head, he made sure his voice was firm when he spoke. “I have thought about it, and quite frankly, I don’t care. The Dursleys weren’t a family to me and they never treated me that. The world deserved to know my “family” wasn’t as loving as they had been made out to be. The fact is Headmaster, if I didn’t have more important things to focus on, I’d be hell bent on getting revenge on them.”

Albus was startled by the teen’s words, though he tried not to show it. This was not what he expected. Not at all.

“Harry, it’s thoughts like that that sent Voldemort down the path he is on now,” Albus said, hoping to change the teen’s words. He was sounding too much like another teen, or rather, too much like those blasted Slytherins.

“Well maybe if the people who were supposed to protect and care for him had done their jobs, he wouldn’t have had to go down the path he’s on now,” Harry countered.

For a moment, Albus had felt a spike of fear. The boy’s words, coupled with his blasted interview, it had almost sounded as if—ridiculous.
Seeing the Headmaster shocked and concerned at his words, Harry changed tactics. He let out deep sigh, seemingly tinged with frustration, and closed his eyes briefly and rubbed the back of his neck, “I’m sorry for snapping professor. It’s just, I really was tired of having all these stuff said about and I just wanted my own truth out there. And I’m sorry you got caught in the middle; I know you were only doing what you thought was best and that your hands were tied. I’m not Voldemort, and I have no intention of ever being him.”

The thoughts that had been there a second evaporated. The boy turning down the same path as Tom, completely ridiculous. How could he ever have thought that? Yes, he was being too outspoken and he was doing things he never would’ve before, but that could be attributed to being around the Slytherins, something he was still wary of, but he was still Harry Potter.

“I know that Harry,” Albus nodded, “Regardless of your somewhat similar pasts, I am not concerned about you travelling down his path. The difference between the both of you is the fact that Tom is incapable of love, while you are not.”

‘Incapable of love? Then I wonder what you’d call what he has with Severus?’ Harry mentally snorted.

“Like I told the Quibbler Headmaster,” Harry continued, “the madman responsible for the deaths of my parents—my childhood, Sirius, everything—he’s going to pay for it.”

Albus nodded as if he expected as much, but still, something about the article grabbed hold and wouldn’t let go. There was something there, something just below the surface that troubled him.

“Why did you tell the paper about your childhood?” Albus asked. That was one of the things troubling him; the words that spilled out and the implication they casted over everyone mentioned, himself especially, left him unsettled with a deep sense of foreboding.

Harry shrugged. “Why wouldn’t I? It was an in depth interview, one that requires questions and answers about who I am, and that includes my childhood; horrible as it was. I wasn’t going to lie Headmaster. Like I said, I just needed to get the truth out there, to show everyone that I wasn’t a spoiled, pampered prince growing up. That I had to suffer and work to get to where I am now. I just wanted to be heard for once.”

He bit his lip, looked away briefly and then spoke, his voice a little softer. “I really I’m sorry sir. I really didn’t mean to make aspersions or whatnot against you. Like I said, I know your hands were tied and you did the best that you could.”

The words banished the remaining doubts and shook away the unease and foreboding Dumbledore had felt.

‘The boy may not be as easily controlled as before, but he is still on the right path, the one that I set out for him. Still, just to make sure he does...’

“It’s alright Harry.” Albus said, “I understand. The only reason I questioned your motives, or rather, your answers, is because I do not want anyone to think that there is dissonence between us. If Tom ever sensed that there was discord between us, he would not hesitate to use it against you. He’s already done it once before.”

‘No he hasn’t, but I see your game nonetheless.’ “You’re right professor,” Harry acknowledged.

“Well that is all my dear boy,” Albus said, his eyes twinkling. “I do not want to take up the rest of your afternoon.”
Harry stood up, “It’s ok professor. I get it; you were just curious and worried about the interview. You were just looking out for me.”

“I always try to do what’s best for you Harry,” Albus said.

“I know that,” Harry nodded. “I’ll see you later sir.”

“Good day my boy,” Albus smiled.

Harry gave another nod and then he left, leaving the Headmaster staring after.

~…~

After leaving Dumbledore’s office, Harry quickly made his way down to the dungeons to Snape’s office. He arrived at the door and gave three quick knocks.

“Enter,” Snape called out.

The door opened and the teen stepped through, locking and warding it behind him.

“I suppose there is a specific reason for your visit?” Snape asked when he saw the teen. “What did the Headmaster have to say about the interview?”

“What do you think?” Harry snorted as he dropped into an armchair.

“I suppose he spewed the usual, and predictable, trite about how while he admired what you did and was proud, it was also quite foolish and you should have come to him before allowing the interview to happen,” Snape answered with a raised eyebrow.

Harry chuckled. “Dead on.” He relaxed even further in his seat as he recounted the meeting with Albus.

When he was done, Snape remained quiet, though his features were pulled into a frown.

“What is it?” Harry questioned, seeing the expression on the man’s face.

“It would be prudent that from this point onward,” Snape spoke, “we proceed with extra caution when it comes to dealing with the Headmaster.”

Harry stared at the older man for a few minutes as he tried to suss out his meaning. When he did, his green eyes narrowed. “You think he’s starting to have suspicions?”

Snape gave a slow nod. “I do believe so. Albus Dumbledore did not get to the position he is today by being ignorant or stupid. If he realizes that he has lost his most valuable weapon in this war, if he knows that you have switched sides and is more knowledgeable about his own plans and his own actions, then all of this will be for naught.”

Harry’s head fell back to rest against the top of his chair. He closed his eyes in slight frustration, but he did understand what Snape was saying. Suddenly, an idea came to him and his head popped back up. “Then we’ll just have to make quick, but calculated moves to ensure that he doesn’t know the truth until it is far too late to do anything.”

Snape raised an eyebrow. “Just what is brewing in that mind of yours?”

Harry grinned and stood up. “I have a plan, but before it can be implemented, first we need to see the reaction the Wizarding World has to the interview, including the parts Dumbledore played and
second, I need to talk to the others. After that, I’ll let you know.”

“Very well then,” Snape nodded, though he was curious to know just what the teen had planned.

“Good afternoon professor,” Harry said as he made his way to the door.

“Good day Potter,” Snape replied. His lips twitched in amusement as he heard Harry laugh in reply. When the door closed behind the teen, he stood up and headed to the Floo. Calling out his destination, the private floor where Voldemort was residing, he stepped in.

_Voldemort’s Personal Quarters; Malfoy Manor_

Voldemort didn’t look up when he heard the Floo in his private room activate. There was only one person who had permission. Everyone else had come through one of the Malfoy’s many Floos before coming to his quarters.

“Hello Severus,” he greeted, keeping his eyes on the document in front of him.

“Marvolo,” Snape nodded as he crossed the room, removing his robes as he did so. He took a seat as he waited for his lord and lover to finish up.

It took several more minutes for Voldemort to finish going through the documents. When he was done, a quick flick of his wrist had them neatly stacked and off to the side. He then stood up, rounded the desk and made his way over to his lover.

“Not that I do not enjoy your company Severus,” Voldemort smiled as he sat in the chair across from the younger man, “But I do know that this is the time when you are at school and as such, will be busy. So, what brings you by?”

Snape gave one of his rare smiles. “I have some news that I thought my lord would like to know.”

“Oh?” Voldemort raised an eyebrow.

Snape nodded and then recounted not only what Harry had told him of his meeting with Dumbledore, but also the talk he had had with Harry after.

“You were right when you told Harry that Albus did not ascend to the position he is in now, with the public and in the government by being easily fooled or led.” Voldemort acknowledged with a nod, “However, the fact that everything that is happening now, or rather most of it, is done by his supposed “Golden Boy” means that he will not see it coming. He will be blindsided by the actions taken as he is not expecting Harry, or yourself, or Remus, or any of the other players that we have on our side that he believes to be on his side to do anything of this magnitude.”

Snape became thoughtful. “I see your point. While he may be starting to get suspicious, or have doubts about Harry’s actions, his belief that his hold is strong on Harry will prevent him from seeing the truth.”

“Exactly,” Voldemort nodded. “You said that Harry has an idea?”

“That is what he told me,” Snape said, “however, he didn’t share the details. He said that he needed to speak with the others, and that he also needed to observe the reactions further before he implemented it.”

Voldemort smirked. “Hmm. The boy is up to something, and having an inkling of the way his mind works, I do believe that whatever it is, it will be phenomenal; a subtle praise to us while casting more
aspersions and doubts on Dumbledore.” He nodded. “I have the utmost admiration for his Slytherin
tactics.”

“As do I,” Snape nodded in agreement.

Voldemort stood up. “Very well then. That concludes our business aspect of this meeting.” He held
out a hand for the younger man to take. “Tell me Severus, are you free for the rest of the afternoon?”

Snape felt a pulse of warmth at the heat in his lover’s eyes. “If you want me to be my Lord.”

“Most assuredly,” Voldemort grinned and pulled his lover close, pressing him tight against his body.
He lifted a hand and tilted Snape’s neck to the side, allowing him access to nip and kiss and lick.

“Oh Merlin,” Snape moaned as he clung to his lover.

“I do love the noises you make Severus,” Voldemort whispered, “and I will enjoy extracting more
and more out of you.”

The words were a promise and the husky and dark tone to them left Snape trembling with
anticipation. He couldn’t wait.

“Promises, promises,” Snape taunted, his own eyes darkening even further as his body flushed with
heat from the lust filling him. “One that if you don’t keep, I am sure I can find someone else to do
so.”

Voldemort went still. “Do so and I will force you to watch as I rip them to shreds, starting with
removing their skin from their bodies. They will suffer not a quick death, but a maliciously slow and
painful one.” The red in his eyes flashed prominently. “You are mine Severus! No one else’s!”

Snape leaned in until their lips were almost touching, and then, whispered. “Prove it.”

A loud growl a second later and the Potions Master was hoisted up in the Dark Lord’s arms, as the
two made their way to the man’s bedroom. His magic reacted to his emotions, opening the door as
they neared and then slamming it shut behind them.

From her place in a corner of the room, Nagini watched everything and couldn’t help the amused
hiss that escaped. She knew exactly what the Potions man had tried to achieve with his words. He
had played on her master’s possessiveness spectacularly.

{Isss sssomesssing funny mama?} one of her babies questioned.

{It isss nothing to consssern yourssself with sssnakeling} she answered back, coiling her body around
her children a little more securely. {Now ressst}

{Ok} the snake replied.

As her babies settled, Nagini tasted the air again, taking in the high concentration of the mating scent.
Oh yes, the Potions Master knew exactly what he had been doing.

At the Daily Prophet

While Snape and the Dark Lord were enjoying some afternoon delight, the workers at the Daily
Planet were in just as much—if not more—of an uproar as everyone else; especially the head of the
paper, Roosevelt Dunbar.

It wasn’t the contents of the interview that had him going—or it was—it was more of the fact that the
very first time their Saviour had decided to be willing to talk, and *The Quibbler* had been chosen instead of them.

The biggest scoop in the world, and they hadn’t been a part of it.

“I don’t believe this!” Dunbar ranted in his office towards his top reporter, Rita Skeeter.

Rita almost flinched as the man swung his gaze towards her, but she didn’t.

“Harry Potter offered up and interview,” Dunbar continued, “the chance to interview the Saviour, a full disclosure interview and we were passed over for *The Quibbler*!” his eyes, and voice, darkened, “You! This is because of that mess you made two years ago, isn’t it?!”

He didn’t wait for her to answer. “We need to fix this! We need to get an angle on this story somehow. We can’t let *The Quibbler* out scoop of the biggest story!”

“I agree,” Rita nodded, a salacious smirk gracing her face. “And I have an idea.”

“What is it?” Dunbar asked.

“As we’ve already established,” Rita explained, “We’re not going to get an interview from Mr Potter, and I admit that that is partially my fault. However, instead of focusing on the Potter angle, we focus on something else; Albus Dumbledore. Mr Potter made several comments during his interview in regards to Dumbledore. Intentional or not, his words casted a mark on Dumbledore’s ‘pure’ persona. I say we investigate Albus Dumbledore. I believe that there is a major story just waiting to be written if we can find it.”

Dunbar went quiet as he thought of her words. It was true; when he had first read the article, he had been pissed. The first time ever the Boy-Who-Lived gives a willing interview and it wasn’t with them. Of course he knew some blame lied with them, especially Rita and her ways of writing, but still, it was the scoop of the century and they had missed out.

After getting over his anger, he had taken in the article and while had been surprised by the contents, he could admit that there had seemed to something more to the teen’s words. Especially in regards to one Albus Dumbledore. It was as if the teen was firing accusations and placing blame at the old man’s feet. But, the thing of it is, he hadn’t stated the accusations, or the blame out right. Instead, it had been buried in the undertone. You had to read between the lines to see how much he blamed the old man.

The article had, as Rita had said, cast aspersions on Dumbledore’s character; even if no one else had recognized it, it was still there. Apparently, Dumbledore’s supposed Golden Boy wasn’t as enamoured with him as they had thought.

A lot of things that Potter had made mention of in the article were unsettling to read; their Saviour, growing up in a cupboard with magic hating Muggles? Never checked on by the one who placed him there; having to suffer through years of starvation, beatings and neglect.

If the undertones in Potter’s article were real, then Dumbledore had a hand in the boy’s suffering; the article spoke as if Dumbledore knew and deliberately did nothing to stop it. And then, when you add in the school years and everything that happened under the man’s watch. Maybe the old man wasn’t as saintly and pure as he wanted everyone to believe.

Oh yes, Rita was right; there was a story there, and it lied with Albus Dumbledore. So, he gave his head reporter the assignment.
“Do it,” he told her. “Find any and all information you can about Albus Dumbledore. Search deeply into his past; there has to be something there.”

“If there is,” Rita grinned as she stood up. “I’ll definitely find it.”

*Back at Hogwarts*

While Snape was at Malfoy Manor, Harry had decided to go to the library where he knew his friends would be.

As he passed through the hallways, he was aware of the whispers and stares from the other students. He made sure not to focus on any of them, giving the impression that he was ignoring them, when he was really listening.

What he heard, had him smiling, though he kept it to himself. As he entered the library, he took notice of everyone sitting around, including Granger, and the way they looked up at him as he passed.

Ignoring them, he quickly made his way to his secret room. When he entered, he saw the group milling around. He was a little surprised to see Gabriella, but shook it off. The girl had gotten close to the group since school started, and while they didn’t tell her everything, they had included her in enough, and he knew her mind was strong enough to withstand Legilimency from the headmaster. Plus, since she didn’t grow up here, but in America, there was no reason for the Dumbledore to even suspect her of anything.

So, shaking his head, he immediately went over to where Draco was sitting and sat next to him, smiling when the blond shifted closer.

“So, how did it go?” Pansy asked, from her spot on the floor in front of the fireplace.

Harry shook his head, “Just as I thought. I went to see Snape afterwards and told him and he gave a word of warning.”

“What was it?” Cory asked.

“He reminded me that Dumbledore wasn’t a stupid man,” Harry told them, “and that he didn’t get to the position he was in today by being so. The man was as cunning as a Slytherin and smart enough to hide his true persona from the public.”

Blaise nodded, “I believe that.”

Draco looked up at the brunet. After staring at his face for a few minutes, he smirked. “But all that did was serve to give you an idea. What is it?”

Luna grinned. “It’s Slytherin worthy.”

“Well?” Gabriella asked, leaning forward slightly in intrigue. She was completely fascinated by this group of friends, especially Harry, and how their minds worked. To see their actions, or the results of said actions, always left her feeling awed. She knew that the six were very closely and it was an honour to even be in these private meetings and was humbled that they had not only accepted her presence, but had allowed it. A part of her knew that it was because she had been reared in America and not here to be completely influenced by either side, but she didn’t mind.

Harry let out a laugh as he told them his ideas.
“I think it’s bloody brilliant,” Cory nodded, a smile on his face. “It’ll be totally unexpected, but it’ll also push the public opinion of Dumbledore to where we want it; against him.”

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On Monday, two days after The Quibbler interview had been published, the Daily Prophet released its own article.

The Saviour’s Interview: Real or Fake?
by Rita Skeeter

My fellow witch and wizards, two days ago, our counterparts at The Quibbler posted an interview with none other than our own Saviour; Harry Potter. The interview was a shock to us here at The Daily Prophet and we have no doubt it was a shock to everyone else as well.

So, was the interview just a ploy to garner attention from the masses, or was every word he spoke the truth? Either way, it is disturbing. The article comes out after an article written by yours truly was printed. In that article, former friend Ronald Weasley voiced his fears of the Saviour turning dark as he was becoming quite close to Draco Malfoy, son of Lucius Malfoy, supposed Death Eater and a family rumoured to be on the Dark side, as well as his friendship with the former Neville Longbottom, now Corvus LeStrange and the fact that Lucius Malfoy had been given the post of teaching Defence Against the Dark Arts. An article that was printed not without repercussions. [to read on Lord Malfoy’s reaction, go to pg. 4]

Although, I would have to admit that despite whatever issues I had previously had with the Saviour, I do not think he lied. However, with that in mind, the contents of the interview itself does make you wonder. First off let me say this, even I have to admire Mr Potter for his continued friendship with the former Neville Longbottom. That story however, does have me very curious. How did the child end up in the care of the Longbottoms? Did Lady Augusta know that her grandson was not really hers? Lady Augusta could not be reached for comments regarding her thoughts on this situation, but I cannot imagine it was something that was taken quite well. Her grandson instead of being her loving son’s, was in actuality the son of the people who attacked him and his wife. [for more on what happened to Frank and Alice Longbottom, go to pg. 6]

What really happened that night? How did the Longbottoms end up with a LeStrange baby? Is that the real reason why the LeStranges attacked the Longbottom home that fateful night? I am sure I’m not the only one that would love to know the answer to those questions.

But now, to the more intriguing part of Mr Potter’s interview with The Quibbler. The fact that after losing his parents, he was placed with magic hating Muggles. A child of magic being made to live with people who hated the very thing he was? Unbelievable! And then those same magic hating people, forced him to live in a cupboard under the stairs. Not a bedroom, a cupboard. This writer is aghast to learn that a child, more specifically our beloved Saviour was forced to live in a cramped, dark space for close to ten years.

How was this allowed to happen? In his own words, Mr Potter stated that no one checked up on him during his entire time at his relative’s place. The only time someone from the Wizarding World showed an appearance was to bring him to collect his schools supplies and then take him to school. Again, I have to ask, how did this happen? If Albus Dumbledore was the one to place him with his Muggle relatives, why did he not check in on the child every once in a while?

And why would he place him with magic hating Muggles, relatives or not? I would think that he would have researched the family before leaving the then young Mr Potter in their care. And if he had and he still went ahead with the placement, then what does it say about him? What exactly did
he hope to accomplish? Does that mean he was aware of the abuse that Mr Potter suffered through? Did he not care?

The article went on with more disparaging remarks to Dumbledore’s character, calling into question his actions to Harry, which then prompted questions on how if he had made such horrible judgment calls with Harry, then what other mistakes had he made in the past?

Needless to say, it sparked conversations between all the students; while some of the students didn’t believe the article (most of the Gryffindors and some Hufflepuffs) others did and started questioning their Headmaster themselves (the Slytherins, who never really believed in Dumbledore anyways, and Ravenclaw, who were smart enough to accept that what both articles had printed was quite possibly the truth and that maybe Dumbledore was hiding more than he was showing).

For Harry and co. they couldn’t have been more pleased.

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That same night, Albus was preparing to go to The Burrow. An emergency order meeting had been called, as those involved were disturbed by the contents of both articles from the two papers and needed to talk about it.

It was not something that Albus wanted to do, but he knew it was something that needed to be done. The last thing he wanted was for the Order to start questioning him and to resign from the Order.

So, he activated his Floo and quickly stepped in.

When he stepped out, he could hear the talking in the other room from his Order members. The Order of the Phoenix had been forced to find another place for their meetings ever since over the summer, after Sirius’ will reading and the Order’s subsequent eviction from Grimmauld Place.

Of course he had tried to get Potter to allow them to continue to use Grimmauld Place as their Headquarters, but he had had a trying time finding the teen after the will reading. And when he had finally found him, the teen had sent back an owl stating that Sirius had left him a letter explaining that he hadn’t wanted the Grimmauld Place as a use for the Order as it was filled with too many Dark curses and as it was his Godfather’s wish, he was not going to go against it.

‘Once again Black managed to circumvent my plans and I am still no closer to learning as to how or why he suddenly changed,’ Albus fumed as he made his way to where the others were waiting for him.

“Albus/Dumbledore!” echoed from the room the moment he stepped inside.

“Hello everyone,” Albus greeted as he moved to the head front of the room so that everyone could see him and he could see them.

Almost immediately, questions erupted in the room. Everyone wanted to know about the articles and the insinuations that were implied. While no one wanted to believe them, they couldn’t help but to admit that the insinuations were disturbing and almost all of them needed the reassurance that it wasn’t so.

“Quiet!” Albus ordered, without fully raising his voice.

The room went silent.

“Now I understand that you all have concerns,” Albus continued, “but they will not be addressed if
“What exactly is going on Albus?” an Order member called out. “These articles have everyone talking and making speculations.”

“Was The Quibbler telling the truth?” another member asked. “Was Harry Potter really abused?”

“It’s all ridiculous lies!” Molly snapped. She then turned and glared at Albus. “That boy is getting out of control! First he ends his friendship with my Ronny, after everything they’ve been through together and now, he’s going around spreading lies! And I bet it’s those Malfoys and that—that LeStrange boy. He needs to be stopped!”

At her words, a loud growl cut through the cacophony of noise, rendering the entire room silent. All eyes turned to where Remus was sitting next to Bill, who had a grasp on the man’s arm to prevent him from attacking.

“I would appreciate it Mrs Weasley,” Remus growled out, “if you would refrain from speaking about my cub like that.”

Molly actually took a step back at the threat and also from the angry, amber glowing eyes that were trained on her form. She wasn’t the only to move; others had shifted away as they knew that Remus thought of Harry as his cub, and that to a werewolf, nothing was more important. To attack their cub, whether verbally or physically, sent the wolf in a defensive mode.

While Albus appreciated and even agreed with the woman, even he knew it was unwise to wilfully challenge a werewolf over his cub. Remus might be a calm and docile man, but they could not forget that he was still a very dangerous creature.

And he Albus could not afford to lose half his Order members—for he was sure if Remus gave into his wolf, Mrs Weasley would not the only one to suffer—because the woman could not keep her mouth shut. While normally, he would leave her be, this was not the time for it.

“Calm down Molly,” Albus soothed, or tried to anyway.

Molly, confident in the fact that Albus would not allow Remus to attack her, geared back up. “I will not calm down.” She looked over at Remus. “You may not want to hear this, but you will. You have not been around him until this summer, so what do you know? The boy’s always been an attention-seeking liar. And he’s lying again!”

“Funny how he wasn’t an attention-seeking liar when he and Ron were friends,” Bill said, drawing everyone’s attention and shocking his mother into silence as she had never thought anyone would’ve spoken up against her, least of all her eldest.

“As far as I’m concerned,” Bill continued, “Harry was right in ending their friendship.”

“What?” Molly snapped out, glaring at her eldest. Her shock hadn’t lasted long.

“Ron is nothing but a jealous arse,” Bill said, ignoring the way the words made his mother go red with anger, or was that disbelief, or shock again? “He always has been and he always will be. He’s always wanted what other people had and when he didn’t, he threw a bloody tantrum! It’s certainly not Harry’s fault that Ron’s temper, and mouth, was out of control. And what did Ron do when Harry wanted no part in catering to his childish whims and tempers? He decided to talk to the
Prophet and slander Harry’s name, telling everyone he’ll go dark. So of course Harry struck back! He wanted to tell the truth. That boy’s name has been in the papers ever since he returned to our world and it’s been nothing but trouble for him. And he simply had enough.”

“How can you take his side?” Molly demanded, “After the way he treated Ron, after everything they’ve been through!”

Bill glared. “Ron deserved it!”

“What?” Molly was stunned.

“For Merlin’s sake, open your eyes mum!” Bill snapped, entirely done with his mother’s inability to see past the flaws of her youngest son; something that had always bothered him as she never seemed to have a problem to focus on the flaws of her oldest, especially the twins. Percy, unsurprisingly, was the exception.

Deep down, he knew the reason for it. Unlike him, Charlie and the twins—when they were still Weasleys—she could control the other three very easily.

Bill stopped talking and instead, narrowed his eyes at his mother. “Why did the twins disown themselves?”

The change in topic threw not only Molly, but the others as well.

“W-what?” Molly stuttered out.

“You wrote me a while back saying that the twins had disowned themselves,” Bill continued, “I didn’t believe you, but looking at the Family Clock now, I can see you were telling the truth. I never got the opportunity to talk to the twins, but I have it now and I’m asking you. What happened that made the twins turn their back on generations of Weasley family magic and traditions?”

At that point, Albus decided to intervene. If he didn’t, he was sure Molly would reveal something unintentionally and he could not allow that to happen.

“William, Molly, please,” Albus interjected, “perhaps your familial situations would be best placed aside for now. This meeting was called for a reason and we need to address it.”

“What is going on with these articles Albus?” Kingsley Shacklebolt asked.

Albus sighed. “I assure you, I was stunned as well. However, I have spoken to Harry and William is essentially correct. Harry explained to me that he was simply tired of Rita Skeeter and the Prophet slandering his name, so he spoke with Ms Lovegood and asked if her father would be willing to speak with him in an effort to quell the tide of new, and old, rumours created by Ms Skeeter.”

Albus let out a chuckle. “He also apologized for any backlash that may befall upon me, but I assured him that I could handle myself.”

“So what you’re saying is,” Arthur spoke up, “this is all just the reporters taking Harry’s words and twisting them to suit their purposes?”

“Exactly,” Albus nodded. “So, nothing to worry about.”

“So,” Arthur continued, “Harry wasn’t really locked up in a cupboard or anything?”

“Of course not!” Molly snapped at her husband. She was still reeling from the fact that Bill of all
people had talked back to her, almost yelled at her…his mother!

“That part is not a lie,” Remus spoke up. When the other members looked at him, he explained. “It took a little prodding, but I had managed to get Harry to tell me what his childhood was like and he spoke the truth in the interview. In fact, he actually left a few things out.”

“Oh dear Merlin,” an Order member gasped out. “It was true? That boy was starved and beaten?”

“Yes,” Remus nodded, “but, please. Don’t make a big deal out of it. Or rather, not an even bigger deal. I’m sure Harry didn’t tell his story just to gain sympathy points.”

“Remus is correct,” Albus added on, “Harry only wanted the chance for everyone to see that his own life has been far from perfect, but that he is not letting it overrun his future. Instead, he is letting it be used a point of strength.”

Murmurs of appreciation grew from the group, and you could see the respect reflected on almost all of the members.

“So,” Albus looked around the room, “have we cleared up the issues that these articles brought forth?” When there came no dissenting arguments, he continued, “Good. Now, on a different note; you will notice that we are missing a member?”

A few looked around the room and realized that they were indeed missing someone; not just one person though, a few to be honest, although most could be explained away.

“I assume you’re talking about Auror Nymphadora Tonks?” Kingsley asked. He had wondered where his Auror was as he hadn’t seen her in a while.

“That is correct,” Albus nodded, “She is currently doing a mission for me and will be unreachable until it is over. The reason for that being that it is a very sensitive mission and one that cannot afford any distractions as it could prove fatal. Any messages you may have for her, you can pass them to me and I will make sure that she receives them.”

