The Rise of a Dark Lord

by LittleMissXanda

Summary

Dumbledore was sure he had made the right choice. Ten years later Harry shows him just how wrong he was. With little regard for most, Harry makes a name for himself at Hogwarts, and shows everyone that he is far more than just the BWL. In doing that he attracts the attention of the Dark Lord, making Voldemort believe that the Boy-Who-Lived could be far more than an enemy.

Notes

Disclaimer: This story is based on characters and situations created and owned by J. K. Rowling. No money is being made.
Chapter 1 – The Boy-Who-Lived

On the night of the first of November of 1981 most of the Wizarding World of Britain was celebrating. They were celebrating the fall of the most powerful Dark Lord of the last 500 years. They celebrated cheering the Savior of the Wizarding World. But not once during their celebrating did they think about the price a young baby had to pay so they could have peace.

Not once did they think about the little orphan who was being left on the doorstep of a family who didn't want him. Not once did they think that that little boy had lost all his family that night.

It was on that night that Albus Dumbledore left the little orphan on the doorstep of his aunt's home. Albus Dumbledore, who was considered by many as the greatest wizard since the Founders of Hogwarts, was confident that he had made the right choice. They were after all the boy's family, it was best if he grew up away from all the fame that he was certain to receive, like that when he finally went to Hogwarts it would be easier to guide him in the right direction, because the boy would not have been subjected to the bigotry of the wizarding world. In all his wisdom he saw no problem with his plan, in his opinion there was no way it could go wrong.

It would take ten years for Albus Dumbledore to start to understand how wrong his plan would go, and a few more after that for him to really see just how wrong he was when it came to dealing with the young Harry Potter.

Albus Dumbledore and Severus Snape were in front of a house that had seen better days. It had a old and worn out look, and it emitted a cold and desolated air.

Albus Dumbledore verified the address again, and confirmed that they really were in the right place. The House wasn't a simple house, it was a orphanage, a boy's only orphanage and Albus Dumbledore and Severus Snape were there to see young Harry Potter.

Just like all years the Deputy-Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry would send of the letters of acceptance to all the children that were registered and several professors would visit the students that were new to the wizarding world personally. But this year there was something different, this year was the year that Harry Potter would come back to the Wizarding World.

Dumbledore spent several hours pondering on how to deal with the situation. If it were best to send a letter or a professor. And if he did send a professor which one would be appropriate? After several
different options he concluded that it would be best if he went there himself. If he went himself he
could even talk to the young boy and see what kind of child he was. Having made his choice he
waited till Harry's birthday and apparated to Privet Drive.

What was supposed to be a nice afternoon talking with Harry Potter and his family was everything
but.

The Dursleys lost no time telling the Headmaster that they had left the freak, it was what they called
the child, in the nearest police station and they informed the Headmaster that they wanted nothing to
do with freaks and then proceeded to close the door on the Headmaster's face.

It took five seconds for Albus Dumbledore, the greatest wizard alive, to understand what the
Dursleys had told him. When he finally understood he did the only thing he could think of; find
Severus Snape, Hogwarts's Potion Master, to help him localize the young Potter. He may be the
greatest wizard of his time, but even he admitted that talking to police officers and trying too find his
way in the muggle world wasn't his cup of tea.

Finally, after a couple of hours, with a little magical help, they were able to locate the young Harry
Potter in the orphanage for boys St. Benedict.

And that led them to be siting in a small, stuffed and moldy office talking to the matron of the
orphanage.

"You are here to take young Harry to a school for the gifted? Was that what you said?" asked Mrs.
Brown.

Dumbledore smiled his usual grand-fatherly smile and had a twinkle in his eyes when he answered.
"That's right. He's been registered since birth, since his parents went there as well. Mrs. Brown, if
you don't mind, could you tell me how long Harry's been here at the orphanage?"

"Approximately ten years, I think. A police officer brought him, if I'm not mistaken on the fifth of
November of 81. he was such a beautiful baby, so calm, we never heard him cry. We never
understood why nobody wanted a baby like that... But then..."

Mrs. Brown didn't continue, she seemed to be lost in old memories and Dumbledore started to have a
bad felling. He could remember a talk that he had a little over 50 years ago that had started in a
similar way. Even Snape started to pay more attention to the conversation.

"Was there something wrong with the baby?" asked Dumbledore calmly.

"It wasn't really wrong... I would say strange to be the right word... Even when he was a baby, those
eyes, they seemed to see the darkest secrets in our souls. It was unsettling."

Dumbledore 'hummed' and took another sip from his tea. "And what else could you tell us about
young Harry?"

Now Mrs. Brown appeared uncomfortable and the bad felling Dumbledore was having grew.

"Ah... Well... Harry is an excellent student. He has the highest grades in school, he even jumped a
couple of years. Most of his professors say that Harry could probably be considered a prodigy."

Albus visibly relaxed, maybe she was uncomfortable because she didn't want them to think that she
was exaggerating. There probably was no reason for him to have a bad felling, and Albus had almost
convinced himself that that was the case, until Severus ask a question that destroyed any conviction
that Albus may have had.
"And friends?"

Mrs. Brown became even more uncomfortable, but she managed to smile and say. "Ah... Harry never was very social... and you know how children are... sometimes they can be really cruel..."

Snape had to contain the growl that wanted to escape his throat, he hated bully's, and the brat appeared to be following his father's footsteps. "He's a bully? Is that it?" he ended up asking.

"Oh, no, on the contrary. The other children were often cruel to him. You know how it is, we are a small orphanage, with little funds, the children do everything they can to be adopted. And suddenly Harry shows up. A truly beautiful child, an angelic beauty many say, and on top of that he's an extraordinary student, brilliant in everything he does. Naturally the older boys started to resent him. They beat him, they tore his clothes up, they even locked him up in the basement we couldn't find him for a couple of days..."

"And nobody did anything?" asked Dumbledore incredulous.

"Do what? We didn't have any evidence, we couldn't accuse any of the boys. And Harry was completely alone, none of the boys said anything to help him." the matron defended herself, slowly her eyes unfocused and the professors could see something like fear on her expression, "But things changed," she whispered, it seemed she was talking more to herself than to her two companions, "oh, how they changed..."

"What changed Mrs. Brown?" asked Albus gently. The bad feeling he had previously was back and, although he tried, he couldn't ignore the similarities between this one and the other. But he could still convince himself that they were only coincidences.

Snape may have been too young to have been there, but he knew what his mentor was thinking, Albus had told him stories about the brilliant pupil that went through Hogwarts fifty years back, and if he could see the similarities based on what Albus had told him, then he was sure that Albus could see it even better.

"You are going to take him, right?" asked the matron in a voice a little above a whisper.

"Harry has been registered since he was born, nothing that you tell us will stop us from taking him. We just want to know a little more about him." replied Dumbledore trying to tranquilize her.

Mrs. Brown nodded a told them everything she knew or everything she suspected. "When he turned seven things changed. We never had any evidence of anything. For all intent and purpose he continued to be a perfect student, a prodigy that charmed his professors. But as time went by the children started to fear him. It started with Ben, there was no evidence, but his arm didn't break itself now, did it? And Ben was only seven.

A few months after that we went to visit a farm, so the children could see the animals, a little garden snake vent into the bus, Harry liked it and he decided to keep it. We saw nothing wrong with that, it was small, it was always in Harry's pocket, it didn't hurt anyone. But Steve, an older orphan, a friend of Ben's, on the night before Christmas, went into Harry's room and stole the animal, killed it, put it inside a box, wrapped it and he put the 'gift' on Harry's bed. The morning after all the boys mocked him. They told him that he was such a freak that even the snake committed suicide so that it didn't have to be near him. Trough all that Harry didn't even shed a tear.

One week after that happened Steve was hospitalized, he was in a deep coma. Nobody knows what happened, he went to bed the night before and the following morning he simply wouldn't wake up. He was two weeks in a coma. And when he did wake up he had to be institutionalized, the doctors
still don't know what happened. But I remember Harry's smile.

The following year we found two boys locked in the basement, I don't know what happened, but they started to be afraid of their own shadows, they were never the same again. And they did everything they could so as not to be in the same space as Harry. It lasted for, six or seven months, I think, after that, one of the boys, Colin, killed himself. He hanged himself in his room.

There is absolutely no evidence, and even if I accuse him of something who would believe me?

Most people when they see him only see his angelic face, he charms everyone.

He's a true fallen angel."

When Mrs. Brown finished they were able to see it clearly, her expression was one of pure fear, however mixed in with that fear there was another emotion, they could almost call it awe, and that made both men shiver. The both of them had seen similar expressions, but much more intense on the faces of Death Eaters.

Snape wasn't able to contain the shiver that went down his spine when he remembered his former master. Albus made an effort to smile and asked if it were possible to speak with Harry. Only long years living as a spy stopped Snape from showing what he was feeling, but the idea of seeing Potter didn't please him one bit, if it were up to him they would leave the brat there and never set foot in there again but it wasn't, and deep down he knew that they had no other choice, but there was something about Potter that unsettled him.

When Mrs. Brown showed them Harry's room, they were surprised when she simply pointed at the door and then went away, it was obvious that she didn't want to be near Harry.

As soon as they entered the room and saw Harry, both Dumbledore and Snape had to make an effort to hide their shock. Normally, when they thought about Harry Potter, both of them imagined a clone of James but with Lily's eyes, they were prepared for little changes but nothing could have prepared them for what they saw, and both immediately understood what Mrs. Brown meant by fallen angel.

Sitting on the window seat, with his back against the wall, his left leg stretched in front of him and his right leg bent against his chest, with his right arm against his knee and a book in his left hand, his head inclined a little to the side and hair as dark as night framing his aristocratic face, that was almost completely from the Black's, you could tell he was a Potter, but some characteristics were pure Black, obviously inherited from his paternal grand-mother who was a Black, he also had traces from the Malfoy's and the Rosier's whom had married Potter's along the line, Dumbledore recalled that his great-grand-mother had been the only girl from the Rosier's. Apparently Harry inherited traces from several lines, giving origin to a beauty without precedent.

Snape saw that too, but he didn't forget Lily Potter that was considered the most beautiful girl in Hogwarts in her time. And when the sun shined on Harry's hair he didn't miss the blood red sheen it had. But what surprised him the most were his eyes, they may have been the same shape as Lily's but the color was nothing like it. Neither of them could stop the shiver that went down their spine when they looked at eyes the color of death, eyes the exact same color as the 'Avada Kedavra'.

The first to pull himself together was Dumbledore and he quickly put a smile on his face, neither of the professors missed the subtle alterations on Harry's face, he seemed more innocent, more child like. They remembered immediately what Mrs. Brown had said, ‘...and even if I accuse him of something who would believe me?... he charms everyone...’. Crushing the bad feeling he was having Dumbledore greeted him.
"Harry, it is a pleasure to see you again. My name is Albus Dumbledore and my companion is Professor Severus Snape."

"Good afternoon, pleasure to meet you." Harry replied, he had an almost musical voice, and a small smile on his face. Snape was sure that if he hadn't had that conversation with the orphanage's matron he would have believed that the smile wasn't fake.

"Well Harry, Professor Snape and I came to invite you to a school for special children."

The change was instantaneous, any and all innocence that was on his face disappeared and in it's place was a cold and calculating look, something that Snape didn't think was possible on a child.

"What type of school?" he inquired without any emotion in his voice.

"Ah, well, the school of which I am Headmaster of is named Hogwarts, it's a school of magic."

Albus was preparing himself to give Harry a great explanation on how Harry was a wizard and some spells to demonstrated that he was telling the truth, when he heard a little chuckle coming from Harry. Believing that young Harry thought he was being lied to he was going to explain that it was, in fact, the truth when he saw something in Harry's eyes; recognition and relief? But before he could better analyze the expression it was gone and Harry uttered.

"So what I can do is magic... I knew, I knew I was different from them."

The word 'them' was spoken with so much disdain and disgust that both professors almost gaped. Dumbledore thought immediately of Tom Riddle, but there was a difference, when little Tom Riddle said something similar it was spoken with hate, Harry on the other hand was disdain and disgust, as if he didn't even consider them human or worthy of his attention, truthfully Albus didn't know what he considered worst.

"Is that so, and what can you do?" asked Albus in a calm and jovial tone, hiding all the anxiety and nervousness he felt.

For a second or two Snape was certain that Potter's eyes were analyzing their souls, judging them, seeing if they were trustworthy or not. Snape was certain it was some kind of test and when Potter got a little twinkle in his eyes, a warm smile on his face, and looked, for all those watching, like an excited child, Snape was certain they had paste the 'test'. But that certainty was short lived.

"Oh, strange things happen when I'm sad or angry," Harry told them, in a tone of voice so filled with innocence that it was difficult to not believe that it was true, "a professor screamed at me and suddenly his hair was blue. Sometimes when I'm angry things start to shake, things like that." finished Harry with a happy smile.

And for just a few moments both men believed the innocent image that Harry was projecting, for a few moments they thought that everything that Mrs. Brown had said was just a coincidence, for a few moments they saw nothing more than an innocent child. But that was all that it was, a moment were they saw what Harry wanted them to see.

However none of them forgot what Mrs. Brown had told them, so the image that Harry was projecting although it was persuasive, none of the professors was deluded by it. Both were brought back from their thoughts when Harry spoke again.

"Professor how can I go to that school? Do I have to do some sort of test so that I can gain a scholarship? Or something like that?"
Harry's question remembered both professors that Harry knew nothing about his own history. For a fraction of a second Dumbledore pondered not telling him, but as quickly as the impulse appeared it disappeared. The boy had the right to know, and the fact that he was the Boy-Who-Lived was impossible to hide. Sighing the professor answered.

"You don't need a scholarship, your parents left you everything they had."

"My parents?" Harry inquired in a flat tone with an expressionless face, "you knew my parents?"

Dumbledore breathed in deeply and conjured tree chairs for them to sit, he didn't miss Harry's interest when he saw his wand, nor the confusion, but when Dumbledore motioned the chair for him to sit, he did so, without saying a word. Dumbledore and Snape sat in the other two and shared a brief look then Dumbledore started.

"Some years ago, before you were born, our world was at war. A wizard rose to power and started the war. Your parents participated and became targets rather quickly. Your mother got pregnant, and your parents decided to go into hiding so that you could be safe. But, unfortunately, he ended up finding you. Voldemort, the name of the Dark Lord, killed your parents and tried to kill you, but the curse he used turned against him, and he lost his powers and disappeared. Lily, James and you are know as heroes that ended the war and brought peace to the Wizarding World."

Harry didn't say anything for a few moments, he seemed to be lost in his own thoughts. Albus and Severus didn't know for sure how to proceed, they were expecting a more emotional response, it wasn't every day that you learned that your parents were killed.

"That war ended? And what were the objectives from both sides?" Harry ended up asking expressionless.

Both professors took a little time to answer, they were not expecting those questions. They were expecting questions about his parents, not about the war.

"The war ended, yes," answered Albus, "about the objectives, it is a complex subject, it is something children of your age shouldn't worry themselves wit."

Severus was sure that was the wrong answer as soon as Albus finished answering. Potter, who had maintained a friendly and lightly interested expression on his face became closed of and cold and every emotion vanished from his expression. Severus felt a stab of apprehension seeing the child's behavior.

"I see," whispered Harry in a cold tone that caused Severus to shiver, that tone of voice was remarkably similar to the one the Dark Lord used when one of his followers had displeased him, and it was normally followed by a Crucio, "could you then inform me how I can access what my parents left me? What I need for school, where I can buy it and all that information?"

In that instant Severus knew they had lost Potter, but if he was being honest with himself he didn't think they ever had him. Potter was nothing like they had thought he would be and fr the first time of many times Severus wished that Potter would be just like his father, James Potter.

"Of course, of course," Albus replied without the usual twinkle in his eyes, "here is the letter with all the needed information. The list with everything you need to buy, the train ticket, where and how to catch the train and the day and hour it leaves. Professor Snape can accompany you to Diagon Alley where you can buy all your things for school."

Harry took his letter, opened it and inspected the contents.
"It won't be necessary for the professor to go with me. He certainly has better things to do, I don't want to impose. Besides, I'm used to doing things by myself."

"Are you sure?" asked Albus in a smooth tone, they couldn't force him to take someone with him, but neither of the professors felt at ease with letting him go alone.

"Yes." was the only response Harry gave them, and so containing a sigh Dumbledore gave him his Gringotts key, explained to him how to get to Diagon Alley and how to find the entrance to the Leaky Cauldron.

Harry thanked them and with short goodbyes both professors left young Harry's room. They said a quick goodbye to Mrs. Brown and lost no time in leaving that place. None of them noticed the eyes the color of death that followed them from the window on the third floor, both focused on their thoughts about Harry James Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived, the Savior of the Wizarding World.
Diagon Alley

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: This story is based on characters and situations created and owned by J. K. Rowling. No money is being made.

Warnings: this story will be Slash, but seeing as Harry is only eleven, it will take a while for anything to happen.

Beta: noirekitsune

A.N.: I know that he has a lot of money in his account, but there is a reason for it. It will be explained when he turns 14 and goes to his family vault.

Chapter 2 – Diagon Alley

The day that professors Dumbledore and Snape told young Harry what he was, was a revolutionary day for him. As soon as both professors left, a huge smile spread over Harry's face, he was a wizard! He could hardly contain his joy. He always knew that he was different of course, but now he had confirmation that he was different from all those bugs that he lived with. And better yet, there was a whole society full of people like him, and in a very short time he would be a part of it.

He would have much to do the following day, first he had to see what his parents had left him, after that, depending on what they had left him, he had to go shopping; clothing, books and school things.

He had much to learn about this new society, especially about that war that the professor mentioned. A war doesn't just end because the leader disappeared, but since the professor hadn't answered his questions he would have to find the answers himself. He hated reading about History, because history was written by the victors and the losers were always the bad guys, it was prejudiced, but maybe he could obtain some facts that weren't influenced by the ideas of the author, he could always hope.

And so Harry went to sleep with a smile on his face, dreaming about the time he would leave that place behind him.

The next morning, Harry woke up earlier than usual. He put on his best clothes, although that didn't mean much; they were all second-hand and not the best quality, but at least it was better than the rest that he had. He left a note to Mrs. Brown and took the first bus to London. As it was rather early in the morning he had no trouble locating someone to help him find the street that professor Dumbledore had said that the Leaky Cauldron was on, and before long he was entering the little old pub.

Harry could hardly believe it, he was finally where he belonged. Without losing a second he approached the counter.

"Excuse me." his voice was heard above the noise inside the pub and Tom, at least that was what professor Dumbledore told him the bartender was named, looked over to him.
"Good morning, how can I help?"

Harry made his expression as innocent as possible and plastered a big smile on his face. "Good morning Mr. Tom. Yesterday Professor Snape told me I was a wizard and gave me a letter with all the things I have to buy in Diagon Alley. Can you open the entrance for me?"

This mask that Harry had perfected over the years was ideal for this situation. He admitted to himself that he was excited, but he would never normally behave so childishly or that innocently. It just wasn't him, but he knew how useful it was to convey the idea of an innocent child, and as long as he knew nothing about this new world that he was entering it was the best mask to use.

"Of course lad," Tom told him with a smile, and led him to the back of the pub where they stopped in front of a brick wall, "pay attention to the sequence."

Harry nodded and saw Tom take out his wand and tap several bricks and in front of his eyes a doorway appeared that lead to another street.

"Welcome to Diagon Alley."

Harry tried to control his reaction, he really did, but it was difficult, the whole place screamed magic and Harry didn't even notice that he had left Tom in the back of the pub, he was transfixed.

However, Harry remembered everything he had to do and quickly pulled himself together. Fortunately as it was rather early there were few people in the alley, and those that were there didn't pay him any mind. Following Dumbledore's directions it wasn't hard to find Gringotts, however he spent almost a whole minute near the building observing the strange creatures that were at the door. He had no idea what they were, but he suspected that they worked for the bank. As soon as he entered the bank his childish mask faded away and one that was closer to his true self came to the surface. Harry didn't know it but his gait was perfectly aristocratic, and not even the clothes that he was wearing took away from the natural beauty that he possessed. Without paying attention to the few wizards that were in the bank Harry made his way to a teller.

"Good morning. I would like to talk to someone responsible about my account." Harry always believed that manners never hurt anyone, and seeing that he was in front of a creature that he had never seen and knew nothing about, he believed that it was better to be safe than sorry.

The being in front of him looked at him like he was something insignificant and Harry had to stop himself from snarling; who did this creature think it was to look at him like that?

"Get lost brat. I have better things to do than lose time with scum." grumbled the creature, eying his clothes with disdain.

Harry felt his blood boil, normally he had excellent control over his emotions, but there were certain things that he did not tolerate, and the thing in front of him had crossed the line. Until that moment Harry had had perfect manners, a little too serious, but completely friendly. Now however the air around him changed, his expression lost all emotion and his eyes glowed with a fire that badly concealed the power Harry possessed. When he spoke his voice came out flat, showing just how angry he was.

"I said," he said a little above a whisper, however nobody had any difficulty in hearing him because his voice was laced with his magic, giving the feeling that it filled the whole space where Harry was, "that I would like to talk with someone responsible about my account."

And just to make sure that the creature in front of him understood, Harry made his magic surround
The being completely and squeezed.

The creature started having trouble breathing and its eyes grew wide. After a moment, Harry let the creature go, and it stuttered when it spoke again.

"N-na-name?"

"Harry Potter." Harry answered, going back to his previous mask, he was still angry, but he had to remember that he knew nothing about this society and he had to control himself a little, at least until he knew more about this new world.