‘This is the only way to stop anyone from questioning her absence. As it is, I have no idea where she is, yet I do believe she has met her demise. How and when still eludes me. But, the longer that knowledge can remain a secret, the better for me,’ Albus thought.

A few nodded their assent and the meeting continued for a short while longer before breaking up. When it was over, everyone headed back to their own place, while Remus decided to head to Hogwarts with Albus to check on Harry. He knew it was a school night, but Moony was agitated, and it had been too long since he set eyes on his cub.

Of course, Albus tried to dissuade him.

“Remus,” the old man stated, “while I understand your concerns,”

“It’s not just concerns Albus,” Remus cut him off. “You know that Moony has claimed Harry as his cub, as it is, with these articles and everyone’s reaction to them, my instincts are telling me to check on my cub.”

Albus frowned. He did not want the man at the school, having any kind of influence of the teen. He was still peeved that Sirius had managed to not only emancipate the boy, but to name Remus as his official legal guardian as well; something that he could no circumvent no matter how hard he tried.

With Harry having complete control and access over his vaults, all monetary gains that he Albus had
made from it was suddenly gone. After the Potters’ demise, he had appointed himself guardian for
the instant access to the Potter wealth. He had used the money to spend on not only himself, but to
support the Order and other things he deemed necessary. But, after that wretched will reading, he
had been unable to continue his habit of siphoning money from the Potter vaults.

And he knew he couldn’t go to the brat as he didn’t want him to know he was taking money from
him; although, he was sure that Lupin and those Weasley twins had told him. Despite that however,
the brat had made no move to ask questions or demand retribution.

‘It appears my hold on him is strong enough that he didn’t even question. He assumed that I was
doing what was right and that all was well. No doubt if I had asked, possibly thrown in guilt about
how the money was helping others, he would’ve given in. Unfortunately, I can’t do that now. The
wolf would be too suspicious.’

“Albus?” Remus spoke up, drawing the man out of his thoughts.

Blue eyes shifted to focus on the younger man in front of him. “Remus, I understand you want to see
Harry, but how would it look if I allowed his guardian on the school grounds just to see him?
Especially since it’s a school night and curfew is very close? Everyone would cry favourite.”

Remus’ eyes narrowed. “That matters not. As you’ve said Albus, I am his legal guardian, and as
such, I do have the right to see him if I so choose, whenever I so choose. And for you to try to deny
me that right…” he trailed off and reigned himself in. He let out a deep sigh. “I’m not trying to cause
trouble Albus. I really am not. With all the accusations flying around with Harry giving this
interview; I just need to know what is going on his mind and how this is all affecting him. I don’t
want to see him going down the wrong path.”

Another sigh.

“I’ll be quick Albus,” Remus added on. “I won’t let him miss curfew.”

Knowing there was nothing else he could do, not without making Remus too suspicious or ending
up on the wolf’s bad side, Albus gave in. “Very well.”

“Thank you,” Remus nodded and quickly proceeded to the Floo. “Headmaster’s office, Hogwarts!”

The man disappeared in a flash of green flames, leaving his old mentor watching his departure.

“Albus?” Molly called as she walked into the room.

“Is there something else Molly?” Albus turned to her.

“The boy needs to be under control Albus,” Molly frowned, “telling all those lies; allowing the
papers to print them. Clearly the effect of that Malfoy and LeStrange boy is to be blamed! We need
to get him away.”

Albus’ patience evaporated just a little. “Maybe if your son had seen fit to hold his tongue and
temper, he would be close enough to influence Harry.”

Molly flinched. She knew Ron had a temper on him; out of all her children, he and Ginny were the
ones to inherit her own temper. It also didn’t help that she doted on her two youngest a bit more than
the others.

Ron had made a colossal mistake when he had attacked the Potter brat, and it had cost them.
“As it is,” Albus continued, drawing the woman’s attention once more. “We should be lucky that despite your son’s blunder and the new influences around him, Harry still holds his faith within me and within our cause.”

He paused. “I would dare to say that cutting all ties with your son has been the best.”

Molly was aghast. “How can you say that?”

“Harry’s relationship with the young Mr Malfoy is beneficiary in that Lucius Malfoy will do anything for his son,” Albus explained. “As a result of this relationship, Draco Malfoy will be influenced to Harry’s side of thinking and as an extension, so will his father. As much as I had hoped to be right, Lucius Malfoy has done nothing suspicious ever since his appointment to the DADA teaching post.”

“What are you saying?” Molly asked in confusion. She couldn’t understand exactly what he was trying to tell her. In fact, she was still kind of reeling from him saying that it was Ron’s fault and that Harry ending their friendship was a good thing.

She couldn’t see that. She’s already lost the twins to the Potter brat, plus the dissolution of the marriage contract between Harry and Ginny that would’ve secured them to wealth.

“With Harry influencing young Draco,” Albus clarified. “Lucius will have no choice but to do what is best for his son.”

Although she understood what he was saying, Molly wasn’t too appeased by his words.

“If that is all,” Albus said. “I must be returning to the school.”

Without waiting for a response, he activated the Floo and disappeared.

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Remus quickly moved through the halls, making his way to Gryffindor Tower. He was a little anxious to see his cub as he hadn’t set eyes on him since they had returned to school.

When he got to the portrait entrance, he asked the Fat Lady to let Harry know that he was outside and within minutes, the entrance was opening, his cub coming through.

“Remus,” Harry grinned as he stepped into Remus’ arms for a quick hug. “What are you doing here?”

Remus returned the grin as he released the teen. “Checking on you I suppose. Those articles have everyone talking and I wanted to see how it was affecting you. How are you holding up?”

Harry cocked his head slightly. “I’m good.” He gave a one-shouldered shrug. “I mean, all things considered, it could be worse, right?”

Remus nodded. He then looked around. “We’ll have to talk more, when it’s not so,”

Harry grinned in understanding. Whatever Remus wanted to tell him, he couldn’t really do it here where the walls could hear. “I get it. This is a school and privacy can only be so much.”

“Exactly,” Remus smiled and pulled him into another hug. “It was good to see you cub.”

“Same Remus,” Harry replied as he breathed in the scent of his guardian. “I’ll see you later?”
“Owl me sometime,” Remus answered, “let me know how you’re doing and we can set up a time to meet during one of your Hogsmeade trips.”

“Sounds good,” Harry smiled as he released the man. “Goodnight Remus.”

“Night cub,” Remus said and he watched the teen go before he himself turned away and hurried down the hall to the stairs. There was one other person he needed to see.

A short time later, he arrived at his destination. He gave three quick knocks on the door and waited.

When the door opened, he gave a nod and then spoke. “Professor Malfoy, I would like to speak to regarding your son’s relationship with Harry. If you do not mind?”

Lucius regarded the man in front of him coolly, before slowly stepping back, allowing him entrance.

The moment the door closed behind Remus, Lucius threw up powerful locking, silencing and warding charms.

“Not that I don’t appreciate seeing you,” Lucius commented as he walked over to his lover, “but what are you doing here?”

Remus raised an eyebrow. “What? No kiss?”

Letting out a chuckle, Lucius reached out and pulled the younger man to him. The blond leaned in, until there was only mere millimetres separating their lips and breathed out, letting his breath caress Remus’ lips. Tilting his head, he pressed and nosed alongside Remus’ chin until he got to his neck.

There, his tongue slipped out and teased along and around his lover’s pulse point, sending shivers through the younger man.

“Lucius,” Remus breathed out, his eyes darkening steadily with arousal.

Lucius’ lips joined his tongue and he sucked and licked Remus’ pulse point, as if he was giving it a French kiss. When he felt Remus’ grip tighten even more and his hips start to thrust, he pulled back with a satisfied grin.

“There is your kiss,” Lucius purred and stepped back, fully disentangling himself from his lover.

Remus glared at the blond. “You’re a damn tease Lucius Malfoy!”

“Ah,” Lucius grinned, “but you do enjoy it so. Now, will you care to explain your presence?”

Remus sighed and reigned in his arousal. “There was an emergency Order meeting tonight, and I needed to see Harry, and you I suppose.”

“I feel blessed,” Lucius deadpanned and then gestured for the other man to sit down.

Remus chuckled as he took the offered seat.

“So the Old Fool called a meeting, did he?” Lucius inquired.

“I think it was more like his followers were disturbed by the articles by The Quibbler and Daily Prophet and they needed answers or explanations,” Remus told him and then he proceeded to recant the entire meeting.

Lucius was silent for a while. “The ramblings of Molly Weasley have never surprised me. I do
suspect however that she was surprised by the fact that her eldest stood against her and came to Harry’s defence.”

Remus chuckled. “She was. I think it was the first time I saw her shocked and speechless.”

Lucius hummed. “Have you eaten as of yet?”

“I’ve had dinner,” Remus replied, “but I don’t mind eating once more with you. And I have not had dessert.”

“Very well,” Lucius gave a nod and then summoned an elf, and ordered dinner, and dessert, for the both of them.

The two settle in to eat and their conversation consists of Lucius’ teaching and how everything is going with both sides of the war and their hopes for the future.

The air was comfortable and welcoming as they enjoyed just being in each other’s presence. All too soon it seemed, the dinner—and dessert—was over and it was time for Remus to leave.

“Well I must be on my way,” Remus said as he stood up.

“Must you leave so soon?” Lucius asked as he followed his lover.

“I do believe if I stay any longer,” Remus mused, a grin playing on his lips, “then Albus will be suspicious of me, if he isn’t already by my already prolonged presence. And the last thing we need is for him to be suspicious.”

Lucius knew he was right, but that didn’t mean he liked it. “Very well. If you insist on leaving.”

Remus rolled his eyes at the elder blond’s tone. Instead of replying verbally, he grabbed Lucius and pulled the man to his body and kissed him.

Lucius immediately responded, pulling Remus even closer to his body as he deepened the kiss. Keeping his hold on his lover, Lucius walked them forwards until Remus’ back was pressed against the door.

Remus moaned into the kiss, shifting his grip when he felt his back hit the door. His legs fell open, allowing the older man to settle more firmly onto him.

Their hardening cocks rubbed together, the sensations pulling a low growl from Remus and a moan from Lucius.

Holding Remus against the door, one of Lucius’ hands drifted over his body until it reached his groin and he gently, but firmly, cupped the hardened length he could feel beneath the layers.

Remus tore his head from the kiss to let out a loud moan. “Lucius…”

He could the intense pleasure dancing through his veins and he knew that he was only a short time away from completely giving in to his urges to rut and mate.

But he couldn’t.

So, with extreme great reluctance, he pulled away from Lucius’ touch and firmly pushed the blond away to create distance between them. When he looked up at his lover, a whine slipped past his lips at the sight of the normally light grey eyes darkened, and cheeks flushed, with arousal.
“Why did you stop me?” Lucius demanded, his eyes scanning Remus’ body. He made a move to step forward once again to finish what he had started. His body was aching with the need to claim his lover, to have him beneath him crying out his name in pleasure.

Remus held out a hand to stop the other man’s advances. He needed to clear his mind and having Lucius touch him right now, would not do that. “I stopped us because I need to leave. We do not need Albus knowing of our relationship until it is time to reveal to him; at the time of his demise.”

Lucius stepped forward once again, ignoring Remus’ outstretched hand, and moved close enough to rest his forehead against his lover’s. “I very much dislike the fact that you are correct.”

“In this instance,” Remus grinned, “So do I.”

Lucius leaned in and kissed him. Once. Twice. And then pulled back with a sigh as he removed the wards and unlocked the door. “Go. Before I change my mind.”

Giving his blond love one last kiss, Remus opened the door and quickly slipped out, letting it close gently behind him.

Shaking his head, he turned to leave. He had just left the hallway that led to the dungeons when he was stopped by the last person he wanted to see.

“Remus, you are still here?” Albus questioned as his blue eyes caught the other man. His gaze moved from Remus to behind him, to the entrance leading to the dungeons.

‘Why would he be coming from the direction? I know for a fact Harry is up in Gryffindor Tower, and the portraits told me the two spoke briefly and then Remus left.’

Remus held back his groan. The very thing he had been trying to avoid happened anyways.

“Yes I am Albus,” Remus nodded. “However, I was just leaving.”

Albus took a step towards the man. “I thought you wanted to speak to Harry?”

“I did,” Remus said.

“Then why are you coming from the directions of the dungeons?” Albus inquired.

“I needed to speak to Lucius Malfoy,” Remus explained, “These articles really had Moony agitated, which is one reason why I needed to talk to Harry. But, even after, he was still agitated, so I decided to speak with Lord Malfoy. As Harry is dating his son, I needed to know that my cub was completely safe.” He paused.

“And what was Lucius’ response?” Albus asked.

Remus looked thoughtful. “It was…not what I had expected. I daresay, Harry’s relationship with the young Malfoy, I believe it has an effect on Lucius Malfoy.”

That made Albus curious. “How so?”

“Well,” Remus said, “when I questioned him, he was more open to answer than I expected. He seemed calmer, more…I don’t know, but he’s different. I think the fact that Harry is with his son, is influencing him in a way no one saw.” He looked up his former mentor. “He’s not the same man he was before.”

Although unexpected, the words pleased Albus greatly. It was what he had hoped for when he and
Harry had first spoken at the start of the school term; that Harry’s presence in Draco Malfoy’s life would influence the elder Malfoy and possibly, over time, sway him from Riddle’s side.

“What brought you to that conclusion?” Albus asked.

Remus grinned. “Moony could sense it. All he got from Lucius was a sense of calm and near-peace. It’s the reason why I was not afraid of being in Lucius’ presence. Moony sensed no intent to harm me, nor any lies when I questioned him on his thoughts of Draco and Harry’s relationship.”

Suddenly, Remus brought his wrist up. “Ah, I’m sorry Albus, but I must be going. I’ve already stayed here longer than I expected.”

“It’s alright,” Albus smiled, his blue eyes twinkling as he gave nod. “If what you say is true about Lucius, then I do believe it would do no harm for me to speak to him, give him options other than those he may currently have.”

‘Good luck with that Old Man. You may have options, but Lucius is not as gullible as you perceive him to be of late.’

“Have a good night Albus,” Remus said.

“You as well,” Albus replied and turned and headed back to his office.

Remus watched him go, his amber eyes glowing briefly. ‘Your end is near Albus; the time is coming when you will pay for everything you have done. And you will not be expecting the direction the blow will fall from.’

With a smirk worthy of a Slytherin on his face, Remus left the castle.

Chapter End Notes

A/N 2: and that’s the chapter! Yay! lol. Sorry…I just thoroughly enjoyed writing this chapter. So what did you guys think? Now, some of you may think they are getting away with too much, but, remember Voldemort’s words to Snape; Dumbledore’s arrogance and ego knows no bounds. He honestly believes that he has control over everything that the thought of Harry, or any of the others, betraying him will not register. Even if it did, for a fleeting moment, his arrogance will wipe it away because he fully believes they are on his side and his control over them is so strong and also that he’d see a betrayal coming (never mind that he didn’t see Sirius’). As Voldemort said, it will happen because Dumbledore is not expecting it to happen so therefore, he will be caught extremely off guard when he finally figures it out and by then, it’ll be too late for him to do anything. As for the final showdown, please remember that in this story, everyone—especially Harry—is using their Slytherin side. So this will be a Slytherin battle and victory and not a Gryffindor one; it will not be like canon.

A/N 3: The second part to this chapter, things really progress even more. I think, if I’m counting right, that there’s only about 2 or 3 chapters left; 2 and then an epilogue or maybe 3 and then an epilogue…though it’s looking more like 2 and then an epilogue…we’ll see…
The Middle of The End Part Two

Chapter Notes

A/N: here is the new chapter. Hope you guys like it. This chapter contains mostly articles, ones that reveal a lot, and the reactions to said articles. Also, I am so, so, so sorry for the very long wait you guys had to endure.

Disclaimer: I own nothing…if I did, Ginny would have died in the CoS, Dumbledore would have choked on his lemon drops and Harry would have stood up for himself against Molly and Dumbledore.

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“Talking”
Thinking'
|Hedwig’s mental speak|
|Harry’s mental speak|
Letter or commentary/introduction and flashback
~…~ indicates scene change

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Last time on RDA:

“Have a good night Albus,” Remus said.

“You as well,” Albus replied and turned and headed back to his office.

Remus watched him go, his amber eyes glowing briefly. ‘Your end is near Albus; the time is coming when you will pay for everything you have done. And you will not be expecting the direction the blow will fall from.’

With a smirk worthy of a Slytherin on his face, Remus left the castle.

It’s been two weeks since his interview with The Quibbler, and Harry decided it was time to implement the next part of his plan.

It started with another letter to Luna’s dad.

So that Saturday morning, he sent out a letter with Hedwig to Xenophilius, requesting another interview. It hadn’t taken long for the man to agree.

Hedwig had returned later when the group were all sitting around in Harry’s private room in the library.
“What is it?” Gabriella asked after Harry took the letter from his bird.

“What’s Luna’s dad’s response?” Harry told her. “I asked him if he wanted to do another interview. He agreed.”

“And what’s this one going to be about?” Blaise raised an eyebrow, “After the last article, you gave us some ideas of what you planned next, but nothing too detailed.”

“Oh come on,” Cory injected before Harry could reply to Blaise, “You’ve got to admit that it’s so much fun reading the interview and finding out what Harry said with everyone else. Plus it makes it seem like we ourselves had no idea what’s going on.”

“And we get to see the look on everyone’s faces,” Draco pointed out as well, “including the Old Coot’s. Speaking of which, why do I get the feeling that somehow this is going to throw him in even more bad light?”

“Because you’re smart,” Harry grinned as he gave the blond a quick kiss.

The blond rolled his eyes but a smile still persisted on being on his face. “Well of course I am; especially enough to know you’re trying to deflect.”

Draco’s words brought chuckles from everyone, yet Harry still didn’t answer.

“So when are you seeing father?” Luna asked.

“Now,” Harry told her, “figured I’d go and give the interview this morning and tell him that it doesn’t have to be rushed like the last one. He can print it this afternoon or tomorrow if he wanted.”

“So are you really not going to give us more details on what the article is going to be about?” Pansy asked.

Harry looked at them and then smiled. “Alright, I’ll tell you a little.”

“Go on then,” Blaise nodded, as eager as the others to get a little insight.

“Ever since I stepped foot in this school,” Harry explained, “there have been all sort of rumours flying around, especially about a lot of things that has happened here. So, what this interview is going to be about is basically an insight into what really happened every year since my first year.”

The realization took just minutes to dawn on the group.

“You’re going to give Luna’s dad a true exclusive,” Cory said, “you’re going to tell him everything; dispel the rumours once and for all.”

Harry grinned, “Yep.”

“And the truth,” Draco picked up, “will only shed the Old Fool in more bad light.”

“Exactly,” Harry nodded, his green eyes flashing with delight.

Gabriella looked intrigued. “Now I’m really curious to read this article. I want to know what really happened the last five years as it seems to be something that was very interesting.”

“Oh it really is,” Luna smiled, “there was a troll, a basilisk, a werewolf, a tournament and then a bitch, but the bitch got dealt with this summer.”
Gabriella’s eyes went wide. “Are you serious?”

“Very,” Cory shook his head with a smile then shifted to look at Harry. “You do know that there is a possibility that the moment this article is out, the moment Dumbledore reads it, he’ll realize what you’re doing?”

“And he might try to discredit you,” Blaise added. “Try to make it seem like you’ve turned to the dark side. Something that would be possible, especially if he has the rest of the Weasley family supporting him.”

At the words, Draco turned and raised an eyebrow in Harry’s direction. “That’s your plan, isn’t it? You’re going to spill the truth about the last five years, knowing that it will cast Dumbles into more bad light.”

Pansy’s brows furrowed. “But if that is the case, then wouldn’t that make Dumbledore suspicious of Harry’s plans?”

Draco nodded, not once taking his eyes off of his boyfriend, “That’s exactly what he wants. The old man will retaliate and you want that to happen because you already have something in mind as a response to his retaliation.”

Harry’s grin was positively devious. “And that’s why you’re the Prince of Slytherin. Your mind works fast.”

“Wait,” Gabriella looked between the two boys. “He’s right?”

“Wait and see,” Harry grinned as he threw the girl a look before turning his attention his bird.

“Allright Hedwig,” Harry said. Hedwig flew to land on her master’s shoulder. “Directly to Luna’s dad.”

With a soft trill, the two flashed out of the room.

Gabriella stared at the spot Harry had been at for a few minutes.

“Gabriella?” Blaise called out, seeing the intense expression on the girl’s face.

“He’s really dangerous, isn’t he?” the girl commented, turning to look at the others.

“He’s really dangerous, isn’t he?” the girl commented, turning to look at the others.

“People underestimate him all the time,” Cory replied with a shake of his head, “It makes it easy for him to do what he wants, to let his Slytherin side come out and play because no one will expect it.”

“It’s even better because he’s never done that before,” Draco added on. “He’s spent the last five years pretending to be a good little Lion so no one ever realized he was actual capable of having Slytherin tendencies.”

“Only because they didn’t want to see,” Luna smiled, “if you think back, there were times when his Slytherin side came into play.”

Cory nodded in agreement with his girlfriend’s words. “You’re right; there had been times when he acted more Slytherin than Gryffindor. I’m surprised no one else realized it, especially Granger considering she spent so much time acting as if she ruled his life. Both her and Weasley.”

Blaise let out a snort, “Merlin that boy was possessive of Harry.”

“You have no idea,” Cory shook his head. “It was like since he was Harry’s friend first, and it was
he and Granger that went through everything with him then the two of them, but he especially, had a claim to Harry.”

“And they never suspected he was more dark than light?” Gabriella questioned.

“No,” Pansy said, “but then again, none of us suspected either.”

“I think it was more that they were too close to realize the truth,” Cory said, “and also because we all had preconceived notions of each other. I mean, we expected Draco and the other Slytherins to act like mean and complete gits because it’s all you hear about Slytherins.”

“And in reverse,” Draco picked up, “everyone, not just us Slytherins, expected the Saviour/Boy-Who-Lived to be the ultimate Gryffindor. I mean, imagine; the son of James and Lily Potter, dark? No way.”

“So he’s always been dark?” Gabriella questioned, “It wasn’t just something that happened this year?”

“Oh yes,” Luna answered with a smile. “Our Harry has been dark long before he ever came to Hogwarts. He became very good at hiding his true self as at the time, it was something he had to do. He recognized early on the machinations of the Headmaster and kept his true core hidden.”

“And then Sirius died,” Cory picked up, “that was basically the turning point for Harry.”

“His interview,” Gabriella said, “in his last interview, he said his godfather’s death was like a switch flipped and it made him change.”

“His godfather was his reason to stay to the Light,” Blaise said, “but when he died, he no longer had a reason to keep fighting for them, especially after the realization he had had.”

“Which turned out to be good a thing,” Pansy added on, “not disregarding his godfather’s death, but if he hadn’t died, nothing that happened would’ve happened. All of us wouldn’t be sitting here right now.”

They all went quiet as they let Pansy’s words sink in. She was right. As tragic as Sirius’ death was, as horrible as it was for Harry to lose his godfather, if he hadn’t, then none of them would be here together; they wouldn’t be friends and everything that had happened, wouldn’t have.

The topic of conversation soon shifted though, and their talk drifted off into more pleasant things.

Not half an hour later, Harry returned.

“So how’d it go?” Cory asked.

“Splendid,” Harry replied with a smile as he retook his seat.

Hedwig rubbed her head against his cheek before flashing out of the room.

“I told him no rush,” Harry continued. “So the paper’s probably not going to come out until tomorrow. Hopefully, it’s during breakfast.”

“Well I for one cannot wait,” Pansy mused, with the others offering up their own agreements.

“You guys know there’s a Hogsmeade weekend coming up?” Blaise questioned. “I think it’s around the nineteenth; so, about two weeks from now.”
The conversations dissolved into plans as for that, especially after realizing that Gabriella had never been.

~…~

The next morning (Sunday, October 6th) the Great Hall was almost completely packed as everyone settled in for breakfast.

There were a few conversations around as it was Sunday morning and most everyone wanted the place to stay as quiet and peaceful as possible, so as it was, the students were surprised and confused to see the flurry of owls heading towards them.

Excited whispers broke out however, as they started to remember the last time this happened, it had been about Harry’s first consensual interview; an interview that had sent shock throughout the school and left them talking for days, so they hoped—even if they would never admit it—that this paper had another interview and one that had more interesting information.

They were not disappointed.

The Truth Behind the Rumours
by: Xenophilius Lovegood

Just two weeks ago, Mr Potter sat down with us and opened up about his relationships with the people in his life, as well as an insight into what his home life was really like. And it was an insight that was shocking as it was humbling. To get such an exclusive to not only his radical change but his childhood life as well was extremely. That exclusive however, made me think on the last five years; five years where rumours ran rampant, and all of it surrounding our very own Mr Potter.

Bolstered by our last meeting, I decided to reach out and see if Mr Potter would be willing to do another interview. An interview that would possibly explain the rumours that we as a society has heard. Such was, was there really a possessed professor? What really happened during the Tri-Wizard Tournament?

All these questions, all these rumours, could only be answered by the one person immersed in the middle; Mr Potter himself. As Mr Potter is still a student, we did not feel completely comfortable with pulling him out of the school just to answer some questions to satisfy our curiosity, no matter how strong the curiosity was. Instead, we decided to owl Mr Potter the questions and the answers he gave in return, if he chose to, we would print them as is.

Was there really a Troll loose in the school? And what of the fabled Chamber Secrets? Read on to find out the truth behind those infamous Hogwarts Rumours.

The Quibbler: Mr Potter, we are delighted that you once again chose us to be the one you gave this exclusive interview to.

Harry Potter: No problem. Like I told you last time, I didn’t trust The Daily Prophet and if I liked how the interview with us went, I’d be willing to work with you in the future. I liked how it went, so here we are.

The Quibbler: Very well then. Was there really a Troll in the school? And more importantly, the rumour about the then Defence Against the Dark Arts professor being possessed by You-Know-Who, how true was that?
Yes there really was a Troll in the school and the rumour about a professor possessed by Voldemort was true as well. During Halloween that year, a Troll was somehow released into the school. It was released by the same professor who was possessed by Voldemort.

How did that professor get that Troll into the school and how did no one realize what he was doing?

Well, it was done during the feast and usually, all the professors, the headmaster included, are at the feast. It was the perfect opportunity really. Other than that, I honestly don’t know how he managed to not only get the Troll inside, but it made its way from the dungeons with no one reporting it. I mean, with all the portraits, we didn’t know about the Troll until Professor Quirrell came bursting into the Hall to tell everyone.

That is truly a question to which I would be interested in knowing the answer. But that brings me to the other point; how exactly was the professor possessed and yet no one realized? Wouldn’t a possession be easy to spot? How did this man get away with teaching our children for an entire year being possessed by You-Know-Who? How is that Albus Dumbledore, as powerful and as perceptive as claimed, was not able to tell that the professor was possessed by the Dark Lord himself?

It’s such a coincidence though that Voldemort chose that year to possess Quirrell.

Why do you say that?

Well because, not only was that my first year, but it turned out there was something that was hidden at the school that Voldemort wanted. The Philosopher’s Stone.

The rumoured creation of famed alchemist Nicholas Flamel that would give the drinker eternal life? The stone that was kept at Gringotts and then rumoured to be stolen. If You-Know-Who was after the stone, a stone that was highly sought after and dangerous, then why was it hidden in a school full of children? And who hid it there?

That is indeed a coincidence Mr Potter and it does raise questions. One of which I have to ask. How is it that you, as an eleven year old, find yourself fighting against You-Know-Who?

Well it wasn’t just not. Not really. At the time, I had Hermione Granger and Ronald Weasley. The night Quirrell went after the Stone, was the same night Dumbledore was called away from the school. We figured out that with Dumbledore’s absence, Quirrell would make a move and he did, so we did as well.

We got past the guard dog, escaped the Devil’s Snare, played against a giant Wizard’s Chest and then by luck only one of us could go on, what with Weasley being injured, so Granger decided to stay back with him and I went on.

I faced Quirrell, we fought over the Stone and then, by some luck, I won. I don’t know what happened at that point as I passed out, but I assumed that Dumbledore found me. It was funny though, all the obstacles to stop Quirrell and three first years got through them.

Anyways, we saved the Stone and then, we went to the closing feast. Dumbledore couldn’t
exactly tell the rest of the students what had happened, so instead, he just gave us House points as a reward for bravery to the school or something.

The last point brought a laugh to him, but it made me think. This Stone, this coveted and dangerous artefact, was not only hidden in a school full of children, but the safeguards were enough for three eleven year olds to pass. Well if that was case, then no wonder it was easy for Quirrell to get through. If I didn’t know better, I’d swear the safeguards were more for the first years than to actually stop Quirrell. Almost as if someone wanted to test their knowledge, or strength.

And not only did the three first years face You-Know-Who, but in the aftermath, they were left to deal with the trauma themselves. How was it possible that the Headmaster did not bring in a mind healer to speak to these kids to make sure that they were ok? Did no one speak to any of them?

By Mr Potter’s own accounts, he along with two other students, faced down a professor possessed by You-Know-Who, suffered through terror and yet, no one spoke to them. Instead, the Headmaster rewarded with food and House points and then sent on their merry way.

How was that possible?

Now, I was even more intrigued to know the truth about the other events that happened over the years. Continuing with the infamous Chamber of Secrets.

_The Quibbler:_ Your second year of school brought up past rumours of the Chamber of Secrets and the possible monster hiding there. What can you tell me about that?

_Harry Potter:_ Well, there was a Chamber of Secrets, and it was housing a, well I guess some people would call it a monster. The magical creature it was home to was a basilisk.

_The Quibbler:_ A basilisk? One of the most dangerous magical creatures to exist, and also one of the rarest.

_Harry Potter:_ Yep. The basilisk lived within the Chamber. And not just any basilisk either. Apparently it was the pet of Salazar Slytherin. No one believed that the Chamber of Secrets was real, after all, it hadn’t been found in about fifty years at that point, so it had been reduced to a myth. But yet, students and pets and ghosts kept getting petrified.

And then Hermione Granger figured out not only what the supposed monster was, but exactly how it was moving around without being seen. I figured out that the last victim was Moaning Myrtle, the ghost that haunts the girls’ abandoned second floor bathroom and she was the one to direct us to where it was. I told the professors and I was told to show our Defence professor at the time, Lockhart, where it was since he claimed to be able to defeat it.

Ronald Weasley, Professor Lockhart and I found the Chamber, but due to unforeseen circumstances, Lockhart and Weasley weren’t able to continue with me. I found the basilisk and after a short skirmish, I killed it; stabbed it through the mouth and into its brain with the sword of Gryffindor that Fawkes [Dumbledore’s phoenix] brought to me. Of course I got injured, but Fawkes healed me.

We ended up saving Ginny Weasley, as a message had been left that she was down there, and we escaped the Chamber using Fawkes. The petrified students recovered and we all enjoyed the closing feast, celebrating their return as well as the fact that the Chamber was now defunct.
I was completely stunned at this point. This young man just revealed that at the age of twelve, he fought and killed a grown basilisk. A creature that is not only extremely dangerous, but one that even the most hardened and experienced Aurors would have problems with. And how was it possible that a twelve year old was able to figure out what was happening, figure out not only what the creature was and how it was getting around but where it was also, but no one else could?

How did no other professor manage this? And where was Dumbledore during all of this?

And another point; Gilderoy Lockhart was the Defence Against the Dark Arts professor that year. The same Gilderoy Lockhart who ended up in St Mungo’s and the same Lockhart who turned out to be a complete fraud. And that begs the question; when they hired the man for the position, did anyone actually do any research on who he was and the things he claimed he did? Or did they just accept everything at face value? [for more on Gilderoy Lockhart, go to pg. 7]

And once again, none of the professors thought that perhaps that students that had been petrified, or the school as a whole, needed a mind healer to help them cope with the trauma of that year? And if there were signs throughout the year, then why was no Aurors brought in, or why weren’t the students sent home until such a time it was deemed that the danger had past? Unbelievable.

I now find my curiosity has risen as the urge to know the truth behind the rumours concerning the remaining previous three years.

The Quibbler: I’m almost afraid to ask, considering what your first two years of school was like, but, what about your third year? That was the year Sirius Black escaped from Azkaban to come after you?

Harry Potter: Yes and no. Sirius did escape from Azkaban, but it wasn’t because he was out to get me. See, before Sirius escaped, he had a visitor; former Minister for Magic Cornelius Fudge. During the visit, Fudge had with him a copy of the Daily Prophet and on the cover of the copy was a photo of the Weasley family having a celebration. In the photo, the youngest Weasley son, Ronald, held a pet rat in his hands. Unbeknownst to anyone, the rat was actually Peter Pettigrew in his Animagus form.

The Quibbler: Sorry to interrupt, but Peter Pettigrew? The man that was killed that fateful Halloween night?

Harry Potter: Sirius never killed him. Pettigrew lied and then staged his own death and Sirius got blamed for it. See, Sirius recognized the rat and he realized that my person who betrayed my parents was still alive and even worse, would be at Hogwarts where I would be, and that’s what prompted him to escape Azkaban. He wanted to protect me and make the bastard pay for what he did.

The Quibbler: What exactly did he do?

Harry Potter: Well, many think that Sirius betrayed my parents, but he didn’t. He was never a Death Eater, and he wasn’t the Secret Keeper that night either. He had managed to convince my parents to switch to Pettigrew, after all, who would ever expect them to use Peter Pettigrew of all people? Hardly anyone knew about the change. Pettigrew was a Death Eater though and he was the one to betray my parents. So, third year, Sirius realized Pettigrew was at the school and he came there. Everything that happened, it wasn’t because he was trying to kill me, but because he was trying to get to Pettigrew.
I want to comment, but my infernal curiosity is too persistent to get the rest of the stories.

**The Quibbler:** And your fourth year? That was the Tri-Wizard Tournament.

**Harry Potter:** Yes it was. When the announcement came, I was happy because I thought to myself, finally I can be out of the spotlight. Yeah right. *(he chuckles)* Somehow, despite the fact that the Headmaster had used his own magic to create an age line around the Goblet, one that prevented anyone under the age of seventeen, someone was able to enter my name. So I was chosen, which, now that I think about it, was kind of weird. I mean, when a professor ordered the choosing to be redone, it was told that that couldn’t happen as the Goblet wouldn’t relight again until the end of the tournament. So, what if someone was wrongfully entered? What if a person who was, say, twelve or thirteen, had been entered?

Anyways, the Tournament happened and at the end, both Cedric and I tied for the cup. The cup turned out to be a portkey to Voldemort’s hideaway. Unfortunately, Cedric was killed and Voldemort was resurrected. He then called his Death Eaters to his side to show them that he had returned. During all of that, I managed to call the portkey back to me and escaped with Cedric’s body.

Back at Hogwarts, I told everyone what had happened and that Voldemort was back, but no one believed me. Interestingly enough, initially besides Dumbledore, only one other person did. Alastor Moody, or rather Barty Crouch, Jr who was impersonating him using Polyjuice. Turns out it was Barty who had entered my name in the tournament and who turned the winning cup into a portkey.

Fudge had Barty kissed before he could answer any questions. Which leads into fifth year. That summer, the *Daily Prophet*, with the blessing of Fudge, really tore into me. Since Fudge refused to believe that Voldemort had returned, he instead used the paper to make me look like I was crazy. That I was just making stories up to rile up everyone and be against the Ministry. It’s why his Undersecretary at the time, Delores Umbridge, sent Dementors after me. And when I tried to defend myself, I was summoned to a trial, where surprise, Umbridge was presiding over.

Dumbledore showed up, the trial was dismissed and I was let go. I had thought everything was over, but lo and behold, school started and who turned out to be the new DADA professor? Delores Umbridge. The woman was a right menace and should not have been at the school. We never learned anything and we were basically forced into some twisted form of subservience due to the asinine rules she kept making up and enforcing. Because I’m Harry Potter and at the time I was Fudge’s number threat, she had it out for me. I was given detentions for the silliest of things. And it wasn’t any regular detention either; she forced me to write lines using a Blood Quill, and I’m sure I wasn’t the only student who had to suffer through that.

Since she wasn’t teaching us anything, we were forced to form our study group. It was a success, however, it didn’t last. She forced another student to reveal the location and then she proceeded to give everyone detention where we were punished to write lines using once again Blood Quills.

And if that wasn’t bad enough, she almost used the Cruciatius Curse on me. I honestly don’t
know if Fudge had sanctioned her use of it, but considering he was the one to have her there in the first place...

And then, at the end of the school year, I lost my godfather.

The Quibbler: You have been through a lot, haven’t you Mr Potter? More so than anyone should have to go through, especially someone your age. And yet, despite all of that, you have still managed to be a well-adjusted young man, with a good head on his shoulders and a firm grasp of how life works and what you yourself want from life.

Harry Potter: Well, I suppose I have gone through a lot, but I stopped focusing on that aspect of it. If I did, I would be completely overwhelmed and I’d probably break. I’ve accepted that my life hasn’t always been easy, and in some ways, it’s made me a better person. One of my closest friends loves to say that everything happens for a reason and I believe her. Maybe I was meant to go through all of that, to appreciate and understand the rest of my life.

The Quibbler: That is a very mature response and outlook Mr Potter. And while I feel deep sympathy over everything you had to experience, I cannot help but to admire the strength you had to actually go through it all and I wish you all the best on your future endeavours.

Harry Potter: Thank you.

The Quibbler: Well, once again, thank you Mr Potter, for agreeing to this interview. And I do hope that you continue to choose us in the future.

Harry Potter: I think I probably always will. Have a blessed day.

And that concluded our interview. As stated earlier, everything you’ve just read was the truth. However, I am completely shocked by the revelations. Just what exactly has been going on at Hogwarts these last five years? And I say the last five years as it seemed as if everything coincided with Mr Potter’s return to the Wizarding World.

It is not a secret that this young man has been through a lot. More than anyone else should have to go through and he has survived it all. He fought against a Troll and a teacher possessed by You-Know-Who, he killed the Basilisk that resided in the infamous Chamber of Secrets, he learned the truth surrounding his parents’ death, he was the youngest competitor in the Tri-Wizard Tournament and won, only to be witness to the death of a classmate [for more on Cedric Diggory, go to pg 8]

He suffered through a year of having the late Delores Umbridge as a professor, and to top it all off, he lost his godfather. He has survived against what seems insurmountable odds and is stronger as a result and that in and of itself demands our respect and sympathies.

However, this interview may have provided answers to questions we have needed for so long, and yet, it produced its own set of questions as well. As we’ve asked earlier, how was Quirrell, possessed by You-Know-Who able to spend an entire year around the students? Did none of the professors suspect anything? Albus Dumbledore has been renowned as a wizard that is hard to fool and yet, he himself was.

And then again in second year, a twelve year old was able to figure out the truth of the Chamber of Secrets and none of the professors could. Dumbledore is known to all as the man who knows everything that happens within that school and yet, he had no knowledge of this?
Despite it being the year Sirius Black escaped from Azkaban and attacked the school in search of former friend Peter Pettigrew, a then unknown Death Eater, Mr Potter’s third year of school seems to be the easiest of them all.

Which brings us to fourth year and that Tri-Wizard Tournament. Once again, Death Eater was teaching our children. This time, through using Polyjuice to impersonate someone else. And not just a random person. No, the Death Eater Polyjuiced himself into Alastor Moody. What makes this little titbit so disconcerting is not the fact that Alastor was an Auror, but rather, Albus Dumbledore himself claims to have known the man for generous amount of years, with their friendship being rather strong and yet, in all the time I’m sure the Headmaster spent in the presence of the Polyjuiced man, he did not notice anything out of the ordinary?

Even if the Polyjuice had been successful, I am sure there are certain nuances that a person has, nuances that would easily be recognized by someone who has known the other for years and would notice if those subtle nuances were suddenly not present. Or if new characteristics presented themselves.

But what really left me reeling about that year was the fact that an under-aged child was allowed to compete in such a dangerous and life-threatening tournament. It is understood that the Goblet would not have been relit until the tournament was over, and yet, I find that distracting. That was not the first time that tournament had taken place and yet, no precautions were made for a scenario such as that? By that reasoning then, someone could have entered the name of an eleven year old and that child would have been forced to compete. I find that very hard to believe!

And the final point to touch on. Delores Umbridge. Now, you may recall that the woman was found dead early September. A murder that has been unsolved to this day. At the time, through all the curiosity surrounding her death, it was the message written on her cheek that seemed to generate the most.

This vile woman was punished because of her crimes against children and werewolves

And now that message is understood just a bit more. During her reign as DADA professor, it seems as if the late Umbridge used her position as a means to exact petty revenge on not only Mr Potter, but on other students as well.

Throughout all the entire interview, and keeping in mind Mr Potter’s previous interview with The Quibbler, one thought has been prevalent on my mind.

When you put together everything that Mr Potter has been through, from his placement with magic hating Muggle relatives, to his return to our world and everything that followed, it makes you wonder; either Mr Potter was very unlucky, or someone orchestrated the events surrounding his life.

Despite the fact that he managed to survive everything thrown at him, when combined, it was obvious that he was deliberately placed in all of those life-threatening situations. It’s almost as if Mr Potter was being tested.

But by whom? Who would do such a thing? And why? Who exactly would benefit from all of those machinations?

Whispers started up between the students as everyone read, and reread, the paper.

Up at the Head table, the Headmaster stared down at the Gryffindor table. While on the outside the man exuded calm indifference, inside, he was angry and honestly somewhat confused.
On the other end of the table, Snape and Lucius sat and both men employed their Slytherin masks to keep their glee from showing.

As it is though, Lucius still couldn’t help but to slightly lean towards his friend.

“The boy is a dangerous opponent,” Lucius spoke in a lowered voice, ensuring only Snape would hear him.

“Very well executed I would say,” Snape replied, his voice as flat as ever.

But Lucius knew the man for far too long to not pick up on the pride and pleasure in the man’s tone. Sitting at the Gryffindor table, Harry hid his smirk. He could feel the headmaster’s gaze boring into him, but he didn’t give the man any attention.

‘Let him sweat. Let him sit there and seethe; unable to do anything, to show how he’s really feeling.’

With a slight smile, Harry finished his breakfast, and then stood up to leave the Hall.

On his way out, Draco stood up from the Slytherin table and joined him and the two left the Hall together, leaving behind a cacophony of conversations.

At the Gryffindor table, a very interesting one was taking place.

“I can’t believe he fought You-Know-I mean, V-Voldemort in his first year!” Romilda exclaimed, drawing the others’ attention.

“I can’t believe he said all that!” Ginny countered.

Parvati looked at the redhead with a frown, “What was wrong with what he said?”

Ginny glared at the girl, “He said Dumbledore was setting him up!”

“You must’ve read a different article to what I read then,” Cory said, “because at no point during the interview did Harry say that. He was asked questions and he answered them truthfully. He never once implicated the Headmaster in anything.”

“He didn’t have to though,” Dean spoke up.

“What do you mean?” Romilda asked, turning to look at her Housemate.

“Well,” Dean shifted uncomfortably, “It wasn’t really about what he said; it was also about what he didn’t say. Actually, Mr Lovegood did. A lot of the things that happened to Harry, especially since he started Hogwarts, now having read the interview and the truth about all of those, it really does seem a bit suspicious. I mean, before Harry started here, nothing like this had happened at the school. So would everything had happened if Harry hadn’t come to Hogwarts?”

“He’s right,” Seamus picked up, “It does seem a little suspicious that everything happened when started Harry started Hogwarts, and then when you read everything else.”

He pointed to a section in the interview. “Like here. The part with the Chamber of Secrets.” He then threw a look at Hermione, “You were the one who figured it out, even though you ended up getting petrified and Harry ended up killing the snake.”

“Yes,” Hermione nodded. She was a little surprised that the Irish teen was even saying anything to her, but she didn’t let it show. She had made a huge mess of things and she was determined not to
keeping making mistakes.

“Well, how did you figure it out when none of the professors, especially Dumbledore, did?” Seamus continued. “Why was Harry sent to fight the Basilisk? Why didn’t anyone else go with him and Lockhart?”

Hermione remained quiet as she thought about it. Finally, she answered. “I don’t know.”

“And another thing,” Cory added on, “Why would four first year students be given a detention to spend in the Forbidden Forest when the Headmaster had specifically warned about going near there?”

Parvati saw the speculative look on her best friend’s face and gently nudged her, “Lav? What is it?”

Lavender looked up from reading the article. “It’s something The Quibbler wrote at the end of the interview. It said that Harry was either very unlucky, or someone orchestrated everything, making sure he was in the centre of it all; almost as if he was being tested. But tested for what? And by whom?”

“But that makes no sense,” Romilda frowned. “Why would someone do this? I mean, why would they want to test Harry?”

“To see just how good or bad he was,” Cory spoke up. “Maybe they wanted to see if he could live up to the title of being the Boy-Who-Lived. Think about it; growing up with abusive relatives, everything in first year and all the other years. It’s like they were trying to break him down and rebuild him, or they were trying to mould him.”

“But mould him into what?” Seamus asked with a frown.

“Into a weapon,” Hermione said softly, and she threw a quick glance to the Head table.

Ron couldn’t help himself. “You lot are all bloody mental! Dumbledore is a good man! He wouldn’t do anything!”

Hermione shook her head at her ex. “He also allowed a lot of things to happen that shouldn’t have. Things that were too coincidental to not be suspicious.”

Before, she had blindly followed the man and had paid the price for it. She had made herself blind to what he was doing and what he was really about, but now, with these interviews that Harry gave, she was finally seeing who Dumbledore really was.

Ron fumed, unable to believe what he was hearing. “So what are you saying? Dumbledore made Potter’s relatives hurt him? Or that he knew Quirrell would go after the Stone and we’d go after him? That he knew all along who put Potter’s name in the Goblet and let it happen?”

“Sounds exactly that to me,” Lavender replied. “Who else could it have been? Who else would’ve wanted to test Harry?”

“You lot are mental!” Ron repeated his earlier. “It could’ve been You-Know-Who!”

“Voldemort,” Lavender spoke up, “the name is Voldemort.”

Ginny narrowed her eyes at the girl. “Since when are you so brave to say that name instead of You-Know-Who?”
Lavender raised her chin in defiance. “Since I became friends with Harry. And like I was saying, why would Voldemort do all this? Voldemort was killed the night Harry’s parents died. So how would he put Harry with his relatives? And how would he do everything that happened here at school?”

As Ron angrily replied to Lavender as he steadfastly defended Dumbledore, Cory hid a smirk as he listened to the group. In this moment, he couldn’t help but to mentally congratulate Ron. Instead of diffusing the situation as the redhead probably hoped, it fuelled the whispers.

Feeling eyes on him, he looked up and locked gazes with Luna. The two exchanged a small smile as the conversations around them continued.

Things were going all to plan.

~…~

For the last two days, the rumours were swirling strongly around Hogwarts as the conversation that had taken place at Gryffindor table had made its way to the other Houses.

That conversation had led to the rumoured possibility that Dumbledore was behind everything, but most of the students dismissed it as such as they didn’t want to believe. With the exception of Slytherin, the rest of the Houses were split down the middle; half were starting to question Dumbledore and his actions; the other half, while they believed Harry’s words, they refused to believe what the paper was implying about Dumbledore.

It was after all that that the Headmaster decided to finally make his move.

It was lunch now, and Harry was sitting with Cory at Gryffindor table. The others were either still in class or had stopped off at their dorms first.

The two were sitting and talking quietly when Draco walked over to them and sat down next to Harry.

“Your plan is coming together quite brilliantly,” the blond grinned.

“I know,” Harry grinned. “It’s amazing. I mean, I’m sure you’ve heard the conversations that’ve been going around the school.”

“I have,” Draco nodded. “And quite honestly, it’s exhilarating to see others finally seeing the chink in the Old Man’s armour.”

Just then, a student approached the three and gave Harry a note.

“What is it?” Cory asked, though he had a pretty good idea.

“The Headmaster wants to see me in his office,” Harry told them as he quickly read through it.

The three exchanged looks and Draco smirked.

“Now why doesn’t that surprise me?” the blond shook his head. “I was starting to wonder when he would make his move.”

Harry grinned in response. “Same here. But he has now, and I have a pretty good idea of how this is gonna go down. And if it does go how I expect, then I can make my next move.”

Draco smirked. “I do love it when your Slytherin side comes out to play.”
Harry chuckled and leaned in to whisper into his ear, “And you love my snake even more.”

Draco let out a laugh as he pulled back to see Harry’s eyes. “Completely corny, but very true.”

Cory shook his head, knowing it had been something naughty. “I don’t even want to know.”

“Aw Cory,” Harry grinned. “You sure?”

“Yes,” Cory said firmly, though he was grinning, “there are some things a man shouldn’t know about his brother.”

“Love you too,” Harry made kissy faces at the other teen causing Draco to laugh even more.

“Git!” Cory laughed and playfully shoved Harry. “Shouldn’t you be going to meet the Headmaster?”

Harry let out a sigh, “Very well. If I must, I must.” He stood up. “I will see you guys later.”

“We’ll tell the others,” Draco told him.


~…~

Harry hummed as he made his way to the Headmaster’s office. He was actually looking forward to this meeting as he wanted to see how the old man would play it out.

He knew that he had aroused the man’s suspicions and that he wouldn’t be able to just wave them and claim complete innocence like the last article, but as that was his point, he didn’t care.

All he cared about was seeing what move the man would make next.

Giving the password to the gargoyle, he went up the stairs and knocked.

“Come in.”

“Hello professor,” Harry greeted as he entered, “you wanted to see me?”

“Yes,” Albus nodded, “have a seat.”

Harry did as was told and sat down, not breaking his gaze with the old man. He was still aware though that the normal filled portraits were empty.

Albus didn’t say anything. Instead, he just stared at the teen, anticipating that the boy would break and start speaking.

‘Really? If you’re waiting for me to break old man, not gonna happen.’ Harry thought. Outwardly, he raised an eyebrow in the Headmaster’s direction.

Hiding his surprise at the fact that the teen hadn’t started speaking, Albus had no choice but to concede to the silent battle.

“Harry,” he started, “How have you been?”

“I’ve been good Headmaster,” Harry replied, his voice as cordial and polite as ever. “Grades are never better and all my relationships have blossomed amazingly. Honestly, I don’t think my life has ever been better.”
Albus gave a small nod. “Very good. Now Harry, I’m sure you’re wondering why I’ve called you here.”

“It has crossed my mind,” Harry shrugged slightly. “However, I assumed it had something to do with the newest article from *The Quibbler*?”

“Yes,” Albus stared at the teen. “There are implications in that article Harry. Ones that reflect poorly on who I am and as a result, it could be very damaging to our cause.”

“Well I am sorry for that Headmaster,” Harry replied, “but I couldn’t do anything. There was a vow involved, so the truth had to be told, and that’s all I did. Whatever people saw or deciphered is not really my fault. I can’t control others’ perceptions.”

He gave a shrug. “Maybe if things had been done differently, then no one would be asking questions right now.”

Albus’ eyes narrowed slightly at the words from the teen. “I’m afraid I do not understand what you mean.”

“Well,” Harry continued, “the article really made think about everything that I told them. I mean, I never paid much attention before when everything was happening or had just happened, but now that I talked about it, looking back, things just don’t add up. They don’t seem right and it’s making me have questions.”

“Questions such as what?” Albus asked. This was not what he had expected to hear.

Harry shifted in his seat, “Well, questions like; why did no one check on me at the Dursleys? Even better, did no one check out the Dursleys before I was placed there?”

This time, he stared the man right in the eyes, making sure his Occlumency shields were up. “And everything that happened since I started Hogwarts; looking back at it now, it all felt as if it was a setup. As if someone was testing me. And that has me thinking; why would someone do that? Why would someone deliberately place a child in danger? Who in their right mind would be so callous?”

Albus held back the flinch and his blue eyes flared with anger. “Callous Mr Potter?”

‘*Mr Potter? Damn…must’ve gotten to him.*’ Harry thought. “Well, what else can I say Headmaster? How would you describe the person behind this? It’s as if they had no regards for my life. They only thing that was important to them was their own endgame. They didn’t care how they got there, as long as they did. Whoever was responsible, I will never forgive them for it and I always hate them.”

Albus was taken aback at the vehemence of that last sentence. A niggling thought was forcing its way to the front of his mind. “My dear boy-

“But stop,” Harry cut him off, “I don’t want to hear whatever platitudes you’re about to give. Nothing you can say will excuse the actions of that selfish, manipulative, irresponsible person that left a magical child with magic hating Muggles, relatives or not.”

Suddenly, he needed to know the answer. He needed to hear it from the man himself. “I just have to ask; why Headmaster? Why would you do that?”

“Excuse me?” Albus was not prepared for that question.

“I told you the interview made me think,” Harry said, “I know you’re the one who placed me with the Dursleys. What I want to know is, did you even research them before you did? Because if you
had, there’s no way I should’ve been placed with them. And if you had researched them, and yet you still placed me there, then I can only come to one conclusion.”

“And what conclusion is that Mr Potter?” Albus asked, body slightly tense, and blue eyes no longer holding that familiar twinkle.

This was definitely not what he had expected at all.

“It was a deliberate move,” Harry said, “however, the one thing I can’t get is why.”

No need to show all his cards just yet. Give him enough rope and the old man would hang himself.

Albus remained quiet for a few minutes as he thought on the boy’s answer and the best way to twist it to suit him and his purposes.

After all, no need for the boy to have these suspicions turn him against him when there was still a chance he could work it in his favour.

So, he conceded a point.

“You were right Mr Potter,” Albus said, “It was deliberate. But only because of the sacrifice your mother gave. In order to keep the blood protection going, it was necessary to place you with blood relatives; more specifically, Lily’s blood relatives, which just so happens to be Petunia. It was the only way to keep you safe from Tom and his followers.”

‘Hmmm. What a load of crock; you’re telling me as powerful as you are, you couldn’t find somewhere in the Wizarding World to hide me? Yeah right.’

“And that was the most important thing,” Harry smiled, “keeping me safe from Voldemort and the Death Eaters.”

“Exactly,” Albus nodded.

“Yeah,” Harry nodded before raising an eyebrow, “and yet, it didn’t keep me safe from the Dursleys, now did it?”

Albus stilled. “I’m sorry?”

“Oh don’t be sorry Headmaster,” Harry shook his head, “unless you actually have something to be sorry for. I mean, it’s not as if you knew exactly what was going on and what they were doing and did nothing to stop it.”

Albus didn’t reply, but he never got the chance to anyways as Harry continued speaking.