He didn't miss the way the creature's eyes widened when it heard his name, nor did he miss the shocked look on the wizard's face to his side. Apparently his name was very well known, sure Dumbledore had told him his parents and he were considered heroes, but he hadn't expected his name to be so easily recognized. He had to get information as quickly as possible. He also noted how their eyes traveled to his forehead, or rather to his scar that was hidden by his hair.

"Griphook," the creature exclaimed when it got over it's shock, "take mister Potter to Goldaxe's office."

The creature that appeared gave a brief bow and with a sharp 'follow me Mr. Potter', led him down a corridor with several doors. Stopping in front of one that said 'Account Manager Goldaxe' he knocked and opened the door. He spoke briefly with the one inside in a language that Harry didn't understand and motioned for him to enter.

"You can go in Mr. Potter."

Harry did as he was told, and entered the office. It was richly decorated, it had several murals, and those showing battles were highlighted in gold. There was a desk by the opposite wall, with a being sitting behind it, it was larger than the ones Harry had seen, and appeared older too, but it didn't give him a weak look, it gave him a wiser look.

"You may sit Mr. Potter," his tone of voice was rather grave, and Harry thought it sounded similar to when you rub two rocks together, "how can I help?"

"Good morning. Professor Dumbledore informed me yesterday that my parents left me everything they had. I want to know what that everything is and how much I have in my account. Depending on the amount, I would like to, when I'm finished, take some money out." Harry answered politely, with a little respect in his voice.

"Very well. However, Mr. Potter, we will have to confirm your identity before we disclose that information, it's a matter of security, we take similar precautions with all the clients that have larger accounts."

"And how do you confirm my identity?" asked Harry, curious to know how things worked.

"It is a simple procedure, you just need to put three drops of blood on this parchment, the charms on it will confirm your identity and show what accounts are rightfully yours."

"Hmm, very well then." said Harry and taking the dagger that Goldaxe had indicated he made a shallow cut in his thumb and let three drops fall on the parchment. He concentrated on the cut on his finger and slowly he saw it close, satisfied he looked back to the parchment. The blood that had dropped on it was forming words, he was able to read his name before Goldaxe took the parchment and analyzed the information.
"Well Mr. Potter let's see, you have two accounts. One is the Potter family vault and the other is your personal vault that was created when you were born. You can't access the Family vault yet, when you turn fourteen you will be able to access the vault and take out books, jewelry, weapons and other things from inside. When you turn seventeen you will gain complete control of the vault and everything it contains. Your personal vault has only money, every year on your birthday fifty thousand galleons are deposited in your personal vault from the Family vault. Seeing as you never used your personal vault you have 500 thousand galleons in it."

Harry had to control himself immensely to not let the shock show on his face. 500 thousand? And on his birthday he would receive another 50 thousand? He had lived in that orphanage with those bugs, not even having money to buy clothes, and always having to watch what they ate to make sure that they could make it the entire month with food, and all that time he had a fortune waiting for him. Controlling his emotions Harry asked his account manager.

"And if I want to buy things outside of the Wizarding World, or want to take out money?"

"In the last few years we've created something similar to muggle credit cards. The cards are enchanted so that they can only be used by the client and to buy things in stores you just have to give them the card and the money goes from one vault to the other. In the muggle world it works like a normal credit card. But as it has a 100 galleon annual fee, only the more wealthy families use it. Those that don't use the card have to come to the bank to take money from their vault and exchange galleons into pounds if they want to buy something in the muggle world."

"I see," muttered Harry, "I want one of those cards. But I also want to take out fifty galleons and 100 pounds."

"Alright Mr. Potter, it will only take a moment."

Goldaxe wrote something on a parchment and a little over a minute after that Griphook walked into the office with two pouches, a few pieces of parchment, and something very similar to a credit card only made of gold.

"Here you have it Mr. Potter. In the dark green pouch you have the galleons, in the black one the pounds, here is your card. Now all you have to do is let one drop of blood fall on the pouches and the card and sign this parchment and everything will be settled.

And if you ever lose either the pouches or the card you just need to come here and one of the tellers will take care of it."

Harry took the dagger again and did what Goldaxe instructed, after he signed the parchment it disappeared.

"Is there anything else I can help you with?" asked Goldaxe as soon as he saw that Harry had finished.

"No, that was everything. Thank you for your time," answered Harry politely.

"Very well. Griphook will accompany you out."

And Harry followed the creature putting both pouches and the card in his pocket. Now that he had solved his financial matters he had shopping to do, lots and lots of shopping.

He took out the letter that had his school supplies on it and inspected what was needed, seeing that most things were rather bulky he decided to buy a trunk first, like that he could put everything in it and not walk around carrying heavy bags.
As he didn't know where anything was, he spent a bit of time walking through Diagon Alley, looking at shop windows. He had never been to such an interesting place. His favorite so far had been a bookshop; it had so many books that Harry was sure he would spend a small fortune there. He ended up seeing a store named 'Bags and Trunks for all occasions' and went in. It had a counter in front of the door and the walls were covered in shelves that displayed a number of bags and trunks. Not knowing the difference between them he approached the counter to see if he could call someone who could help him. Before he could call someone the door that was behind the counter opened and a man in his fifty's walked through it.

"I'm sorry; I was out back in the workshop working on a trunk. How can I help you?" the man asked in a friendly tone.

"It's no problem," replied Harry, maintaining a friendly and polite air but with an innocent smile on his face, he couldn't look too childish, but behaving like he had in the bank was not acceptable, "I'm sorry for disturbing you, but could you tell me what type of trunks you have? I was just told about all of this yesterday and I haven't had the opportunity to learn much yet. As far as I know one of those trunks could eat me." concluded Harry with a little laugh.

He hated to seem so ignorant, but he knew that sometimes you had to admit your weaknesses if you wanted to overcome them.

The man laughed and said, "It's no trouble. That's why I'm here. Well, I suppose that you want a backpack for day to day use and a trunk for school, to put all your things correct?" Harry nodded and the man continued, "The backpacks have all the same enchantments, the only difference is how it looks. They are bigger on the inside than the outside and they have a feather-light charm on them; no matter how many books you put in it, it will always be feather-light. The trunks have more variety. We have the basic trunk, normally students buy this one, which has one compartment that is twice as big on the inside. Then we have one that has three compartments, where all the compartments are twice as big on the inside. Students that are better off sometimes buy one of these so that they can have their clothes, potions ingredients and school things in different compartments.

These are usually the ones that students buy. But we have two other models; one with five compartments and another with seven. These models are much more expensive than the others. The one with five compartments has three basic compartments, like the trunk with three compartments. Then it has a fourth compartment, that one has the option to be a library or a potion's lab and then it has a fifth compartment that is an apartment, it has a living/dining room, a kitchen, a bedroom, an office and a bathroom.

The one with seven compartments is identical to the one with five but it has the library and the potion lab, along with a second apartment."

Harry was very interested in the five compartment trunk, he had no idea what the apartment was like, or how they even put an apartment in a trunk, but it couldn't possibly be worse than the little room in which he slept.

"May I see a five compartment trunk?"

"Of course lad. Come here." the shopkeeper led him to a trunk on the floor by the door he had come through.

As far as Harry could see, it was a trunk like all the others on the shelves. It was a dark wood, with a dark metal on the corners, the handle was the same metal, as was the clasp, but on the clasp were five stones. Harry wasn't sure, but they looked like emeralds to him.
"This is a five compartment trunk. We can alter the exterior to the client's liking, this is the base look so to speak. You see these emeralds on the clasp?" seeing Harry nod he continued, "Well if you press one of them it will open that respective compartment. Look here," and the man pressed the first stone, the clasp opened and he pulled the top up showing Harry the inside. Harry saw that it was a normal compartment, bigger than the outside but normal nonetheless. The shopkeeper closed the lid and pressed the fourth stone. He opened it again and this time Harry could see shelves inside the compartment and on the lid was a parchment and quill.

"Ah this is one with a library. Let me explain how it works. The shelves that you are seeing here are not the only ones available. When these shelves are full the first one disappears and a new one appears at the bottom. This library can hold up to five thousand books. The parchment that is on the lid is tied to the library. Imagine that you want a specific book, but you already have a thousand books, searching through all those books would be a rather slow and boring process. To facilitate it we created this, you write the name of the book on it and the book will appear on the first shelf. If you write the author's name, all the books that you have in the library written by that author will appear. If, for example, you write the word 'water', all the books with the word 'water' in them will appear, but if you write 'water spell' all the books containing spells that involve water will appear. Understand? What do you think?"

Harry was rather impressed, and although he usually didn't show his emotions it was difficult to contain his enthusiasm. "I think it's brilliant," he ended up saying truthfully, "Do you think I could see the apartment? I'm very interested in this trunk, and if the apartment is as good as the library, I'm positive that I'm going to buy it."

The man smiled and closed the lid.

"I have no trouble in showing you the apartment, but when I said that these were far more expensive I wasn't joking. Are you sure you can afford one of them?"

"I believe so, yes," replied Harry with confidence, "From what I've seen I have more than enough, but even if it was a little more than what I believe it would still be worth it."

"Very well, if you're sure. Let's see the fifth compartment then."

And he opened the lid again. The first thing that Harry noticed was the staircase that appeared in the trunk. Seeing the shopkeeper go inside the trunk he followed him, as soon as his head had gone through the opening the lid closed and little lights appeared on the walls on his sides, illuminating the way. He went down a few more steps until he reached the end of the stairs and he saw a room with white walls and white furniture. The only reason he wasn't blind from all that white was because everything was different shades of white.

"Well let's see," the shopkeeper said merrily, "I know it doesn't look like much with all the white but it's for a good reason. The apartment has an enchantment that lets the client choose the colors he wants, the enchantment leaves everything in these white colors until the client changes it. To change it you just have to put the tip of your wand on the furniture or the walls and think about the color you want. But the enchantment only works that one time, so it would be better if you already had an idea of what you want. Afterward you can only change it with the right spells, but I think that you only learn those spells fourth year and up. You can't change the shape of the furniture, you can buy other and put it here, but these can't be changed with the enchantment. You can only change them with transfiguration and those spells are only taught to the older years at Hogwarts too. But apart from that it's a normal apartment that can be decorated however a person wants. Do you want to see the rest of the space?"

Harry nodded and looked around. Now that he knew the reason for so much white he was paying far
more attention. The room he was in had the same shape as the trunk, a rectangle where the smallest wall, the one where the stairs were, was 16ft long, and the longer wall was 26ft approximately. On the wall to his left were two doors, and the wall on his right had one door and an open archway. On the wall in front of him was a black marble fireplace.

"The things that aren't in white can't be changed, the enchantment doesn't work on them." the man informed him when he saw where Harry was looking. Harry nodded and continued to inspect the room. It was half living room, half dining room. Closest to him was a couch, big enough for three people. In front of it was a table as long as the couch and two armchairs were opposite to the couch. Near the fireplace was a dining room table with four sitting places. And two big rugs were on the floor, one in the living room area and the other in the dining room area.

Wanting to see the rest Harry opened the first door to his left and saw it was the study. The walls on either side of him were covered in shelves, on the opposite wall was a desk and in the middle of the room was a rug that had two armchairs and a divan on it.

"Behind the desk on the wall, is a parchment and a quill, it works the same way like the ones in the library. These shelves are also linked to the library."

"Rather ingenious." praised Harry.

Closing the door, Harry opened the next one. It was the bedroom, it had a double bed, a wardrobe, a bookcase and a divan.

"This bookcase is not tied to the library," the shopkeeper informed him, and Harry 'hummed'. He didn't pay much attention to the bedroom; even if it only had a bed it was far better than his room at the orphanage. He had to admit that it was far better than what he was expecting.

The kitchen and the bathroom were completely equipped, and the only thing that was white were the kitchen walls and the high chairs by the kitchen island. The cabinets in the kitchen were a dark wood with gray marble. And the bathroom was done in blue, black and gray tiles.

When they left the trunk Harry was rather impressed. He had no idea that magic had so many possibilities, he could hardly wait to see what all was possible to do with magic. With magic he believed that not even the sky was the limit.

"I want to buy a five compartment trunk, with a library, I just have a question or two, if you could answer them, I would appreciate it."

"I'll do my best, go ahead."

"Is there a way that makes it impossible for others to open my trunk? And how do I stop someone from moving the trunk while I'm inside?"

"That is all easily solved. If you buy our safety pack, enchantments that prevent those things are cast on the trunk and it also has the option to open every compartment with different passwords. To set the password you only have to put the tip of your wand on the stone of the intended compartment and say the password but only after the safety pack is on the trunk. The pack also has the option of shrinking and enlarging the trunk with just a touch of your wand."

"And how much would that be?"

"The trunk would be 5800 galleons, and the pack another 100 galleons."

Harry didn't have to think long about it. Seeing how much he had in his vault six thousand galleons
wouldn't even dent the amount he had.

"Very well, and the trunks exterior?"

The shopkeeper's eyes grew wide; obviously he hadn't thought that Harry would really buy it. After all six thousand galleons was a lot of money but he pulled himself together quickly and answered, "You just have to tell me the look you would like."

"I want it lined in black leather. The metal endings, the handles and the clasp I want them in silver. And the stones can stay emerald. Engraved on the lid I want the initials H.J.P. in emerald and silver. How long will it take to be finished?"

"Seeing as we already have the trunk finished, we would only need to change the exterior and put the safety pack on, it should take 10, 15 minutes at most."

"That's perfect. And if it isn't too much trouble I would like a backpack with a similar look."

"It's no trouble at all." replied the shopkeeper and taking a backpack from the shelf beside him, he went back to the workshop, telling him that he would be right back.

Harry took the time to organize his thoughts. He had to control himself immensely to not show just how amazed he was seeing an apartment inside a trunk. No matter how he looked at it, it should not have been possible, but he supposed, that with magic the things one could consider impossible decreased immensely. He could hardly wait to see what else was possible. Harry was extremely happy that the start of school was still a month away, like that he could at least study the basics.

A little over fifteen minutes later, the shopkeeper came back with his trunk and backpack.

"Well, here it is," he proclaimed with a smile, "How would you like to make the payment?"

"With a Gringotts card."

"Of course, of course. You just have to sign here," he said, indicating a parchment on the counter with a Gringotts seal, "And do you see the rectangle on the right corner? You just need to put the card there, front side down."

Harry did as he was told, and a soft green light enveloped the card for a second or two, showing that the items were paid for. The shopkeeper looked at his signature and he gaped at him. Taking his chance Harry took his trunk and backpack and started to leave the store with a quick good-bye. When he was almost out the door he heard the shopkeeper exclaim.

"Welcome back Mr. Potter!"

Harry smiled at him and left. He had many more things to buy and he didn't know where most of the stores were. As soon as he was outside he put his backpack inside the trunk, and explored the alley a bit more.

The second store he entered was a clothing store named 'Madame Malkins' where he simply said that he wanted the Hogwarts uniform in the best material she had. He also asked for a whole new wardrobe, in dark tones, preferably black, gray, green, blue, and red.

After Mrs. Malkins had his measurements, it took a little over half an hour to have a complete wardrobe that consisted of seven pairs of black trousers, one pair of dark gray trousers and one pair dark blue. He also had three green shirts in different shades, two red ones, again in different shades, two blue ones, and a black one. He also had two black jumpers, two gray ones, and a green one. He
decided to also buy two red t-shirts, three blue ones, and a green one. He also bought five robes, one black, one gray, one blue, one green, and one red. By the end of it he had more clothes than he had owned in all his life but he was rather satisfied.

Putting everything inside his trunk, he opted to go to the apothecary next. After all he knew that he would spend a lot of time in the bookstore, so it would be better to go to the places that would require less time first.

The apothecary was his fastest stop, he simply walked up to the counter and told the clerk he wanted three of the first year kits, and in less than five minutes he had everything, simple and effective in his opinion. Then he went to buy parchment, quills and ink. He bought large quantities of the three; he had never written on parchment much less with quills, he had to practice. And finally there were only two things on his list that he had to buy. A wand, that Harry had decided he would get last, and his books.

Harry went back to where he saw the bookstore and went in. Fortunately the store wasn't too full and he could look at the books in peace. Harry wanted to put all the books he could into his basket, but he resisted the temptation and managed to buy his school books first. After he had that taken care of he went through the bookstore section by section.

He started with the History section, where he bought only two books, one named 'Hogwarts: A History' and another called 'Important events of the last centuries'.

Then he went to the section named Defense, where he bought five more books. Two of them talked about the basics of defense, and the other three just seemed interesting. One was about duels, and the other two were about curses, their counters, and shields.

In the Charms and Transfiguration section he chose two books, one of each. Not that any others didn't catch his eye, but he doubted that he would be able to understand them. He firmly believed that you had to first learn how to walk and only then could you run. So he was using that same philosophy when it came to magic.

In the Herbology section he didn't buy anything. From what he had seen it wasn't something that would hold his interest and he thought that reading the school book would be enough.

In the Potion section he bought five more books, two of them had the basics in them, how to cut, the difference between the different ways to cut the ingredients and all that information. The other three were about ingredients and what reactions they could have together, they also had a number of potions in them that went from medical uses to pranks.

In the Astronomy section he didn't chose anything, and when he passed one that said Divination, he didn't even look. Harry firmly believed that people made their own futures.

He found the Magical Creature section fascinating, and bought several books that caught his attention, mostly because they talked about animals that until that moment he thought were myths, who would have thought that dragons were real?

He added to his collection two books on Arithmancy and Ancient Runes, the books taught the basics and explained what was possible to do with that branch of magic.

He finished with several books of general knowledge and a few books on rules/laws and day to day knowledge of the Wizarding World and ended his shopping. He had enough books to study and he could always buy more if he needed to. He paid for all his things, put everything inside his trunk, and left the bookstore in search of a wand store.
He was curious about these so-called wands, why did wizards use them? Were they all the same? Did all wizards need wands? He had a lot of questions, maybe when he found the store he would be able to obtain some answers.

He found the wand shop rather quickly. As soon as he entered the store he felt a shiver go down his spine. The air was saturated with something that Harry could only define as magic.

"Good morning."

Someone said behind him, and if he wasn't so used to controlling himself he would have jumped out of his skin.

Turning around he saw an old man, with white hair that defied the laws of gravity and pale gray eyes that seemed a little unfocused.

"Good morning." answered Harry, trying to keep an innocent and polite look on his face, even though he really wanted to scowl at the old man, he hated being surprised.

"Ah... Mr. Potter, I wondered when I was going to see you." the old man went on to talk about his mother's wand, and his father's wand, he even told him that he was the one that had sold the wand that had given him his scar. While he was doing that he answered some of Harry's questions without Harry having to ask.

But even so there were still things he wanted to know, but Ollivander, the old man's name as Harry found out during the man's speech, started giving him wands. Harry had no idea what Ollivander was waiting for, he didn't even know what to do with the wands that the old man gave him, but every time he touched one something exploded, was set on fire, or nothing happened at all.

Ollivander on the other hand became more excited the more wands Harry tried. When the 20th wand came and went Harry started to think that none of the wands would suit him, but Ollivander gained a pensive look and went to the back of his store where he came back with a box covered in dust in his hands. He handed the wand to Harry, and as soon as his fingers touched the wand he could tell the difference immediately, while the others felt like sticks of wood in his hands, this one emitted a warm wave that traveled up his arm and spread through his body. But even so, Harry felt that something was missing.

"Hmm... strange." muttered Ollivander, looking at Harry with curiosity.

"What's strange?" asked Harry taking his eyes of the wand and focusing on the wand maker.

"I was sure that that was your wand, holly and phoenix feather, 11 inches. But apparently I was wrong, but what is strange is that the core bonded with you magic but the wood didn't."

"And does that have a solution?" inquired Harry, he had no knowledge about wand making, for all he knew it could be a daily occurrence, based on the old man's reaction he suspected it wasn't but he couldn't be sure.

"Yes, of course it has, it is just strange," commented Ollivander, "Come, let's go to my workshop take care of that, bring the wand." and not waiting to make sure that Harry was following him Ollivander started toward the back of the store. Not seeing another option, Harry followed.

The back room was where Ollivander made his wands and Harry found the space rather interesting.

"Put the wand on the counter," Ollivander told him, pointing to the space in front of him, "good, what we are going to do now is see which is the right wood for you. It is a simple process, seeing as
the core already bonded with you, you just have to hold the core in your right hand and with the left hand you have to feel the wood in the boxes on the counter. When you feel the same thing you felt with the core it's the right wood. Give me just a few minutes to extract the core."

Ollivander focused on his wand again and Harry paid close attention while he worked. With great care Ollivander put the tip of his wand on the tip of the wand on the counter and traced it all the way to the base, on both sides. After that he used something that looked similar to a scalpel but it had a different type of blade, it was thinner and it was longer and Harry could see several things engraved on the blade, and traced the same lines that his wand had previously. And the next moment the wand was split in two with a red and gold feather between both halves.

"You can pick up the feather Mr. Potter, in your right hand, don't forget. Now you just have to go see which wood in those boxes responds to you."

Harry did just that and a little over five minutes later he felt the same thing he had felt the first time he touched the holly wand. When he gave the wood to Ollivander he saw his eyes grow wide and an emotion similar to trepidation crossed his face.

"Very well," he murmured, "You can give me the core and in approximately two hours, I will have your wand ready. Why don't you go explore Diagon Alley or get a bite to eat at the Leaky Cauldron?"

"Alright, see you in two hours."

Now that Harry thought about it, it was almost lunch time, and he hadn't had anything to eat the entire morning, no wonder he was feeling a bit hungry. So Harry went to the Leaky Cauldron and chose a table a little hidden in a corner, he had no wish to be disturbed. A few moments later, the barman that had opened the archway for him that morning came to take his order and Harry spent the next two hours reading one of his books on general knowledge of the Wizarding World and eating a good lunch.

Harry found his book fairly interesting, it wasn't a work of art, nonetheless it had fundamental information about the Wizarding World, for example, means of communication and transportation, basic things but for someone that had just entered the Wizarding World, interesting and quite informative.

He was so absorbed by his reading material that he almost didn't notice that the two hours were almost up. Paying for his lunch, Harry asked Tom to open the archway again and went back to the wand shop.

He went inside and a few moments later Ollivander come from the back of the room, as soon as he saw him he said "Ah, Mr. Potter I just finished."

He put a box on the counter, opened it and took the wand out, it was completely white with the handle in the form of a serpent, it had it's mouth slightly open and it was possible to see its tongue and fangs. Harry was captivated; it was a work of art.

"Yew and phoenix feather, 11 inches." Ollivander whispered so low that Harry almost didn't hear him.

Harry held the wand and he knew immediately that it was the right wand for him. Sparks of all colors shot out of the tip of the wand but more important was the feeling that surrounded his entire being, he felt warm and energy flowed through him and in that instant he felt like he had the whole world at his feet, it was an almost addictive sensation.
"Curious... very curious..."

Hearing Ollivander's whisper Harry looked at him and asked.

"What's curious?"

Ollivander looked at him for several moments and Harry had the feeling that he was internally debating if he should share the information or not. Harry wasn't sure but it appeared that he had a resigned expression for a few moments but it was quickly hidden.

"It's curious that that is the wand destined for you, when it was it's twin that gave you that scar," he ended up saying, "Yes, yew and phoenix feather, 13.5 inches."

"And is it rare for wands to be... twins?" Harry asked finding the term peculiar when talking about wands.

"It is quite rare. Brother wands aren't that rare, it means that an animal that gave a core for a wand gave another core for another wand, normally it happens more to wands that have unicorn tail cores or dragon heartstrings. The unicorn tail because they usually give more than one, and the dragon heartstrings because one heart can be used for more than one wand. It happens a few times every century, usually members of the same family end up buying wands that are brother wands because they have similar characteristics. If the holly and phoenix feather wand had bonded with you completely, you would have had the brother wand to the Dark Lord. But it didn't and now they are twins. And, contrary to brother wands, twin wands are extremely rare. In the last 500 years there was just one recorded case of twin wands. For them to be twin wands they have to have more than cores from the same creature, they have to be made of the same wood, extracted from the same tree, at the same time. That's why they are that rare, even if the wood is the same, it is extremely rare that it's from the same tree and having been obtained at the same time. Usually wand makers only obtain enough wood for one wand, and then come back later for more if they want to use wood from the same tree. Most of the wand makers prefer to have the same type of wood from several different trees."

"Hmm... I see." said Harry when Ollivander finished speaking. Harry was rather interested to know what it meant, but there was no reason for him to show Ollivander just how interesting he found the information.

Paying for the wand Harry left the store, not paying attention to the pale gray eyes that followed him with a trace of fear in them. As soon as he was near the Leaky Cauldron he took out his wand and touched his trunk with it and couldn't stop the smile that appeared on his face when he saw the trunk shrink to the size of a matchbox. He still had shopping to do in the muggle world, that was the name that wizards gave non-magical people, according to the book he had been reading, and he had no wish to have to drag the trunk from one place to the other. With his wand and trunk in his pocket he left the Leaky Cauldron and went in to the muggle world.

Harry went to the nearest shopping center; now that he had money he had no intention of using second-hand clothing. He bought five pairs of jeans, two in black, one in gray, and another two in different shades of blue. He also bought two jumpers, the shirts and t-shirts he had bought in the store at Diagon Alley looked muggle enough, so he didn't need to buy more.

Harry also bought groceries, he now had an apartment that he could use, just because he went back to the orphanage didn't mean he had to spend more time than absolutely necessary in the company of muggles.

Muggle, he quite liked the name, it showed just how disgusting they were, just how different they
were, it showed the little insects their place.

He also bought several hygiene products, at the orphanage they always had to share; he had no intention of doing that again.

Having finished his shopping, Harry took the bus that would lead him back to the orphanage. He wasn't happy having to go back there, but at least he had many books to read, many new things to learn before he went back to where he truly belonged.

The first thing Harry did was to put a password on his trunk and after he confirmed that it could only be opened with the password, Harry started to organize it. In the first compartment he put all his school books, his parchment, quill and ink. In the second compartment he put all his potions things, not including the books. In the third compartment he put his school uniforms and a few trousers, jumpers, shirts, and t-shirts. He planned to keep the rest in the wardrobe of his new room. Next he organized his library, since he didn't have that many books it didn't take that long. He also had a few muggle books, but since he didn't think he would be using them all that much he decided to put them in the bookcase in his new bedroom.

When he finished with the library, next came the more complicated part, decorating his apartment. Not that it was hard to do, but it was something he had no experience in and he only had one chance, if he didn't like the outcome he would be stuck with it. With that in mind he chose to use the same colors as his clothing, at least he knew he liked them, and there were dozens of different shades of gray, green, blue, and red.

The walls in his living/dining room were a pale green, and the two rugs black. The couch became emerald green, and the two armchairs forest green. The tables had a glass top and he chose a silver color for the feet. For the chairs he chose the same emerald as the couch for the cushion and the feet the same silver color as the table's.

For the walls in his study he chose a grayish-blue color. The rug he made a deep blue and the two armchairs black. For the divan he opted for a dark gray with two sky blue pillows.

His bedroom was a little more difficult, he didn't want the colors to be too bright, but if it was too dark he knew that he wouldn't like it. With that in mind he tried to make an acceptable compromise. He made the walls a light green, the furniture black with silver highlights and the sheets dark green, the pillows became gray with green stitches and the bedspread black with green stitches. For the divan he chose a deep green with a black pillow. He considered it a job well done, the room had color but not too much.

The bathroom was completely done so he went immediately to the kitchen, which was in his opinion the easiest. The walls became a very light red, almost white, color and the cushions on the highchairs a deep red and it was finished.

When was all done he packed up his groceries, put his clothes in his wardrobe and his hygiene products in his bathroom and he was ready to start to enjoy his new flat.

Harry spent the rest of the month studying his new books, and most of his time inside his trunk. He just came out every morning to have breakfast and sometimes dinner. He only did it so that Mrs. Brown would leave him be, they just had to have breakfast together, so it wouldn't be strange if he didn't show up for lunch or dinner. As long as he was in his room at nine p.m., that was when Mrs. Brown made her rounds to see if everyone was in their room, then he could spend practically all his time enjoying his trunk and learn all he could about magic.

And before he knew it, it was the first of September and he was taking the bus to King's Cross.
Following the directions that Dumbledore had given him Harry had no difficulty in finding the right platform. When he finally crossed the barrier and saw the red train that said 'Hogwarts Express' he couldn't stop the huge smile that spread across his face. Finally, he was finally where he belonged.
Chapter 3 – Better be...

Harry had no difficulties boarding the train, although there were many people on the platform nobody paid him any attention. Even if there were people looking for 'Harry Potter' they had absolutely no idea what he looked like and that suited him just fine. He had no wish to entertain the adoring public.

Not wanting to be surrounded by children he went to the last compartment on the train, closed the door and hoped that nobody would disturb him. He took his trunk from his pocket, enlarged it and changed to his uniform immediately. Seeing as the train would take a while to arrive he chose to take a book out as well. Having done everything he needed he put his trunk in the rack above his seat, sat himself in a comfortable position and started reading his book.

It was a book about runes for beginners he had bought but hadn't had the opportunity to finish. He found it rather fascinating, and could hardly wait to have the subject. He didn't understand why they only started it in their 3rd year. Sure it was a little difficult, but it was like learning a new language, the younger you started the easier it would be for your brain to create the pathways necessary for you to speak it.

Almost twenty minutes after he arrived he heard the whistle signaling the departure of the train and Harry felt his excitement growing. He was finally going to Hogwarts.

Harry had spent a lot of time thinking about how he was going to behave. He ended up concluding that the best thing to do was to wait and see. The books he had read had indicated that he was seen as some kind of hero and that he was rather famous. That meant that people would keep their eyes on him and any little thing he did would be judged and gossiped about. Something he loathed but it couldn't be changed so he just had to be a little more careful, he was sure that he could do it.

He also found out that most of the population were rather prejudiced against wizards that came from muggle families and those that were half-bloods. It was rather stupid in his opinion, for him magical blood was magical blood; he didn't really care where they came from as long as they were useful.

But all that contributed to his decision. He would wait, learn more about the society, see how they would react to him and then choose his path. He was still young, he had time.

Harry was rather enjoying the train ride, a blond boy had looked in to his compartment, looked at his book and went away, aside from that only the trolley lady had disturbed his peace which made him rather happy.
Unfortunately his luck couldn’t last forever and his peace and quiet was rudely interrupted. The door of his compartment was violently opened, hitting the wall and a girl with bushy brown hair, followed by a round faced boy who looked to be on the verge of tears entered his compartment.

Harry looked at them expressionless, he was a little peeved about the interruption and also about the way they entered his compartment.

"Have you seen a toad?" the girl asked and Harry noticed that she had rather large front teeth, "Neville lost his, we are trying to find it."

Harry assumed that Neville was the boy with the round face. Who the hell would want a toad as a pet? But as it had nothing to do with him he answered with a simple "No." and promptly went back to his reading. If the both of them were even a little bit intelligent they would realize that he was dismissing them and that he would like to be alone.

However it appeared that neither of them understood what he was implying. Oh God, he hoped that not all the students had their level of intelligence.

"Oh, that book wasn't on the student list, was it? When you're finished could you lend it to me? My parents are muggles, you know? I knew nothing about magic. But I read all my books and all the spells I tried worked perfectly, of course."

Harry had to control himself so as to not curse the girl. He couldn't stand her type. There were a few like her in his old school. They could be relatively intelligent but they had too much faith in books and authority figures, they didn't have one original thought in their minds. And they always had that superior attitude, as if they were God's gift to mortals. And if someone had better grades than them then they must have cheated because it was impossible for someone to be better than them. And this girl had that same air and that was more than enough for Harry to want nothing to do with her, taking all that into consideration, there really was only one possible answer that Harry could give her.

"No."

He didn't even look at her. Harry assumed that at least now the girl would get the message and leave, seeing as he had made it perfectly clear that he had no interest whatsoever in their company. Apparently the girl was particularly slow. She huffed and in an extremely arrogant and pretentious tone said.

"You are being rather rude, did you know that?"

This time Harry looked up from his book, lifting an eyebrow but not showing any other emotion he replied in a flat tone.

"Oh? I'm being rude? That's strange, you see, I consider it rude to barge into a stranger's compartment without knocking or asking if you can go in. I also consider it rude to stay in that stranger's compartment when it is perfectly clear that said stranger has no wish to be in your company."

The girl blushed and she was clearly preparing herself to throw a rather long and unnecessary tantrum when the boy that was with her pulled her by the arm and out of the compartment.

"Come on Hermione. It's better if..."

Harry didn't hear anymore because the boy closed the door. Harry almost sighed in relief. Finally alone. Gods, he hoped the other students were more tolerable, if they weren't, Harry would just have to make them more tolerable, wouldn't he? A cruel smile appeared on his face and a dark chuckle left
his lips. However he quickly left his daydream and remembered that he had decided to wait and see. Educating little brats on how they should behave towards him wasn't in the wait and see category. But could you really blame him seeing how slow the students appeared to be? Was it really his fault if they practically begged for him to show them how to behave? Of course it wasn't. Nevertheless he had chosen to wait and see and he had rather good control. He would stick with his plan unless something drastic happened.

Approximately an hour later he felt the train slow down and he heard a voice throughout the train.

"We will be arriving at Hogwarts in five minutes. Please leave all your luggage on the train. It will be taken to the school separately."

Harry pulled his trunk down and put his book in the library, when he was done he felt the train stop completely and he heard hundreds of students start leaving their compartments. Not wanting to be run over by overexcited students he stayed in his compartment for a bit waiting for most of them to leave.

As soon as he left the train he heard a voice shout.

"Firs' years! Firs' years over here!"

Turning Harry saw the biggest man he had ever seen, you could hardly see his face with all that hair and beard. Harry thought he looked rather savage.

"C'mon, follow me — any more firs' years? Mind yer step, now! Firs' years follow me!"

Harry paid really close attention to where he was stepping, the path they were on didn't seem safe at all. The giant man said something that Harry didn't hear but the next second Harry heard the other first years let out an "ooohhhhh" and Harry looked up and only with a lot of effort did he avoid making the same exclamation as his colleagues.

The path had opened suddenly onto the edge of a great black lake. Perched on a high mountain on the other side, its windows sparkling in the starry sky, was a vast castle with many turrets and towers. It was breathtaking and Harry felt at home.

Following the man's instructions Harry sat in one of the boats, he was followed by two boys and one girl. It seemed to Harry that one of the boys and the girl were sitting as far away from the other boy as they could. He wondered if it had anything to do with the crap he had read about blood purity but seeing as it had nothing to do with him he ignored it.

The next few moments were nothing more than vague images for Harry, he remembered crossing the lake and a professor McGonagall opening the doors and giving a small speech about houses and family, he also remembered ghosts showing up in the corridor where they were waiting. However the only thing he vividly remembered was when professor McGonagall took them to the Great Hall.

Harry had never seen anything more fascinating. It was lit by thousands and thousands of candles that were floating in mid-air over four long tables, where the rest of the students were sitting.

Professor McGonagall led the first years up so that they came to a halt in a line facing the other students, then she silently placed a four-legged stool in front of the first years. On top of the stool she put a wizard's hat.

Harry looked at it curiously, he wasn't really seeing what they wanted them to do. However before he could think more about it the hat twitched and a rip near the brim opened wide like a mouth and the hat began to sing.
"Oh, you may not think I'm pretty,
But don't judge on what you see,
I'll eat myself if you can find
A smarter hat than me.
You can keep your bowlers black,
Your top hats sleek and tall,
For I'm the Hogwarts Sorting Hat
And I can cap them all.
There's nothing hidden in your head
The Sorting Hat can't see,
So try me on and I will tell you
Where you ought to be.
You might belong in Gryffindor,
Where dwell the brave at heart,
Their daring, nerve, and chivalry
Set Gryffindors apart;
You might belong in Hufflepuff,
Where they are just and loyal,
Those patient Hufflepuffs are true
And unafraid of toil;
Or yet in wise old Ravenclaw,
if you've a ready mind,
Where those of wit and learning,
Will always find their kind;
Or perhaps in Slytherin
You'll make your real friends,
Those cunning folk use any means
To achieve their ends.
So put me on! Don't be afraid!
And don't get in a flap!

You're in safe hands (though I have none)

For I'm a Thinking Cap!"*  

As soon as the hat stopped singing the whole Hall began to clap. Harry admitted that it was an ingenious way to sort the students but that didn't stop him from being nervous. That hat would see what was in his mind? He didn't like that, he didn't like that one bit. What if the hat revealed his secrets? There were things that happened in that orphanage that he didn't want to come to light, things that he had done that may not be considered legal.

Sure they were only muggles, but it would draw more unwanted attention to him. If the worst did happen he could always say that it was accidental magic, there was no one there who could confirm or deny it, practically everybody would believe him, he was after all only a child, he couldn't have possible tortured another orphan to insanity while he was trapped in his worst fears, now could he? No, of course he couldn't, he was nothing more than a child after all, their perfect little savior. People were pathetic really, as long as it maintained their illusion of normalcy and peace they would rather believe a lie than the truth, even if the truth was looking them in the face.

While Harry was immersed in his own thoughts he didn't notice the sorting and before he knew it he heard professor McGonagall call.

"Potter, Harry."

The Great Hall became almost instantly silent, Harry almost wasn't able to contain a sigh, this celebrity thing didn't please him one bit.

Not showing any emotion and with secure and confident steps he walked towards the stool. There was no need to show others just how unsettled he was about the idea of something looking into his mind, he had no wish for anyone to suspect that there was something wrong, it wouldn't do to have some nosy professor asking unwanted questions.

To most of those watching Harry looked like the perfect pure-blood heir, he had a grace about him that not many could achieve and that most old pure-blood families tried to have their children learn. More than one of those pure-bloods wondered if the rumors that Harry Potter had lived with muggles were lies after all. Though he was only eleven they couldn't deny that he posed a rather intimidating image. His beauty was angelic, but when the light from the candles shined upon his hair it gained a blood red sheen, with his expressionless face and his regal gait it gave him a rather cruel look. He looked cold, untouchable and more than one person in the Great Hall felt a cold shiver run down their spine.

Harry meanwhile was sitting on the stool and the last thing he saw before McGonagall put the hat on his head was the students starting to whisper to each other and trying to have a better look at him.

"Hmm... What do we have here," he heard a voice in his mind, Harry assumed that it was the sorting hat, "It's been years since I've seen a mind like yours. Immense power and talent, above average intelligence. From what I've seen you have courage to fight for what you want. You work hard to accomplish your goals. You have a brilliant mind and love to learn new things and you would use any means to achieve what you want. I honestly think that all founders would like to have you in their house. Any preference?"

Preference? They could choose? Honestly he hadn't thought about it. Harry supposed it didn't matter much, sure whichever house he went to would define how people saw him, at least at the beginning,
he could always alter their perceptions of him later down the line, but for now no matter the house he went to he would wait and see. As long as he was left alone he would be satisfied with observing and only after that would he act. One way or another, the members of the house he went to would follow his rules.

Harry heard a little chuckle in his mind.

"I see," the sorting hat said, "Taking in consideration what I saw, I believe that it is in everybody's interest that you better be... Slytherin!"

Harry heard the sorting hat's voice scream Slytherin to the Great Hall and took the hat off his head. He almost laughed when he saw the faces of some of the students. They were looking at him as if he was the root of all evil. It was a look he was rather familiar with, almost everyone in the orphanage looked at him the same way.

Putting the hat on the stool Harry turned and went to join the Slytherin table. It didn't escape his notice that the Great Hall was completely silent, even the Slytherin students were looking at him with some curiosity, at least some of them were, others were looking at him with disdain and something similar to hate.

Harry contained a sigh, it didn't seem like some students of his new house would leave him alone. Apparently his plan to observe first wasn't going to work for very long. At the end of the day it didn't matter he would deal with it when the time came, it annoyed him a bit however, he didn't like it when people messed with his plans.

Professor McGonagall finally seemed to pull herself together and called the next student, making most of the Hall pay attention to the sorting, something which he was grateful for.

The rest of the sorting went a hitch and soon the feast was beginning. Harry had never seen such a variety of food in his whole life. The students around him talked to each other but they never tried to start a conversation with him. Not that Harry minded, he wasn't at Hogwarts to make friends. However throughout the feast he had the feeling that he was being watched but every time he looked around no one was looking at him, it was very frustrating.

When the feast ended professor Dumbledore stood and addressed the students.

"Now that we are all fed and watered just a few more words. I have a few start-of-term notices to give you. First years should note that the forest on the grounds is forbidden to all students. And a few of our older students would do well to remember that as well." Dumbledore said looking in the direction of the Gryffindor table, "I have also been asked by Mr. Filch, the caretaker, to remind you all that no magic should be used between classes in the corridors. Quidditch trials will be held in the second week of the term. Anyone interested in playing for their house teams should contact Madam Hooch.

And finally, I must tell you that this year the third-floor corridor on the right-hand side is out of bounds to everyone who does not wish to die a very painful death."

A few students laughed but not many, Harry asked himself what in the hell was in a school that caused students a painful death. No matter how curious he may be, his survival instinct was far stronger and so he made a mental note to stay as far away from the third-floor corridor as possible. He liked being alive, thank you very much.

After singing a horrible song the Headmaster wished them a good-night and the students started leaving the Great Hall. Harry followed a girl from his house that was assembling the first years. They
went to the dungeons and stopped in front of a stone wall. The girl turned to face them and explained.

"Here is the entrance to our Common Room. As you can see it looks like a simple wall, however in the right upper corner, if you look closely, you will be able to see a carving of a snake, and that is what shows the entryway. To go in we have to say the password, it changes every month on the 1st. When you wake up in the morning you will have a piece of parchment on your nightstand, it will be blank. For the new password to appear you just have to put the tip of your wand on the parchment and say the password being used, the parchment will destroy itself at the end of the day. Any questions?"

Seeing as no one said anything the girl turned back to the wall and said.

"Belladonna."

Before their eyes the wall slid to the side and revealed the entrance to the Slytherin Common Rooms.

Harry felt immediately at home, it was decorated in black and several shades of green. The furniture was all in black and it had several highlights in greens and silver. The walls, floor, and ceiling were in stone but several rugs were spread through the room giving it a more welcoming feeling. It had two big fireplaces, on opposite sides of the room and one wall was covered in bookshelves. There were several couches and armchairs throughout the room, as well as a few work tables and chairs.

The girl that had led them to the common room turned to face them again, but this time she was joined by a boy.