“It’s not like everything was all a set up,” Harry said, “that it was all planned from the start because you wanted a pliable and complacent patsy that would do anything and ask no questions, right? You’re not like that, are you Headmaster? You wouldn’t put a child at risk just for the greater good or for selfish reasons.”

Harry chuckled. “Because if you did, if you did, then you are worse than Voldemort, aren’t you Headmaster? And that just can’t be.”

Albus had no idea where these questions or comments were coming from and he did not like it. And he felt a tinge of panic. Why was he asking these specific questions? Was he really going dark?

‘No! I don’t believe that. I have done everything right to ensure that he is indebted to me and my
Forcing his body to relax, he brought forth the comforting and grandfather persona he had perfected, making sure to make his eyes twinkle even more.

“You are right Harry,” he said, “I would be a worse person than Tom if I did that. I would never willingly place a child in danger. But there is a reason I did apologize. And that was for not checking in on you over time. I failed in that aspect. It is not an excuse, but it is one I have; with the Wizarding World in chaos, I suppose I trusted that your relatives would take care of you and I could concentrate fully on restoring this world. After all, how could anyone related to Lily, be cruel to her offspring? As I said, in that I failed, and I apologize.”

Harry stared at the man for a few minutes, just long enough for Albus to start to wonder if his plan had worked, before he nodded. “You’re right, I suppose Headmaster. It’s just, the article really got to me. I didn’t want to believe that you knew everything and did nothing to stop it. I’m sorry I doubted you sir.”

“It’s ok my boy,” Albus’ smile was a little more genuine. “And it’s understandable that the article got to you. The way it was worded, it was enough to make for doubts to spring up, but I am happy that you saw the truth and that you trust me enough to not believe I would ever hurt you like that or put you in deliberate danger.”

“I suppose,” Harry shrugged. “And I’m sorry if I implied you were callous or selfish or manipulative sir. I know you’ve ever only had my best interests at heart and if you had known how the Dursleys treated me, you would’ve stopped it. I was just angry and frustrated by how the article came out and the implications it brought with it. And all the whispers around school didn’t help either.”

“That is why you cannot let it get to you,” Albus said, “and why next time you are asked for an interview, at least use a professor so that you would not be caught in a trap such as this again.”

“I know,” Harry nodded. He fidgeted a bit, “You said earlier that the article hurt our cause. It didn’t cause too much damage, did it? I mean, the Order members won’t default because of this will they? That’s the last thing I wanted to do.”

“No worries Harry,” Albus assured, now a bit more secure. “All will be explained to them and things will settle down. They already understand how reporters work and how they twist everything to suit their purposes.”

“Good,” Harry sighed. “Well, I suppose I should be going. Unless, you needed me for something else?”

Albus shook his head. “That was all. Have a good day my boy.”

“You too Headmaster,” Harry replied as he stood and left the office.

The moment it closed behind the teen, Albus swept his hand out, his magic knocking everything off his desk.

Things were not going as he had expected.

First was the war. It seemed as if Tom was no longer interested in mindless violence and death. For whatever reason, the Dark Lord had not been as active as he had been in the past.

With the exception of the murder of Delores Umbridge, there had been no more major attacks or major murders from the Dark side.
Something was different. Something had changed.

He could not figure out what that change was, but he knew that whatever it was wasn’t good for him. He needed Tom to continue with his dark work; with his mindless murdering and instilling fear into the masses.

‘How else am I supposed to continue to control the people and have them do what I want them to?’

And it wasn’t just Tom who was no longer playing by the rules. The blasted boy was becoming too independent. The boy had never been this outspoken towards him before. He never questioned him.

Yes, in the end he had managed to deflect and to twist it all to benefit himself and to put the boy at ease, but he never should have had to. It had to be those blasted articles. They were filling the boy’s head and making him think.

‘How did things get to this? Am I losing control of him?’

Albus fumed as he stayed sitting at his desk. ‘I did not do everything I did just for the brat to do this now! He is getting too far out of hand. He needs to be reigned back in.’

He sat there, thinking for a while, until the perfect idea came to him.

“Yes,” he murmured, “that will be absolutely perfect. It will remind him of how fickle the public can be. Bring him back to heel.”

Plan in hand, he quickly got up and moved to the Floo.

~…~

Three days later, the school seemed to have settled down, and while the talk surrounding the article was still there, it wasn’t as prominent.

But if the students had thought Harry’s article was anything, then they would be blown away by what happened next.

Harry was walking through the halls with Cory when he noticed the looks and whispers following him.

It wouldn’t have bothered, as he initially thought the students were still thinking about the article from over the weekend, but he soon realized that that wasn’t the case.

It wasn’t curiosity or awe or anything positive on the students’ faces; it was fear.

“What do you make of that?” he asked Cory.

“I honestly don’t know,” Cory shook his head, noting the fear as well. “Did something happen?”

“Looks like it,” Harry replied, “and whatever it was, must be bad. It’s like they think I did something; something awful.”

When they entered the Hall, all whispers stopped as every eye focused on the two boys.

Exchanging a look, Cory and Harry made their way to the Slytherin table, where Draco was beckoning them with a tilt of his head.

“What’s going on?” Cory asked when he and Harry were close enough.
“This,” Draco replied as he pushed the paper at them.

Confused, Cory picked it up and his eyes went wide when he read the title. “Harry…”

“What is it?” Harry asked as he took the paper from his friend.

**Harry Potter Connected to You-Know-Who?**

*by Rita Skeeter*

It seems dear readers that this is the year for shocking revelations. It all started weeks before when Mr Ronald Weasley, former friend to Harry Potter, gave us an exclusive interview where Mr Weasley expressed his concerns over Mr Potter’s new relationships and the worry that our Saviour was turning to the Dark Side. Mr Potter however, gave his own interview to our counterparts at The Quibbler refuting the claims and explaining the reasons behind his new outlook on life, including the termination of his friendships with said Mr Weasley and Ms Granger and his new ones with the young Mr Malfoy and newly revealed Corvus LeStrange, formerly known as Neville Longbottom.

The claims brought forward by Mr Weasley were dismissed as ramblings of a boy jealous of his friend’s stature and his inability to accept that his friend was maturing and growing up. However, this reporter now has evidence, given by Mrs Molly Weasley herself, which offer support to her son’s claims.

And in her words, shed light on Mr Potter’s actions and the true reason behind his termination of his friendship to one Ronald Weasley; a friend who has stood by his side since Mr Potter re-entered our worlds five years ago.

And what is the evidence?

According to Mrs Weasley, Mr Potter has a connection to You-Know-Who. And not just any connection, but a mental one. Yes readers, you’ve read it right. Mr Potter and You-Know-Who, the darkest dark lord to ever grace our world, share a mind connection.

“It’s a terrible, terrible thing,” Molly Weasley lamented. “The poor boy’s mind is connected to that awful creature. They’re connected through the scar. It’s why it’s called a curse scar. I didn’t want to believe it, but Albus explained everything. The connection has been there since that horrible Halloween night when You-Know-Who attacked the Potters and tried to kill Harry.”

*When I asked Mrs Weasley what all of this meant, she had this to say.*

“It means that You-Know-Who can get into Harry’s mind,” Molly explained, tears falling from her eyes, “Which would explain why Harry abandoned my Ronniekins and is now friends with all those Slytherins. And why he’s dating that Malfoy boy when we all know he and Ginny belong together. It has to be that awful connection.”

Is Molly Weasley correct? Is Mr Potter being influenced by You-Know-Who? Is that the real reason why he is now associating with Slytherins, leaving his former friends behind? Is that the reason for the interviews to The Quibbler and the subtle aspersions cast towards Albus Dumbledore’s character?

Harry didn’t bother to continue reading. He dropped the paper back on the table and his gaze swung around the Hall.

The students were still watching him; there was fear, anger, curiosity, disbelief and on Ronald
Weasley’s face, there was smug satisfaction. It was the same satisfaction he saw on Dumbledore’s face when his gaze shifted to the Head table.

While on the inside Harry was seething, on the outside, his posture was slightly relaxed and his expression was blank. He was expecting the Old Man to retaliate, to make a move, but this was not what he honestly thought he would do.

“You ok?” Gabriella was the first of their group to speak.

Harry shifted his gaze from the Headmaster to his friend and gave a nod, a small smile gracing his face.

“A bit shocked really,” Harry replied as he took a seat next to Draco.

“Harry,” Lavender spoke up hesitantly. She didn’t want to anger her friend, but she couldn’t deny the curiosity filling her. “Is it true?”

“Hmm?” Harry looked over at the girl, noticing that their conversation was basically heard by everyone as no one had yet to speak. “Is what true?”

“What the paper said,” Lavender clarified, “What Molly Weasley said; that you have a mind connection to You-K-to Voldemort.”

It was as if the entire Hall, with the exception of Lucius and Severus, were holding their breath, waiting for his answer.

Harry raised an eyebrow at the girl, “Will the answer change how you see me? Neville becoming Cory didn’t change how I see him.”

“It would change nothing for me,” Luna wrapped her arms around Harry from behind, pressing a kiss to his cheek.

Draco looked up at the blonde Ravenclaw. “Lovegood, I thought I told you to stick with your boyfriend?”

Luna let out a giggle as she moved to sit next to Cory. “Yes, but I do so enjoy the way the light reflects your eyes and I dare say Harry enjoys it even more than I do.”

“Don’t pull me into this,” Harry sing-song, a grin splitting his face.

Pansy snorted, “You’re already in it my dear.”

“I’m ignoring that part,” Harry told her, throwing a grin in her direction.

Luna carried on the banter, easily continuing the shift in the conversation and moving it from the article, and in essence, the question that Lavender had asked. It wasn’t until later, that Lavender—and the others as well—realized that Harry had never answered her question.

~…~

Over the course of the next week, Harry dealt with the continued looks and whispers from the other students as well as a few Howlers and other mail from people around the Wizarding World.

It didn’t help that Ron had once again taken up the mantle of defaming Harry and had continued to spew the accusations that his mother had spilled in her interview.
The ones who ignored that completely were Seamus, Lavender, Parvati, Romilda and Dean. They weren’t as close to Harry as Luna, Cory and the Slytherin four, but they had gotten to know him better and they trusted him more than they trusted the paper, or anything from the Weasleys—specifically Ron or Molly.

So they defended him to the other Lions, and to the students that they happened to overhear or those that approached them for questions; no one dared approach the Slytherins, and those that approached Luna or Cory were met with either a blank stare or giggles.

As for Harry; he just let it all wash over him. He never denied or confirm the accusation. Instead, when some student got brave enough to ask, he simply stared or smiled and then either changed the topic, walked away or ignored them.

Despite the defence of Harry by Cory and the few other Lions (Seamus and the few), most of the students still took Harry’s silence on the matter as confirmation. And in turn, that fuelled the rumours and looks and whispers even more.

~…~

It was October 19th, the very first Hogsmeade weekend, and it was the weekend that would prove to be one of the final nails in Dumbledore’s coffin—though he didn’t know it as of yet.

The day started out pretty much the same as usual.

The students were excited about the Hogsmeade trip. It was always a fun thing for the repeating students and for the third years, it was something amazing to look forward to as it was their first time.

As was the norm, Harry woke first and quickly went through his morning routine and then he headed downstairs to wait for Cory.

Hermione was sitting on one of the sofas near the fireplace with a book on her lap. She looked up when she heard Harry but said nothing.

She had heard all the rumours and had read the newspaper, and while she knew of the connection beforehand between Harry and Voldemort, not once did she ever think that it was being used to control Harry.

She wished she could tell him that, but she couldn’t and the knowledge sent a pang through her heart.

Harry knew Hermione was watching him, but he didn’t bother to give her a glance as he took a seat on one of the sofas closer to the door. His mind was focused on his plan for the day; more specifically, his plan for when they got to Hogsmeade. It was the perfect plan to not only counteract Dumbledore’s article from over a week ago—and there was no doubt that it was the Old Man that was behind Molly Weasley’s interview—but as one of the final pieces to bringing him down.

Ten minutes later, Cory walked down the stairs.

The two teens greeted each other and made their way out of the common room and down to the Great Hall for breakfast.

Hermione watched them go with sad eyes filled with longing.

~…~
Harry and Cory met up with their Slytherin friends as they neared the Hall.

“Morning,” Harry greeted, green eyes immediately seeking out grey.

“You ready for today?” Draco asked, knowing what Harry had planned. Blaise, Pansy and Gabriella knew that Harry had something big planned, but they didn’t know exactly what it was; only he, Cory and Luna knew the exactly details of what was going down.

“Of course,” Harry nodded as the group turned as one to go into the Hall.

“It’s going to be vastly entertaining, isn’t it?” Pansy raised an eyebrow as she took her seat at the Slytherin table.

“Isn’t it always?” Blaise replied with a smirk.

“Well it is Harry,” Luna said as she joined them, startling some of the students as they hadn’t even seen or heard her coming towards them.

Nods and smiles in agreement were exchanged and the group settled into having breakfast.

About ten minutes later, Seamus, Dean, Lavender, Parvati and Romilda showed up and joined the group.

It was a sight that the students were used to by now, but at the Head table, Severus still found it odd to see Gryffindors sitting among his Snakes.

“Startling, isn’t it?” Lucius questioned in an undertone, while subtly casting a Privacy Charm.

“Very,” Severus replied. “I do not believe I will ever acclimate to the sight of Lions at the Snakes’ table.”

“One more thing to blame on Mr Potter,” Lucius said with a slight smirk. “Do you know of his plan for today?”

“Every detail,” Severus said, “And it is brilliant in its planned execution.”

“He is playing the Old Fool like a finely turned instrument,” Lucius commented. “I must say, he has shown himself to be a very worthy opponent and I am delighted that he had decided to tap into his Slytherin’s side when he joined our side. To imagine that potential on their side…”

Severus snorted. “That would not have happened. Albus Dumbledore failed to see the boy’s potential. He wanted the boy to be Gryffindor; brave and willing to do anything, no questions asked. Or jump first, ask questions later. He would not have allowed the boy to develop any Slytherin habits. To do so would have resulted in Mr Potter asking questions that Dumbledore would rather he not.”

“This plan of his for today,” Lucius said, “absolutely brilliant. In fact, I dare say the entire way he has handled the last week and some was nothing short of sly. He offered nothing to counter the ridiculous interview put forth by that insufferable Weasley woman and now, this action he is about to employ—

“It will decimate those actions and quite possibly eradicate the doubts towards him once and for all,” Severus finished. “It will be a splendid thing.”

The two men exchanged looks and a barely there conspiratorial smile. They could not wait to see the
outcome of Harry’s move.

~…~

The town of Hogsmeade was bustling with not only the regular patrons but the students of Hogwarts as well.

As Harry and company walked through the town, they were aware of the whispers and stares that followed them.

“This is ridiculous,” Gabriella huffed as they came to a stop just before Honeydukes and a woman who had just exited the shop pretty much ran away after throwing a fearful glance towards Harry; more specifically, where his scar lied.

Harry shrugged, “This is my life. Whenever the Prophet prints some ridiculous story or another, this is usually the reaction from the masses.”

“Bunch of sheep is what they are,” Cory snorted.

“Yes,” Draco nodded, “and while that works against us, it also works directly in our favour. Especially with what Harry has planned.”

Harry cast a look at his boyfriend, seeing the barely constrained excitement in the grey eyes. “You’re excited to see it executed, aren’t you?”

Draco didn’t even bother denying it. He was. It was so brilliant and so Slytherin worthy that he couldn’t wait to see the aftermath of it all.

“Maybe a little,” the blond hedged, a grin teasing his lips. “But I’m not the only one.”

“He’s right,” Pansy grinned, “Everything you’ve done so far has been completely brilliant and not to mention positively entertaining, so it stands to reason of course that this latest plan of yours would be the same.”

“I don’t think you’ll be disappointed,” Luna commented with a smile.

Harry grinned before changing the subject. “So, what are the plans for now though?”

“I’m going to head to Honeydukes,” Blaise said, “I need some sweets.”

“Pansy promised to take me to the clothing store here in town,” Gabriella added. “Gladrags, I think it’s called. She said I need to be measured, so they’d have it on file, and get some clothes.”

“Sounds fun,” Harry said, though he didn’t really mean it because he hoped that Draco wouldn’t get any ideas about shopping. He turned to Cory and Luna. “What about you two?”

Luna smiled. “New quills. It seems as if the Wrackspurts have started to play their favourite game once again and I find my quills disappearing.”

Used to the blonde’s way, Blaise and Pansy blinked, while Draco just stared and Harry raised an eyebrow; Gabriella kept her composure—already told of Luna’s different view and getting used to it—though it was easy to see that she really wanted to question her blonde friend.

Cory just shook his head at his girlfriend’s words. “You really need to get them under control and to stop taking your stuff.”
“It’s ok,” Luna assured him, “I don’t mind and it’s actually quite a fun game.”

“I’m not even gonna touch that,” Harry said with a grin.

“And you two?” Blaise asked with a raised brow. “What are you going to be doing?”

Draco shrugged. “Not too sure. We’ll just walk with everyone until we figure out what we ourselves want to do.”

“Sounds like a plan,” Cory nodded, as did the others.

“Well I’m right here, so,” Blaise grinned as he waved a hand at Honeydukes. “You guys go on, and I’ll just re-join you when you come back down this way.”

“Sounds good,” Harry said.

Giving a nod, Blaise moved away from the group and headed to the sweet shop.

“Let’s go,” Pansy commented and the group walked on.

Pansy and Gabriella walked in front, with Cory and Luna behind them and Draco and Harry at the back.

Soon, Pansy and Gabriella broke off and headed into Gladrags and seconds later, Luna and Cory were off to the quill shop.

“So where to?” Harry turned to Draco, reaching out to grab the blond’s hand.

“I’m not too sure actually,” Draco said. “We could just walk.”

Shrugging, Harry pulled the blond close and the two continued walking. “I’d have thought that you would’ve dragged me to Gladrags with Pansy and Gabriella.”

“When I can wait until Christmas and take you on a proper, and more expanded, shopping trip?” Draco retorted with a smirk.

Harry let out a groan. “I was afraid of that.”

Draco let out a chuckle at his boyfriend’s words.

Harry shook his head and then turned around, heading back where they came.

“What is it?” Draco asked.

“I was thinking we could go to Zonko’s,” Harry told him, “The twins were thinking about expanding their business since it’s doing so well and I thought it’d be cool if they had a store here in town.”

Draco looked at him, “Are you wanting to see if Zonko’s had any ideas, or are you wanting to see if they would be willing to sell? Because quite honestly, I don’t think Hogsmeade needs two joke shops.”

He became thoughtful. “Although, if the twins do set up shop here, then eventually, it really will only be one because they are brilliant and Zonko’s would go out of business.”

Harry grinned and gave the blond a quick kiss. “Smart and gorgeous. How did I ever get so lucky?”
Draco grinned and returned the kiss, but making it longer. “Just be glad you are.”

The two shared a chuckle and continued their walk. They soon got to Zonko’s and made their way inside.

Ten minutes later, they were back out and met Cory and Luna waiting outside.

“Pansy and Gabriella will be a little while,” Luna told them, “however, Blaise is waiting for us.”

“Alright,” Draco nodded and the four started down in that direction.

They hadn’t gotten far when a shrill cry broke through the air. They, and everyone else, stopped what they were doing and looked to where the sound came from.

It was a phoenix. And not just any phoenix; a white one.

The sight of the bird sent a flurry of furious whispers through the crowd as they all stared at the bird, each wondering what it was doing there.

Everyone knew about phoenixes and what they represented.

The bird flew to where Harry and the others were standing.

While Cory, Luna and Draco all stepped back, seemingly taken aback by the bird coming directly towards them, Harry flinched and brought his arm up as protection.

To his surprise, and the shock of the crowd, the bird landed on his arm. The moment it did so, the phoenix let out a cry and a bright light—bright enough that it had everyone covering their eyes—lit up the place followed by a flash of fire.

When the light and fire died down, Harry was standing there, staring at the bird on his arm in clear surprise.

“Dear Merlin!” someone in the stunned crowd managed to spit out.

Still in surprise, Harry turned to his boyfriend. “I—Draco, what’s going on? What just happened?”

Draco took a step forward. “Harry, what just happened is that you’ve been bonded to a phoenix. And not just any phoenix, but a white one.

“What’s so special about a white phoenix?” Harry asked, seemingly uncomprehending of the significance.

“They’re extremely rare and the most powerful of all phoenixes,” Luna answered him as she took step forward to touch the bird. “It is said that white phoenixes choose their bonder and only someone worthy and pure in heart and soul could be claimed by them.”

Harry’s eyes went wide at what Luna said and he reached out a slightly shaky hand to rub the bird’s breast. “And you chose me? You’re mine, and I’m yours?”

The phoenix let out a trill and moved up Harry’s arm to rub its head against his cheek.

| You are enjoying this way too much! | Hedwig’s voice echoed in Harry’s mind.

| Of course I am. You should see the looks on their faces. They are completely buying this. |
“What did it say?” Draco asked, shocking the crowd even more as the implication sunk in.

“It is a girl,” Harry replied, “and she said she’s been searching for me for a long time.”

“What’s going on?” Pansy’s voice sounded as she and Gabriella pushed through the crowd. The two girls froze when they saw Harry.

“Oh my God,” Gabriella whispered.

“Harry,” Pansy started, “Is that a phoenix? More specifically, a white phoenix?”

“What?!” Blaise near shouted as he joined the group. He had heard the commotion and the whispers, and knew it was his friend, but this was not what he expected when he hurried to join them.

He too froze when he saw the bird on Harry’s arm. It took but a few seconds to recognize the animal and he had to use his Slytherin skills to stop himself from reacting even further.

“That’s amazing,” Cory breathed, as he too reached out to touch the bird.

Hedwig let out another trill as she shook herself out. She was glad to finally take her true form. It was harrowing being stuck in the owl form for so long.

“Only you Harry could be the bonded one of a white phoenix,” Draco shook his head with a smile.

Trilling again, Hedwig flew from Harry’s arm to land on the blond’s shoulder, once again shocking the crowd.

Draco chuckled as he reached up to gently rub the bird’s wing. “Well hello beautiful.”

Rubbing her head briefly against Draco’s, Hedwig gently nipped his ear before she flew back to land on Harry’s shoulder.

Throwing a glance at the crowd, Cory made a suggestion. “Maybe we should head back to school.”

Taking in the crowd, Harry nodded in agreement. “Maybe we should.”

With that, the seven turned and made their way through the stunned crowd as they headed back to the school.

As they passed through the village, they weren’t surprised when they saw the rest of the people—both students and regular patrons alike—come out of the stores only to stop and stare at them.

It wasn’t until they had cleared the village, and the chance of being overheard had disappeared, that someone finally spoke.

“That was your plan?” Gabriella actually stopped walking to turn to look at her friend.

“Yes,” Harry nodded with a grin.

“That was bloody brilliant!” Blaise breathed out, still staring at Hedwig. Even though he’d seen her form before, it still left him in awe.

“Why didn’t you tell us?” Pansy demanded, though she wasn’t really upset; just curious.

“Your reactions needed to be genuine,” Luna was the one to answer.
It took a few seconds for it to dawn on them.

“It needed to look like we had no idea about what was going to happen so that the papers wouldn’t accuse it of being a plan,” Cory shook his head in amazement. He had known about the plan, but he found that despite knowing beforehand, he was still in awe over what had just happened and how everything played out.

“And that’s exactly what’ll happen,” Draco smiled, “When the Prophet prints this story, all they’ll talk about is how a white phoenix bonded to Harry Potter and how shocked we all were.”

“And it will completely erase the doubts that Molly Weasley brought up with her stupid interview,” Harry added on.

“I’ve said before and I’ll say it again,” Gabriella shook her head, “You are one dangerously brilliant person.”

“I don’t see the danger. I just see it as complete brilliance,” Blaise said, still in awe over the entire thing. “You’re even more Slytherin than I thought.”

“I am, aren’t I?” Harry laughed.

“So how long do you think it’ll be before this hits the papers?” Cory asked as the group resumed their walk back to school.

“Probably by dinner time,” Pansy said. “What just happened was too good for it to wait. I guarantee that letters were already being sent to the Prophet, that is, if Rita herself wasn’t already there.”

Luna smiled. “She was and it will.”

~…~

When the seven had gotten back to the school, the students and professors had been stunned at the sight of Harry with the phoenix on his shoulder.

And when dinner came around, Luna’s prediction was right; no surprise there.

Everyone was still staring at Harry and talking about what had happened when the owls arrived with the paper.

The article spoke about what had happened earlier that day, and included interviews from people who had actually witnessed everything. The article did exactly what they had anticipated; it denied all accusations of Harry being dark—after all, how could a person be dark if a white phoenix chose them to bond with?—and ended with Rita bringing back up the articles that both The Quibbler and the Daily Prophet had printed before, and tearing into Molly Weasley and attacking Dumbledore.

Harry and crew, including Severus and Lucius, took great delight in seeing the Headmaster vaunted control crack as the whispers and heated looks from students and professors settled onto him.

And when the Headmaster’s gaze settled on Harry, the teen simply stared at the old man, almost daring him to react.

Harry knew that Dumbledore probably suspected on some level that what happened was planned, but he also knew that what had the old man going, was that he had no idea how he Harry had managed to do it. And because of that, he couldn’t prove it.
With his action of having a white phoenix now made public, Albus Dumbledore’s days were numbered.

*Time Skip—October 31st; Halloween*

The morning started out as it always did every year. The students got up and went to breakfast, conversations fluttering all around as they admired the Halloween decorations all over the school, especially the Great Hall, and made plans for the rest of the day and night.

Harry was sitting at the Slytherin table along with Cory and Luna, and their pets, when owls poured into the Hall, each of them carrying a newspaper.

As always, whispers started up as the students took in the sight of the owls.

The papers were dropped on the table and the owls flew away as the students, and professors, grabbed them.

The headline had everyone gasping and sent them into a shocked silence.

A silence that was broken surprisingly by a Ravenclaw who voiced exactly what everyone was thinking.

“Merlin’s balls!”

**ALBUS DUMBLEDORE FOUND DEAD!**

Chapter End Notes

A/N 2: so…tell me, tell me; what did you guys think? Again, so sorry for the long, long wait. Hope it was worth it. I wasn’t too sure about the scene with Harry in Albus’ office or the scene directly after, so I hope it was ok. Also, the big jump from what happened in Hogsmeade to Halloween, don’t worry; the next chapter will have the details leading up to the Halloween announcement, including more on the aftermath of the Hogsmeade trip.

Next chapter is the final chapter (yes I know! I can’t believe it either ). And I will try extra hard not to take too long to get it out. As always, you know what to do; review please!

*Kila*
The End of the End

Chapter Notes

Apology: before you go any further, I just wanted to apologize and explain why this story took so long for this chapter to come out: it was my last year of school and I had to deal with an internship from the months of August to December and then, over the Christmas break, I was working on this and I had had every intention of finishing the story for Christmas or New Year’s at the latest but then plans derailed. Days before Christmas, my family had a big blow-up, one that almost descended into a fight; it was really bad. There’s been a long suspicion that my sister may possibly have a personality disorder and we’ve been dealing with that. The thing of it is though, because she’s now legally an adult, any eval has to be voluntary unless she becomes a complete danger (like suicide attempts or something) and is then forced by a doctor or she is forced by the courts. So over the next few months, we dealt with blow ups and it was just…I simply had no interest in writing. And then when I finally did, there was another blow up and that derailed me again. Things calmed down, but then I had to deal with the final semester of school and getting through finals and then graduation. But, things seem to be settling down with my family, and I’m done with school (yay me! I’m a college graduate with a BA degree…I’m so happy ) and I was able to work on the chapters and finally…after nearly a year…here it is!