"Welcome to Slytherin. I'm Alexis Rosier and this is Malcolm Linndon we are the fifth year prefects. If you have any questions, or any troubles you come talk to us, if we don't know how to help you we will talk to the prefects the year above ours. Your dorms are through those doors," Alexis told them pointing to the first door to the left of the fireplace on their right, "It is the dorm for the boys and the girls. You all have single rooms and they will be your rooms until you leave Hogwarts at the end of your seventh year. You may change the rooms however you wish, even when you go back home for summer vacation the rooms will not change. As I said you may do whatever you wish with your room, for example, the rooms have no windows, but if you learn the enchantment to create false windows with an artificial view or to show the weather outside you are free to use it in your room. Nobody can enter your rooms without your permission, not including professors of course. However if you want to add more defensive or offensive wards you are free to do so, you just aren't allowed to add wards that kill immediately, aside from that, everything goes. And lastly I want you all in the common room tomorrow at seven thirty so that we can take you to the Great Hall, we will be doing this for the next three days, to make sure that you know your way. Your room will have a plaque on the door with your name, you are free to go."

Harry was the first one by the door that led to the dorms; the right side of the corridor had the boy's rooms and the left the girl's. His door was the last one in the corridor.

The room was rather spartan; it had a double canopy bed, a bookcase, a desk and a wardrobe. The walls, floor and ceiling were in stone giving the room a rather dark look, it didn't help that the furniture was a dark wood. The only thing that wasn't dark in the room were the bed sheets and cover. They were a light gray, and the pillows a light green. Harry thought that learning the spells to change his room would be something rather high on his list of things to do, he had to spend seven years there after all. There was a door that led to a bathroom, it had a bathtub with a shower and was decorated in silver and light greens, Harry found it rather luxurious compared to the room. Being far too tired to inspect the room more, he changed into his pajamas and went to bed, his last thought before falling asleep being that he was finally home.
The Headmaster's office was fairly full. All the professors involved in protecting the Philosopher's Stone were there, meaning, Flitwick, Sprout, McGonagall, Quirrell and Snape, although Hagrid had also contributed to the Stone's protection he was not present because there was nothing to alter in his defense.

However, instead of discussing the Stone's protection, like Albus intended, they were discussing the sorting, or the sorting of a particular student, one Harry Potter.

Severus was being particularly vocal about the issue. Albus didn't know if he was in denial or if he had really thought that Harry couldn't possibly go to Slytherin. Which Albus found rather strange, seeing as Severus had been at the orphanage with him, really the boy almost screamed Slytherin.

"I don't believe the brat is in my house. *In my house!*

"Really, I never thought I would see the day that a Potter would be sorted into Slytherin." agreed Minerva, though she was far more controlled than her colleague.

Filius nodded and ended up saying, "I suppose that everyone was thinking that he would be a Gryffindor like his parents."

"I bet the brat is just as arrogant as his father. He must think that he owns the castle just because he has a little bit of fame," exclaimed Severus.

Albus seeing that the situation was going nowhere was preparing to intervene when they heard a chuckle come from the shelf that had the sorting hat on it. It captured everybody's attention, even Sprout and Quirrell's, who had remained silent throughout the conversation.

"What is so funny Alistair?" inquired Albus looking at the hat curiously.

"Oh nothing, nothing," answered Alistair, the sorting hat, "I just find it amusing that Severus is so astonished about young Potter's sorting, after all he went to the orphanage with you to inform him about Hogwarts."

"Orphanage? What do you mean orphanage?" exclaimed Minerva shocked and she wasn't the only one, the other professors were in similar states. They all had thought that Harry was living with family, with his aunt and uncle on his mother's side.

Albus seemed to age right in front of their eyes.

"The Dursleys left Harry at the nearest police station with his name and date of birth, nothing else. Harry lived in an orphanage practically his whole life."

"Yes, and as I was saying," Alistair continued, "I don't know why you are so surprised Severus. I saw the reaction you had to the young Potter. Only years and more years of Occlumency stopped you from showing the shock you felt."

"Obviously I was shocked," Severus almost yelled, "Seeing the brat who wouldn't be, aside from that I am certain that he is an ignorant and incompetent brat."

The sorting had appeared to sigh and if he had a head Albus was sure he would be shaking it.

"Severus, I advise you to let that hate that you have for anything Potter die. I do not believe that this Potter would tolerate your attacks and I am not sure you would win a confrontation against him, there is a reason why I put him in Slytherin."
Severus went red with anger and Albus wanting to prevent another explosion from his Potion Master tried steering the conversation in another direction.

"Then why did you put young Harry in Slytherin?"

Everyone paid attention to the sorting hat, even Snape, they all wanted to know why the Savior of the wizarding world ended in the house were the Dark Lord came from.

"You know I can't reveal student's secrets Albus," answered the hat in an almost regretful tone, "But I guarantee that Slytherin is the best option."

"I am not asking for you to reveal his secrets Alistair. But why was Slytherin the best option for Harry? And what were the other options?"

"Young Potter could have gone in to any of the houses. I did not say that Slytherin was the best option for him, just that it was the best option."

Severus couldn't control himself anymore and demanded.

"If there were more options then why did you put him in my house when it wasn't even the best house for him?"

Severus knew he was losing his mask, but he couldn't help it. Potter gave him an uneasy feeling, he didn't want the boy in his house, hell he didn't want him in Hogwarts let alone in his house.

"Having seen what he was capable of Slytherin was the only house that would survive more or less intact.

If he had gone to Gryffindor like everyone expected it, he would have been the perfect Savior of the Wizarding World..."

"Then why the hell didn't you put him there!" exclaimed Severus interrupting the sorting hat, looking even more agitated than before.

"You are not listening Severus!" yelled the hat, surprising those in the office, "He would have been the perfect little Gryffindor, the perfect Savior and when he left this school he would have had an army at his beck and call ready to do whatever he wished, and considering he was the perfect Savior people would follow him without a second thought, he could tell them that exterminating all the muggles was the right thing to do and the people would believe him. And those who didn’t believe him, would be powerless to do anything against him. And he could achieve it fairly easily, seeing as everybody expected him to be the Savior, the perfect Gryffindor; they gave him that power before he could even ask for it.

If I had sent him to Hufflepuff most people would have underestimated him, nobody truly considers Hufflepuffs a threat and he would have been able to take advantage of it to an extreme. He would disappear into the background, work from the shadows. In seven years he would have more than enough time to make the Hufflepuffs loyal to him. Imagine an army of people so loyal that if he told them not to move while he shot a 'Avada Kedavra' at them they would do it without a second thought. And nobody would ever suspect it because, supposedly, Hufflepuffs aren't dangerous.

And Ravenclaw wouldn't have been much better, their thirst for knowledge would have been extremely easy for him to manipulate.

Slytherin is the best house for us. In Slytherin he will have much more difficulty in gaining the trust from the other houses and even from those in his house, with all that prejudice against non-
purebloods. However if he achieves it in Slytherin, I have no doubt whatsoever that he would be
great." Alistair concluded gravely, trying to show them just how serious the situation was. He may
not be able to tell them what he saw inside Potter's mind, but he could try to warn them. It was true,
the boy had traits that made it possible for him to be in any of the houses, but that wasn't the reason
why he would have done well in them. The reason why he could and would have done well in any
of them was because the boy was an expert manipulator and a chameleon. He could and would use
any and all situations to suit his needs, and adapt to any situation. He had been doing it for years
already, in the orphanage where he lived, at the school he went to and the sorting hat knew he would
do the same at Hogwarts.

The sorting hat knew he had made a very risky gamble. The truth was, that although Slytherin was
the best house for them, it was also the perfect house for the boy. Slytherin would help him perfect
his skills, would make him great. But only if the boy could handle the way Slytherin house worked
and only if he used all the potential he had, but if he did, Alistair was certain that the world would
become his playground and the people in it his puppets. He just didn't know what it would mean for
the wizarding world, would it be it's downfall or it's salvation?

He supposed that it was the part of Salazar in him that could hardly wait to see what the boy would
achieve and the Godric part of him that tried to warn those in the office about the danger that the boy
could represent. He hoped it would be enough. But he had existed for a thousand years and he knew
how most humans thought. He just hoped that this time they would prove him wrong. However he
wasn't proven wrong and if he could he would have slumped in his shelf when he heard what
Pomona said.

"He is only eleven. Surely it..."

And he blamed the part of him that was Helga for the answer he gave.

"I am not saying that those are his plans. I am just saying that he has the ability to do it. But that
means nothing, Albus has the ability to cast the killing curse that doesn't mean he does it. Just
because someone has the ability to do something doesn't mean they are going to do it. You are right
Pomona, right now he is only an eleven year old boy who wants to learn magic."

Almost all the professors visibly relaxed when the sorting hat said that, it was right of course, just
because someone had the ability to do something didn't mean they would do it.

Albus and Severus however traded a look, they would keep an eye on Potter. The meeting in the
orphanage was still fresh in their minds and unlike the other professors they had seen the real fear in
Mrs. Brown's eyes. They weren't sure if they wanted to know what kind of eleven year old was
capable of evoking that look in someone's eyes.

Nobody noticed the look on professor Quirrell's face, showing just how intrigued he was by what he
had heard about the Boy-Who-Lived, supposed Savior of the Wizarding World.

Albus called the attention back to the Philosopher's Stone, the reason they were there and the words
spoken by the sorting hat were soon forgotten by those in the office, except for three. Each one of
them wondering just what the year would reveal about the young Slytherin.
Chapter 4 – Getting a Pet

The first week of classes was interesting although not that difficult. Harry was expecting a bit more, but he supposed that each subject would become more challenging in the following months, at least he hoped so.

Just like the prefect Rosier had told them, they helped the first years to find their way the first few days, something for which Harry was thankful, Hogwarts was enormous and he was sure that he would have lost himself at least once trying to find the right classrooms. However he did want to explore the castle, it was huge and he was sure that it had to have hundreds of secrets, he could hardly wait to uncover them.

Classes were something he found just as frustrating as interesting, and he could only hope that it would change. Still it was something he was used to, in muggle school he always found classes to be boring and he always had to find something new to study to keep himself entertained.

His first class was Charms with professor Flitwick and though it had the potential to be an interesting class, they had done nothing more than theory, theory that he already knew, and it looked like it wouldn’t be changing in the near future. What Harry wanted to do was practical classes, he wanted to do the charms, he wanted to cast magic but knowing it would take a while for it to happen he decided he would do it on his own in his room, at least like that he would learn something.

Transfiguration was far more interesting for him, he had to admit that he quite liked it. They had a bit of theory at the start of class, but after that professor McGonagall gave them a match and told them to turn it into a needle. Harry pointed his wand at the match, said the spell and nothing whatsoever happened. He frowned, he had done exactly what the book said, why hadn't it worked?

Theoretically a needle was supposed to be on his desk in front of him, but no, on his desk, practically laughing at him, was still a match. Aside from that, he hadn't felt anything. Every time he had used magic he had felt something, just under his skin, and all around him, it wasn't always the same feeling, but he did always feel something, but now there was nothing. What was the difference? He was still looking at his match when his eyes went wide. It took him a little bit but he knew what was different. It was so obvious that he had to ask himself why he hadn't noticed it before. Every time he had done magic he had focused on what he wanted, had focused on his will, and when he tried to change the match into a needle he had only said the spell without even thinking about his will. Was that the reason why it didn't work? Well there was only one way to find out. Trying again, Harry not only said the spell he also focused on his will, on how he wanted the match to change into a needle. To his delight the match changed completely and on his desk was a needle.

"Well done Mr. Potter," a voice said from behind him, making Harry turned to see professor
McGonagall looking at him, "Now try turning that needle back into a match."

As it didn't seem like the professor was going away Harry turned back to his needle and said the spell again, not forgetting to focus on his will, and the needle became a match again.

"Wonderful Potter," professor McGonagall said with a small smile on her face, "I never had a student that was able to do both of the transfigurations on the first class, 20 points to Slytherin. Continue to transfigure the match until the end of class, try changing the needle, try adding a pattern to the metal or something similar. The spell is the same, it's just a matter of visualization."

Having said that, professor McGonagall continued walking around the classroom helping the students that needed it.

Visualization? Harry took a while pondering what the professor meant. When he thought that he had understood what she was implying he admitted that it made a lot of sense. The spell he had used to change the match into a needle and the needle into a match was the same, so logically if he wanted a different needle he had to imagine that the needle was different. When he was transfiguring the match into a needle he hadn't thought about the needle because they were both already quite different, but because he hadn't visualized the needle it turned into a basic needle, he supposed that if he had no idea how a needle looked that it wouldn't have worked. But seeing as he knew what a needle was his subconscious must have provided the needed image to complete the spell.

Satisfied with his reasoning he focused on his match again and cast the spell. However this time he focused not only on his will but also on visualizing the needle, he imagined that the needle had a floral pattern. He was quite happy when the match changed into a needle with a pattern on the metal. However when he inspected the pattern he noticed that in some places it was more blurred and not as defined. He supposed that he needed to have a clearer image of the whole needle for it to work as it should. Having a better understanding of what he had to do he proceeded to change the needle back into a match and try again and again and again, until he achieved a result that he was satisfied with.

When at the end of the class professor McGonagall asked them to turn in their match/needle only one other student had been able to change their match into a needle but not back again, it was the girl that had stormed into his compartment on the train. Harry on the other hand handed in a needle that looked like a snake, it had beautiful detailed scales, and had it's tongue out, which was the eye of the needle, and it's tail was the point. On the snake's head were his initials in a beautiful script. All in all it was an amazing work. Professor McGonagall spent almost a full minute looking at it until she reacted.

"Ten more points to Slytherin, I have never seen a student do something like this with a needle much less on their first class. Very well done Potter."

And she moved on to the next desk to collect their match, leaving the students staring at Harry. He didn't pay them any mind, he was used to most of the looks he was receiving, after all the students in his old school were also jealous of him. It was only natural that it would be the same in Hogwarts, he was after all better than them and they were starting to realize it.

While he was happy about the fact that even in this new world he was above average, not that he would accept anything else, it would hinder his plan. He was sure that one or more students would choose to confront him sooner or later about it. He would have to deal with it when the time came, after all it didn't really matter what they did, as long as by the end of it they knew their place.

History of magic was a great interest of his. Even if history was biased towards the winner it would still have some facts that couldn't be altered and he was eager to learn more about this world that he had suddenly entered. And maybe they would learn about some obscure magic that was used
centuries ago. Maybe magic was like technology and was always evolving. Sure he had noticed that
the wizarding world favored more ancient tools, like quills and parchment, however that didn't mean
that spells and enchantments didn't change and evolve throughout the centuries, it was completely
impossible for a society to not evolve at all, it would stagnate and die. It was all those little things that
he could hardly wait to find out.

History class however would prove to be a disappointment. When Harry first found out that the
professor was a ghost he was quite excited, the man would know with first-hand experience how
things had changed over the years. However the ghost only talked about goblin wars, he didn't even
verify which class he was teaching, he simply floated through the blackboard and started talking
about some goblin war, never even telling them which war it was or when it started. Harry managed
to spend twenty minutes listening to the ghost, after that he wasn't able to anymore and took a book
out of his bag. He figured he would learn more if he simply read the history section in the library so
he might as well make something productive of his time.

Herbology was interesting, however it would never became one of his favorite subjects. He could
see how advantageous it would be to know the subject, and nothing would stop him from doing his
best and achieving quite high grades, but it wasn't a subject to which he would dedicate more
attention than what he had to and he certainly wouldn't go out of his way to find interesting books on
the subject.

He found Astronomy to be a waste of his time, it was pathetically easy. He may not like them, but he
knew for a fact that muggles had developed far more in that department then wizards in terms of
knowledge.

Potions on the other hand he quite liked, even if he couldn't stand the man that was supposed to teach
them. By the end of the class he was thanking Merlin that he had read all those potion books.
Professor Snape may have been their Head of House but Harry had no problem in saying that the
man was not a professor. Putting a potion recipe on the blackboard and telling them to begin was not
teaching. But no matter how inept the man was, that was not the reason he couldn't stand him,
dealing with incompetents was part of life and he had gotten used to it years ago, not that he liked it,
but there wasn't much he could do. Now the way the man looked at him, that was slowly but surely
getting on his nerves. Most of the time professor Snape seemed happy in letting him be, but other
times when he thought that Harry wasn't looking he would look at him with a sneer and open his
mouth as if he was about to tell him something, that would be without a doubt malicious or
humiliating, but then he would close his mouth and look at Harry with disdain before he turned to
look in another direction. You didn't have to be a genius to realize that the man hated Harry.

Harry just didn't know why that was. Sure the man had been to the orphanage with Dumbledore, and
he had slipped in front of both of them, however he didn't see why the man would treat him that way
just because of one meeting. Even if Mrs. Brown had told them anything, there was no evidence
whatoever, besides he had behaved at Hogwart. He hadn't injured, tortured or killed anyone, hell
he wasn't even planning on doing it in the near future. He was behaving like a little angel practically,
only observing nothing more, so there truly was no reason for the looks. Even so, the truth was that
the looks were starting to annoy him. Not that he would do anything of course, he wasn't an idiot and
he knew that he could do nothing to the man, at least not yet. However that did not stop him from
daydreaming about what he could to do him once he had finished school, or maybe as a birthday gift
to himself when he turned seventeen. Oh, the possibilities were endless.

So at the end of class Harry had a small smile on his face when he handed in a perfectly brewed
potion. He could hardly wait for his next class, it appeared that he could get quite imaginative when
he was fantasizing about hurting the esteemed professor. Who knew when those ideas could be
useful.
Snape didn't know why but he was sure that that smile meant nothing good, and he had to repress a shiver that wanted to go down his spine.

Yet the class Harry thought had been the most interesting was Defense against the Dark Arts. Harry was one of the first to arrive and took a seat in the front of the class. This was the first class that Harry had a lot of questions for. It frustrated him to no end that he couldn't find the answers nor any indication of where he could possibly find them. With that in mind he opted to ask the professor, he hoped that the man could at least clear up some of them or point him in the right direction.

So when the professor had finished taking attendance Harry put his hand up and said, "Professor I have a question."

Professor Quirrell seemed surprised that Harry would talk to him and more than one student was looking at him with curiosity, they were only starting after all, what questions could he possibly have.

"Y-y-yes P-p-potter?"

"Why is this class called 'Defense against the Dark Arts'?"

Harry heard the Gryffindors laugh and even some of the Slytherins were looking at him as if he was an idiot. Quirrell on the other hand stop trembling and looked him straight in the eyes.

"Excuse me?"

Harry didn't know what it was but something about the professor's voice was different, and he didn't mean the lack of stuttering. His voice seemed deeper, smoother, and darker. This voice didn't seem to belong to the professor, it was like the man was wearing a costume and put on the wrong mask, it just didn't match.

"I asked," Harry answered putting aside the matter of the man's voice for later consideration, "Why this subject is called 'Defense against the Dark Arts'. I read our book from cover to cover, and the book only teaches us some spells, a few hexes and jinxes, and a lot of theory. The spells also have the counter spells in the book, I suppose that's the defense part, however if that part is the defense, unless the spells are Dark Arts spells, I don't see how we are defending ourselves against the Dark Arts. And if they are Dark Arts spells why are they being taught if they are supposedly illegal? And while we're at it, what are the Dark Arts and who decides what's classified as Dark Arts? Going back to the original question if we're learning to defend ourselves against magic that isn't Dark why is the class called 'Defense Against the Dark Arts'? Doesn't that give a false sense of security, not to mention how biased it is, telling students that they only need to defend themselves against the Dark Arts, isn't it giving the idea that all other types of magic are safe, that only Dark Arts are bad?"

When Harry finished talking none of the students were laughing at him and Quirrell was looking at him with curiosity. Harry waited calmly for the professor to answer, he was perfectly aware that the students were looking at him strangely, especially the Gryffindors, but he never cared about what others thought of him, what mattered to him now was how to get all the knowledge he wanted, after all knowledge was power and Harry would never deny that power was something that interested him immensely.

Professor Quirrell seemed to come out of his stupor and answered, "The Ministry are the ones who classify what is Dark magic and isn't. I don't know the reason why the subject is called 'Defense Against the Dark Arts'. The definition of Dark Arts is rather complex, however most people classify 'Dark Arts' as curses and hexes that hurt or kill people."
Harry waited for the professor to continue, but when it became apparent that he was not going to he stared incredulously at the man.

"The Dark Arts are pure evil!" a red-headed Gryffindor exclaimed and Harry almost went into shock when he saw several students nodding, agreeing with the idiot.

"You have got to be kidding." Harry muttered to himself but everyone heard him and the professor focused on Harry again, having previously been looking at the red-headed idiot.

"Why do you say that Mr. Potter?" and Harry noticed that there was something in his eyes that wasn't there before.

"That is one of the most irrational things I have ever heard. I always knew that I was far more intelligent than the average person, however the stupidity that some people in the Wizarding World are showing is astounding. When I heard about the Dark Arts I thought that it was related with our magic, with the magic in our core and how we manipulate it but if it truly is the Ministry that decides what Dark Magic is then it's the most stupid thing I have ever heard."

"Why do you think that?" Quirrell asked not taking his eyes from Harry's.

"The Ministry is made out of people, and people are fundamentally afraid of what they do not understand, of what they are not able to do, of what they cannot control. With that in mind what guarantee do we have that the choices they made are for the right reasons? What if someone wasn't able to do a spell, and he or she was afraid of said spell, and couldn't defend themselves against said spell, they could simply classify it as Dark Arts and be done with it. And that's not all, what if war breaks out, what then? Are we expected to cast a cheering charm or a stunning spell and hope they don't recover or that someone on their side doesn't reverse the spell? It's human stupidity at it's best."

Quirrell continued to stare at him for a few moments, then he looked around and appeared to remember where he was and focused on the class again. The rest of the class passed by quite quickly, though the professor stuttered so much that it became difficult to understand him. Harry however wasn't paying attention. The answers he had obtained concerning the Dark Arts were nowhere near as satisfying as he wanted, he would find a way to gain the knowledge he wanted and he didn't really care how he did it. He was so immersed in his thoughts that he didn't even noticed that professor Quirrell's eyes barely left him throughout the class.

The day after the Defense class Harry noticed immediately that something had changed in the way the students looked at him. At first they pointed at him, whispered behind their hands and passed him several times in the corridor, trying to have a better look at his scar, but as he was a Slytherin they did it when they thought he wasn't looking. But now, now a new emotion was in the eyes of the students looking at him. It was an emotion he knew well, he never tired of evoking it in the muggles that lived at the orphanage. Fear, it was such a wonderful emotion.

As far as Harry knew the conversation he had in his Defense class had spread and the general opinion was that he was the next Dark Lord. He couldn't help the smile that appeared on his face every time that he heard someone whispering about it. Honestly he had absolutely no idea how an eleven year old boy could be a Dark Lord, but at least it provided him with entertainment.

The Gryffindors were the worst, especially the red-head from his Defense class, that he learned was named Ronald Weasley. He never missed a chance to call him traitor, dark wizard and Death Eater every time he saw Harry in the corridors. Harry almost didn't notice the red-head, to Harry he was like a fly, it could occasionally bother you but never enough to receive more than a passing glance.
Though if Harry were honest, there was very little that would gain and keep his attention, especially people. They were so boring, so uninteresting, was it really any wonder he ignored most of them? Still some were useful so he tolerated them even if they could hardly hold his attention. He had been hoping that it would change in the Wizarding World, that he would find someone that would truly interest him, someone like him but with enough differences that they could challenge each other. However until he found someone like that he would be quite happy with someone who could be useful and interesting enough to at least entertain him.

It was also the day after the Defense class that Harry found someone just like that. People would say that it was Harry's first friend, though Harry didn't quite see it like that. To him it was like acquiring a pet.

It was lunch time and the great hall was half full, Harry was seated in his usual seat a little away from the rest of the students. He was reading a book he had taken from the library about runes when he felt someone sitting beside him. Even though he didn't show it he was curious, normally nobody would sit beside him. Cursing his curiosity, Harry lowered his book a little and looked to his left. It was a boy from his year, the one that had taken the boat with him that the other two were avoiding. He was a little bit taller than Harry, with dark brown wavy hair and blue eyes, with an aristocratic face, high cheekbones and thin lips and a perfectly straight nose. He was quite handsome Harry noticed, nothing close to how beautiful he was of course, but still handsome.

"Theodore Nott." the boy introduced himself as, when he saw that he had Harry's attention.

Harry lifted an eyebrow showing his confusion, even so he too introduced himself, it was only polite after all, "Harry Potter."

Nott seemed quite happy with it and before Harry could go back to his book he asked, "Do you mind if I sit here?"

"No," Harry told him, and cursing his curiosity again he added, "Although it seems rather curious that you would want to, after all the other Slytherins haven't really welcomed me with open arms."

Nott seemed uncomfortable but Harry didn't care, however when bitterness and rage crossed the boy's face Harry's interest grew a bit.

"My father is in Azkaban for being a Death Eater. The Ministry took more than half of our estate. Obviously the children of exemplary citizens that only served the Dark Lord because they were under a curse, cannot be seen in the company of the son of a known and loyal Death Eater." Nott ended up answering not taking his eyes from Harry.

"I see." Harry muttered, and he really did. Now that he thought about it he remembered seeing Nott sitting away from the others, he had never seen them talk either, he appeared to be quite isolated in the House, and he had no friends in other Houses because he was a Slytherin so that meant he must be pure evil.

Even so it was rather strange that the son of a loyal Death Eater chose to associate with the Boy-Who-Lived. Weren't they supposed to hate him for destroying their lord? Besides he was a half-blood, and he knew that many believed the crap about blood purity. But he could see no hate in Nott's eyes. Then he saw something in his expression that explained why he was there. The boy was lonely.

It was a feeling Harry knew all too well. He used to have that look in his eyes when he was at the orphanage. Before everything changed, before he changed. He remembered how it was before, wanting to belong, wanting to have someone to be proud of him, hell even someone he could talk to.
But it didn't matter how much he hoped, it didn't matter what he did, he was always the **freak** to them. He could still perfectly remember all the times they hurt him, all the times they humiliated him and nobody ever did anything.

He used to pray that someone would come and take him home, that someone would be his father, his mother, that someone would want him. And a few times someone did take him home, and for a little while he believed that everything would be alright, that he could be happy and have a family. But it never lasted. They always brought him back, there was always something wrong with him. A particularly religious couple even told him that he was the Devil's child.

The other boys at the orphanage took advantage of that and told him that he was not worthy of love, of a family. That no matter what he did he would never be good enough and nobody would ever want him. And for a little while he believed them. He stopped praying, he stopped hoping, because, clearly, neither did any good.

But then he turned seven, and everything changed.

So that was why he only nodded his head and went back to his book. Besides Nott could be useful, he was raised in the wizarding world, he could give him information that he otherwise wouldn't have.

Nott appeared satisfied in just sitting and eating his lunch and Harry wasn't complaining, he appreciated the quiet and saw no need in having pointless conversations.

More towards the end of lunch Nott broke the silence.

"What are you reading? It has to be quite interesting, you practically didn't eat lunch."

Harry looked up from his book and focused on Nott, as he only saw genuine curiosity Harry answered.

"I'm reading *Runes and their basic applications* by Shane Willis. It is rather interesting, though as it is only the basics it's relatively simple things. But I believe that in two or three months I will be able to understand some more advanced runes."

Harry was going to continue talking about the book when he saw that Nott's eyes were wide open.

"Something the matter Nott?" he ended up inquiring, even though he didn't really care.

"Runes?" exclaimed Nott, fortunately they were far away from the other Slytherins so they didn't hear, "You are studying runes? We only start runes in third year! I knew you were good, I mean, seeing you in class leaves no doubt about that, but runes? And you believe that you will be able to understand more advanced runes in a few months? That's incredible."

Harry almost smiled when he saw the look on the boy's face.

"I made a mistake when I bought the school books," admitted Harry, "I only bought the books for our year and a few others. But I already read them all. And our first year books as well as our classes are extremely easy. I had to find something that would entertain me, that's were Runes come in."

Nott didn't say anything for a few moments, then he chuckled and shook his head.

"I don't know why, but that answer doesn't really surprise me."

Both went back to their lunch, Harry was more starting his, seeing as he had his plate almost full.
However after a few minutes Nott started sighing and Harry looked at him lifting an eyebrow. Knowing what Harry wanted he explained.

"They haven't stopped staring since I sat here and when they see that I noticed they look away and start whispering with each other. It's rather irritating."

"Hmm, since I am, apparently, the next Dark Lord they must be wondering if you are my first follower." Harry remarked highly amused but maintaining a serious tone, looking back to his book.

Nott didn't say anything for a few seconds then he started laughing, gaining the attention of a few Slytherins that were sitting a little closer to them.

It took a little for him to control himself but he finally said.

"Is that so? Should I address you as 'My Lord' then?"

When Harry looked at him it was impossible to deny the amusement in the eyes of both boys and Theodore Nott was the first to see a true smile on Harry's face.

"No, I don't believe it is necessary. At least at Hogwarts, Potter or Harry will do. However outside of Hogwarts I suppose you may address me as 'Your Grace', it has a nice ring to it, don't you think?"

However Nott was laughing again and was not able to give him an answer. Harry smiled and finished his lunch, maybe having Nott around wouldn't be so bad after all.
Chapter 5 – Hierarchy

Before Harry noticed it a month had passed, nothing had changed, classes continued to be so easy that Harry found it almost boring and he continued to not interact with other students. Not that they would have wanted to, they still firmly believed that he was going to be the next Dark Lord, so most preferred to avoid him, besides Theo of course. Theo almost became his shadow, it was very rare to see Harry without Theo.

At first Harry didn't really know what to do with the boy, he'd never had a friend before, or anyone to talk to really, so Harry did not know which mask to use with the boy. He had no wish to behave like an innocent little child every minute he spent with Theo, but he didn't believe it was prudent to show his real self either. So the first few days he was mostly silent and let Theo do the talking. Not that the boy was the talkative type, but it did help Harry see what he was like.

They spent most of their time in the library, Theo studying their first year books, and Harry searching for things that caught his interest. After the first few days, Harry found that he did enjoy Theo's company. He was quiet, more mature than most children his own age and Harry could have an intelligent conversation with him. He may not feel like he could show his true self to the boy, but at least he could be more like his true self.

Today was one of the few times that Theo wasn't with Harry. Theo had forgotten that they had homework for the next day and decided to do it in his room, teasingly saying that every time they were in the library he would get distracted with the things Harry was studying, finding it more interesting than his homework.

Harry didn't mind. He may have become used to Theo but he was still a very independent and solitary person and enjoyed being alone. He didn't like people in general so the fact that he spent so much time with Theo was in his opinion something akin to a miracle. That he actually enjoyed it was almost mind blowing.

Seeing that it was almost curfew Harry packed his things and left the library. He made his way to the common room, said the password and entered.

As soon as he went in Harry knew that something was different. He felt a shiver go down his spine and discretely looked around the room. He immediately noticed that no Slytherin first years were present. The second thing he noticed was that the common room was divided in two, it was nothing obvious, but for someone who was looking for it, it was noticeable. The third thing he noticed was a group of five older boys that were separate from both groups, they had cruel smiles on their faces and were looking at him with contempt and hate.
Harry knew immediately what it was about. Apparently some Slytherins weren't going to let him continue his observations in peace, something that irritated him. Now he only had a matter of seconds to decide how he was going to react and how he could make it so that the situation could be used to be to his advantage. He only had a few moments to decide how he wanted them to perceive him, sweet and innocent, or dark and dangerous? Or anything in between, really. He could make it work for him no matter what he used, he just had to decide which one would be more advantageous.

Before he could think more about it the five students were in front of him and one of them shoved him against the wall, making his head hit the stone and leaving him a bit dazed. Two of the boys held his arms and the other three made a barrier in front of him.

Harry recognized the boy in the middle, it was a sixth year named Jugson, he had a nasty smile on his face and Harry was sure that he was the leader of this little gang.

"I think it's time that you learn how things work around here Potter," he said in a tone that Harry had no doubt Jugson thought was menacing, Harry had to stop himself from rolling his eyes, it was completely ridiculous, "It's time that you learn where your place is. You are nothing more than a disgusting half-blood, who shouldn't even be allowed in to Hogwarts much less the noble House of Slytherin. You are worth nothing. Your place is at my feet, licking my shoes, it's the only thing you're useful for. And you are going to learn that, one way or another." And Jugson and his two friends took their wands out of their pockets.

Before Jugson started to speak Harry was only going to do enough so that he would come out of this without injury, but now he was angry. He was worth nothing? His place was at his feet? If there was something that he could not tolerate, it was being treated like that, as if he were below them. At the orphanage they did it because he was different and here they were going to do it because of his origins, at the orphanage they learned not to mess with him, they were about to learn it at Hogwarts too.

"I see," whispered Harry, but everyone in the common room heard him, making more than one student shiver, "and who is going to, supposedly, put me in my place?"

"Me!" growled Jugson pointing his wand at Harry.

And that's when Harry did something that surprised every one of them, he laughed. Harry laughed and most students felt their blood freeze, it was cold and cruel and nothing like a laugh should be. And when Harry lifted his head Jugson and his two friends took a step back instinctively. Harry's eyes shone with magic and a sadistic smile made his angelic face seem demonic.

Harry lifted both of his hands, the movement followed by all those present, and put one hand on one of the arms of the boys holding him, the next moment the silence in the common room was broken by two agonizing screams coming from both boys. Both of them let go of Harry immediately, holding their arm to their chest, those closest to them could see their shirts getting soaked in blood and a few even saw a piece of bone sticking out of their flesh. Harry pointed in the direction of both boys and they fell unconscious.

Having taken care of the small inconvenience of being restrained in less than ten seconds, Harry turned his attention to Jugson and his remaining two cronies. Jugson's two friends lifted their wands in his direction, but before they could even open their mouths to say a spell, Harry had already acted and twin screams filled the common room. Both of them were on the ground with both of their legs broken. Harry pointed in their direction again, and the screams stopped, showing that both of them were unconscious.

Harry was focused on Jugson, however he didn't lose sight of the rest of the room, not missing the
pale faces of some students, nor the fear that some of them couldn't hide. He would be lying if he said that he didn't enjoy it. Fear was truly such a wonderful emotion.

"You're going to put me in my place?" inquired Harry softly, never taking his eyes of Jugson. Moving with surprising speed he was standing in front of Jugson and took the wand from his hand, "May I know how you plan to do that?"

Even though his tone was perfectly friendly, his eyes promised pain and Jugson lost any and all color that he had in his face.

Seeing as Jugson was not going to answer Harry focused his magic in putting the teenager in front of him on his knees, as long as it was something simple he didn't need spells or a wand, his magic would do as he wanted.

With Jugson on his knees in front of him, Harry had no difficulty in caressing his face, it was a tender touch, soft and sweet and that only made his expression all the more terrifying to Jugson.

"I am a little annoyed with what you tried to do Jugson," Harry informed the other boy without taking his hand from Jugson's cheek, loving the way Jugson's eyes went wide and filled with fear, "I was perfectly satisfied with observing and studying, but you forced my hand, which, I have to admit, annoys me a bit."

When Harry finished speaking he had his right hand on Jugson's left arm, had pulled Jugson's sleeve to his elbow and was creating invisible patterns with his forefinger on Jugson's forearm.

"And all for what?" continued Harry, "Because of blood?" he asked in a soft voice, collecting his magic into his forefinger and making it cut Jugson's arm wherever his finger passed, "Tell me, how is your pure blood helping you now?" Harry asked, his finger creating a grotesque pattern on the other boy's skin, completely ignoring the pained moans the other was making.

"What matters is not the blood Jugson, it is the magic. Do you understand?" inquired Harry, as if he was a professor asking his student a question.

Despite the pain Jugson lifted his head and looked Harry in the eyes, he didn't know if it was a rhetorical question but he answered either way.

"I u-u-understand." And looking in to the eyes of the child in front of him how could he not understand.

"Good boy," whispered Harry caressing his cheek, as if he was a pet that had pleased his owner by learning a new trick, "Just so there aren't any doubts, where is my place?"

Jugson lost no time in answering.

"Above me." he said with conviction and he breathed a sigh in relief when he saw that Harry's eyes lost some of their cold look.

"I'm pleased to see that you are intelligent. Unfortunately that does not mean that you didn't annoy me, you know you will have to face the consequences, correct?"

Jugson nodded and dropped his head, he may have been a sixth year, but there was something inside of him screaming at him to submit, to obey and that's what he did, he submitted, lowered his head and waited for his punishment.

"Hmm... I hope that you don't make me regret giving you such a light punishment." Harry said a
little above a whisper, touching Jugson's left hand he shattered every bone in his hand. Fortunately for Jugson he only felt the pain for a few seconds because Harry lost no time in stunning him.

"You," Harry said looking at a boy and two girls that were closer, "Take them to the infirmary."

The three Slytherins didn't even think twice about obeying him and a few moments later they had left the common room with the five boys levitating in front of them.

The whole situation hadn't lasted more than five minutes. Five minutes was all it took for Harry to define the Slytherin hierarchy. Himself at the top, followed by all the others, depending on their usefulness and relationship with Harry the closer to the top they were, they could fight it out between them. All of that was defined in five minutes, without Harry having to say a single word about the matter, they were Slytherins after all.

Harry observed the common room, his face showing no emotion, he didn't seem to care about what he had done, when he spoke his voice was soft and melodic, making some of them wonder how such a beautiful voice could sound so cold and cruel just moments before. Others thought it fit him, his voice just like his appearance, conceals a cruel and sadistic demon, it was far more terrifying than if he looked like a monster.

"I hope that the rest of you are as intelligent as Jugson, seeing as I would not be, at all, pleased if, due to your stupidity, I were in any way harmed."

Harry was rather satisfied when he saw some of them nod and others looking at him with understanding in their eyes.

Not wasting time he went to his room, there was a book he wanted to finish and he had already spent more time out here than what he wanted.

What he did not know was that in an alcove, hidden behind a tapestry, all the first year Slytherins aside from Theodore, had been watching everything that had happened.

"Did you see that Draco?" asked Blaise Zabini, his best friend, "What do we do?"

Draco looked at the other Slytherins that were there and they, just like Blaise, were looking at him waiting for an answer. However he didn't know what to say to them. What could he say to them? Before he came to Hogwarts he had it all planned out, he would go to Slytherin, he would climb up in the hierarchy of his House with ease, he was after all a Malfoy and a pureblood, and he would end up ruling Slytherin, just like his father before him. But five minutes, only five minutes, had changed all that. Maybe the best option would be to talk to his father and ask for his opinion, he was sure that his father would know what to do.

"We do nothing. We observe and do nothing. During Yule break I'll talk with my father, I'm sure that he will know what to do."

The rest of the Slytherins nodded and discretely left their hiding place to go to their rooms, they had a lot to think about.

That night the only Slytherins that had a peaceful night were Harry Potter and Theodore Nott, all the others could not close their eyes without seeing a angelic face with a sadistic smile and eyes the color of death.

The next day nothing appeared to have changed in Slytherin House. Harry and Theo continued to sit a little away from the other snakes and the students of Slytherin continued to have that superior and
arrogant air about them. For practically every inhabitant of the castle nothing had changed. Severus Snape however was not one of those that saw nothing different about the Slytherin House.

For starters the night before he had received a floo call from Poppy, telling him that five of his snakes were in the Infirmary. Severus would never admit it but when he saw who the students were he was rather surprised. Jugson and his little group were some of the best students in their years. When he asked them what had happened he was even more surprised when they refused to say anything. Frustrated but knowing there was nothing he could do he went to bed, making a mental note to pay close attention to the students the next morning to see if he could get some more information about why five of his Slytherins ended up in the Infirmary. He knew that if some Gryffindors had done it they would not be able to hide it; Gryffindors didn't know the meaning of the word subtlety.

The next morning he didn't notice anything different about the other Houses and at first glance there was nothing different about his House either, but for someone like him, someone that was used to noticing every little thing about his surroundings and about other people just so he could survive, it was rather easy to see that all of his Slytherins were forcing themselves to behave like they usually did, all of them but two. Harry Potter and Theodore Nott. Both of them were behaving like they usually did, they were the only Slytherins that didn't appear to be forcing themselves. The strange behavior of his snakes and the five in the infirmary made him observe them with far more attention than usual.

The Slytherins seemed nervous, some of the younger ones couldn't hide the fear that sometimes appeared on their expressions, while some of the older ones couldn't hide the admiration, respect and in some cases the reverence that appeared from time to time.

Severus also noticed that those emotions only appeared when they surreptitiously looked at the two first year Slytherins.

Severus could only hide his shock with effort. No! No, it couldn't be. It was completely impossible. The conclusion that he had come to had to be wrong. Potter was a first year student, it was impossible for him to put five older students in the infirmary. 'But,' whispered a little voice in his mind, 'your Slytherins are behaving strangely and all those looks... Besides you remember the orphanage, don't you?' he was sure the voice was mocking him, he couldn't find a valid argument and he did remember the orphanage, he wished he didn't but he did.

He continued to observe his snakes and the looks in Potter's direction didn't stop. At lunch time, when the five Slytherins left the infirmary and joined the rest of the House in the great hall Severus paid close attention to the interactions between them and the rest of the House and he almost gaped when he saw that they only sat down, and the others only made space for them when they received a little nod from Potter.

That was the confirmation that he needed, but how? How had Potter done it?

That was one of the thoughts that tormented him for the rest of the day, until he had class with the first year Slytherins.

Potter just like in all his previous classes had handed in a perfect potion and Severus was not able to contain the desire to confront him. Since Potter had arrived at Hogwarts he was itching to find something to put the brat in detention and this was the perfect opportunity.

"Potter, stay after the end of class."

Potter just nodded and packed his things, telling Nott that he would catch up with him later. When all the students had left the room Potter approached his desk looking at him expectantly.
"Last night five students ended up in the infirmary with broken bones," Severus began hoping to see something incriminating in Potter's posture, however the only reaction he got was a raised eyebrow, "Is there nothing you want to tell me about it?"

Severus knew it had been him, he just didn't know how, and he had absolutely no proof that it had been Potter. But he was hoping that if Potter was pushed into a corner that he would confess or at least let something slip.

For a fraction of a second Severus could have sworn that he saw a smile grace the boy's lips, but when he looked again the only thing visible on Potter's face was confusion.

"Something about the five students? No professor, honestly I think I only ever spoke to one of them and I'm sure it was for less than five minutes. Theo and I heard this morning at breakfast, they were saying something about a duel between friends that got out of hand..."

If it were a different situation and a different person, Severus would have admired Potter's ability to lie without lying. Severus was an excellent Legilimens and as far as he could identify, without entering Potter's mind, Potter had told the truth, not all the truth but the truth nonetheless.

Severus knew that you had to be an excellent manipulator to be able to lie while telling the truth and he didn't know what to feel knowing that the boy in front of him was able to do it. An eleven year old boy.

No matter how hard he tried he couldn't stop thinking about the orphanage and the talk with Mrs. Brown, nor the conversation that followed with Potter. It couldn't be normal that a child made him remember the Dark Lord so much.