A/N: Also, I want to say thanks to all of my fans who waited patiently for the story to be updated. I really am so sorry for the wait. Hope you guys like it.

A/N 2: this chapter was possible by a few different people who read it over, offered corrections, and added ideas: lordcromwell, Trousseaux, SaruwatariAsuka, and babyvfan. I appreciated it all guys, thank you so much!

Disclaimer: I own nothing…if I did, Ginny would have died in the CoS, Dumbledore would have choked on his lemon drops and Harry would have stood up for himself against Molly and Dumbledore.

Disclaimer 2: this story is based on characters and situations created and owned by JK Rowling and Bloomsbury/Scholastic. No money is being made and no copyright or trademark infringement is intended.

‘Talking’
Thinking’
|Fawkes/Hedwig’s mental speak|
|Harry’s mental speak|
Letter or commentary/introduction and flashback
~…~ indicates scene change

O.P.D.: Tuesday 31st May, ’16.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
Last time on RDA:

The morning started out regularly. The students got up and went to breakfast, conversations fluttering all around as they admired the Halloween decorations that were all over the school, especially the Great Hall.

Harry was sitting at the Slytherin table along with Cory and Luna, and their pets, when owls poured into the Hall, each of them carrying a newspaper.

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“Merlin’s balls!”

**ALBUS DUMBLEDORE FOUND DEAD!**

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A week and a half earlier—the Hogsmeade Weekend

The group was still talking about what had just happened; how Harry’s plan had been executed perfectly.

Gabriella was still in awe over it.

“I still can’t believe it,” the girl said, her eyes darting over to Harry and Draco. “That really was freaking amazing.”

Harry laughed, “It really was, wasn’t it?”

“This is the start, isn’t it?” Pansy questioned. “The end is near.”

“Yes it is,” Harry agreed. “What just happened should remove all doubts Molly’s interview had brought up, and within the next few days, whatever little remained shall be obliterated while at the same time, adding one more nail in Dumbledore’s coffin.”

“How are you going to do that?” Blaise asked, intrigued and so very curious and eager to know Harry’s plan.

“It’s my turn, right?” Cory asked as he threw a smirk at his friend.

“Your turn?” Gabriella was puzzled.

“Cory’s going to tell his story to the papers,” Draco clarified, “He’s going to reveal to the public what really happened in the Longbottom home all those years ago and Dumbledore’s role in everything.”

Gabriella’s, as well as Pansy and Blaise, eyes went wide. “Oh my god.” She stopped to think about it. “He’s dead. Dumbledore’s dead and he doesn’t even know it. There’s no way he’ll be able to recover from that revelation.”
“Exactly,” Harry grinned, eyes lighting up at the thought of Dumbledore crumbling.

The group shared a laugh as they continued on to the school.

~…~

Rita Skeeter was practically quivering with excitement as she quickly left Hogsmeade to make her way back to the *Daily Prophet* offices.

When she had decided to go to Hogsmeade earlier, in order to know what the townspeople had thought of her latest article, that’s all she had been expecting. In fact, she hadn’t even wanted to be in Hogsmeade initially.

But now she was glad she had made the decision to go. She had managed to get something better than those interviews and she couldn’t wait to get the article written and published.

It was so good that she knew she’d be able to convince her boss to put a rush on the prints and get the paper out by dinner.

A short time later, Rita arrived at the office, much to the consternation of her boss.

“Rita! What in Merlin’s name are you doing back here already?” the man yelled. “Shouldn’t you be getting the interviews?”

Rita couldn’t stop the grin. “I got something even better.”

The man raised an eyebrow. “And what is that?”

Grin still in place, Rita revealed what had happened earlier at Hogsmeade.

When she was done, her boss looked at her with the same dawning excitement. “Tell me this is not a joke.”

“It’s not!” Rita crowed. “I was there. I saw and heard everything.”

Rita couldn’t wait to get started on the article. She knew that the article would just prove what she had thought all along about Molly Weasley’s interview; that it was just a way to get back at Mr Potter for turning against her son. She also had no doubt that Dumbledore had been in on it.

She had never liked Albus Dumbledore for a simple reason; his image was too perfect. The man came off as too clean and it was as if he worked hard to project this grandfatherly, all-knowing man that just wanted the best for everyone. He had everyone fooled.

And it was that reason why she had been convinced that he was hiding something. She had always thought that Dumbledore was not as saintly as he came off and this was just another stepping stone to prove her right.

She knew that there was more to this Dumbledore saga and she was sure she would find it in his past. She just had to keep looking.

For now, though, she had a very juicy article to write.

~…~

Everyone in the Hall was staring at the Gryffindor table where Harry was sitting with his group, Hedwig still on his shoulder.
The whispers had been running rampant ever since they had gotten back from Hogsmeade and they hadn’t stopped.

Some students had even had the courage to come up to Harry, asking questions and wanting to pet the phoenix.

Not even the professors had been exempt from throwing their own whispers and looks.

Up at the Head table, McGonagall stared at her House with disbelief.

“Did you have any idea, Minerva?” Filius asked.

“None,” McGonagall shook her head. “I simply can’t believe it.” She paused. “And yet, on the other hand, in a way I can. Mr Potter has changed and has proven to be an exemplary student and person. His personality and his actions prove to be those of a leader; of something his peers can look up to and are willing to follow.”

“That is certainly correct,” Severus said, “Who else would be the one to be chosen to be bonded to one of the rarest and most powerful creatures but Mr Potter?”

“High praise Severus,” Pomona teased.

Albus stood up, drawing everyone’s attention and silencing the students.

“Congratulations to Harry Potter for his extraordinary bond to a white phoenix,” he said, “Phoenixes are known to not only as paragons of good, but extremely cautious about who they choose to bond with. It takes an extraordinary person to bond with a phoenix and I could think of none better to be chosen by a white phoenix than our very own Mr Potter. Congratulations Harry.” Cheers of applause echoed throughout the Hall from almost every single one of the students.

Albus sat back down, his blue eyes focused on where Harry and his friends are sitting. While he was curious and intrigued by the fact that Harry had a white phoenix, he was also deeply satisfied.

‘I already have Fawkes, but with the boy, I now have access to one of the most powerful creatures. Of course, I am a bit insulted that I was not the one chosen. However, I cannot be too upset as Harry does what I want.’

Albus smiled, but in reality, he was smirking. ‘Choosing that boy was the best thing I ever did. With him comes the power and connections of the Malfoy family, along with the friendships he has made with the rest of the Slytherins; something I have now come to see as being beneficial to myself and my cause. And now, the power of a white phoenix. Neither Tom, nor the ministry, will stand a chance against me.’

~…~

Later that night, the next part of Harry’s plan went into motion.

It was well after curfew and as such, no student was in the common room, or Halls when Harry and Cory quickly made their way from Gryffindor Tower down to the dungeons to Snape’s office.

Most of the portraits were either asleep or elsewhere and the few that were still there and awake, would later attest to the dishevelled, urgent and slightly frightened look about the two boys.

~…~
Pius Thicknesse was a very practical man who, despite what others may think, actually did love his job. Sure there were times when he cursed Merlin and all his ancestors, but other times more than made up for it.

As it was, when he arrived at work, he was surprised, curious and a bit flabbergasted to learn that not only Harry Potter, but Severus Snape and the former Neville Longbottom (and wasn’t that just a kick when it came out? Neville Longbottom was actually the son of one of their most infamous Death Eaters: Bellatrix LeStrange. Come to think of it, the true story behind all of that had yet to be revealed) wanted to see him.

After settling into his office, he gave permission for the three men to enter.

“Mr Potter, Mr Snape and Mr LeStrange,” Pius started, after they had taken a seat, “I was told that you three needed to speak with me immediately. First off Mr Potter, let me say congratulations. Phoenixes are rare and treasured creatures and I honestly have to say I’m not surprised that one chose you to be bonded to.”

“Yes,” Harry nodded, “And thank you. That’s pretty much the same thing everyone said and I’m humbled and amazed.” He smiled, “Of course I wish everyone would stop, but I get that this is me and people won’t stop talking for a while. But that’s not why we’re here.”

Pius nodded. “And why is it exactly that you’re here?”

The three men exchanged looks.

“What we’re about to tell you might think is completely unbelievable and made up,” Cory started, “but it’s the truth.”

Pius’ curiosity increased.

“As you know,” Harry started, “I was bonded to a phoenix yesterday. Well that wasn’t the only strange thing to happen. Apparently last night when we fell asleep, she sensed something was off with Cory; she thought he was having a nightmare, so she used her magic to try and calm him down.”

“Instead though,” Cory picked up, “it didn’t just calm me down. It turns out, the nightmare was a memory that I’d forgotten and when Harry’s phoenix used her magic, it unblocked whatever was keeping the memory locked up and fully returned it to my conscious state.”

Cory paused and looked down, seemingly unsure. “When I woke, I remembered it exactly, but I-I couldn’t believe what it was. It freaked me out, so I woke Harry and told him and then we both went to Professor Snape.”

“Why Snape?” Pius asked. “Why not your own Head of House?”

“Well to be honest,” Harry said, “We really weren’t sure about the memory, and we figured that since Professor Snape is the Potions Master, and probably the best at Veritaserum, he’d be able to tell if the memory was real or just something made up.”

“And what exactly is this memory of yours that you needed not only confirmation from a Potions Master,” Pius asked, “but also needed to see me?”

“Honestly?” Cory said, “I think it would be better if you see the memory for yourself.”

At that point, Severus stepped forward and held out his hand; in it, was a vial that held a mercury-
like substance.

Pius’ eyes locked on to the vial. He got up from his desk and went over to his bookshelf. He tapped his one in a short pattern and the shelf shifted away revealing a space, where a pensieve was resting.

He grabbed and walked back to his desk and set it down.

Severus stepped forward and handed over the vial and Pius poured it in. within minutes, he was emerged into the memory.

Knowing that it wouldn’t take long for Pius to view the memory, the three stayed quiet.

About ten minutes later, Pius exited the memory, and when he did, he dropped into his chair in complete shock. He could not believe what he had seen, and he was also wishing for a strong drink.

“Merciful Merlin,” Pius breathed out. “What in all of magic did I just witness?”

He shifted to look at the two boys. “You’re sure this memory is real? This is not just some fantasy?”

“I checked the memory myself for any inconsistencies and found none,” Severus answered for the boys.

“And why come to me with this?” Pius asked, “why not go to Dumbledore and question him?”

At that, Cory fidgeted, bit his lip and looked away briefly. “I thought about it. I really did because honestly, I was just as confused and shocked and horrified by the memory. And I was going to, but then I remembered all the weird stuff that happened to Harry and how it seemed as if the Headmaster had a hand in it and suddenly it was like I wasn’t too sure that if I had gone to him, he wouldn’t have lied or done something to me.”

“So we went to Professor Snape,” Harry picked up with the explanation. “We figured, if there was anyone who would know what to do, it would be him. Professor Malfoy was there and he told us that we had to take it to the Aurors. When we couldn’t decide which Auror to contact, Professor Malfoy suggested you; he said that as the Head of the DMLE, you would be not only the most logical choice, but an impartial one as well.”

“And why isn’t Lord Malfoy here as well?” Pius wanted to know.

“He said something about not being overwhelming or having accusations come out of manipulation,” Cory explained, “As everyone knew how he felt about the Headmaster.”

Pius sat back in his seat and took in the three men.

A part of him wanted to dismiss these claims, memory included, after all, it was Bellatrix LeStrange and her husband and brother-in-law and they were wanted by his department. However, he was a man of the law and no matter who it was, if a crime was committed, they had to be dealt with.

“I will look into this,” Pius told the trio in front of him.

“I,” Cory started and then stopped. “Thank you.”

He then stood up, as did Harry and the two moved to join Severus at the door.

The older man opened it, but Harry stopped before he could go through.

“Mr Potter?” Pius asked.
“What’s going to happen to Dumbledore?” Harry asked. “And please don’t take offense to this, but, are you really going to look into this?”

Pius raised an eyebrow. “Do you believe that because of who he is and who the victims were that this will be swept under the rug?”

“Yes?” Harry’s answer came out more like a question. He sighed then continued, “I don’t want to cast doubt on anyone here and accuse anyone of not doing anything because of who it is, but the truth is, I grew up a lot over the summer and it made me start to rethink a lot of things. And I know you know about the articles, pretty much everyone does, and giving those interviews just made me really start to question everything, especially where Dumbledore was concerned.”

He paused. “So yes, I do think that because it’s Albus Dumbledore, that it’ll be swept under the rug. No matter who they are, no parent deserves to have their child taken from them, and especially in such a way. I know what it’s like to not have your parents and I wouldn’t ever wish that on anyone.”

He paused again. “And the fact of the matter is, if Dumbledore really did do all those things deliberately, and he attacked the LeStrange family, it makes me wonder just what else is he capable of. And if he did something to the LeStrange family before.”

The statement raised Pius’ curiosity even higher than it was. “What do you mean by that?”

It was Cory who answered. “My real parents are known as some of the most dangerous, powerful Death Eaters. So how exactly was I stolen from them in the first place? Neither Frank nor Alice Longbottom struck me as the type to overpower the LeStranges, especially Bellatrix. So that only left one conclusion, and that conclusion also makes you wonder; Bellatrix wasn’t always maniacally insane, so how did she get to that point?”

With that haunting question, the three left the office.

After they did, Pius sat back in his chair, his eyes focused on the pensieve in front of him, though not really seeing it.

In all honesty, he never really liked Albus Dumbledore. Yes, the man had made strides for their world, but there was always something off about him.

But this still shocked him.

When those articles had started coming out with Mr Potter’s account of his time at Hogwarts and before, it had shed a light on Dumbledore and had made him start to question the old man but he had never expected something like this; to think, the idea of one of the most influential man in their world could and would be responsible for something so heinous.

What those articles had implicated, what this memory added on, it painted a story of a man who was far more manipulative and darker than anyone realized.

Standing up, he left his office and made his way to the Minister’s office. Something like this, nothing could be done without Scrimgeour being aware of it.

~…~

The next morning, the entire Hall went dead silent when the Minister, Pius Thicknesse, Head Auror Kingsley Shacklebolt and five Aurors appeared.

Albus stood up and stared at the entourage. “Minister Scrimgeour, is there a specific reason for your
visit? And may I ask as to why the Head of the DMLE and six Aurors are in attendance?"

“Albus Dumbledore,” Pius spoke, his voice loud in the silent Hall. “You need to come with us. You are to be detained and held for questioning.”

“May I ask in regards to what?” Albus asked, the familiar twinkle slowly leaving his eyes.

“Kidnapping of a minor, use of an Unforgiveable on said minor,” Pius explained, his gaze hard. “Use of an Unforgiveable on others, circumventing an ironclad will, stealing of funds from a minor, illegal placement of a minor, child endangerment.”

As the list of charges were read, students and professors alike stared at the Headmaster in growing disbelief and horror. The man they had trusted, someone they placed so much faith in, turned out to be as bad-or even worse-than the Dark Side.

This was Albus Dumbledore, leader of the light. How could he be accused of kidnapping someone, or even willingly and intentionally putting a child in danger?

But then, their eyes shifted to Harry, and some of them couldn’t help but to remember the interviews he had given, with details of his life before Hogwarts and during.

Albus took a step back, away from the Head table, his blue eyes sweeping over the room. The gaze came to a stop where Harry was sitting at the Slytherin table along with Cory and Luna. He saw the mocking light in the green eyes and it was then he experienced a startling clarity, one that made him lose his composure to glare outright at the teen.

Of course, with everyone’s attention on Albus, they all saw the glare and to whom it was directed at.

With effort, Albus tore his eyes from the Slytherin table and looked back towards the Minister.

“Everything I did was for the greater good,” Albus said, “I must continue my work and as such, I’m afraid I cannot comply.”

At that moment, Fawkes flashed into the Great Hall.

Albus raised a hand for the phoenix to land on and within seconds was covered in a flash of phoenix fire.

“Damnit!” Scrimgeour shouted, incensed that Albus had gotten away. “We need to find him—

He stopped speaking abruptly when he realized that Albus had not flashed out with the phoenix as he had thought.

He wasn’t the only one surprised.

Albus was as well when he realized that he was still in the Great Hall.

Fawkes let out a trill and flew to land on the table in front of Harry.

“Fawkes, what is the meaning of this?” Albus glared down at the phoenix.

Fawkes let out another trill.

“Holy Merlin,” Harry breathed out, his eyes on the phoenix.

Immediately, all eyes turned to him.
“Harry,” Draco touched the dark haired teen’s arm. “What is it? What did Fawkes say?”

“Are you saying he can understand the phoenix?” Scrimgeour asked, staring at Harry in disbelief.

“Yes,” Cory nodded, without taking his eyes off of his best friend.

“Well of course he can understand the phoenix,” Seamus rolled his eyes and replied in a ‘duh’ tone of voice, “if you haven’t noticed, he has one.”

“What did he say, Harry?” Pansy asked. It was taking all of her Slytherin prowess not to lose control and start smiling like a fool. It was immensely satisfying to see Dumbledore be thrown off of his pedestal and by no other than the one he had kept as his pet project.

“Fawkes said that he’s not taking Dumbledore anywhere,” Harry answered, his gaze still locked on to the bird. “What you just saw was him dissolving the fake bond that was between him and the headmaster.”

“Fake bond?” Minerva whispered, though again, it was heard by everyone due to how quiet the Hall was.

Fawkes trilled again, this one longer than before.

“He said that Dumbledore isn’t his true master,” Harry translated, drawing confused and disbelief from the crowd. “He said that during one of his burning days, when he was weak, Dumbledore forcibly bonded the two of them together,” this drew horrified gasps, “thus preventing him from being with the one he had already chosen to be bonded to.”

All eyes shifted to look at the Headmaster.

Albus felt rage fill him, unable to believe what was happening, or even how it was happening; somehow, all his plans seemed to be falling apart. And he knew, somehow, it was all because of Harry.

Pius was disgusted. Phoenixes were revered creatures, and they were also somewhat rare. To see a phoenix was an amazing sight, but to be bonded to one was even more amazing.

Dumbledore had been held in such high regards, not only due to his actions during the first war with Voldemort and the war with Grindelwald, but mainly due to his bonding to a phoenix. And now to learn that it wasn’t a true bond, but rather one that was due through sneaky manipulations; that the old man had waited until the Phoenix had had its burning day and to then capitalize on its weakened state to bond it to him…

This was just adding on the list of crimes Dumbledore had committed and gotten away with.

Rufus Scrimgeour glared at the Head table, directly at Dumbledore. When Pius had arrived at his office yesterday with his accusations, he had considered them ludicrous. He may not have really liked Dumbledore (and honestly that had more to do with the man’s garnering respect and popularity and refusal to see things his way) but he did acknowledge that the man had made more strides for their world than anyone, and that included the former Minister for Magic Cornelius Fudge.

So while he may not have personally liked him, he did respect him. And so, hearing the information that Pius had brought forth had pulled immediate dismissal from him, until his DMLE Head had forced him to listen and to think.

Pius was right. Those articles filled with all those interviews that gave an insight into the last five
years, plus Mr Potter’s life; painted a man that stayed in the background pulling strings and
manipulating people to where he wanted, no matter the cost.

Unbidden, Scrimgeour gaze drifted over to Corvus LeStrange. The latest point to add to
Dumbledore’s machinations.

“This is nothing more than a simple misunderstanding,” Albus cajoled, though he was furious.
“Everything can be explained.”

“There’s no way out Albus,” Rufus spoke up, taking a step forward, his wand at the ready. “It would
do you good to simply come with us to sort all this out. If it all is, as you say, simple
misunderstandings, then that shouldn’t be a problem.”

“I cannot do that,” Albus replied. He took a step back and smirked at the room. Using his connection
to the wards as Headmaster, he poured his magic into it, and opened up enough space that would
allow him to Disapparate…and he did.

Everyone was too stunned to react immediately.

“Bloody hell!”

The outburst ended the stunned silence and soon, the Hall was filled noise as everyone tried to
process what exactly had just happened.

At the Head table, although Minerva wanted to simply collapse from the overload of what she had
just witnessed, she knew she couldn’t. With Albus’ departure, she was now the acting Headmistress
and her duty was to her students.

Knowing she wouldn’t be heard over the cacophony of noise, she pointed her wanted at herself,
casting a quick Sonorous.

“Quiet!”

The effect was instantaneous. Everyone, including the Ministry group, went silent.

“Minister,” Minerva started, “I assume that with Albus’ abrupt departure that your business here is
now concluded?”

Scrimgeour threw a look around the Hall and took in the faces of the frightened, yet horrified,
students.

These students had just been dealt a devastating realization and they needed to deal with it, without
the ministry breathing down their necks.

A quick glance at the Head of the DMLE showed that Pius agreed.

“It has,” Pius nodded.

“What’s going to happen now?” Pomona asked.

“Now,” Pius replied, “We send out posters announcing that Albus Dumbledore is wanted for
questioning and that he’s considered dangerous.”

“We’re sorry that the students had to bear witness to this spectacle,” Scrimgeour apologized. “We
will take our leave now and allow you to continue with your day.”
With one final nod, the Minister and his group left the Hall.

“You know,” Lucius spoke up when the men were gone, “there is one intriguing question I would like to know the answer to.”

“And what would that be?” Minerva asked.

“If Dumbledore is not the true bond mate of that phoenix,” Lucius spoke up, his grey eyes locked on to Fawkes, “then who is?”

At that, Fawkes let out a trill and Harry gasped.

“No freaking way!”

“What is it?” Cory asked, looking at his friend.

“Who is it?” Gabriella asked at almost the exact same time.

Luna started giggling and that triggered Harry as well, whose mind was boggling at who Fawkes’ bond mate was; the image alone was enough to keep him going.

Fawkes answered the question when he flew up towards the Head table to land on the shoulder of none other than Potions Master Severus Snape.

“Bloody hell!” Ron exclaimed, staring in disbelief and for once, the entire student body, and professors, were in agreement.

~…~

Later that afternoon, owls arrived at the school; to no one’s surprise, they were all carrying the *Prophet* and the main article was about what had happened in the morning.

**SCANDAL AT HOGWARTS!**

*If you thought that there could not be any more scandal, then you were wrong. Earlier today, the Minister for Magic, along with the Head of the DMLE Pius Thicknesse and a few Aurors made their way to the Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft. Their intention? To arrest Albus Dumbledore.*

*Shocked? So were we here at the Prophet. So why was Albus Dumbledore arrested?*

*As you are all aware, for the last few weeks, our very own Harry Potter gave some interviews to our counterparts at The Quibbler and within those interviews, Mr Potter revealed a story of a horrific childhood where he was basically made to live as a slave to his relatives.*

*And the stories hadn’t stopped at his childhood. They had continued on through all his years at Hogwarts where they brought forth the allusion that someone had orchestrated everything horrible that had ever happened in Mr Potter’s life, including the initial placement with the abusive relatives and every “adventure” that has happened during his stay at the school. And just who was that someone? None other than Albus Dumbledore.*

*It seems now as if our esteemed Minister has finally brought formal charges against Dumbledore, and the charges are as follows: kidnapping, use of an unforgiveable on others, circumventing an ironclad will, stealing of funds from a minor, illegal placement of a minor, child endangerment.*

*So what prompted the Minister, and DMLE, to finally make a move against the favoured Albus*
Dumbledore? The story of another student, Corvus LeStrange.

But it’s the next bit of news, ladies and gentlemen, that will leave you truly horrified. When confronted at the school with the charges, Mr Dumbledore dismissed them before attempting to flee via his phoenix Fawkes; a mode of transportation that he has employed in the past, most recently being last year when he left the school, forcing the then Minister for Magic Cornelius Fudge to place the late Dolores Umbridge as Headmistress.

However, to the shock of not only Dumbledore himself, but to everyone watching (students, professors and Ministry workers alike), while the phoenix did “flash” out, it returned mere seconds later and it was then, a horrifying truth was revealed.

The Phoenix, the symbol of purity and Light and change and the beacon that stood at Dumbledore’s side for over two decades, did not belong to him. How? As you all know, phoenixes have burning days; a period when they die and are reborn from the ashes. And apparently, during one of Fawkes’ burning days, Albus Dumbledore came across the newly reborn phoenix and during its vulnerable and weakened state, Dumbledore forcibly bonded himself to the bird.

You read right, readers. Albus Dumbledore forcibly bonded himself to a phoenix. This writer can only gather that such an act was done to establish a façade towards the people; to fool everyone into believing that he was a man of virtue, a paragon of good. It was done to hide his true nature, to hide who he really was.

It makes you wonder, doesn’t it? If Albus Dumbledore, the man who we placed as the leader of the Light, the one to stand between us and the Dark side, is capable of such a horrific act, then what else is he capable of?

The British Wizarding World was in an uproar.

And they weren’t the only ones.

Over in France, Marcellin Delacour was in his home office when Louvel Beauchene came through his Floo.

“Louvel!” Marcellin looked up in surprise. He was not expecting the other man. “Comment vas-tu? Assoyez-vous s’il vous plait.” (Louvel! How are you? Please…sit.)

“Je suis bien, merci,” Louvel replied as he took the offered seat. (I’m well, thank you.)

“Alors, que vous apporte par ?” Marcellin asked. “Tout est-il bien ?” (So what brings you by? Is everything well?)

“Avez-vous vu le papier de Prophète Quotidien ?” Louvel asked as a reply. (Have you see the Daily Prophet paper?)

“Non,” Marcellin shook his head. “Qu’est-ce vers cette époque ?” (No. What is it about this time?)

Without saying anything, Louvel placed the paper down in front of Marcellin.

The man picked it up, and as he read, his eyes went wide.

“Mon dieu !” Marcellin exclaimed. “Combien exact est-il ?” (My God. How accurate is this?)

“Je conjecturerais que c’est très exact,” Louvel said. “Souvenez-vous que nous nous sommes rencontrés avec Monsieur Potter, seigneur Voldemort et le Malfoys il y a quel quelques semaines ? À
l’époque, ils avaient fait des allusions à ce qui est mentionné ici.” (I would surmise that it is very accurate. Remember we met with Mr Potter, Lord Voldemort and the Malfoys a few weeks ago? At the time, they had made allusions to what is mentioned here.)

“Devrons-nous commmuniquer seigneur Voldemort pour savoir ce qu’il a à dire à ce sujet?” Louvel asked. “Ou bien nous attendons?” (Should we contact Lord Voldemort to know what he has to say about this? Or do we wait?)

“Nous allons attendre,” Marcellin replied. “Je vais parler de Fleur et Bill première. Ils seront peut-être en mesure de faire lumière sur ce.” (“We’ll wait.) (I will speak to Fleur and Bill first. Maybe they will be able to shed some light on this.)

Louvel nodded in agreement as his gaze returned to the paper.

~…~

Harry knew that he would have to speak to Voldemort about everything, so while the rest of the school was still discussing the events of the day, he quickly made his way to Snape’s private rooms, using the Floo to go Voldemort’s rooms at Malfoy Manor.

When he got there, he saw that the man was reading the paper, so he sat in the chair in front of the desk and said nothing, allowing him to finish his reading.

His presence drew the attention of Nagini and her snakelets, and immediately the little ones quickly made their way from their mother’s side to him.

{They’re gorgeoussss Nagini} Harry told the proud mother who was curled up in front of the fireplace. {And getting sssso big}

{They are bratssss} Nagini replied, {All of them}

Her voice sounded like she was laughing though, which became more evident when the little snakes around Harry started hissing in response, voicing their displeasure at their mother’s words.

Harry laughed even as he ran a finger down the top of the head of the snake around his shoulder.

Voldemort placed the paper flat on his desk and raised his gaze to the young man in front of him.

“So?” Harry asked when he realized he had the elder’s attention.

“This is beyond perfection,” Voldemort said.

“I know,” Harry nodded. “It played out exactly how we planned; perhaps even better.”

“And the next phase?” Voldemort asked.

“Ready to go,” Harry told him. “Cory’s going to “receive” an invitation for an interview and he’s going to tell his side of the story; about what really happened the night that Bellatrix and the others attacked the Longbottoms.”

“Excellent,” Voldemort grinned.

“And there’s more,” Harry could barely hold back his glee. “Fawkes revealed who his bond mate really is.”

“And who is it?” Voldemort raised an eyebrow. He had to admit that he was very curious about that
bit of information; ever since the young man opposite him had revealed the truth about Dumbledore and his precious phoenix, it was a question that had always been at the back of his mind.

“Professor Snape,” Harry chuckled.

Voldemort was not someone who was stunned quite easily but he was this time. “Severus is the true bond mate for that phoenix?”

“Yes,” Harry nodded. “You should’ve seen the look on his face, and everybody else’s come to think of it, when Fawkes made that revelation. It was priceless.”

Voldemort needed to see it. “When you return, send a message to Severus for me.”

Harry nodded, knowing exactly what and why the elder man wanted to say. “I will.”

After saying goodbye to Nagini and her young ones, Harry went back to Hogwarts, reappearing in Snape’s private office.

Catching sight of his professor, and Fawkes, he grinned. “He wants to see you when you have free time.”

Severus scowled. “Why do I have distinct feeling that he now knows of my new addition?”

Harry laughed. “I don’t know; maybe because you’re kind of suspicious and paranoid? And because I told him.”

Severus let out a deep sigh, as if irritated though feeling affection for the teen in front of him. “Very well. Message received.”

Giving a nod at the dismissal, Harry waved to Fawkes and left the room.

After Harry left, Severus made sure that everything was in order, and that his room locked and warded. Satisfied that everything was in order, he headed to the fireplace and prepared to Floo to Voldemort’s private quarters.

Before he could even grab the Floo powder, Fawkes flashed onto his shoulder.

Severus sneered at the bird. He was still surprised that the animal had chosen him as its bond mate.

|Come now Severus| Fawkes spoke, a grin very clear in his voice. |Exactly who else would I have chosen?|

|Anyone else but me| Severus replied, |Do I look like the type of person that would require a phoenix, of all magical animals, as my bond mate?|

|Technically| Fawkes rubbed his head against the man’s cheek. |I’m more your familiar than your bond mate|

“I hate you,” Severus snapped, “I hope you know that.”

Fawkes let out a trill, one which Severus knew meant the bird was laughing at him.

Severus ignored the bird and reached for the powder.

|You do know that I can just flash you over to your mate, do you not?|
To be honest, and though he would never admit out loud, he hadn’t really thought about that. Having a phoenix, one that could provide instant transportation, was still something new and he honestly wasn’t sure when he would get used to it.

“Very well,” Severus replied.

Letting out another trill, the two flashed out.

~…~

Voldemort was going through some papers when a flash of fire drew his attention and he looked up to see Severus standing there with Fawkes on his shoulder.

He was on his feet immediately and moving towards his lover.

“So it is true,” Voldemort mused as he came to a stop in front of the other man. “Fawkes really chose you as his bond mate.”

“I am still questioning why,” Severus replied dryly, but beneath that, Voldemort could hear the surprise and awe in the younger man’s voice.

Severus may project indifference but deep down, Voldemort knew his lover was awed. And judging by the way the phoenix was completely relaxed and looking at his lover, he knew that the bird knew that as well.

“May I?” Voldemort directed his question to the bird, his hand raised in the air.

Fawkes shuffled and let out a trill and then a nod.

Smiling slightly, Voldemort gently patted the bird on its head. “Interesting turn of events this is.”

“I’ll say,” Severus agreed. “I assure you, no one was more shocked than I was.”

“From what Harry told me,” Voldemort chuckled, dropping his hand back to his side, “The students perhaps have surpassed you in that regard.”

Severus paused as he thought on the reactions of the students, and conceded with a nod, “Perhaps.”

Voldemort turned to go back to his desk, with Severus following. “Things are advancing splendidly. It won’t be long now.”

“Agreed,” Severus nodded, “With Dumbledore now considered a fugitive and majority of his crimes out for the world to know, I’d dare say this “war” is now yours.”

Voldemort chuckled as he leaned back in his chair. “Come now, is it really fair to call it a war when we have been manipulating everything from the start? Dumbledore played his part perfectly, as did we, and we are simply reaping the rewards.”

“The war is over before it began,” Severus murmured.

At his words, Fawkes let out a trill. [Exactly.] the phoenix murmured mentally. [Albus Dumbledore played with one too many lives. It was time that he be removed from the power of pedestal that he placed himself on.]

“What did he say?” Voldemort asked, his expression of intrigue.
Severus repeated the phoenix’s words.

“And to think,” Voldemort added on with a grin, “It was at the hands of the pawn he himself created.”

Severus let out a low chuckle, one which prompted Voldemort to join in as well. The two men spent a short while talking before Severus took his leave.

After Severus left, Voldemort sat his desk, a small smile playing on his face. Things were progressing smoothly. The end was near; he could feel it. Dumbledore will meet his end, and the Wizarding World would be theirs.

Miles away: The Burrow

While Voldemort was contemplating, and enjoying, his imminent victory, Molly Weasley was angry. Possibly the angriest she’s ever been. She was staring at the paper that lay on the table in front of her, but she wasn’t really reading the words. She’d read it already and what she had read enraged her.

She could not believe how they were ruining Albus’ name the way the way they were. Albus Dumbledore was a great man and he had done great things for their world. Without him, they wouldn’t be where they were today; without him, Grindelwald would’ve won and they wouldn’t know how to defeat He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.

She could still remember when Dumbledore had told her about the plan to make sure the Saviour was inducted to the Light. How he had wanted her to be at the Platform to meet him and get him close to her family. She had been more than happy to do it as she had seen nothing wrong; after all, there was no way their Chosen one would be in Slytherin and surrounded by those awful people.

So she had taken him in, made him a part of their family. Of course they got paid for it; looking after seven kids and then the Chosen one was no easy nor cheap feat. It was a lot of effort to remain looking like they were poor so that the boy would still be enamoured with their family, that he would be willing to do anything for them.

After everything that had been done for Harry Potter, this was how he had repaid them? Telling all these lies and trying to turn the public against Dumbledore?

Well, not on her watch!

~…~

The red howler entering the Great Hall was not a surprise. Nor was it a surprise when it headed directly to where Harry was sitting. In all honesty, with all the revelations Harry had done, most were surprised that he hadn’t received one before now.

Instead, those in the Hall were filled with curiosity as to who would be the one sending the howler, and what it would contain.

“Are you going to destroy it?” Blaise asked, looking from the howler to Harry.

“I should,” Harry told him with a sigh, “but I honestly have this morbid curiosity to hear what it says.”

“No choice now mate,” Seamus grinned as the howler finally exploded and Molly Weasley’s voice echoed throughout the Hall.
“HARRY POTTER! HOW DARE YOU SPREAD THOSE FILTHY LIES ABOUT ALBUS DUMBLEDORE?! THAT MAN HAS DONE NOTHING BUT GOOD THINGS FOR OUR WORLD AND SHAME ON YOU FOR LYING! HOW COULD YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON HIM? WHAT WOULD YOUR PARENTS THINK ABOUT YOUR ACTIONS? YOU UNGRATEFUL CHILD! AFTER EVERYTHING WE HAVE DONE FOR YOU!

That was as far as the howler got as Sesshoumaru appeared and grabbed at it with his teeth, using his acid to dissolve it.

“Good boy,” Harry praised as he lifted the pup into his arms, gently rubbing his head.

“That was one angry woman,” Blaise shook his head.

“That was Molly Weasley in all her glory,” Harry retorted.

“You don’t seem to be angry over it,” Gabriella commented, looking at him with a slight frown. It wasn’t even her and she was upset over it.

“It’s nothing new,” Harry dismissed with a shrug, “It’s how she’s always been, only her target is now me. To be honest, I was kind of expecting it. The only thing I’m surprised about is that she took so long.”

“I don’t understand how she can still support him when all of his actions have been revealed,” Gabriella shook her head.

“The Weasleys are basically in Dumbledore’s pocket,” Draco sneered, “the rest of the family, especially the mother, would do anything that man asked without question. She will remain loyal to him no matter what and will look a fool for doing so.”

“What did you say about my mother?” Ron demanded as he stood behind the group.

The redhead held back a flinch and stood his ground when all eyes turned to him.

“You heard me,” Harry told him. “Dumbledore was as bad as Voldemort, and Mrs Weasley refuses to see that. She continues to defend him ever after all those truths came out and that makes her a fool.”

“You’ve changed,” Ron sneered, “And not for the better. I can’t believe after everything—

“Stop right there,” Harry cut him off. “Do not even dare to finish that sentence. Our entire friendship was a lie from the start; you were paid to be my friend; the entire meeting between me and your family at Kings Cross was staged so that you could find me later on the train and that I’d be close to your family.”

Ron ducked his head at the truth, not being able to refute the words.

Harry paused and looked at the teen in front of him before sighing and turning his attention back to Sesshoumaru. “The truth is Weasley, I’m done; done with you and the rest of your family. I honestly don’t care what you think or what you do as long as it doesn’t involve me or anyone I care about. Whatever friendship was there was all based on a lie and I’ve cut my ties. You should do the same and stop holding and harping on everything I do. That cannot be healthy. We’re not friends to be honest. We’re not even enemies. We’re just…not anything to each other.”

Ron stared at the dark haired teen for a few minutes before he turned and walked away without saying anything.
“Huh,” Draco mused, “I’m a bit surprised that Weasley actually walked away without some type of remark.”

“Do you think he’ll listen?” Gabriella asked, “Do you think he’ll let go and move on?”

“He better,” Cory shook his head, “Harry’s right. It’s tiring having to fight against him constantly. He’s no longer a friend and he’s not an enemy either. He’s…”

“Nothing,” a voice answered and the group looked up to see Luna joining them with Kilala and Kirara in her hands.

The girl ignored their looks and reached out to scratch Sesshoumaru’s head. “Hello lovely one.”

She handed Cory’s cat over to him and grabbed a few things to eat and took a seat next to her boyfriend.

The others exchanged amused looks.

“Well,” Blaise grinned, but not saying anything else. Although to be honest, he wasn’t sure there was anything else to say to that.

Gabriella shook her head with a grin, “You are one strange bird.”

Pansy’s lips curved into a smirk. “And that’s the way we love her.”

Luna smiled at both girls and started humming as she ate, absently petting her familiar.

~…~

THE TRUTH IS OUT!
THE REAL STORY ABOUT CORY LeSTRANGE/NEVILLE LONGBOTTOM
by Alexander Stockhausen

As you know, just a few days ago, our Minister for Magic, along with the Head of the DMLE and a few Aurors made their way to the Hogwarts School to arrest Albus Dumbledore. The man was wanted for questioning about the role he played in regards to Mr Harry Potter’s life, the horrific home life as well as the dangerous situations Mr Potter had been plagued by since his entry to Hogwarts. And now, another child’s horrific childhood can be laid at his feet. The child? Corvus LeStrange, formally known as Neville Longbottom.

In our previous article, we made mention of Dumbledore’s connection to Corvus LeStrange and what really happened that night at the Longbottom home. So, you may be wondering just what the connection is, and here it is; according to sources, Albus Dumbledore was there that fateful night at the home of Alice and Frank Longbottom. Albus knew that little Corvus was indeed stolen from his true parents, Bellatrix LeStrange and Rodolphus LeStrange.

Readers, these past few months have brought forth some of the most shocking revelations, and they haven’t stopped. Today, we add on one more to the list. The following reveals the true story about Corvus LeStrange/Neville Longbottom and the secrets surrounding how that came about, including the night the Longbottoms were attacked.

We received an exclusive interview with none other than Corvus himself and the details revealed will leave you breathless and in disbelief. So sit back readers and be prepared to be shocked, sympathetic and have your world turned.
Daily Prophet: Mr LeStrange, we are honoured that you chose us to give this exclusive interview to. To be honest, when we made contact initially, we had been prepared for you to tell us that you would prefer to use our counterpart The Quibbler.

Corvus LeStrange: Well, since you’re being honest, I’ll be as well. I was going to use The Quibbler, but I decided not to. I know that Harry prefers to use that paper, and a few students already think that I’m just some puppy following after him, so I figured I’d go different.

DP: Was Mr Potter in any way upset over your decision to use us, since it is no secret that we and Mr Potter have not had the best of relationships.

CL: Harry understood. He’s actually a very understanding guy once you explain your reasons. He may not agree with them, but he will support you. He’s my best friend and I’m beyond thankful for that. Without him, I’m not sure I would’ve made it through the last few months as I have.

That was as perfect an opening as possible into getting directly to the real reason behind this article.

DP: I’m glad that you brought that up Mr LeStrange. As you know, myself, as well as everyone else, is very curious about your story. What really happened that night? How exactly is Albus Dumbledore tied into this? How did you go from Neville Longbottom to Corvus LeStrange?

CL: Where to start with this story?

DP: as clichéd as it sounds, the beginning. What really triggered everything?

CL: Well then I suppose it all started this summer, when I woke up one morning and realized that I didn’t look anything like I did the night before; my entire look had changed.

DP: How exactly did that happen? That’s one point that many people, myself included, have speculated upon.

CL: That part is actually kind of funny. It turns out, it was all thanks to Harry’s phoenix.

At this, I had to interrupt. I was eager to know just how exactly Mr Potter’s phoenix tied into when Mr Potter did not gain his phoenix until recently.

DP: How exactly was that possible? Mr Potter gained his phoenix only days ago.

CL: Well, apparently from what we were told, Harry’s phoenix is actually his owl Hedwig.

Shocked my readers? So was I when that little bit of information was revealed. He had to clarify.

DP: Explain that for me please Mr LeStrange.

CL: Don’t worry. You weren’t the only completely shocked by that. You should’ve seen Harry’s face when she revealed it to him. The story goes that Harry’s phoenix was very sought after due to her rarity and because of it, many people had tried to bond themselves to her. So to protect herself, she had a wizard cast a spell on her that would disguise her in an owl form until she found the person she knew was hers. And that person didn’t come along until the end of summer 1991 when Hagrid bought an eleven-year-old boy a birthday present. Based on what she told us, or rather, told Harry and Luna, the moment she met Harry, she knew he was hers.
DP: How did Mr Potter not know that his owl was a phoenix?

CL: Because she never told him. Hedwig said she knew that Harry wasn’t ready magically to bond with her, so she decided to keep her owl form until that day came. She said that that day wasn’t going to come until probably next year, but then she saw how Harry was being railroaded and treated in the papers. After that, she knew she had to bond to him. Not only because he deserved it, but because she wanted people to see that he wasn’t how he was being portrayed.

I have to admit Mr LeStrange had a point there. Over the years, Mr Potter has been subjected to the harsh quill of my colleague Ms Skeeter and it was not always in a positive light.

CL: So anyways, I wrote to Harry over the summer because I knew he had lost his godfather and I didn’t want him to become too depressed or something. I wanted to let him know I was there to talk to, even if it was just to talk about stupid things like the weather or school or whatever. Just anything to make sure he didn’t get too into his grief.

And there was one night that Hedwig had delivered a letter from Harry and I had told her to stay over and fly back in the morning. Apparently, when I was sleeping, I must’ve had a bad dream or something and she said that she sensed something off. She said she sensed that there was some kind of block on me and she used her powers to remove it.

The next morning, I woke up and I looked like this. I freaked completely out and immediately sent a letter to Harry. I was scared and terrified and horrified because I thought he’d reject me, but he didn’t. He wrote back, invited me over and calmed me down. Then he told me that I was still his friend no matter what. I think I cried when he said that because I really wasn’t expecting it.

If you could see the emotions playing across his face when he spoke those words. I was humbled to see just how much the friendship between these two boys were valued. We’ve read about and I am sure that it is seen often throughout the school grounds by the other students and so, I am a bit awed to see a glimpse of it.

DP: Tell me about the events a few days ago. What led to Albus Dumbledore’s arrest?

CL: Ok, so it was after we came back from Hogsmeade. Everyone was in awe over Hedwig’s form, and I suppose they are even more so now that I told everyone Harry’s phoenix was actually his owl in disguise.

He laughs a bit at this, but the joy and pride for his friend is very obvious.

CL: So we go through the rest of the day and then we go to sleep. And that’s when things changed. Again, I had a nightmare and Hedwig was in the room and sensed it so she tried to ease the nightmare. Only when she tried, she realized that it wasn’t simply a nightmare but actually a memory. She used her magic to clear it up and that’s when I woke up, once again freaking out. I immediately woke Harry, told him what happened, and then the two of us practically ran to the dungeons to Professor Snape’s office.

DP: And what was the memory?

CL: It was of the night the LeStranges attacked the Longbottoms. In the memory, I’m being
held by Alice Longbottom and Bellatrix LeStrange, along with her husband and another man are pointing their wands at us. Baby me is crying and Bellatrix is yelling at Alice to return her baby to her. Alice refused and replied that Bellatrix didn’t deserve to have a child when she herself couldn’t.

That started a fight and somehow, Bellatrix managed to get baby me from Alice. She then told her she would pay for taking her child and that’s when she cast the Cruciatius Curse. While she did that, Rodolphus and his friend did the same to Frank. Before they could leave, Albus Dumbledore appeared and told them that he couldn’t allow them to take me.

He threw a spell, one which Professor Snape identified as a Dark Cutting Spell, at Bellatrix, not seeming to care that she still held me in her arms. She managed to dodge it and she put me out of the way and turned to fight him alongside the other two.

Then Dumbledore overpowered them and cast a powerful memory charm. That’s where the memory ends, but since Bellatrix and Rodolphus ended up in Azkaban, I assumed the Aurors showed up not long after.

I was stunned, unable to believe what I had just heard. And I am sure readers that you are as well. To think, respected members of society, the late Frank Longbottom and his wife Alice (currently a resident at St Mungo’s spell damage ward) had kidnapped a child from Bellatrix LeStrange and her husband and that Albus Dumbledore was behind it all?

However, there is a question that is persistent. How exactly did Alice and Frank come to kidnap a child from the LeStrange family? Frank was an Auror, and a good one, but he was also no match for the neither Bellatrix LeStrange nor her husband, so it makes you wonder; was there someone else involved in it? And considering everything we have learned so far about the lengths Albus Dumbledore would go to, is it a far stretch to think that maybe, just maybe, he had a hand in that?

To what end?

And what of Lady Augusta Longbottom? Is she as shocked by these revelations as we no doubt are, or did she know about it as well? It was very curious that not once did Mr LeStrange ever mention going to his grandmother with the changes he experienced. Why is that?

It makes you wonder folks, from everything that has been revealed, is Albus Dumbledore the good guy he has everyone believed he is, or he is in some way, worse than You-Know-Who?

The article went on a bit more to continue questioning Dumbledore’s ethics, as well as who else could’ve possibly been involved.

Combined with all the previous articles, it was all very damaging to one Albus Dumbledore.

~…~

Albus Dumbledore was not having a good time. Ever since that blasted day when the Aurors had shown up at the school, things have been going downhill.

‘No. things have been going downhill since that idiot Black got himself killed.’

For all the plans he had made, he had never counted on it being foiled by Sirius. The reading of his will had thrown everything off balance; the emancipation of Mr Potter, which led to his relationships with Mr Malfoy and the Slytherins and the dissolution between Mr Potter and his two friends, friends that had been carefully selected and turned.
He had thought that he had lost his greatest pawn, but had been thoroughly surprised and calmed to know that not only had he not lost his pawn, but that he had gained more as well.

But now, he knew; now he knew that it had all just been a ploy. The brat had played him. He had played them all.

When he looked back on every interaction he had had with Potter, he could now clearly see when he was being manipulated, and like a fool, he had allowed it to happen.

He hadn’t seen what was going on. And it had cost him.

But how? How could he have missed it?

A thought came to him. The Malfoys. From the very beginning he had been sceptical of the association between the Malfoy brat and Potter, but he had been assured that what he had thought was not the case.

He had been so sure that instead of the Malfoys influencing Potter, it was the other way around. Now it turns out he was so very wrong.

And Fawkes! How dare that phoenix turn on him?! He needed the ruddy animal to convince people to trust him and more importantly, to get through pesky wards.

Everything, all his hard work, ruined!

A flash of fire interrupted his thoughts and he turned, not seeing anything immediately. One more glance around and he caught sight of a bit of white parchment laying on a table.

Albus walked over, a bit of hesitancy in his steps, and picked up the letter.

Dumbledore,

The time has come old man. We will meet on the eve of Samhain, where it all began and we will end this once and for all.

LV

Albus crushed the note in his hand, his blue eyes hard and his lips pressed into a flat line.

“So, he wants to end it all,” he muttered, “what should I do? Should I follow this letter and meet him? Or should I arrange a little surprise instead? Perhaps go to the Ministry and inform them of Voldemort’s whereabouts.”

He paused. “No…I can’t do that. After the events of the last few days, those fools at the Ministry will waste too much time trying to question me instead of doing what I asked. No…I can do this on my own. I will defeat Voldemort and then, I will show them why I am the best thing for this world and the greater good.”

When he was done, the Wizarding World would once again stand behind him. And he would bring Harry Potter to heel and punish him, along with all those who had opposed him and had dared to besmirch his name and good standing.

Eve of Samhain: October 30th

Down in the Chamber of Secrets, in the private chambers of Salazar Slytherin, sat Harry and
Harry and Draco sat together in one of arm chairs near the fireplace a bit away from the others (which were the three Slytherins, Cory and Luna).

“Are you scared or worried about tonight?” Draco asked, looking to the fire and not to his boyfriend.

“A little,” Harry admits, turning to look at the blond. “But more than that though, I’m just ready to be done with it all. I just want it to be over and to move on with my life.”

“Agreed,” Draco finally turned to look at the other teen. “Just promise me something?”

“What?” Harry asked.

“I know Dumbledore is a powerful and it won’t be completely easy to take him down,” Draco spoke, “So I know you can’t promise not to be injured or get killed. So promise me this; promise me you’ll try to come back to me. I don’t care if you’re injured, I just want you to not end up dead.”

Harry stared at the blond, green eyes boring into grey; he could see determination lurking in the depths, but beyond that, he saw the fear and that made him nod.

“I promise.”

“Good,” Draco replied.

He leaned up and pressed his lips to Harry’s, shifting his body to be more comfortable as the kiss deepened.

Harry wrapped his arms around Draco, pulling the blond even more into him as the kiss continued.

The kiss didn’t last long as Gabriella came over to the two of them, interrupting, with a grin on her face. “Stop making out and come join us. You’ll have plenty of time for that later.”

The two separated and while Draco glared at his fellow snake, Harry simply chuckled and stood up, pulling the blond with him.

The three joined the others and sat on the large couch, with Cory, Luna, Blaise and Pansy moving to take up spots on the floor and in the closest other arm chair.

“So how exactly is everything going to go down?” Cory asked, wrapping an arm around Luna’s shoulders, “I mean, what’s the plan? Or can’t you tell us?”

Harry shook his head before explaining what the plan for the night was.

Gabriella interrupted, “Godric’s Hollow. Isn’t that where—”

“Yeah it is,” Harry nodded, knowing what she was going to ask. “A bit of irony and poetic justice mixed in together, I suppose.”

“It’s a bit perfect actually,” Blaise said thoughtfully, “but then again, I think that’s why that specific location was chosen.”

“We should focus on other things,” Luna said, “We do not want our entire focus to be what shall transpire tonight. Let’s give Harry a relaxing evening.”

The others agreed and they ended the talk of the upcoming meeting and shifted to more mundane
things and a few games to help them pass the time.

_Voldemort’s Private Quarters: Malfoy Manor_

“Do you believe he’ll show up?” Bellatrix asked as she looked around at her Lord, husband and brother-in-law.

The four were having a meeting about what would happen later that night.

“He will,” Voldemort said with confidence.

“But will he be alone?” Rabastan asked.

“Dumbledore’s pride and ego to believe that he is all powerful and there is no one stronger,” Voldemort explained, “No one that can best him, will be his downfall. To that end, he will show up alone tonight simply because he will believe that no one else will be needed. However, if he does show up with reinforcement, I am very sure that we can handle it.”

The three nodded in agreement. They were three of his elite Death Eaters for a reason.

“It will not be easy to kill him,” Rodolphus stated with a bit of reluctance.

“Agreed,” Voldemort nodded, “If it was, he would have been dead already. No. it is going to take all of us to dispatch of him. However, we will have one advantage that he will not know about.”

_Godric’s Hollow: just over two hours before midnight_

Albus wasn’t a fool. He suspected that Voldemort would have one or two followers with him, but he was confident that he would be able to defeat them without too much fuss.

So as he made his way through the grounds, barely sparing a glance at the preserved destroyed house that last housed the Potters, he had his wand at the ready.

When he got to the back, he saw Voldemort standing there along with Bellatrix, Rodolphus and Rabastan LeStrange.

“I will admit,” Voldemort remarks with a smirk, “There was a tiny part—a very tiny part, mind you —of me that did not think you would show.”

“And why would I do that Tom?” Albus asked. He used the other’s birth name, knowing how much the man hated the reminder. To his surprise, the man didn’t even flinch nor did he show any other reaction to the name.

“And may I ask, why they are here?” Albus gestured to the LeStrange family.

“It’s very simple,” Voldemort told him, “you see, they have a grievance with you for what you have done to their family and they would like payback for it.”

“What I did was for the best,” Albus said.

At his words, Bellatrix let out a snarl and sent a spell in Albus’ direction, only for the man to block it.

“So be it,” Albus nodded.

The battle started. Albus and the three LeStrange exchanged a volley of spells.
If Albus had thought that it would have been easy to dispatch of the LeStrange, he was sorely mistaken. Something he was coming to realize as the fight continued on; yes, he was holding his own against them, of course he was—he was Albus Dumbledore, defeater of Grindelwald, after all—and he knew they were powerful, but not compared to him.

This fight should’ve been over already.

Even through the volley of spells, Bellatrix was able to read the other man’s face and saw that frustration and irritation that she wasn’t even sure he was trying to hide and she couldn’t help but to taunt him.

“What’s the matter Old Man?” she sneered, “Thought we’d be dead now, didn’t you? Thought you would’ve had easy to kill us?” she cackled as she sent a bone crushing spell his way.

Albus managed to block that spell but got hit by the cutting spell that Rabastan sent his way. Enraged, he whirled around and used a wandless, and nonverbal, blasting spell and sent the man flying off his feet to land on the ground a short distance away.

“One down,” Albus mused with a chuckle.

Rodolphus’ eyes darkened even more at the sight of his brother’s body and he fired a quick succession of spells at Dumbledore.

He desperately wanted to check on his brother, but he knew that he couldn’t. Dumbledore had to be taken care of.

The fight continued on and Albus, wanting to end it, shifted to dark spells.

Of course Bellatrix had to say something.