"Get out." Severus whispered looking at the angelical face in front of him, this time Severus was sure that a smile had appeared on that face, however it was the laugh that he heard when the door closed that made him shiver. It would not be the last time that Severus would curse the day that they had gone to that orphanage.

Albus was in the staffroom waiting for all the professors to arrive so they could start the meeting. While he waited he noticed that his Potion Master looked distracted and a bit agitated, making a mental note to talk to him at the end of the meeting Albus called his colleagues attention so that they could start.

As was usual they started with the older years, like that the professors that only gave classes to students third year and up were free to go when they reached the second and first years, considering that they hardly dealt with those students.

A little over two hours later they had finally arrived at the first years and Albus had to admit that he was curious to see how young Harry had adapted.

Harry was nothing like he had imagined and he couldn't help but feel curious about the boy.

"And is there a first year that has shown particular talent?" Albus inquired.

It was a usual question, he asked it every year, as did every Headmaster before him. There wasn't always a student that had more talent than their peers but occasionally there was a student that was particularly talented in one field or another and the professors would keep an eye on them and encourage them to study independently in those fields. Albus remembered perfectly some of those students, Severus Snape was a genius with Potions, he made potions when he was eleven that not all sixth years were capable of. James Potter was another one, however his field was Transfiguration, he
made things in transfiguration that even surprised him. And of course Lily Potter, Charms was her field, there didn't exist a charm that she was unable to do.

But this year, although it was a usual question, Albus was particularly interested in the answer. Had Harry inherited his mother's or his father's talent? Or would his strength be in a completely different field? He could hardly contain his curiosity, however he did notice that the professors seemed to be far more animated than they previously were but none of them appeared to want to start. Minerva ended up being the first, she pulled something out of her pocket and put it in the center of the table.

"Minerva?" inquired Albus, asking himself what his long-time friend was doing.

"That was made by a student on his first Transfiguration class."

Albus raised an eyebrow and picked up what appeared to be a needle, and as soon as he saw the needle up close his eyes opened wide. The needle was a work of art.

The curious stares from his colleagues told him he hadn't been able to conceal his amazement. Knowing that if they didn't see the needle they wouldn't be able to understand Albus passed the needle to Filius who was on his left. Albus was pleased to see that the Charms professor was also unable to conceal his wonder. After the needle had gone around all the professors he asked.

"Who?"

"You didn't recognize the initials?" Minerva asked with a little smile, "HJP; Harry James Potter. Potter was able to achieve the transfiguration on his first try and he also turned the needle back into a match in the first try. Then he spent the rest of the class playing with his needle, changing it in every way he could imagine. I was the one to tell him to try and change the needle but I never expected this. I have never seen anyone with so much talent."

Albus hadn't seen Minerva this excited in a long time, she was practically gushing.

He heard Filius chuckle and saw the tiny professor shake his head.

"Apparently it isn't only my class that is child's play to him. I swear that he's bored in class. I don't think that anything I give them truly challenges him."

The other professors joined the conversation, all of them stating that Harry was among the best if not the best student of his year. Severus was one of the few who didn't say anything about Harry, Quirrell hadn't either but Albus believed it had more to do with his stutter than anything else. After almost a half hour, ten minutes of which were spent talking about Harry, Albus ended the meeting and dismissed the professors, asking Severus to stay behind.

"You appear distracted, is something wrong?" asked Albus as soon as they were alone.

"The brat, all the potions he made were perfect."

Albus sighed, having a student that talented in more than one subject was rare, the last one had been more than fifty years ago, it was strange how the similarities between the two continued to appear.

"Was that all that was distracting you?"

Albus was sure there was more to it, however if he didn't ask he was sure that Severus would not be forthcoming.

Severus looked him in the eyes and letting out a sigh he ended up saying.
"Five Slytherins ended up in the Infirmary last night. I know it was him Headmaster. I am certain it was him."

"Do you have any evidence?" inquired Albus in a calm voice, he doubted that he did, Tom had never left any either.

"Evidence? Of course I don't have any evidence!" Severus almost growled, "Albus there is something about the boy that unsettles me." Severus ended up admitting almost in a whisper and Albus had to refrain from smiling.

Fifty years ago it was him that was in Severus Snape's place having similar thoughts about another black haired boy with an angelic face and cold eyes.

The similarities between the both of them were so many, even so Albus still had hope because even though the similarities were many there were also many differences. Maybe it would be best to focus on the differences and hope that history wouldn't repeat itself, after all the biggest difference was that one of them was the Dark Lord and the other was the Savior of the Wizarding World.
Chapter 6 – T.M.R.

Harry woke up with a sore neck, not really understanding why until he remembered where he was. The day before had been the last day of school before the Yule holidays and after having said goodbye to Theo and being the only Slytherin that stayed at Hogwarts he decided to have a long bath inside his trunk. After his bath he decided to stay in his trunk, so he had picked a book and sat in an armchair in his living-room, where he apparently fell asleep which was where his sore neck came from.

The previous months passed with nothing more exciting than flying lessons happening and Harry was quite happy with that. It appeared that his House had learned their lesson, at least for the moment. He was sure that he would have to reinforce the lesson for some idiot sooner or later. He hoped it would be later, considering the circumstances. After the Potions class where Snape had asked him to stay behind the man hadn't talked to him anymore, however Harry knew that Snape spent most of the day watching him. He knew that the professor didn't like him and he knew that Snape thought that he had been the one that had sent Jugson and his friends to the Infirmary, so he held his child-like behavior most of the time, every time he saw the professor near. So he hoped that no one caused him trouble, it would be quite bad if he slipped even more in front of Snape.

Jugson though, Jugson had surprised him. Instead of avoiding him like the plague and plotting revenge he had instead decided to spend time with him. He was with him almost as much as Theo was.

At least twice a week he would join them in the library, he would usually do his homework, however one time he saw what Harry was working on and noticed his interest in runes and offered to help him, to see which runes he had already drawn or craved and even offered him his notes from class so that Harry could understand the subject better.

Harry accepted, curious to see what Jugson wanted, but so far Jugson had only done his homework and talked with Harry about runes. Harry admitted that the conversations with Jugson were interesting, runes was one of Jugson's favorite subjects so he knew quite a lot about them.

Harry stretched and went to take a shower. He loved the castle but he was happy to finally have a little time for himself and have the opportunity to lose all of his masks in the safety of his trunk.

Though he wanted to he knew that he couldn't spend the entire holiday inside his trunk, even so he only left his trunk at lunch time.

As there had been very few students that stayed at Hogwarts for the holidays, the professors decided
that they would all eat together at one table. Supposedly it was so that the few students that stayed
could be more at ease with each other and spend some time together, regardless of their House.

To Harry it made no difference, the students stayed away from him, most still believed that he was
the next Dark Lord, even though, as far as they knew, he hadn't done anything since entering
Hogwarts. He had to wonder if they were truly that stupid or if they just pretended to believe it so as
not to be seen as being on the side of the evil Slytherin. Honestly he didn't know what was worse, the
stupidity or the lack of a back bone. He was eleven! Did they think he sat in his room at night with
Theo and made plans for world domination?

Grumbling under his breath about human stupidity he chose a seat near the professors and sat beside
professor Quirrell. He didn't know why but the professor had an aura that calmed him, he supposed it
was the man's magic. Harry had the feeling that the man used as many masks as he did.

Wishing the professors a good morning he started his lunch. Not wanting to spend more time than
what he absolutely had to in the great hall, he finished rather quickly and went straight to the library.
Now that the castle was almost empty he could explore the library to his heart's content. He lamented
that he couldn't explore the restricted section, but he didn't think that any teacher would give him a
pass, it didn’t matter how good he was he was still a first year student and they would without a
doubt think that he was far too young to be in there. At least he still had thousands of books at his
disposal, something that he would not waste.

In one of the farther away corners of the library Harry found a little work table by a window with a
comfortable looking armchair. It was far enough away from the main parts of the library that it gave
the illusion of privacy; it quickly became Harry's favorite place.

Harry swiftly established a routine; he would spend his mornings and evenings inside his trunk,
lunch and dinner in the great hall, and his afternoons in the library.

It was one of those afternoons where Harry was absorbed in a book about Defense Against the Dark
Arts that professor Quirrell found him. Harry was so distracted by his book that he only noticed the
professor after he had called him three times.

"Harry..."

Harry lifted his head up from his book and looked in the direction from which the voice had come,
he was a little surprised when he saw that it was professor Quirrell. His voice was a bit different,
deeper, and it had something else that he couldn't identify, it was like that first day in Defense class.

"Professor," he said, letting the book drop to the table and sinking back in his armchair.

"I called you two times and you didn't notice." the professor informed him, raising an eyebrow
showing that he wanted to know why Harry hadn't noticed him.

"Oh, I'm sorry about that professor," said Harry with a small smile on his face, "I was completely
absorbed in the book."

Quirrell pulled out his wand and conjured an armchair similar to Harry's and sat, looking at the book
and at Harry with curiosity.

"'Magical Forms of Defense Vol. II', I never thought that I would see a first year student read this
book, much less understand it. Is there a reason as to why you are in here reading this book, instead
of out there with the other students playing in the snow?"

Harry studied his professor carefully, he could have sworn that he had seen a red sheen in his brown
eyes. Aside from that Quirrell appeared to be truly interested in the answer and for some reason Harry didn't feel like he had to use his child-like mask with him.

"I'm not a really social person." he ended up answering with no emotion in his voice.

Quirrell raised an eyebrow.

"Oh? That isn't what it looks like," he said without taking his eyes of Harry, "From what I've seen Nott is practically your shadow and as far as I know Jugson also spends a lot of time with you."

Harry focused all of his attention on his professor, he knew that Snape almost always had an eye on him, but he didn't know that Quirrell also watched him, he didn't quite know what to think of that information.

"Hmm, I had no idea that you paid so much attention to what I do professor," remarked Harry, his eyes never leaving those of his professor and again he could have sworn that he saw a bit of red mixing with the brown, however Harry continued without giving the professor a chance to respond, "Tell me professor did you go to Hogwarts?"

Quirrell raised an eyebrow, not really seeing how that question was related to the topic of conversation, but answered anyway.

"Yes."

"I see," Harry almost whispered, "And which House were you in?"

Quirrell took a few seconds but he eventually gave his answer.

"Slytherin."

A tiny smile appeared on Harry's lips, it lasted only a moment and the next second Harry was once again expressionless.

"Then you must know how things in Slytherin work; hierarchies, masks, power, appearances and alliances. Those are the fundamentals that rule Slytherin House.

Theodore Nott's father is in Azkaban because he didn't deny having served the Dark Lord, though that kind of loyalty is laudable, his family also had to suffer the consequences. They lost most of their estate, confiscated by the Ministry, and all the friends they had turned on them over night. After all, they spent thousands of galleons bribing the right people so that they could stay out of Azkaban so it simply wouldn't do to be seen with people that didn't deny their involvement with the Dark Lord.

Naturally they teach their children the same thing, which makes Theodore Nott a student that is automatically at the bottom of the hierarchy, with no power or influence. Tell me professor, do you not think it is natural that Theodore opted to form a friendship with someone who was in similar circumstances?"

For several moments neither of them spoke, simply looking at each other, then Quirrell nodded.

"Maybe, however that does not explain why Jugson spends so much time with you. Nor does it explain why you would accept the company of the son of a known and loyal Death Eater."

Harry let a small smile appear on his face. He was enjoying the company and it was so difficult for him to simply enjoy someone's company, almost without him noticing he let all of his masks disappear, he couldn't remember the last time he had done that in the presence of another person.
"I only found out that I was a wizard a few months ago, there are a lot of things that I don't know that are common knowledge to others. Theodore was raised in the wizarding world," Harry told him as if that explained everything and it kind of did, if he had read the professor correctly he would understand.

"Even with him being the son of a Death Eater?" inquired Quirrell raising an eyebrow.

"As long as they're useful, I don't care where they come from or who they are. What does it matter to me if the father is loyal to Voldemort, if the son is loyal to me?" Harry had a little smile on his face and his eyes started to shine a little.

Professor Quirrell was completely focused on Harry, observing his every move, all of his expressions, and his eyes showed his interest when he heard Harry's answer.

"And Jugson?" the professor asked, not hiding the curiosity he was feeling. It was quite hard for Quirrell to contain the shiver that went down his spine when Harry chuckled. It was something that he never thought he would hear coming from an eleven year old boy. It was cruel, cold and dark, however it was also so very seductive and he had to forcefully remind himself that he was sitting in front of an eleven year old boy.

"Jugson... Well Jugson was simply misinformed, that misinformation made him believe ridiculous things, I simply corrected him."

Harry's smile was sadistic almost to an extreme. Quirrell had no doubt that the situation had been handled with extreme violence, he remembered that a few Slytherin students had ended up in the Infirmary near the beginning of the year. Quirrell just didn't know two things; how Harry had gone against five older Slytherins and won, and what the conflict was about.

"Oh?," Quirrell inquired, he knew the child would not confess anything, however he may tell him the reason why Jugson and his little group ended up in the care of the medi-witch, "And what information was that?"

Harry chuckled again, that same chuckle that made Quirrell shiver.

"Jugson... Jugson had the absurd idea that just because he's a pureblood he was better than me," the sadistic smile was back and this time Harry's eyes shone, their likeness to the 'Avada Kedavra' was undeniable. With the sun shining on his hair, giving it a blood red sheen, Harry looked like an angel of death. Quirrell couldn't take his eyes off him even if he'd wanted to, "I merely showed him that he was wrong."

A small chuckle passed through the lips of the professor before he was able to stop it, but he pulled himself together quite fast and, still not looking away from Harry, he answered.

"I see."

And he really did, he still didn't know how a first year had won in a confrontation against five older students and he also didn't know what he had done. But whatever it was had defined the Slytherin hierarchy, which explained the behavior of the students these last months.

Though that wasn't all that had happened, whatever Harry had done had made a pureblood supremacist submit to an eleven year old half-blood.

There were two possibilities, Harry either scared him so much that he submitted or Harry impressed him so much that he no longer cared about his blood.
He suspected that it had been a little bit of both, and that left him wanting to know what had happened even more. What had the child in front of him done that had scared an entire house? What he had seen from Harry showed that he was a perfect Slytherin, and he had no doubt that he would have ruled the house, he just was not expecting it to be so early on.

He knew there was no point in asking, the child would never tell him what he had done. Maybe later, when he wasn't his professor anymore, he would tell him.

They spent several minutes in silence, each enjoying the comfortable presence of the other, until Quirrell remembered something the child had said, and asked.

"Earlier you said that Nott's father is loyal to the Dark Lord, not that he was. Do you think that the Death Eaters are still loyal to a dead master?"

Quirrell couldn't really describe the way Harry looked at him then, it was part mistrust, part disappointment, part excitement, and part eagerness.

"Professor, you can't tell me that you truly believe that Voldemort is dead. The man is a Dark Lord, from what I read the most brilliant and terrifying Dark Lord of the last 500 years, do you really believe that he would let something as simple as death stop him? Much less that a one year old baby would be able to kill him? I have no doubt that he is alive."

Quirrell had to contain the smug smile that wanted to appear on his lips, it pleased him more than he thought possible that Harry didn't think he was dead, that he thought he was brilliant and terrifying, it made him feel strangely proud.

"Does that not scare you?" he asked Harry curiously, most people would be shaking just thinking that a Dark Lord that had tried to kill them was alive, but there Harry was, looking as if he had no care in the world.

"Why should it?" Harry asked, and Quirrell admitted that the confused expression on his face was rather cute.

"He did try to kill you." Quirrell told him with a look that clearly said that he thought Harry was insane, or at least on his way there.

"I know that, but still, I don't see a reason to be afraid of that now. I would love to know who Voldemort is. I mean, that can't possibly be his real name, and I've found no information on him what so ever. Everyone just says that he was fighting for blood purity but I find that hard to believe. If he was a pureblood he wouldn't hide his name, would he? He would be proud that his blood line was the one that others feared, respected, and worshiped, right? And if he were a half-blood or muggleborn why would he fight for a philosophy that would consider him a second class citizen? It doesn't make sense. You know I would love to talk with him, even if he wants to kill me for reasons I don't know, I would still love to be able to talk to him, can you imagine all the knowledge he has?"

Harry had a bit of a dreamy expression on his face. Quirrell suspected that if he knew he would be mortified, though he thought that he was finding the expression far more adorable than he should. Not wanting to think about that any deeper, he moved his thoughts in a different direction.

"Even though he killed your parents?" Quirrell asked wanting to know the child's reasoning.

"It was war," Harry replied, losing his previous expression and adopting a far more mature one, it still surprised him the way this child behaved, "They knew the risks, it was their choice to fight. I can't even say that I agree with what they were fighting for, considering that I don't know what their
side wanted. I don't hate Voldemort for killing them, nor do I blame him. I respect the man for what he achieved, and for the knowledge and power he has. Though I can't say I agree with him either, since I also don't know what he wanted."

"Even with all the killing? The torture?" Quirrell probed, Harry didn't hate him. That was not something that he was expecting. He himself never knew his mother and he still hated his father for leaving them, but Harry didn't hate him. Didn't even blame him, he didn't really know how he felt about it. Being hated was something he was used to, as was being feared, yet the child in front of him, that had reasons to feel both, didn't.

"It doesn't really bother me, to be honest," Harry answered and there was that smile again, sadistic in ways that he didn't think possible for a child, "I believe that Voldemort was always rather merciful." he added, and Quirrell had to stop himself from gaping. Him merciful? That was the same as saying that Basilisks were small, cute snakes, or that Dementors were cuddly beings, or that Dragons wouldn't hurt a fly, meaning it was inaccurate in every possible way, no matter how you looked at it. He suspected that some of his incredulity showed on his face, and he couldn't really be blamed if it did, considering what he'd just heard, because Harry added, "No matter who they were Voldemort always granted them death. There are far worse things than dying, I don't believe I would be that merciful."

And Quirrell believed him, though death was always something that he feared, he had no trouble believing that the demon in front of him, because that was the only thing that he could be, could make anyone believe that death was a mercy. That death was a reprieve. Harry had such a knowing look in his eyes that he had to wonder if the child had already killed, had already tortured someone to the point they were begging for death, and he denied them that mercy. The strange thing was, he had no difficulty in believing that he had and a part of him, the part of him that was just as sadistic, just as twisted, wanted to laugh in glee, the Light's little Savior was just like him. He was not able to completely stop the dark, cold chuckle that escaped him and he saw Harry smile at him, it wasn't the sadistic smile he had before, it was a warm smile, that made him look so incredibly innocent that Quirrell knew the child would be far more dangerous than anyone else he had ever known, after all there was nothing more terrifying than a monster who looked like a sweet angel.

The both of them stayed silent for a while, lost in their own thoughts. Quirrell didn't really know how long they stayed like that, when he remembered something else Harry had said that had caught his interest.

"You said that you only found out a few months ago that you were a wizard? What do you think of the Wizarding World? Have you been adapting well?"

Harry focused his attention on him again, and he was sure that if he were anyone else he would have looked away, he didn't think that many people would be able to look into those eyes for very long.

But he didn't look away so he was able to see several emotions pass through those eyes, he seemed to come to a conclusion and answered.

"I grew up in an orphanage. An orphanage only for boys that hardly had money to feed us. Thinking that magic was real was not even a thought that I entertained. Naturally I knew I was different from them," Harry didn't even try to hide his disgust when he said the word 'them', making Quirrell look at him with curiosity, Harry noticed and elaborated. "They never lost an opportunity to tell me how much of a freak I was, never lost an opportunity to show me that I was beneath them, that I was worth nothing. They learned the same thing Jugson did."

Quirrell felt a small smile appear on his lips, the child truly was like him when he was younger, though he didn't think that he was quite as bloodthirsty when he was his age, nor was he able to look
so angelically innocent. He was more of a dark beauty when he was younger, and as he got older that dark beauty only grew.

"I believe that I'm adapting quite well," Harry continued, "Classes are rather easy. But there are some things that confuse me."

Quirrell was barely able to hide the surprise he felt, for someone like Harry to confess what could potentially be a weakness required a certain level of trust. A part of him couldn't help but feel proud that the young prodigy had that trust in him.

"What confuses you?" he asked genuinely wanting to know the answer, maybe he would be able to clear things up for him. He remembered how it was when he had first entered the Wizarding World. Quirrell had trouble hiding his shock when that thought entered his mind; he couldn't remember the last time he had wanted to help someone. Really help someone and not expect anything in exchange. Now that he thought about it he also didn't remember the last time he was interested in talking with someone, though that wasn't something that actually surprised him. It became somewhat difficult to have an interesting or stimulating conversation with someone when half the people he dealt with were on their knees in front of him trembling in fear, and the other half were crying, begging for mercy or calling him a monster.

"Well your subject for starters."

Harry's melodic voice brought him out of his thoughts and he took a while to process what Harry had said.

"My subject?" he asked a bit confused, that was something else that he didn't appear to be able to avoid, with Harry he felt no need to hide what he was feeling, with him he felt no need to use any type of mask, "From what I've seen you don't appear to have any difficulties with my subject, it's quite the opposite in fact."

"And I don't. But it isn't the subject itself. In my first class I asked you what the Dark Arts were and the answers were far from satisfying, and even if the ridiculous notion that the Dark Arts are illegal because they can be used to hurt people is true, that just leaves me even more confused. Where is the logic in forbidding something just because it could be used to hurt someone? It's completely ridiculous. I can think of at least four ways to kill someone with a quill and they don't forbid quills, do they?"