“Looks like you’re not as Light as you make yourself to be,” the woman sneered, “but we already knew that. Showing your true colours now, aren’t you, Old Man?”

“It had to be done,” Albus told her. “You were not fit to raise a child. It was all for the greater good, you understand that?”

Bellatrix let out a screech of rage and increased her attack on the other man.

With a shield in place, Albus was able to block her spells and while wordlessly sending a few of his own; one of them, a Bone remover, caught Bellatrix in her left arm and the woman collapsed from the pain.

Rodolphus made the mistake of taking his eyes off of his opponent to look at his wife, and it allowed Dumbledore to hit him with a spell, sending the man off his feet.

Bellatrix staggered to her feet and glared at Dumbledore with eyes full of hatred.

“Rodolphus, are you conscious?” Voldemort looked over at his loyal follower.

Letting out a groan, Rodolphus cradled his abdomen, he just knew that a rib or two was broken, and slowly sat up, “Yes My Lord.”

“Take your brother and make sure you both receive medical attention,” Voldemort told the other man, to the surprise of Dumbledore.

Albus never once thought that Voldemort genuinely cared for his followers and yet, based on what
he was seeing, and hearing, it looks as if he was wrong.

Though he was a tiny bit reluctant to leave, he knew he had to. So, Rodolphus made his way to his brother’s side and activated his hidden Portkey.

“I am tired Tom,” Albus said, “of playing with your pets.” Bellatrix bristled at the words, but said nothing.

“Very well,” Voldemort nodded, “Far be it from me to deny you the chance to battle.”

The fight that ensued was more intense than the ones previous. Unlike their previous encounters, more specifically, the one they had had at the Ministry, this one was a fight to the death.

The fight went on for a while, with neither man able to land a hit on the other.

Voldemort threw a quick look at Bellatrix, and in that look, invited her to join in on the fight.

“I thought it was just between me and you Tom,” Albus said after blocking one of Bellatrix’s spells.

“You are getting your battle with me Old Man,” Voldemort explained, “but who am I to deny my follower her right to fight against you?”

And as the fight continued on, Voldemort couldn’t help but to feel a small sense of relaxation. He was of course, fully concentrated on the battle, but for some reason, he wasn’t really worried; he knew that it would end tonight and while it was a struggle, somehow he knew that the night wouldn’t end with his death.

Feeling almost joyful, he decided to tease the Old Man.

“I’m bored,” Voldemort declared as he stopped fighting and just shook his head with a sigh. “You’re boring me.”

He saw the rage in the blue eyes and on the old, wizened face and laughed.

Deciding it was fun, he continued with his plan. Turning his back to Dumbledore, he spoke as he took a step forwards. “Maybe I’ll go and look at some of these graves.”

Albus felt rage over the seemingly casual dismissal from his former student. This was a battle and he was Albus Dumbledore. How dare the man laugh and then turn his back on him?

Raising his wand, he fired off a spell.

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Hidden from Dumbledore’s sight, Harry watched the battle. As much as he wanted to fight the man for what he had done to him, he knew that Voldemort and the LeStranges deserved that honour more.

His turn would be to deliver the final blow; literally and figuratively. Dumbledore would learn without a doubt that Harry was never on his side and that he had been played so very well before Harry killed him.

He winced when he saw first Rabastan, and then Rodolphus get hit by the spells that put them out of the fight and couldn’t help but once again admire Bellatrix when the woman didn’t even make a move to leave.
However, when he saw Dumbledore about to fire at Voldemort’s back, he decided it was time to step in.

“Protego. Expelliarmus,” Harry said as he made himself visible. “Accio Dumbledore’s wand.”

The wand flew into his hand and Harry stared in bemusement watching as the shock in the blue eyes turned to disbelief, betrayal and then anger.

“Surprised?” Harry grinned as he took in the expression on the other man’s face.

Bellatrix took advantage of Dumbledore’s distraction of Harry’s presence and sent a cutting charm, neatly severing the man’s right leg from his body, followed closely by a Crucio.

Albus fell to the ground from the pain of the Crucio and his missing leg. But despite the absolute pain he was in, it wasn’t the top priority on his mind. Instead he was completely focused on the teen’s presence. He was completely shocked to see the teen standing there. It was one thing to have his suspicions that the brat wasn’t on his side, but he quite honestly was not expecting to see him standing at the side of Voldemort.

“It’s fitting, isn’t it?” Harry remarked casually as he looked around the place. “How we’re back here; back where it all started basically.”

Albus glared at the teen. To think he had spent so much time cultivating the boy to be his weapon and the brat had dared to turn on him!

“Tomorrow,” Harry continued, “Your death will be plastered all over the papers. Halloween has always been special and yes, technically, this is off by a day—or night—but I still think it fits.”

“What would your parents say?” Albus cajoled, “Do you think they’d be happy knowing that this is where you end up? On the side of their murderer?”

Harry let out a dark chuckle, “But they aren’t here, are they? So, it’s kind of a moot point. And don’t think you’re going to try and play the loving grandfather and try to talk your way out of this. It won’t work. Your death warrant was signed the night Sirius died; though neither of us knew it as of yet.”

“Everything I did,” Albus shook his head in supposed disappointment. “I did for the good of the Wizarding World.”

“Spare me the bullshit,” Harry rolled his eyes, “Everything you did, it was for the good of Albus Dumbledore. You didn’t care about anything or anyone unless or until it could benefit you in some way.”

Albus opened his mouth to refute the statement, but Harry cut him off.

“No. I honestly don’t want to hear anything else you’re going to say to try to convince me to not do this.” He sneered at the man, “You’re going to die tonight and nothing is going to change that.”

“You won’t do it,” Albus tried once last time, “You won’t.”

Voldemort chuckled, while Bellatrix laughed outright.

Harry raised an eyebrow and raised his wand. Still staring the old man in the face, he used a cutting charm.

Before Dumbledore drew his next breath, the spell hit its mark and the man’s body collapsed while
his head rolled away, coming to a stop near Bellatrix’s feet. The woman stared down at the head and resisted the urge to stomp on it.

“Why didn’t you use the *Avada Kedavra*?” Bellatrix asked, looking over at the young man.

Harry shrugged, “Possibly because he expected it. I was actually going to use a sword, but well, I’ve only handled those once and that was without training. I thought this was much more fitting anyways.”

“What will we do with him?” Bellatrix looked over at Voldemort.

“Leave him where he is,” Voldemort commanded, “I want his body to be found just the way it is.”

He then turned to Harry. “You may return to the school. Severus and the others may know what has transpired.”


| Already finished? | the phoenix asked as she settled on Harry’s shoulder. |

| Yes. I’m ready to go back! |

Turning to look at Voldemort and Bellatrix, the phoenix let out a soft trill, sending feelings of calm and warmth through them before she flashed out.

With the teen gone, Voldemort turned back to his subordinate.

~…~

Harry and Hedwig reappeared in Snape’s office where he saw that along with Draco and Severus, Lucius and Remus were there waiting as well.

“Well?” Remus demanded as he quickly moved from Lucius’ side to his cub.

“It’s over,” Harry told him, but speaking to the room as well.

The relief in the room was very visible and Remus pulled Harry into a tight hug.

“And what of our Lord?” Lucius asked.

The two broke apart and Harry moved to sit next to Draco before he answered Lucius’ question. “He sent me back, and he stayed behind with Bella.”

“How are you feeling?” Draco asked, turning to look at his love.

“Free,” Harry revealed with a smile, “the bastard paid for what he did and he’s now no longer in a position to hurt anyone again. I think he was surprised to not only see me there but when I actually delivered the final blow. He was not expecting it at all.”

“And there were no traces that you were ever there?” Severus asked.

“None,” Harry shook his head, “At no point did I use my main wand.” He then pulled out Dumbledore’s. “I was going to snap this in half, but something stopped me.” He stared at the wand. “I have no idea what I’m going to do with it though.”

“That’s Dumbledore’s wand?” Remus asked.
“Yeah,” Harry nodded, “I disarmed him when he was about to fire at Voldemort’s turned back.”

“So he’s really and truly gone?” Draco repeated. Dumbledore was a powerful man and was very manipulative and always seemed to be able to get himself out of the trickiest of situations.

“Yes,” Harry nodded, “he’s gone.”

“Now we can move forward,” Remus said with a smile.

“Not just us,” Lucius mused, “but rather the Wizarding World as a whole. Dumbledore’s presence kept many actions from being taken and with him now completely out of the way, we can go forth in implementing the plans that will benefit our world and make it less of the laughingstock of the European Wizarding Worlds and to the glory I know it can be; to the glory it should and would have been.”

Murmurs of agreement came from the others before Severus looked at his students.

“The both of you should return to your dormitories,” he advised.

Nodding at their professors, and Remus, the teens said goodnight and left the room.

When Harry turned to make his way up to Gryffindor, Draco reached out and grabbed his hand, arching one blond brow.

“And just where do you think you’re going Potter?” the blond teased.

“Well, I was going to the Tower,” Harry replied with a smile, “but I guess that’s not the case.”

“You’d guess right,” Draco said, “Come on.”

Still holding hands, the two made their way down to Slytherin. When they entered the common room, it was to see a few students still awake and after bidding them a hello and goodbye, they made their way to the dorms.

Closing, and locking his door behind them, Draco directed Harry to the shower, while he changed out of his school robes and into a pair of pyjamas. He then laid out a set for Harry.

When Harry came out the bathroom twenty minutes later, it was to see the blond sitting on the bed, reading a Potions book.

Harry quickly got dressed and then joined the blond on the bed.

Draco put his book away and pulled his boyfriend into his arms, allowing Harry to rest his head on his chest as he pulled the covers up over them.

Normally, they’d be sleeping in the other position, with Draco the one in Harry’s arms, but not tonight. Tonight Harry needed comfort, even if he hadn’t outright said it, and they both knew it.

Things were silent between the two for a while before Harry started shaking and Draco felt wetness on his chest.

“It’s ok,” Draco whispered as he gently ran a hand over his boyfriend’s back, soothing him. After some time, when Harry’s shaking and tears had stopped, Draco spoke again.

“How are you doing?”
Needing to look into those grey eyes he loved so much, Harry sat up to face Draco. “I honestly am not sure why I even cried. I mean, I didn’t even like him much and with everything he’s done to me.”

“Because it’s over,” Draco told him, “Harry, the man manipulated your life to suit his purposes without thought of what it would do to you. You’ve spent the last five years going against him, even if it was in secret and then you openly defied him once you lost your last connection, a connection that was lost because of him. You’re crying not because you miss him, but because of relief. It’s finally over. Dumbledore is dead. He paid for what he did and now, we can finally breathe and live our life without worrying about what that manipulative old coot would pull next.”

Harry stared into the eyes, and face of the boy he loved. “I love you, you know that?”

Draco grinned, “Of course you do. And yes, I do know that.”

The two shared a kiss.

“Now come on,” Draco said as he pulled Harry to lay flat with him, foregoing the normal position and instead allowing Harry to curl into his chest. “It’s been a long night and you need your rest. We both do.”

Letting out a sigh, Harry wrapped his arm around the blond’s waist and rested his head on his chest, allowing Draco’s heartbeat to ease him into sleep.

Draco pressed a quick kiss to his boyfriend’s forehead and fell asleep not long after.

~…~

Back at Godric’s Hollow, Voldemort stood with Bellatrix, both of them standing near the body of Albus.

Voldemort had sent out a call to one of his followers and the two were simply waiting on him.

“After everything,” Bellatrix spoke, “the old bastard is finally dead.”

“Yes,” Voldemort nodded, “And at the hands of the child he tried to mould into his weapon. The irony amuses me.”

Before anything else could be said, a Death Eater Apparated into the area.

“My Lord,” the man bowed and waited until Voldemort gave permission before he straightened out.

“I have a task for you,” Voldemort told the man. He then proceeded to explain exactly what he wanted him to do and took an oath that he would not reveal anything else other than what he was told.

“It will be done My Lord,” the man nodded and Disapparated.

When he was gone, Voldemort turned to look at Bellatrix. “You need to get checked over and heal those ribs before the damage goes any further.”

“Yes my Lord,” Bellatrix nodded.

Voldemort held on to her and activated his Portkey and the two disappeared.

*Halloween Morning*
Students and professors were in the Hall eating; maybe on some subconscious level, they all knew that something major was going to happen because the Hall was completely filled. As it was, every student was in the Hall when the owls arrived.

The moment the wings and calls were heard, all eyes shifted to where Harry was sitting at the end of the Slytherin table with his friends.

They all knew that whatever was in the paper would no doubt have something to do with him.

And perversely, they couldn’t wait.

The morning started out regularly. The students got up and went to breakfast, conversations fluttering all around as they admired the Halloween decorations that were all over the school, especially the Great Hall.

Harry was sitting at the Slytherin table along with Cory and Luna, and their pets, when owls poured into the Hall, each of them carrying a newspaper.

As always, whispers started up as the students took in the sight of the owls.

The papers were dropped on the table and the owls flew away as the students, and professors, grabbed them.

The headline had everyone gasping and surprisingly, it was a Ravenclaw who voiced what everyone was thinking.

“Merlin’s balls!”

**ALBUS DUMBLEDORE FOUND DEAD!**

Immediately the room was filled with whispers and not-whispers of “is it true?” and “who did it?”

Then, there was the sound of loud shuffling as everyone rushed to open the paper to read it for themselves.

“It says that they found Dumbledore’s body in Godric’s Hollow,” Daphne started reading, and though everyone else was reading for themselves, it seems as if, almost as one, the students had allowed her to read for all of them. “And that it looked as if he had been in a battle before he died based on the remnants of dark magic, the ruined site of where his body was found, and the state of the body itself.”

Murmurs started up, causing Daphne to look up at her fellow classmates with intrigued eyes.

“What else?” Lavender asked, completely captivated by the story. She wasn’t the only one.

“They’re wondering if he was possibly involved in a battle with You-Know-Who, but they won’t be able to tell for sure as of yet,” Daphne finished.

While whispers started at the other House tables, the Slytherin students exchanged looks; they would know the truth from their parents, at least, those who did follow the Dark Lord.

“What a way to start Halloween,” Harry muttered as he shook his head.

“ATTENTION!” Minerva stood up, her wand falling from her neck where she had cast **Sonorus** to make herself be heard.
The students all went quiet and turned their attention to their acting Headmistress.

“Due to,” Minerva threw a glance at the paper, “recent headlines, all classes will be cancelled for the day.”

The students erupted, the headline momentarily forgotten as it hit them that they would now have a three-day weekend.

With her students distracted, Minerva, and the rest of the professors, left the Great Hall and headed to the Headmistress’ office.

“Is this accurate Minerva?” Filius asked.

“That is what I am going to find out,” Minerva replied as she quickly wrote a note and sent it off to Kingsley.

Almost thirty minutes later, the man was standing in the office in front of the all the professors, revealing that the article was in fact correct.

“But how?” Pomona asked.

“From what I understand,” Kingsley said, “it started last night. Someone rushed into the Ministry claiming that there were spells and magic being used around Godric’s Hollow. According to the witness, he went to check it out after everything was quiet and that’s when he discovered Albus’ body. He assumed that the sounds he heard and the magic he knew was being used was now probably a battle of some sort.”

“Do we know who the former Headmaster was fighting and why?” Lucius asked, his grey eyes taking in the reactions of everyone present to report back to his Lord.

Kingsley shook his head, “Speculation has it that it could’ve been You-Know-Who.” He paused, “Although, another name was thrown out as well.”

“Who?” Minerva asked.

Kingsley appeared very hesitant to reveal the name, but it didn’t matter as Severus figured it out.

“You cannot possibly be serious?” Severus hissed, “Are you telling me that those imbeciles that work at the Ministry actually believed that a teenager could have done this? That they actually suspect Mr Potter?”

At his words, immediate protests erupted from the rest of the professors.

Kingsley held up his hand in surrender. “It’s not what I believe and of course neither the Minister nor my boss is giving any credence to that.”

“Well I should hope so,” Lucius drawled out.

“So what happens now?” Minerva asked.

“We will continue with an investigation to determine what really happened last night,” Kingsley told them, “but at this point, it is looking as if Albus was in a fight with someone and unfortunately for him, he lost. And as powerful as he is was, there’s only one person who could’ve held his own against him and that is You-Know-Who.”

“If it was You-Know-Who, and he won,” a professor asked, “then what does that mean for the
Wizarding World as a whole?"

Kingsley shook his head. “I don’t know. I guess we’ll find out.”

(One Week Later—November 7th)

If the Wizarding World thought that reading about Dumbledore’s death was the last shock, they were in for one last huge surprise.

**ALBUS DUMBLEDORE UNVEILED!**

**THE TRUTH BEHIND THE MASK!**

As you know, when it comes to writing articles, I have had no problem in misrepresenting the truth to produce better results. However, the last few months have taught me that sometimes, the actual truth is even juicier and more damaging than a well written lie.

We have seen and heard from our beloved Saviour, the truth of the horrors he endured throughout his life all at the hands of a man who claimed to want the best for everyone, a man who projected an aura of openness, kindness and a somewhat grandfatherly affect; a man who is there to listen and is kind to everyone.

It was a stunning truth that opened my eyes, and yours I’m sure, to the true face of Albus Dumbledore. This has been a year filled with revelations and unexpected upheavals (Harry Potter’s story, the LeStrange/Longbottom scandal, Dumbledore’s arrest, Dumbledore’s death [for more information on these events, pg. 3] and there is more to come.

For some time now, I had taken it upon myself to find out more about Albus Dumbledore. I wanted to know some reasoning behind the man’s actions other than his vaunted, “It’s all for the greater good” spiel. So I decided to go back to the past, to delve into Dumbledore’s childhood and teen years, hoping to find an answer. And I do believe I have.

Readers, what you are about to read is the story of the Dumbledore family; a story that is known yet not. It is one that will no doubt leave you shocked, as it did me, while also revealing just who Albus Dumbledore really was.

It turns out my faithful readers, that Albus may not have been the Muggle loving man that he portrayed to the world. The story starts with younger sister Ariana Dumbledore, who was attacked by three Muggle boys when she was only six years old, and Albus 10, who saw her doing magic. The attack left Ariana severely damaged to the point where she required constant care and supervision, but she could no longer control her magic and was seen as a threat to our world. To protect her from being locked up in St. Mungo’s, the family hid her away and moved to Godric’s Hollow, where they kept her inside at all times.

According to my source, the father Percival Dumbledore was outraged and took matters into his own hands; the elder Dumbledore attacked the three boys, doling out the punishment he believed they deserved. Percival ended up going to Azkaban for the attack, where he later died.

His sister’s affliction and his father’s death made Albus feel nothing but disdain and hatred for Muggles and it was that that made him connect with Gellert Grindelwald, the same Gellert Grindelwald who would later become known as the Dark Lord Grindelwald (for more on Gellert Grindelwald, including his rise to power and defeat, pg. 5) when he was seventeen. We all know that the two became close and were remembered to be the best of friends. But that wasn’t all. Based on what my source revealed, the relationship between Albus and Gellert went beyond friendship. That’s right readers, Albus Dumbledore and the then Dark Lord Gellert Grindelwald were a couple.
Now while the story goes that the friendship ended when during an argument, where magic was used, Ariana died as a result, the real story is much more horrifying. It turns out that both young men had plans to change not only our world, but the Muggle world as well. They wanted to rule over both with Gellert having power over our world and Albus over the Muggle world.

However, as time passed, both men wanted to rule the two worlds by themselves and their arguments devolved into a magical fight where young Ariana lost her life. It was at that moment, for whatever reason, that Albus subsequently turned on his lover.

The article went on to rehash the previous articles that talked about Harry’s life before and during Hogwarts and Albus’ role, as well as the LeStrange/Longbottom scandal.

It was all that the students, and the rest of the Wizarding World, talked about. And considering everything that had happened so far, they weren’t all that shocked to learn that Dumbledore had wanted to rule both worlds, however the fact that Dumbledore and Grindelwald were lovers was what shocked them.

The reactions ranged from disbelief (which was the for majority) to anger (this was from those staunch supporters of Dumbledore who still refused to believe anything bad about, this group was the smallest) to indifference (another small portion) to intrigue and delight (these were the ones who didn’t have any trouble believing it, those who disliked Dumbledore, or mainly those on Voldemort’s side).

Regardless of the reactions, one thing was common; it was a hot topic amongst everyone for weeks to come.

~…~

The rest of November passed by without incident as the Wizarding World as a whole, slowly got over the death of Albus Dumbledore. A few days after the article about Dumbledore, and Grindelwald, another article came out, and it was about the investigation into Dumbledore’s death and what may have actually happened at Godric’s Hollow the night before Halloween. It talked about the efforts of the DMLE and how they were still investigating and how they hoped to find answers soon; it also asked any witnesses or anyone who might know about the events to come forward.

Things settled back into a routine and the students at Hogwarts found themselves looking forward to Christmas break.

As it was, Harry and his friends were sitting together in the Slytherin common room.

“I think one of the best things this school ever did was have a Yule ball,” Pansy grinned.

Gabriella looked at her sallow Slytherin in slight confusion. “Yule ball? What’s that?”

“A dance,” Pansy clarified after seeing the girl’s confusion. “We had a Yule dance back in fourth year for the Tri-Wizard tournament. It was a lot of fun.”

Harry snorted. “Speak for yourself. I was completely miserable.”

“Because you secretly wanted to dance with Draco?” Cory grinned. “Or because you had to spend the entire night with a whining Weasley who was moaning about Granger?”

“Both,” Harry smiled.
“Say what you want about her now,” Blaise said, “but you have to admit that Granger had looked really good at the ball.”

Pansy raised an eyebrow at the Italian Slytherin, causing the others to snicker.

“Oh come off it Pansy,” Blaise rolled his eyes at her. “It’s true. Everyone was shocked by her appearance. No one had expected her to look that good…and to be with Krum of all people.”

“Sounds like it was amazing,” Gabriella said almost wistfully.

“It was actually,” Daphne said. “I kind of wish that we could have another.”

There was a moment of silence.

“Then why don’t we?” Pansy asked, looking around at her classmates.

“What do you mean?” Cory asked, “Have another ball?”

“Yes,” Pansy nodded. “Not only would it be the perfect way to end the semester, but it would be a perfect send off into break. And, if it is successful—meaning we thoroughly enjoy ourselves—then maybe we can convince the professors to make it a yearly thing.”

“We could even do one for Valentine’s Day,” Daphne suggested.

“I love that idea!” Gabriella grinned wide, her eyes practically glowing with delight. “Both of them!”

Harry let out a groan, dropping his head back to rest on top of Draco’s knees while the blond snickered above him; one of his hands came up to run through the brunet’s hair.

“What?” Draco grinned down at the teen

“I really don’t like dances,” Harry replied, “especially since I can’t dance.”

“I can teach you,” Draco replied, “So that’s not an excuse. You know it’s going to happen. Best get used to the idea now.”

“I am,” Harry nodded, “but at least this time I’ll be able to go with you.”

Draco rolled his eyes, “Well of course you will. Did you really believe I’d let you take someone else to this dance? Or that I’d go with someone else? No!”

“How idiotic of me,” Harry replied dryly.

“Glad you see the error of your ways Potter,” Draco grinned.

The group explained more on the Yule Ball to Gabriella and the excitement for another one grew; though they tried to temper it as they hadn’t told the professors as of yet and had no idea if the professors would agree to it.

The talk also included whether or not to once again invite the students of Beauxbatons and Durmstrung, despite there not being any particular reason (such as a tournament or something similar) for them to be there.

Soon after, the idea was pitched to the professors, and to the delight of the group, and the rest of the student body, the idea was accepted and the Yule Ball was set for Friday December 20th, the day before they would leave for break.
Over the course of the next few weeks, the Wizarding World settled down; as much as they could anyways as there was still this slight unease to the air as they realized that in the time since Dumbledore’s death, neither Voldemort nor his forces had made a move.

At Hogwarts, the students—in their minds—had way more important things to focus on; such as, end of term assignments and the Yule Ball; although to be fair, there was more interest for the Yule Ball than there were for the assignments as they spent more time focusing on that than actually doing work.

Soon enough, the night of the Yule Ball dawned. It had been decided that as a result of the short notice, the Durmstrung and Beauxbatons students would not be invited to this ball, but an invitation was set for any and all future ones. Still, the students thoroughly enjoyed themselves and the next morning, it was a group of tired, but very pleased students that appeared at breakfast.

“Last night was completely amazing,” Gabriella gushed.

“I know,” Daphne nodded, “it was just as much fun as the last Yule Ball.”

“I was a bit disappointed that the Durmstrung and Beauxbatons students couldn’t make it,” Blaise said, “but it was still amazing.”

As the group walked towards the carriages that would take them to the train, the conversations revolved around the ball and everything that had happened; the music, the outfits, the dancing and how the other students looked.

The conversation then shifted to what they would be doing for break.

They were all heading to Harry’s manor as the teen had extended the invitation weeks ago and, after conferring with their parents/guardians, they had all taken him up on the offer; more like Gabriella did as Draco, Cory and Luna practically lived there, and Blaise and Pansy spent so much time visiting it almost was as if they did live here.

It was tight fit, but they all managed to fit into one carriage. When they got to the train, they found a compartment as close to an entrance as they could, and took it.

As they settled in, Draco leaned his head on Harry’s shoulder and let out a sigh.

“Excited to go home?” Harry whispered to the blond.

“You have no idea,” Draco replied.

The two let the conversation of their friends wash over them as they settled in for the ride.

~…~

When the train pulled into the station, they quickly and efficiently got off the train and headed to the main pickup area. There, they saw Remus waiting for them.

“Hey cub,” Remus greeted as he pulled Harry into a quick hug, followed by Draco, surprising the blond, before smiling at the others. “How’s everyone doing? Excited to go home?”

“Yes sir,” the others nodded, but it was Gabriella who spoke.

“Alright then,” Remus nodded, “We’d best be off.”
He led them to a secluded area, and the teens all gathered round.

“Portkeys?” Remus asked and everyone pulled out the chain that was hidden around their necks and under their clothes.

When Harry had issued the invitation, he had had the necklaces that allow direct entrance inside the Manor made for the others.

“Outstanding,” Remus nodded. “Ready?”

“Definitely,” Gabriella nodded. She was very excited to see Harry’s Manor, and wasn’t that something? Someone her age had a manor—a manor.

Later, he wouldn’t be able to explain why, but Harry looked up and his eyes caught sight of Hermione just as she got to the barrier to get back to Platform 9 ¾.

Hermione paused, feeling eyes on her, and when she looked back, she saw Harry staring at her. An intense ache of longing once again flared within her when she saw that he was surrounded by his friends.

“Necklaces ready,” Remus spoke, drawing Harry’s gaze from Hermione.

Just before they activated the necklaces, Harry looked back at the girl and a small smile graced his lips.

Hermione stood staring at the spot the group just disappeared from for a few seconds before she made her way through the barrier. As she came out on the other side, she saw her parents waiting for her and quickly went to them.

The family exchanged pleasantries as they gathered her luggage and they settled into the car.

And as they pulled away from the station and started the drive home, Hermione thought back to the smile that Harry had given her before he had left and she couldn’t help the smile that graced her own lips. She knew it wasn’t enough to fix what had happened between them, but it was something she would cherish and a tiny part of her couldn’t help but to see it as a kernel of hope that maybe someday, things between her and Harry would once again be right.

~…~

The group arrived at the entrance to the Manor and immediately Gabriella’s eyes opened wide in astonishment.

“This is amazing,” the girl breathed out. “This is your home?”

“Yeah,” Harry nodded with a smile. “Come on.”

While the other teens settled in, Harry gave Gabriella a tour. He showed her the kitchens, the potions lab, the greenroom, a quick look outside, especially at the Quidditch pitch, and then finally, the room she would be staying in. The girl was amazed by it all, and said as much to Harry.

When they were done, they made their way to the rest of their friends were and found them in one of the dens.

“How was your tour?” Luna asked, looking over at the girl with a smile.

“Amazing,” Gabriella replied, “I’m kinda jealous that all of you get to live here.”
“Well if we’re being technical,” Pansy spoke up, “Harry, Cory and Draco are the ones that live here; along with Mr Lupin and Professor Snape. Luna, well, I suppose Luna lives here as well considering she’s here every day. But Blaise and I actually live with our parents and we just visit as often as possible. And since Harry is dating Draco, who has his father’s permission to be here, our parents don’t really mind either.”

“As if anyone would chance getting on the bad side of Lucius Malfoy,” Blaise snorted. “Certainly not our families.”

“I’d take offense,” Draco drawled, “but it’s true I suppose.”

“So what are we doing today?” Cory asked. “Considering it’s chilly and looks like it’ll snow any minute now, being outside is not an option.”

Everyone quickly threw out ideas, playfully shooting down each other’s when they didn’t agree with it. The discussion became more and more spirited, and as it did so, Harry took a moment to look over his friends. Some days he was still surprised by everything that had happened and how everything had worked out; he had only ever admitted to Draco under the cover of darkness, but there had been a part of him—small though it may have been—that had doubted that everything would work out the way that they had planned.

But it all had. Dumbledore had paid for his crimes and was finally gone from their lives, and now, they simply had the future to look forward to; a better future.

Chapter End Notes

A/N 2: So, how was this chapter? Were the fight scenes ok? (after all these years, i still can't write a proper fight scene lol). Review and let me know your thoughts. Just the epilogue left now.
The rest of the year passed by and the Wizarding World entered the new year without incidents. In the following months, rumours swirled around that the Halloween battle that had ended Dumbledore's life had been between the former leader of the Light and Voldemort himself. However, since no move had been made by Voldemort's side since then, even more rumours came about that just maybe the Dark Lord had died as well.

Although the Ministry, especially the minister, was eager to truly confirm whether or not that was true, they had to acknowledge the undeniable fact that they probably would never know exactly what happened that fateful night and that they couldn't continuously pour galleons and resources into it. So, they moved on.

As for the young teens, school continued on and before they knew it, the year was over and it was time for summer break. It was a unanimous decision that the summer would be spent at Harry's place, with the teens and the adults finally meeting Gabriella's mother.

Meeting Gabriella's mother wasn't the only thing that was experienced that summer. Just two weeks in, Harry received an owl from Hermione; it was a detailed letter further explaining herself and her actions and what truly made her turn against the Weasleys and in essence Dumbledore as well.

"What is it?" Draco asked as he looked up at his boyfriend.
"It's a letter from Hermione," Harry told him as he sat on the floor in front of the blond's seat.

"Really?" Pansy looked up from the book she was reading. "And why is Granger writing you?"

"Don't know," Harry shrugged, "haven't opened it yet. To be honest, I was a bit too surprised to see the letter."

"So open it," Gabriella encouraged.

Luna simply hummed from her place next to Cory, reading a book about magical animals.

Harry shared a look with Draco and when the blond nudged him, he opened the letter.

Dear Harry,

I bet anything you're shocked by the fact that I actually wrote you a letter and if you're actually reading this and haven't thrown it, then I am deeply grateful.

So the reason for this is simply because I need, not want but need, to apologize to you regarding my actions for the past school year; well, to be honest, for the last few years.

I never should've agreed to spy on you for Dumbledore. The only reason I can offer as to why I gave in, was because I felt like I still had something to prove; that I wanted to show all the Pure-bloods who thought I didn't belong that not only was I just as smart, and capable, but that I could gain a position that they may have deemed too superior for the likes of me. The thought that it would've been a bought position didn't really occur or sink in. We were friends first but I let everything he promised go to my head and allowed it to cloud my judgment and for that, I sincerely and deeply apologize.

It was my mother actually, who first steered me off of the path I was on to a new one. But even before then, now that I look back, I see that I had already begun to deviate from that path and it was all because of you. When the school year had restarted back in September, I was expecting things to continue on as they had before. Bypassing what had occurred in Diagon Alley just weeks before then, I was so sure that things hadn't changed that much and that that incident was just a fluke. I was wrong. At the time, I never took into account just how much Sirius' death would've changed you and since those changes went against what I was supposed to be doing, I didn't accept them. But just because I didn't, didn't mean that they hadn't affected me. It was after the situation between us, when we argued over Umbridge's death, when it felt like a veil was being lifted from my eyes, albeit very slowly. I still clung to what I was told but not as much at that time. Honestly, though? I cannot believe the way I behaved towards your reaction; I should've known better. I did know better because you were right. I was the one who helped with trying to heal the scars her "detentions" left behind and to judge you for feeling satisfaction at her death when I knew what she had been capable of...

And that day in Potions class when you rejected my help; it was such a slap in the face. For the first time, my intellect wasn't enough, it wasn't needed. And...that hurt.

But like I said, it was my mother who finally lifted the veil from my eyes. And how did she do it? I had written to her to complain about everything that had happened up to that fateful Quidditch practice. I knew she'd have a few scolding words, but I still expected her to be on my side. She was my mum. Once again, however, I was so devastatingly wrong. She tore into me. She reminded me of when we first met, how you risked your life to save mine; and how Ron had not been a very good friend or boyfriend given the fact that I was so willing to compromise my morals by stooping so low as to cheat to help him win, something I had never before done in my life. And then she went on to
praise you for standing up and finally, in her words, speaking out against the unfair unburden that
the Wizarding World placed on you the moment Voldemort was first defeated Halloween 1981.

When she told me that she didn't recognize the person I was turning into, it broke something within
me and I knew then that I couldn't continue to go on how I was. That's why I broke up with Ron and
that's why I came to you to apologize. Because it wasn't until that moment that I had realized just
what I had lost with my own actions and words.

I knew when I came to apologize that I would never be able to undo the damage I did; that all I
could do from that point was go forward. I will always regret my actions and the way I treated you. I
also wanted to offer up my sorry for even being a part of Dumbledore's plans. Now knowing all the
horrible things he's done, both to you and others, makes me sick to my stomach that I ever looked up
to that man and that I threw away our friendship for nothing.

You did what I couldn't. You stood strong in your convictions and beliefs and stood by your friends
no matter. The way you handled Cory's return is testament to that. I wish I could've done that
because I miss you Harry. So much. But I do understand that things have changed irrevocably
between us and I accept that now. But I think I needed to go through what happened to open up my
eyes and take myself off of the pedestal I'd unknowingly place myself on.

I don't know if we'll ever be friends again. But I will say this, if there's one thing I've learned from
you is to never give. So I won't. have a good life Harry and I do wish you the best in everything you
do. I also want to congratulate you on your relationship with Draco. I didn't understand it at first,
but I've come to realize that it does make sense, you and he. You fit together and I wish you both,
and the others, happiness.

Blessed be,

Hermione J. Granger.

"Huh," Draco murmured as one of his hands reached out to run through Harry's hair. "I have to say I
was not expecting that."

"Well Granger is a smart girl," Blaise offered up. "It stands to reason that she'd want to reach out and
apologize. Before this last school year, I would've said that she was someone who would never
admit they were wrong, but she herself proved me wrong when she not only broke up with Weasley
but came up to Harry to apologize as well."

"What are you going to do?" Cory asked.

Harry gave him a shrug. "Nothing really. I'm not even sure if it really changes anything between us."

"Playing Devil's Advocate for a moment," Gabriella spoke up. "but didn't you say that you were
pretending from the moment you entered Hogwarts? That you realized what they wanted out of you,
so you gave it to them. So if you think about it, you were basically lying to her about who you are."

Harry gave her a considering look before acknowledging her point. "True. But, I've always leaned
more towards the dark side than the light and I suppose I might've been testing her a bit, but
truthfully, even if I had revealed what kind of person I was, I don't think Granger would've been ok
with it; not completely. You think if she knew all the things I've done so far, that she would be on
board? No. Because regardless, she is someone who is Light to her core, so a friendship between us
never would've worked. In a way, it only worked because I kept my true nature hidden and
pretended to be the absolute Golden Boy."
"So it only worked on one level," Cory said thoughtfully, "but that level is a superficial one at best, and it wouldn't work at your core level; who you both are deep down; you, like you said, will always go more to the dark and yes, Hermione has spent the last five years getting into all sorts of trouble with you, but deep down, she will be more for the Light. Although, one could argue that she might possibly be more Grey than Light."

"What are you going to do?" Luna asks, looking at Harry with clear eyes.

Harry looks around at his friends. "What do you guys think?"

"Personally," Pansy was the first to speak, breaking the silence that hovered the room for the past few minutes, "I don't like her. She betrayed you to Dumbledore. Although, like Gabriella pointed out, you were deceiving her as well, so in some way, those two points cancel each other out. And, yes, she's smart, but she was also arrogant and condescending with it; and I know, that's something coming from me as a Slytherin, but we don't outright brag of our genius,"

"Except Draco," Blaise injected with a grin.

"Shut up," Draco replied, throwing a cushion at his friend.

"Point is," Pansy continued after a pointed look at the Italian. "She may be a genius, and have even been called the smartest witch of our generation, but nobody likes it to be thrown in their faces. She cannot handle someone knowing something that she doesn't know. If she could lose all of that, then I won't try to poison her or even glare at her too much if you do decide to retain your friendship with her."

Harry stared at the girl for a few seconds as Blaise laughed from his spot, before he nodded, "Good to know Pansy." He looked over at his fellow Gryffindor. "Cory?"

"My biggest fault with Granger," Cory started, "Other than the obvious of her once working under Dumbledore's orders and dating Weasley, is that she is a very judgmental person, even if she tries to play it off differently. It wasn't too much over the years, at least not until fifth year and the way she treated Luna, dismissing her words simply because it was something she didn't know or understand. And then this last year—before she got her head on straight—and how she treated you in Potions, expecting you to run back to her for help. If you got help from somewhere other than her, or you did something better and faster than her, then it was a huge issue. It's as if because she was proclaimed as the smartest witch of our generation, she believed that her words were law and absolute truth and if she didn't know about it or experienced it herself, then it simply must not be true. Look at how she treated you when it came out that Umbridge was dead? I do believe though that she does have some redeemable qualities, otherwise you wouldn't have given her that little piece of hope on the platform the day we left."

Gabriella looked confused, but she wasn't the only one. "What do you mean?"

"When we were on the platform," Cory explained with a slight smile, "just before we left with Remus, Harry looked over at Granger and gave her a small yet genuine smile. Based on her reaction, I'd imagine it was enough to give her hope and the courage to write this letter."

Eyes turned to Harry, but it was Draco that spoke. "I hadn't realized you had done that."

Harry shifted to look at him. "To be honest, I wasn't even really thinking about it and I honestly can't even tell you why I did it. Maybe I just felt as if it was time, you know? Dumbledore was dead, everything was exposed, plans had come to fruition. It was time. I meant what I said when I said that we could all move on now. After all, I did forgive her last year after she broke up with Weasley and
came up to apologize."

"So what are you going to do?" was repeated for the third time.

Harry hummed. "Nothing much really. She doesn't expect us to be friends, and neither do I. I'll acknowledge her words, but for now, that's it."

In the end, Harry replied back telling Hermione that while he appreciated her apology—and offering up his own—as of now, things would remain the same between them but he did leave an opening where he admitted that perhaps in the future, they might be able to call themselves acquaintances.

With that out of the way, the gang spent the rest of the day simply relaxing.

~…~

The next few weeks were spent getting reading ready for Harry's birthday. So anticipation was quite understandably the setting around the manor. Both the teens and the elves got into decorating the Manor after Harry had revealed that he had never had a birthday celebration, complete with parties and everything. At the admission, Remus had looked fairly murderous and it was only the calming touch of Lucius' hand on his arm that had prevented from him heading to Surrey to exact his revenge. When July 31st came, Harry woke up with a smile on his face, one that stayed on throughout the entire day as he celebrated his birthday surrounded by his friends and family.

And as it was, when seventh year started, it was a group of excited and well refreshed students that convened that first night in the Great Hall. The air buzzed with energy, not only for the new students, but also for the sixth years and also because it finally felt as if they could all breathe. The war was seemingly over and they had nothing to worry about, no deaths or attacks. All they had to worry over was whether or not Potions would be easier or what assignments were missed or would take the longest to complete.

Harry and Hermione, along with the rest of the group, slowly formed a tentative friendship; it started with a few 'Hellos', but it progressed as the school year continued on and they spent time in the library doing homework. For her part, Hermione was completely grateful and determined not to waste the second chance she had been given. December came around and with it, the now implemented annual Yule Ball before end of term; students from both Durmstrung and Beauxbatons were in attendance.

Fleur had attended as a chaperone, and she had spent most of the night talking and dancing with Harry and friends; it was something that had surprised the majority of the students, including Ron and Ginny as they hadn't known that their brother's wife was close to Harry or any of the others. The French woman was a delight and her eyes glowed with pride as she regaled the group with tales of her young daughter. The Yule Ball was once again a complete success and the students went home with smiles and laughter.

~…~

After graduation, things changed even more, but yet for the better. Plans had already been made during the course of the year, so it was simple enough to start implementing them. Draco had decided to do a Potions apprenticeship; his plan was to eventually become a Potions professor. As he had already made mention of his plans over the last year, Severus had adjusted his own to help, so Draco spent the following year shadowing some of the best Potions Masters in the world before coming back to work under Severus' tutelage at Hogwarts. Severus was delighted as that meant that he could finally move on from teaching at Hogwarts as it was never something he had ever wanted to do.
So September '99 found Draco becoming Severus' teaching assistant during classes, slowly moving from him grading some of the papers belonging to first and second years, to teaching a class once a week by himself by the end of term. When the new term started in January '00, he was teaching twice a week, alternating each week between first and second year students. Draco was slightly surprised at just how much he enjoyed teaching, but while he was, neither Harry nor Pansy and Blaise had been. By summer, Draco had not only a Potions Mastery, but also the equivalent of a teaching license and when the new school year started that September, Draco was a full-time professor. After much talking and many conversations, he and Severus had come to a mutual decision; instead of the older man fully retiring from Hogwarts, he would teach the fifth through seventh years as per his reasoning, those students would be the ones who had decided on a career that featured Potions as an aspect; Draco would teach the first through third years and the two would split the fourth years with Severus teaching Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaw while Draco taught Gryffindors and Slytherins.

Draco wasn't the only one to go the teaching route; Harry had decided to do so as well after much thought and consideration as to what he wanted to do. Many had expected him to go the route of the Auror force, but that wasn't the case. Harry had confessed to Draco, and then the others, that all he had been doing since he re-entered the Wizarding World was fight, and that he was done, unless it was an absolute must. It wasn't until a discussion where not only the DADA was brought up, but the way Harry had started teaching the other Lions about other things that were going on the world (the memory of Dennis and Colin and how he Harry had explained their deaths and the way that the other students had listened in rapture) that Harry figured out that he was going to follow in his boyfriend’s footsteps and become a professor as well.

So while Draco travelled the world doing his Potions gathering, Harry was learning and researching all he could about not only defence against the Dark Arts, but the Arts themselves; after all, as he had pointed out, learning about the origins of curses like *Avada Kedavra* and others, would remove most of the stigma and fear that surrounds the Arts. He too travelled the world, occasionally meeting up with his boyfriend so that they could spend time together and catch up on what the other was doing.

He was also helping Voldemort with his plans for the Wizarding World, including buying up plots of land, meeting with foreign dignities and getting to know more about not only the world he now lived in, but the entire world as a whole.

Cory had decided to do an apprenticeship in Herbology, but unlike Draco and Harry, he did not do it with the intention of becoming a professor. Instead, he had decided to open a plant emporium; a place where he would have the widest range of plants, from the common and basic variety to the rare and nigh impossible to locate ones; the Greenhouse back at Potter Manor was his base where he grew and tended the plants until they were ready to be sold in his store. After much searching, Cory finally found a nice spot in Diagon Alley; it was an empty building just past Ollivander's and after going through accumulating the necessary permits to not only buy the building, but also for his plants, by the end of summer of '99, his store *CL's All in Bloom* was ready to open.

When Luna graduated in 1999, she decided to continue the tradition that her and her father had started. So for the first few years after graduation, she travelled the world. The young girl found herself continuously going to many places, with Newt Scamander's *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* book as a guide. During her worldly travels, she sought out many different magical creatures, including those that others were convinced didn't exist but that she knew of. It was an amazing time for her as she had the complete support of her closest friends; knowing she had that base waiting for her, filled the young woman with a sense of joy and it translated well into her adventures. Unlike the others, she didn't go into teaching or open up her own store; instead, she wrote books about her travels and about each animal she encountered (including some that were not in *Fantastic Beasts*) and had them published. When Reperio Academy opened up in 2002, she was
asked by Voldemort (now going by Marvolo Prince) to be the professor of Magical Creatures and she accepted with complete delight loving the idea of showing young children the world through her eyes. Christmas that year brought another surprise when Cory proposed to her in front of their loved ones; she said yes before he had even finished his question.

Blaise, Pansy and Gabriella didn't travel the world like the others. Gabriella went to work in the Magical Child Services Department. She started out as an intern, learning how things worked, while also studying up on the laws surrounding abuse, neglect and everything else that affected a child being in danger. Her no-nonsense attitude combined with a compassionate voice rose her through the ranks and after a few years, she was one of the best MCS workers in the Ministry. Blaise also had a position in the Ministry. Using his mother's connections, and all the missions and lessons growing up and throughout his years at Hogwarts, he studied and learned all about the different departments in both the British Ministry of Magic and the Italian. When Voldemort became Minister for Magic, ousting Scrimgeour, Blaise was in perfect position to be the liaison between the two Wizarding Ministries. Pansy went into a different direction. Unlike her boyfriend and friend, she decided she wanted to be a lawyer. When she was questioned as to why, the reply was that she enjoyed verbally cutting people down and winning and she might as well transcribe that to a job that would pay her well. She studied under the finest barristers in Europe and like Blaise, when Voldemort became Minister, she had completed her studies and gained her license. She was put to the test when Alastor Moody and few remaining Order members brought accusations against Voldemort, going by Marvolo Prince, exposing his past as the Dark Lord and person who had fought and killed Albus Dumbledore.

Molly Weasley, as it turned out to their utter shock, had convinced her husband to use every morsel of coin in their name, pulling every heirloom locked in the bank, even going as far as to put their own house on the market, to support the cause. It was she who was seen marching down the streets with posters and flyers, reciting at the top of her lungs all the good the man has done for the Wizarding world, trying to keep Dumbledore and his utterly-shattered name alive. It was she who marched into the Ministry, demanding a trial to bring forth the truth once and for all.

And it was she whose face was fifty shades of mortifying red when using Voldemort's help, Pansy sliced the woman and her band of Order members to shreds with undeniable, unbeatable solid evidence that Marvolo played no part in Dumbledore's death.

What cemented her victory over the Weasley matriarch and their Order members, was Pansy's final words during the trial.

"If anything, given all the strings the man has been pulling for years to save face, all the lies, all the manipulations, I'd say that Albus Dumbledore finally got what was coming to him and justice was served."

With everything that had been brought into the light on Dumbledore's past, no one argued against the claim. Most certainly, not the judge, who glanced over from a shaken Molly Weasley to a smirking Pansy, and ruled in Pansy's favour with a final slam of his gavel, dismissing all charges the Order tried to bring in.

The emotions within the Order ranged from shock to fury, flinging loud protests left and right as they were led away by Aurors from the courtroom with Molly screaming the loudest. The exact opposite of her pale-faced, shock-slack husband who was a statue as Aurors carried him away.

Ron Weasley was present with his sister for the hearing, watching in shock as their parents were dragged away. He covered his bright-red face with his hands, avoiding cameras and reporters that swarmed them. Ginny, on the other hand, looked over the courtroom, as if she expected aid to fall
Hope lit her eyes as she spotted Harry across the room, watching them. Hope that quickly suffered a horrible, painful death as a smirking Draco cut her with a look before pulling Harry into a deep, slow kiss that the boy melted into like chocolate.

"Harry!" she shrieked, her cry falling to deaf ears. Harry, with a loud moan, wrapped his arms around Draco's neck and allowed him to be pulled in tighter.

Long minutes later, the two separated; still holding each other close, to share a smile.

"Well, that was certainly entertaining," Harry murmured.

"Which part?" Draco smirked. "The part where Pansy decimated the last of Molly Weasley's actions and those of the Order? Or the part where the Weaselette, even after all these years, still expected you to drop me and come to her aid?"

"Both," Harry grinned, kissing him briefly.

Draco laughed, returning the kiss.

"Now come on," Harry smiled, "Let's go home."

20 years after graduation...

"Aren't you ready yet?!" Harry shouted up the stairs. "It's getting late!"

"I'm coming dad!" a young boy's voice returned. Minutes later, he appeared at the top of the stairs, his trunk levitating behind him. "I'm ready."

"You're late," Harry snorted even as he smiled up at his son.

The boy rolled his eyes, and smirked, looking so much like Draco that Harry shook his head. "Not yet."

Seven years ago, during his routine visit to the House of Prince, an orphanage that Voldemort had built after he became Minister for Magic, Harry had met and quickly bonded to a then four-year-old Ryan; the little boy had been taken from his family (a single mother who was completely overwhelmed by her magical son and who admitted that she wanted nothing to do with magic) and had been placed in the orphanage where he had thrived in the company of others like him. He had taken to Harry just as quickly as Harry had taken to him and after spending a few more visits with the little boy and of course talking it over with Draco, they had decided to adopt him.

With the help of Gabriella, who was now one of the top workers in the Magical Child Services Department, the adoption had gone through fairly quickly and the boy went from being called Ryan James Stanford to Ryan James Potter-Malfoy. A few weeks after the adoption went through, after talking it over with Ryan, they had blood adopted the little boy. The result was Ryan now sporting a darker shade to the Malfoy blond hair but with the Potter messiness, grey-green eyes, Draco's smile and Harry's nose; personality wise, the boy was a mixture of both his parents with his own mixed in.

"Harry is Ryan ready?" Draco called out as he came around the corner. He stopped short when he saw his son and husband standing at the bottom of the stairs. "Oh. You are ready. Then why are you standing around?"

"No reason," Ryan shrugged. He looked around. "Where's Lainey?"
"In the kitchen eating," Draco told him, directing the boy forwards so they could start to leave. "She was almost done when I left to see what you were up to."

"I'm done daddy," the little girl as she came out the kitchen.

Three years ago, when again visiting the orphanage, they had met Elaine Rebecca Marshall. Draco had taken one look at the then feisty little six-year-old and promptly fell in love with her. Later he would claim it was because she reminded him of Harry. Little Elaine had lost her parents (who were both magical and living in England for the last few years) in a car accident almost a year before then and had been sent to House of Prince when no family came forward to claim her. They had done the same thing with her as they had done with Ryan; spending time and getting to know her and when the little girl was presented with the opportunity to go home with them, she had been excited yet shy (this time reminding Harry of Draco when it was just them sometimes) but had agreed. The legal and formal adoption had taken place a few weeks later. The blood adoption followed a month after that, resulting in Lainey with blond curly hair, emerald eyes, Draco's pointed chin and Harry's smile.

Draco looked down at his little girl. "Good." He withdrew his wand, casting a quick Tempus.

"Alright, it's time to go."

Ryan's eyes lit up with excitement.

Harry chuckled when he saw. "A bit excited, are we?"

"Yes!" Ryan grinned.

Lainey pouted. "I don't want to go. Why does Ryan have to leave? It's not fair."

Draco crouched down in front of his daughter. "Sweetheart, Ryan has to go because it's what has to be done. Your papa and I went when we were eleven as well."

"And," Harry added, "you'll be going yourself in just a couple of years, so you'll be in school with your brother."

The words relieved the little girl enough to put a smile on her face and soon enough, the family was leaving.

~...~

The Platform was as bustling as it ever was and both Ryan and Elaine took in the sight with eyes opened wide in complete excitement.

"Uncle Cory!" Lainey squealed when she saw the man approach with Luna and their kids; thirteen-year-old twins Serena and Cassiopeia, eleven-year-old Zeus and nine-year old Hyland.

While Lainey went to Cory for a hug, Luna huged Harry and then Draco with a smile. The two families exchanged small talk as Ryan questioned Serena and Cassie about Hogwarts. Not long after that, Blaise and Pansy and their kids joined, followed by Gabriella and her daughter (her husband was staying at home as their youngest was sick) and then Hermione and her husband (a French man she had met through her job, first working for Research Department in the Ministry and then later on at Reperio Academy) and their three kids as well. The families chatted until it was time for the kids (those who would be heading to Hogwarts, both returns and newcomers) to get on the train. As it was their son's first time, Harry and Draco were taking the train, and after they left, Luna would be taking Lainey, and the other younger children, to Reperio Academy with her and Hermione.

The families said goodbye to each other, proud smiles on those whose kids were experiencing
Hogwarts as first time students, and soon enough, the Platform was emptying and the train was departing. Later on the train, after making sure the kids were settled in, Harry and Draco found an empty compartment for themselves. They settled down, with Draco snuggled into Harry's arms as the dark haired man leaned against the window.

Things were quiet between them before Draco spoke up.

"Almost thirty years ago we travelled this train for the first time," the blond murmured.

"And I made the decision to hide who I was," Harry added on.

Draco sat up and turned to face his husband. "It was the best and right decision at the time. Who knows what the Old Fool would've done with you so young if you'd shown your true nature. You may not have been able to outright show it, but you still acted like a true Slytherin; you gave them what they wanted but you watched and you learned and then you made your move. And though it was as a result of losing Sirius, I can't help but be glad you decided that it was time to show them who you really were."

Saying nothing, Harry simply leaned over and kissed the blond. "So what House do you think Ryan's going to be in?"

A playfully heated discussion erupted on their son's potential House for the rest of the journey, switching over to Lainey's potential House in a few years as well.

~…~

Harry and Draco slipped into the Hall from the side door and quickly took their place at the Head table. They gave nods to the other professors and when Headmistress McGonagall caught their eyes, the three shared a smile and a nod before the woman turned to look down the Hall, giving a nod towards Remus, who opened the doors and led the procession of new students down the middle. The smiles stayed as each child was sorted, and as McGonagall stood up and looked down at the students to address them. "My name is Headmistress Minerva McGonagall, and I would like to welcome all of you to a new year at Hogwarts."

End

Chapter End Notes

A/N 2: I just want to thank everyone for sticking with this story over the years. It took a while but we finally at the end. I know the story went in different direction than what it seemed at the beginning and if things were out of left field, I apologize profusely. As stated at the start of the story, there's a second final epilogue and it'll be about Voldemort and his plans for the Wizarding World; it'll have more details than this, and possibly be more dialogued.

A/N 3: thanks to Archangel of Revenge from fanfiction.net for the correction of Accipio to Reperio; so Reperio Academy is literally Learning Academy; more details will be on that in the second epilogue
Review and let me know what you think

Kila

Works inspired by this one:

[Atlanta (IN EDITING) -ON HOLD-] by ParadoxSnake

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