When Harry finished he was breathing a little harder, his cheeks had a little flush and his eyes were shining, it was clear for all to see that this was something that frustrated him and Quirrell understood. He remembered having similar doubts, he was just a little bit older when he started asking similar questions.

"Oh, you only found four ways to kill someone with a quill?" he asked curiously, as if he were asking if it was hot or cold, however the humor in his eyes was impossible to deny.

Apparently Harry was able to see it because a mischievous smile appeared on his face and he answered.

"Well, without having to think about it I just remembered the more basic ones, you know? For example, stab someone through the ear, or through an eye, through the nose and the mouth also work."

"Hmm, very good, but you forgot another one that is also quite basic, stab their neck."
"You are right professor, I hadn't thought of that one. You know what, we should notify the Ministry. I'm sure that if we inform them they will make quills illegal in no time at all. I, for one, would sleep better at night knowing that there are fewer evil, Dark Artifacts like those in the world."

Five seconds, it took Harry five seconds to lose his composure and start laughing. Quirrell also wasn't able to hold on to his amusement for much longer and chuckled, it had been so long since he had been truly amused by something that didn't involve torture.

Both of them pulled themselves together after a few moments, however their amusement was still plain in their eyes. Quirrell after seeing that Harry had calmed down focused on their conversation again.

"When I was younger I asked the same questions," Quirrell told him in a serious tone, "the Dark Arts are a very dangerous branch of magic, it's the reason why the Ministry forbids them. Some wizards are more inclined to the Dark Arts, making them Dark Wizards. But that doesn't make them evil. Their magic is simply more compatible with that branch of magic. It is true that some of those spells require more power and more emotion, but that's it. The fact that the spells require emotion for them to work properly is another reason for the Ministry to forbid them, they argued that if the wizard that used the spells wanted to cause that effect then they could only be evil. They said that light spells didn't need that, making them safer to use."

Quirrell saw Harry incline his head to the right and a confused expression crossed his face. The confusion only lasted for a few moments and something like realization appeared in his eyes. He was a bit surprised when he saw Harry go through his backpack and take out a quill that he placed in the middle of the table. The next moment he had his wand in hand and Quirrell almost couldn't stop the widening of his eyes when he saw the wand up close, and pointed at the quill. Muttering a spell the quill changed in to a jewelry-box, it was in black and silver tones, with 'Avada Kedavra' green snakes engraved on the lid and his initials, in the same green, in the center of the lid.

Quirrell didn't show it but he was impressed, it was a perfect transfiguration. Something that he didn't think a first year would be able to do before the end of the year, much less with so much detail, the snakes were quite beautiful, and in such a beautiful green too. Though he did like seeing what Harry was able to do he didn't understand what he had in mind by doing it.

"That," Harry said pointing at the jewelry-box, and keeping his wand on the table, "Was a quill. Now it's not because I wanted it to be something else."

And Harry didn't say anything else, just continued to look at him. Quirrell took almost ten seconds to react, which in his opinion was completely normal, after all an eleven year old boy had completely shattered the Ministry's logic with a first year spell in less than a minute. And the best thing about it was that he was completely right, it wasn't only the Dark Arts that required emotions and the want of the wizards, it was all magic. All magic was based on want, on will, on emotions it was a fundamental rule, a rule that wasn't taught in schools, but a rule nonetheless.

Quirrell shook his head and looked Harry in the eye.

"I know," he whispered, not taking his eyes of Harry, "There is no Good or Evil, only Power and those too weak to seek it."

Quirrell knew he was taking an unnecessary risk, if Dumbledore heard he would immediately know who he was, but it was a risk he wanted to take. He was certain that Harry would understand, he knew that Harry was one of the few who would be able to really understand.
So he didn't take his eyes off Harry and he saw Harry smile, his eyes showed understanding and he nodded.

"Apparently the Weak have been in power for far too long if that is the valid reason for why the Dark Arts are forbidden."

Quirrell smiled. Harry understood. For reasons that he still couldn't explain the fact that Harry understood filled him with pride.

He knew the moment he had seen Harry for the first time, when he was called to be sorted that the child was not the Gryffindor that the Wizarding World was expecting, so he had decided to wait, to observe the child, instead of attacking. He had been quite satisfied with what he had seen, and the thought of recruiting the child had crossed his mind several times. But now, now that he had talked to him he didn't think that it was a good idea. This Harry Potter would never submit, would never bow, would never follow. Mere months ago that thought would have enraged him, but now they filled him with anticipation, he could hardly wait to see what Harry would be like in a few years.

Quirrell opened his mouth to continue his conversation with Harry when both of them heard footsteps coming in their direction, and a few seconds later Snape was in their little corner, Quirrell had to stop himself from cursing him.

"What are you doing here Potter?" Snape practically growled and Quirrell wasn't as surprised as he should have been when he felt the urge to crucio Snape for talking to Harry like that.

"I was reading professor." Quirrell heard Harry answer but his voice was different, it was more innocent, more child-like and when he looked at Harry he almost gaped, for a few moments he had forgotten that Harry was only eleven years old and now he truly looked like the child he supposedly was.

He felt his respect for Harry grow, his mask was practically perfect. It made him wonder how long Harry had been using masks for him to have perfected them so much at only eleven years old. If he didn't know any better he would say that he had been trained by an old pureblood family.

"That book isn't for first years." commented Snape the doubt was clear in his voice, Quirrell saw irritation flash trough Harry's eyes for a fraction of a second before an innocent smile appeared on his face.

For a few moments Quirrell wanted to see Harry angry, he was certain that it would be magnificent and he would bet that even some of his followers would cower in fear before him.

"I know professor, I heard some of the older years talk about a spell that was in the book and since I already finished all my homework and had nothing more to do I decided to have a look at it. Unfortunately the book is quite advanced for me and I didn't understand certain parts, but professor Quirrell came looking for the same book, and seeing that this is the only copy available at the moment, he offered to help me with the things I didn't understand."

Quirrell almost clapped, he was an excellent actor. With a simple and quite possible explanation he erased all suspicion that could have appeared because they were together.

"Is that so?" asked Snape through clenched teeth and Quirrell decided to contribute to the conversation, it was easy to see that Snape wasn't happy with Harry's answer, it was clear as day that Snape wanted to make trouble for Harry, something that didn't sit well with him at all.

"Y-y-yes Se-se-severus. I wa-wa-was explaining to Mr. P-p-potter the difference between se-se-
several shields."

"I see." Snape sneered, "The Headmaster sent me to tell you that the meeting time was changed to now." Looking at both of them with disdain Snape turned around and left their little corner.

When Quirrell looked at Harry again that child-like air had disappeared but he still had a smile on his face. Without saying anything, he got up from his armchair, put the book in his bag, and his wand up his sleeve and started to go in the direction of the library doors. Before he was too far away he said.

"Thank you professor."

"For what?" Quirrell inquired a bit confused, he didn't think that Harry was thanking him for agreeing with the story he had told Snape.

"For giving me the opportunity to be myself." It wasn't the answer he was expecting, and before he could even think about it he had already replied.

"You are welcome, I thank you for the same."

The smile that Harry gave him would have made angels sin, Quirrell was sure of that. The next moment Harry had left their little corner.

He looked at the table and saw the jewelry-box, not knowing why he pocketed it and with a sigh left the library, it was time to face the idiots that he had to tolerate daily to get what he wanted, at least Harry had provided him an afternoon of intelligent conversation, it was something that he had missed for more than a decade.

Harry woke up on Christmas morning the same way he woke every other morning. For him Christmas had no importance, it was a day like all the others at the orphanage. So that was why when he left his trunk and saw four wrapped packages on his desk he took a few moments to realize that they were Christmas gifts. Christmas gifts for him.

Any other child would have torn the wrapping paper apart in their haste to see the gifts, Harry on the other hand put the gifts on his bed and opened them carefully. They were the first gifts he had ever received and he wanted to enjoy the moment, to remember it.

The first one was from Theo, a book about traditions in the Wizarding World. Harry rather liked it, it was something he hadn't found in the library and he remembered Theo having to endure an almost two hour rant about it. He chuckled a little, at least he knew that Theo was listening to what he said.

The second one was from Jugson, a rather rare book about runes and another one about historical places where runes had been used.

The third one had no name, it only said that it had belonged to his father. At first Harry didn't know what it was, but when he saw his body disappear under it he had a pretty good idea. He didn't know what to feel knowing it had belonged to his father. He never knew the man, so he couldn't say that he loved him, or missed him, it would be a lie. However he was grateful for having it, not because it was extremely useful, though that was a plus, but because it was something that connected him more to his roots, to where he came from, and that was something he was proud of, after all, it was part of who he was.

The fourth one was a collection of ten books. They had no name on their covers, only numbers engraved on the spine, from $I$ to $X$. 
Harry took the first one out and opened it, on the first page was a little note that said.

'Dear Harry,

When I was younger these books helped me obtain many answers that I was looking for.

I hope that they are as useful to you as they were to me.

T.M.R.'

On the next page were the words 'Dark Arts'.

Harry spent almost five minutes looking at the books. He didn't know who T.M.R. was, the only person he had talked to about anything related to the Dark Arts was Quirrell, and he didn't think that the man had told anyone about it. Unless Quirrell had sent him the books but used an alias. He didn't know, and if he was being honest he didn't really care, whoever it was had given him the answers to his questions and he was grateful.

Harry put those books in the book shelf in his bedroom inside his trunk, it wouldn't do to have someone see them. After having packed everything Harry went to the great hall with a smile on his face. Harry knew that it had been the best Christmas he had ever had.
Chapter 7 – Slytherin Court

Harry was already sitting at the Slytherin table when the students that had returned from the Yule break started entering the Great Hall. Though he rather enjoyed the holidays he was happy to see Theo again, which surprised him, he never thought that he would miss someone. Besides, he may still use a mask with Theo but it was the closest to his true self. Who knew, maybe he would be able to be himself with Theo if things continued the way they were. At least he liked him, which was good, considering how much he generally didn't like people.

"Hey Harry."

Theo's voice brought him out of his thoughts and a little smile appeared on his face.

"Hello Theo," Harry greeted him, "How were your holidays?"

"They were good, nothing too exciting, spent it with family in France, and yours?"

"They were... enlightening."

Theo smiled and shook his head, he didn't know why he was expecting a different answer. From what he knew of Harry, he didn't think that he would have some fun during the break or relax. He would bet that Harry had spent all his time in the library, though for Harry that probably counted as having fun.

He was taken out of his thoughts when he saw Jugson enter the Great Hall. Almost instinctively Jugson's eyes landed on the Slytherin table, his eyes found Harry almost immediately and he started walking in their direction. Theo was astonished when he noticed how little that surprised him, though he didn't understand it.

Marcus Jugson was a pureblood supremacist that considered all those that weren't, at least, a fifth generation pureblood as dirt, scum, and other less flattering things. However, Harry was a half-blood and Jugson practically worshiped him.

Theo knew that it had nothing to do with Harry being the Boy-Who-Lived. At the beginning of the year Theo had seen the looks of disdain and disgust that Jugson gave Harry, occasionally Theo even had some fear that Jugson would attack Harry in some way. However, after the first month of school that had changed.

The night that Jugson and four of his friends ended up in the Infirmary was when everything changed. He still didn't know what had happened but he knew that Harry had been involved, he didn't know how but Harry had defined the Slytherin hierarchy, at least until someone challenged
him for the top.

However, if he was being honest with himself, he couldn't say that it surprised him, from what he knew about Harry he was certain that Harry would never tolerate not being the best at something, not being at the top. Aside from that he didn't think that Harry would ever stand it if someone did or said anything that implied that he was beneath them. He had noticed how Harry looked at some of people that he caught talking about blood purity, the sentence 'if looks could kill...' came to mind. So, though he didn't know what happened, he knew that Jugson and his friends had tried something and he was certain that Harry had dealt with it. What he wouldn't give to have been able to see it.

Harry may hide it behind that angelic face and innocent smile but sometimes the real Harry appeared. Evil genius was what came to his mind when he thought about Harry. Every time he saw those malicious and sadistic smiles he had some difficulty containing his laughter, he would bet all that was left of the Nott estate that the Boy-Who-Lived was nothing like they had imagined. Not that Theo was unhappy with the situation, it was the complete opposite.

Occasionally he couldn't help but think about what his father would say if he knew that he was friends with Harry Potter. He liked to believe that his father would approve, after all his father had also sworn loyalty to a Dark Lord. He knew that, technically, Harry wasn't a Dark Lord, but he didn't honestly think that those that believed that Harry was the next Dark Lord were far from the truth, Harry certainly seemed to have the potential.

He knew that Harry wasn't interested in becoming a Dark Lord, at least not yet, Harry himself found the idea ridiculous, stressing the fact that he was only eleven, but every time something like that came up Theo couldn't help but think that he wouldn't stay eleven forever. Besides, no matter what he said, his actions didn't match his words.

He may have only wanted to observe and see how things in the Wizarding World worked. That, however, didn't explain why he had seized control of the Slytherin hierarchy, nor did it explain why he was spreading his beliefs. He seemed to have converted Jugson and before he had gone home for the Yule break he had heard an older Slytherin rebuking a younger Slytherin when the younger one had used the word mudblood. The older Slytherin had looked around and when he didn't see anyone he'd said with a touch of fear in his voice "Don't say that. The only thing that matters is magic."

Theo knew where the sentence came from, he had heard it before when his friend would talk about the stupidity of the pureblood supremacist beliefs. Theo agreed, he hadn't been raised to believe in pureblood supremacy, though his father was a loyal Death Eater, what the Nott family believed in was power.

He still remembered what his grandfather had told him the day before he went to Hogwarts, "Theodore, you are a Nott and the Notts have always believed in the equality of all magic be it Dark or Light; in power, be it magical or political. Your father and I, both follow the same man, we both believe in his ideals, in his policies and we are, to this day, still loyal to our Lord. However I never forced your father to follow in my footsteps, it was a choice he made of his own free will. Neither your father nor I will force you to choose the same path we did. Choose your friends, your allies, chose your own path but never forget that you are a Nott and the only thing that matters to a Nott, besides family, is Magic and Power."

He hadn't understood then, he may not have been raised with pureblood supremacist beliefs, but it was the environment he had grown up in. How many times had he heard his mother's family use the word mudblood, heard them saying how purebloods were superior?

Now though, now he understood. Harry James Potter, son of a pureblood father and a muggleborn mother, making him a half-blood who's supposedly inferior to purebloods. Theodore didn't believe
that anyone could look at Harry, talk to Harry, know Harry and consider him inferior in any way.

He supposed that that was what his grand-father meant, and even if it wasn't there was nothing he could do about it, he had chosen his path and it didn't look like he would regret it anytime soon.

"Good evening."

Jugson's voice took him out of his thoughts and he lifted his head in time to see him sit in the seat in front of Harry.

"Hello Marcus." Harry greeted him with a small smile and Theo was almost able to see a tail appear behind Jugson and move from side to side, that was how much Jugson looked like a little puppy at the moment. Theo would bet that it was because Harry had used Jugson's first name, as far as Theo knew, it was the first time that Harry had done so.

It showed that Harry had gone from tolerating his presence to liking his presence, well maybe not liking but at least it was something above tolerating, at any rate Theo suspected that it was something like that. Understanding how Harry's mind worked wasn't something that Theo believed he would ever be able to do.

Theo looked around and he wasn't able to stop the small chuckle, gaining the attention from the other two.

"What is it?" Jugson asked looking at Theo curiously.

"They are looking at you the same way they looked at me when I sat with Harry the first time."

A little smile appeared on Harry's face and he sighed.

"It's hard to believe that they still think that I'm going to become the next Dark Lord. It is starting to annoy me a little."

Theo saw Jugson pale when Harry said that he was getting annoyed and he asked himself if it was related to the night that he ended up in the Infirmary. He withheld a sigh, he really, really wished he had been there.

"There is nothing you can do about it," he said looking at the students that had been looking at them with fear in their eyes, with disgust, "People believe whatever they want, especially when it concerns Slytherins, and considering who you are..."

Theo didn't need to continue, both Jugson and Harry knew what he meant. Jugson was nodding, agreeing with him, he didn't seem the least bit worried that practically three quarters of the school believed that he was a follower of the next Dark Lord, Theo contained a chuckle, from what he had seen it was probably something to be proud of for Jugson.

"Considering who I am..." Harry muttered, gaining Theo's attention.

Harry had a calculating look in his eyes and after a few moments a malicious smirk appeared on his face.

"I'm not certain I want to know what you are thinking." Jugson remarked however his eyes showed he was teasing, and smirks just as malicious as Harry's appeared on Theo and Jugson's faces.

He didn't often show it, but when Harry revealed that darker side that he had it made Theo shudder. Theo was certain that when that side came out to play was when Harry was being his true self, or at
least when he was closer to his true self and it left Theo feeling excited. Every time he saw that Harry he wanted to see more, it made him wish that Harry didn't have to use any type of mask. However he controlled himself quickly, he knew it wasn't possible, at least not yet. Seeing Jugson's smile he was sure that the other boy felt the same.

"If everything works the way I want it to then I think you will enjoy it quite a bit," Harry answered, his eyes showing just how much the idea he was having amused him, "Unfortunately you will have to wait, these things take time and have to be carefully planned, however I guarantee that you won't miss it when it happens."

Theo almost pouted, however he knew that there was no point in arguing, normally when Harry had something in mind no matter what Theo said he never changed it.

The rest of dinner went by quickly, the three boys talking about their break and about classes, with Theo lamenting the fact that he only understood about a third of what the other two were talking about. That led to Jugson offering to tutor him whenever he wasn't busy with school work, seeing Harry's approving look both felt rather proud, they didn't know why but the fact that Harry approved and was pleased with them made them feel as if they had done something great.

When dinner ended and Theo was in bed in his room he didn't even try to stop the huge smile that appeared on his face. When he boarded the Hogwarts Express for the first time to go to Hogwarts he hadn't thought, even for a second that he would be so happy to be back at school, and it was all because of Harry Potter.

A little over a week after the Yule break ended Harry and Theo were in the library sitting at their usual table when Harry heard footsteps coming in their direction. He knew it wasn't Marcus, he had been with them a little while ago and left with another sixth year student to do some Charm's essay that they had to hand in the next day. He was a little curious to see who it was, generally the students let him be, even the ones that called him a traitor and a Dark wizard every chance they got.

Looking up from his book Harry saw a group of Slytherins coming closer to their table. From what he could see they were all first years, Draco Malfoy, Blaise Zabini, Pansy Parkinson and Daphne Greengrass, if he wasn't mistaken. Malfoy appeared to be the leader of the little group, which didn't surprise him, the first years had all flocked around Malfoy from day one. From what he had learned it had nothing to do with Malfoy himself, as far as he could tell only Zabini was really his friend, the others all flocked to him because he was a Malfoy, nothing else. He hoped that they weren't there to cause trouble, he wasn't in a particularly good mood and he didn't really want to get into trouble because he had killed or maimed some brat.

They stopped in front of their table and Harry raised an eyebrow.

"May we sit?" Malfoy asked in what was supposed to be a confident voice, though Harry could clearly hear the uncertainty that Malfoy was trying to hide.

He couldn't say that it wasn't something that he was expecting, he had thought that the younger Slytherins would start to approach him, however he hadn't decided what do to about it, mainly because it depended on how he was approached and what they wanted.

Harry nodded, either way he would see what they wanted first and if they could be useful.

He saw the four of them relax just a little bit and sit in the vacant chairs. Not wanting the situation to become uncomfortable, well, more uncomfortable than it already was he remarked.
"I'm a bit surprised to see you without your two bodyguards Malfoy. They follow you everywhere when you're not in the common room."

Malfoy went a little pink and Harry had to contain a small chuckle, he was expecting that the Malfoy heir would be able to control himself better. Well that was a lie, from what he had seen Malfoy was quite temperamental, he behaved more like a Gryffindor than a Slytherin.

Maybe he could get Theo to tell the Malfoy brat exactly that, he was sure that it would be rather entertaining. Yes, he would do that, probably when he got bored. Clearing his mind of the amusing picture, he went back to the matter at hand.

Malfoy really did behave like a Gryffindor, no self-respecting Slytherin would confront someone where all the teachers were able to see it, nor would they do it in front of so many witnesses that had absolutely no problem in blaming the evil Slytherin even if he wasn't at fault. 'Well he is still young...

Harry thought completely ignoring the fact that he was actually a little bit younger than Malfoy.

"The library isn't really somewhere they would go..."

The answer didn't surprise Harry, from what he knew Crabbe and Goyle were the type of people that he tolerated the least, well maybe not the type he tolerated the least, but definitely in the top five. They were only good for their brute strength and nothing more, they didn't even put some effort in getting better, in being more than what they were. They had the wonders of magic at their disposal and they wasted it. They could be more, they could strive to be extraordinary and they were content in being ordinary.

"It doesn't surprise me." Harry answered with an innocent little smile on his face and Theo chuckled. He loved how Harry was able to insult someone without ever losing that innocent air.

Harry was still looking at Malfoy so he didn't miss the way the blond boy looked at Theo and he narrowed his eyes.

"Stop." he ordered and they all looked at him, except Theo, who had taken out his wand and was casting a few privacy charms that Harry had taught him. He knew that Harry was about to lose his mask and he was sure that he didn't want everyone in the library to see it. It was a shame that Marcus wasn't there, Theo was certain that he would have loved to see this.

It was easy to see that the four Slytherins were confused, but none of them dared to ask anything, not that Theo blamed them. If Harry had spoken to him in that tone and had ordered him to do something he would have done it without a second thought, after all he quite liked being alive.

"Let's get something straight," Harry told them in a cold voice, he wasn't talking very loud, however that low, cold tone was far scarier than if he had been shouting. "You mean nothing to me," he continued looking at Malfoy, making the other three relax just a bit, they were quite glad that they weren't the ones that had somehow displeased Harry, the last time they had heard a similar tone coming from Harry five older students had ended up in the Infirmary, "You have absolutely no value to me at all. The fact that you are a pureblood and a Malfoy doesn't mean anything to me. At this moment I tolerate your presence because you may be useful in the future, nevertheless my tolerance for spoiled little brats with delusions of grandeur is extremely low, it doesn't matter how useful they could be. And you are quite close to the limit of my patience.

If I catch you looking at Theo like that again I guarantee that you won't like the consequences. What happened to Marcus was because I was a little annoyed; you are well on your way to making me angry."
Theo didn't think it was possible for Malfoy to get even paler, but he was proven wrong when Harry said that last sentence. Malfoy didn't look like he was able to say anything, hell he didn't seem able to move.

He hadn't seen the way Malfoy was looking at him, but the fact that Harry cared made him want to smile like a loon. He didn't think that Harry would actually care. He knew perfectly well that Harry had only started talking to him because of the information he could give him. He didn't hold it against Harry, it was the way he was, but seeing that he actually, truly cared about him made him happy. Maybe he wasn't the only one to consider what they had a friendship.

"Do not forget that your blood and your name will not help you. Prove your value, your usefulness, because if you don't I doubt that you will be able to leave the end of the food chain."

This goes for all of you."

Harry didn't say anything else and focused on his book again. Becoming fond of Theo wasn't part of the plan, but he was and he couldn't stand the look of contempt that Malfoy had when he'd looked at Theo. Theodore had been the first, he wouldn't say first friend because he didn't know if that was what Theo was, but he was the first, apparently that meant something to him even if he hadn't noticed it before.

He didn't know if he had made the right choice when dealing with Malfoy. From what he had seen Malfoy was used to everybody doing what he wanted just because he was a pureblood and a Malfoy, the sooner he got used to the fact that things had changed the better. He was sure that if he let him, Malfoy would, sooner or later, cross the line and then Harry would be forced to take drastic measures to guarantee that it didn't happen again. The way he saw it he was saving Malfoy from himself; he was preventing Malfoy's arrogance from causing him future pain. He was actually being a good person, helping his peer and all that.

It was better if Malfoy had no illusions. He, at the moment, was of absolutely no use to Harry, even his school work was mediocre at best. Not that Malfoy was stupid or weak, he just didn't even try, he was certain that his status would grant him anything, so he didn't put in any effort. The sooner he learned that he had to earn on his own merits the place that he so obviously wanted, the better.

The silence that followed was a little awkward, from the corner of his eye he saw Greengrass and Parkinson sharing a look. It didn't look like the two of them would want to stay for long. It was a loss that he didn't regret. From what he had seen and heard their biggest ambition was to find a pureblood from an ancient bloodline, he had to be wealthy naturally, marry him and spend the rest of their lives being perfect pureblood wives, spending their husband's money.

Harry thought that it was absolutely pathetic. Not even considering the fact that they were eleven how could they be satisfied with that life? How could they want that when there was so much more they could be? Harry simply didn't understand. He had always craved more, more knowledge, more power, more everything. He had always wanted to be more, he worked for it. He didn't think he would ever be able to understand how people could be content with anything less.

"I'm sorry."

The whispered apology made him look at Malfoy, it was so low that he had almost missed it. The blond had a little bit of pink in his cheeks and was doing his best to keep his eyes fixed on Harry's. Harry could see that Malfoy hated what he was doing, however he could see he was sincere, but above all he could see the fear lurking in those silver eyes.

"It's more habit than anything else. I...", Malfoy began to say before he stopped and took a deep
breath, "I am a Malfoy and a pureblood, I was raised believing that a Malfoy always gets what he wants."

That didn't surprise Harry one bit, he could imagine that that was something like the unofficial motto of the family. He didn't think that it was a bad way to live, after all he was also the type of person that always got what he wanted, he just thought that the Malfoy heir was going about it the wrong way.

"Nobody said you couldn't get what you want," Harry remarked in a smother, warmer tone, if he played this right maybe Malfoy could become useful and even loyal, with the right words here and there the situation could be salvaged, "You just have to work to get it. I know you are powerful and intelligent, I imagine you don't like to be at the bottom of the hierarchy. However, considering your power and intelligence, that is something that can be quite easily changed; prove that you're worth more than that.

However it won't be by putting down others that you will achieve it. Putting people down won't show me that you are better, it just shows that you are an immature brat and that I would be wasting my time with you."

Harry almost smiled when he saw Malfoy get a determined look and nod. Now he would be able to see how he could use the Malfoy heir, and if he was lucky he would even stop acting like a spoiled prat.

He actually did smile when he saw Malfoy take a Potions book out of his backpack and start the essay that they had gotten that day. On Malfoy's right side Zabini was already writing on a piece of parchment, taking notes from a book. Apparently they had taken what he'd said to heart, now he just had to see how long it would last.

The two girls however gave some lame excuse that Harry didn't pay attention to and left. Yes, he was sure that he would not regret losing them, the last thing he wanted was for some little princesses to think that they would be the future Mrs. Boy-Who-Lived, he was sure that he would have nightmares about it.

Trying to get those horrifying images from his mind he went back to reading his book, he was quite happy with how it turned out. True he had to endure the presence of two more people but at least they were intelligent, something for which he was quite thankful.

The following morning at breakfast Severus knew immediately that something had changed in the serpent house. Hell, everyone in the bloody castle that was the least bit observant could tell that something had changed.

Potter and Nott were no longer sitting at the farthest end of the table away from the other Slytherins.

Potter was sitting right in the middle of the table, with his back to the wall, observing the whole Great Hall, with Nott sitting on his right side and Jugson on his left. If that had been the only change Severus would have ignored it. However that wasn't the only change, Draco and Zabini were sitting in the seats in front of Potter, well not really in front of Potter; Draco had the seat in front of Nott and Zabini the one in front of Jugson, leaving the seat in front of Potter vacant. If that was all Severus would have only paid a little more attention, and only because Draco was his godson. He would talk to the boy and advise him to stay away from Potter. He may seem cold and uncaring but Draco was his godson and he cared for the boy and he didn't want him anywhere near Potter.

But that wasn't everything and once again Severus was forced to hide his shock and it was those
changes that made him know that he couldn't talk to Draco, couldn't tell him to stay away from Potter. In all honesty he could but it would be for nothing, Draco may not act like it sometimes but he was a Slytherin and Severus knew that there was nothing that would keep him away from Potter now. The only way would be if Potter himself turned him away and if that happened then Draco would become a pariah in Slytherin.

Severus looked to his left and he saw more than one professor looking at the Slytherin table, he saw the understanding in the Headmaster's eyes and the little bit of apprehension. Not that he blamed the old man, he was certain that the Headmaster knew what this meant, he also saw Sinistra's eyes widen, even Quirrell was looking at the Slytherin table with surprise, if he didn't find the situation so serious he would have snorted; even Quirrell noticed. But really, how could he not?

The Slytherins were making a statement.

The first years were sitting all together at the end of the table closest to the head table, they were followed by the second year students, then came the third years and then the fourth years.

After the fourth years there were two vacant seats on both sides of the table, after those vacant seats came Potter's little group and after them came another two seats that were empty on both sides.

Immediately after the empty seats came the fifth years, followed by the sixth years and finishing with the seventh years at the end of the table.

It was such a radical change that it was no wonder they had noticed, however he doubted that most of them knew what it meant. Probably only former Slytherins would know what it was and even then he suspected that most wouldn't remember, at least not immediately. He himself only remembered right away because he remembered Lucius's father talking about an identical situation.

Slytherin house had established it's court.

The Slytherin hierarchy was always changing. Occasionally there was a student that would be able to hold the top off the hierarchy for two or three years, but usually who was on top changed constantly.

When you were part of a house like Slytherin it was inevitable, it was a constant fight between the students that had more influence, power and ambition.

But what Severus was seeing was an established court, that only happened when the student that had defined a hierarchy made the ones that could oppose him submit to him, establishing him as the King so to speak. Obviously it didn't mean that someone wouldn't try to define a new hierarchy, it also didn't mean that everyone approved of the person, however they were Slytherins and self-preservation was something all Slytherins treasured and going against an established court was suicide.

But usually the ones that weren't too happy with it were the older students and they would be gone in one or two years at most, and the younger years would be drilled to respect, almost worship the court. And considering who the Slytherin King was he would have seven long years to influence the younger students, and from what Severus was seeing, even the older ones.

Severus was certain that Jugson was the one responsible for the establishment of the court, considering that it had to be someone that would be a part of the court that convinced the rest of the house that all the conditions to establish a court were met.

Jugson was a Slytherin, Severus was sure that as soon as he had seen that more than one condition to
establish the court had been achieved that he had acted. Jugson was the one on top of the hierarchy before so he knew what to look for, he knew what was needed and he acted as soon as he saw the signs. After all, considering his position it would be a huge advantage for him if a court was established, seeing that even after they left Hogwarts the position that they had in the Slytherin court would influence them.

After all every member from the last Slytherin court became the first Inner Circle Death Eaters.

Marcus looked around and couldn't help but feel proud. He never would have thought that he would be part of a Slytherin Court but he was a part of it and all because of the boy sitting beside him.

As soon as Theo had told him what had happened in the library with Malfoy, he immediately thought about the Court.

Without even knowing it Harry had already fulfilled two of the three objectives needed to establish a Court. Jugson himself was the first one, he was at the top of the hierarchy before Harry had sent him to the Infirmary, after that Jugson had had two choices, continue to fight with Harry or submit. He had submitted, and he did it gladly, not holding a grudge for being beaten. At first he only wanted to see what Harry was capable of, only wanted to try and understand who the Boy-Who-Lived really was. But after spending some time with him he'd started to respect him, sure he still feared him, but Harry wasn't merciless, well as long as people didn't anger him.

And just like that he had achieved the first objective. However it was also the easiest, so he hadn't thought about it too much.

Malfoy was the second objective.

In terms of political power and wealth Malfoy was the only one that could stand on somewhat equal ground with Harry, the only one that could, if he wanted to, try and take the top of the hierarchy from Harry. Not in a direct confrontation of course, in raw magical power and intelligence Harry was far out of his reach. However politically and wealth wise Malfoy could hold his ground and if he was able to gather a sufficient number of Slytherins then maybe he would have been able to define the hierarchy, at least for as long as he would've been able to hold on to it.

However he'd opted not to fight Harry, he'd decided to follow and that had changed everything.

Harry had, without even meaning to, achieved the most difficult step that was needed to establish a Court. They were Slytherins, they wanted power, and they were ambitious. So it was only natural that someone who could be on top of the hierarchy wouldn't give it up, would fight for it. Even if they would only be able to hold it for a year, or even just a month, it didn't matter; what mattered was the power they would gain. Factions were formed every day, alliances were created, and the fights would continue. Of course it wasn't daily duels or anything like that, sure sometimes there were duels, but mostly it was all political.

So when Malfoy didn't fight, Harry had achieved the second step he needed to establish a Court, he needed only one more and he would have all the requirements.

The third one was the easiest, he only needed three people from each year in Slytherin to respect him. They didn't have to agree with his beliefs or anything like that, they just needed to respect the power he had, respect what he was able to do, they just needed to respect him, nothing more.

Generally this was a difficult step as well, but in this case Harry had a huge advantage. The simple fact was you can't respect someone you don't know and sometimes it was difficult to know every
student in the House, so most of the time it was difficult to achieve the three students per year, especially since those that would be part of the Court didn't count. But Harry was Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived, the Savior of the Wizarding World that was sorted into Slytherin, the first year that had defined the Slytherin hierarchy after being one month at Hogwarts in only five minutes, everyone knew him.

Marcus had hardly been able to wait to see if Harry could achieve the last step, but he hadn't wanted to do anything that would displease Harry. Marcus still felt a shiver go down his spine when he remembered what had happened the last time he'd angered Harry. So he had waited until dinner time, where he'd explained to Harry what he could do, the opportunity he had.

Harry had listened to what he had to say and when he finished Harry had been silent for a few moments. Marcus had waited patiently; he knew better than to disturb Harry when he was immersed in his thoughts. Finally, Harry had nodded and said.

"Very well, if it is possible to establish a Court take care of it and tell me tomorrow morning before breakfast. If it's not possible, don't worry. One way or another they will follow my rules, this way would simply be the fastest. However I want you to make it clear that I want no one else to join the Court, at least for now. You and Theo were the first, and I'm still trying to see what use Malfoy and Zabini have. It's enough for now."

Having his orders, Marcus lost no time in following them. As soon as they had entered the common room he'd immediately started to see if the number of students were enough.

From first to forth year, the students hadn't understood what he was doing, however from fifth year and up realized almost instantly. That hadn't surprised Marcus, every Slytherin student would be informed about the court when they entered their fifth year, it was a tradition. Besides, nobody had believed that a younger student would have been able to do it.

Some of them where quite shocked when they found out, they couldn't believe it was possible, while others felt their respect for Harry grow.

By the end of the night Marcus hadn't been able to contain his smile.

They had a Court.

So Marcus thought that he was justified in feeling proud. Proud for having contributed, proud for being a part of it, and above all proud because Harry had looked at him, smiled, and said.

"Well done, very well done."

Harry was lying in his bed trying to sleep but he simply couldn't. He had too many things to think about, so he tossed and turned but sleep wouldn't claim him.

The next day they would be leaving Hogwarts, he couldn't even say that he would be going home. Hogwarts was more his home than that orphanage ever was. However that didn't change the fact that they would be leaving.

Not wanting to linger on depressing thoughts Harry let his mind drift to the end of the school year.

He was quite happy with what had happened during the time he'd been at Hogwarts. True, it wasn't what he'd planned, but he couldn't say he wasn't pleased with the results, especially the Court.

He hadn't done much with it yet but the simple fact that there was a Court made things much easier.
He would get daily information about what was going on in Slytherin house and Hogwarts in general. The information he got from Slytherin helped him to see who could be useful or who could cause problems in the future. He had quite liked the intelligence network and he had some things in mind about how it could be used and improved, though first he had to see if he would be able to do the things he had planned for the summer break.

The Court also made it easier to have Slytherins follow his orders, considering that the Court was established only a suicidal imbecile would go directly against them. Though he wasn't an idiot, he didn't go around lording it over them, he generally let them be, they could do as they wished, he had just three rules that should be followed no matter what and he made it perfectly clear that they would not like the consequences of not following those simple, reasonable rules.

The first one was not to spread their pureblood beliefs outside the common room. Inside the safety of Slytherin house they could spout anything they wanted, they would just have to deal with the consequences if he heard them, but outside the house they would behave as the perfect gentlemen and ladies, and Merlin help them if they even thought the word mudblood outside the common room.

Only the four in his Court knew why that rule was implemented and Marcus still got a little malicious smirk when he remembered what Harry was planning, Harry found it quite amusing, the first time he had told them part of what he was planning he had half expected Marcus to start cackling.

The second one was; don't bully, and if you do be Slytherin about it and don't get caught. Harry didn't give a shit about the students, however he had plans, plans that wouldn't work if everyone thought that Slytherins were evil. Harry had bluntly told them that if they wanted to bully a little first year so that they could feel all big and powerful then they should at least glamor their robes and faces so that they wouldn't get caught, they were Slytherins after all, they should use their supposed cunning.

The third rule was the easiest to follow in Harry's opinion, choose one student from every year and only that student would be talking with those in the Court unless the members of the Court talked to them first.

That was a rule that they had all agreed was needed after the first few days. Those in the Court would be practically chased around all day by students who wanted to be close to the members of the Court and maybe get a chance to join. It was exhausting and Harry had had to be restrained more than once so he wouldn't maim one of the cretins. However after the rule was implemented, and Harry having sent a seventh year student to the Infirmary with both arms broken in three places after he had ignored the rule, everyone followed it. Though he had to admit that it could also be related to the quite sadistic smiles that graced the faces of the members of the Court when they looked at the bleeding boy on the floor without moving a finger to help him while he screamed.

His little snakes were such sadists Harry thought with a fond smile.

All in all he was really pleased with the outcome.

Another thing that had pleased him were Draco and Blaise. After that first encounter in the library the both of them changed a little, they became more studious. They truly appeared to have taken what he told them to heart, especially the part about earning their place. When they found out about the Court both had wanted to prove that they deserved to be a part of it, that they deserved the place Harry had given them.

The effort they put into studying was rewarded, Theo as well as Draco and Blaise were all in the top five in their exams, first place going to Harry in all subjects. The other three fought for the second, third and fourth places amongst themselves. Occasionally the Granger girl would get third or fourth
place but in general the first places belonged to them.

Speaking of exams, on the day of the last exam Harry woke up and on his bedside table was a book with a little note. He could still perfectly remember what was written on it.

'Dear Harry,

I can't express how interesting this year was for me, mostly thanks to you.

Consider this a little gift showing my appreciation.

It is a set of ten books, they're the second volume of the set of ten you already have.

If you read and understand all the books of the previous set, which I have no doubt you will be able to do, then you will have no difficulty in ending the enchantment that has compressed the ten books into one. Consider it a test of your skills if you will.

I can hardly wait to see what you will be able to do in a few years.

Sincerely,

T.M.R.'

That same day at dinner time they were informed that professor Quirrell had gone missing. That led Harry to suspect, again, that Quirrell and T.M.R. were somehow connected, maybe they were even the same person, but he had no way of verifying it. So, although he was quite curious to know what had happened to Quirrell and who T.M.R. was, he tried not to think about it. After all he had no leads and he didn't think he would be able to find anything. Maybe he would look into it next year, or the year after that, it could be his little pet project or something like that.

Thinking about T.M.R.'s note Harry finally fell asleep, exhaustion having finally caught up with him.
Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: This story is based on characters and situations created and owned by J. K. Rowling. No money is being made.

Warnings: This story will be Slash, but seeing as Harry is only eleven, it will take a while for anything to happen.

Beta: noirekitsune

Chapter 8 – Deal with the Devil

Harry looked at the door in front of him with disdain; he was back. Taking a deep breath, he entered the building and went to the matron's office to tell her that he was back and would be staying until the beginning of September.

He knocked on the door and waited until he heard Mrs. Brown telling him to enter. The face she made when she saw it was him was quite entertaining to Harry.

"Good afternoon Mrs. Brown." he said, maintaining a polite and mature air. However the look of dread on her face remained.

It wasn't something that surprised Harry, Mrs. Brown always suspected that he did things to the other boys at the orphanage, however she was far too afraid of him to do anything about those suspicions.

"Harry, I thought that you would be returning tomorrow." Mrs. Brown said, trying to hide her apprehension behind a fake smile.

"Yes, that is my fault, when I sent the letter to inform you about the day that I would be back I got the date wrong."

It was partially true, it was his fault, it just hadn't been a mistake. Harry had no wish whatsoever for them to pick him up at the station. He preferred to keep the contact he had with the muggles at the orphanage to a minimum.

"Is my room still the same?" he asked, the sooner he left the woman's presence the better.

"Yes, of course it is." she replied rather sharply, as if it was an insult to suggest otherwise. He sometimes forgot how seriously she took her job, considering how she never did anything to help him when he was younger, he thought it was rather normal. Perhaps she only cared about appearing to be doing her job and not actually doing it. Oh well, it didn't really matter to Harry, as long as they let him be, he wouldn't bother with them.

"Hmm, very well. I will be staying until the first of September, unless of course I spend some time with some colleague from school. Have the rest of a nice afternoon."

He was out of the office before the matron had the chance to reply. He had many things planned, he hoped that he would be able to do everything. He had to contain the smile that wanted to appear on
his face when he remembered everything he had planned, it was going to be fun.

A little over two weeks after he had arrived at the orphanage, he had established a routine identical to what he'd had before he went to Hogwarts.

The same day he'd arrived he went shopping and filled his cooling cupboard, he still found it odd that there were no fridges in the Wizarding World. Instead there were cupboards with several charms on them that kept the food fresh, cold, or in some cases frozen.

Having those little magical things during the summer was a blessing. After having been in a world full of magic it would have killed him if he had to spend a whole summer completely cut off from that. At least he could practice Potions, Runes, and Arithmancy and had all of his books; otherwise he thought he would have gone insane, pretending that he was nothing more than a muggle.

Speaking of books; now he could finally read the books he had received from the mysterious T.M.R. as a Christmas present. Though he'd been dying to read them, he hadn't touched the books at Hogwarts. He knew that the books were illegal and he didn't want to risk someone finding them, even if they were inside his trunk. Accidents did happen, he could put a book inside his backpack or something like that, and even though he was careful, he would rather not risk it.

Now though, there was nothing to stop him from reading his books. He knew he couldn't do magic, but nothing stopped him from picking up a stick from the ground and practicing the wand movements and when he went back to Hogwarts he would be able to practice with a wand.

However that wasn't all he dedicated his time to. Being the Boy-Who-Lived and being sorted into Slytherin was making things more difficult than they needed to be. On one hand, he didn't particularly care, he'd always liked a challenge, however the future Dark Lord thing was getting on his nerves. He could do nothing without having half of Hogwarts following his movements with distrust. They followed his actions because he was the Boy-Who-Lived and with distrust because he was a Slytherin. Considering that he couldn't stop being one or the other he had to change people's perceptions.

What he planned on doing was risky, he knew that, and some consequences could be rather bothersome but if things went the way he wanted to, even if just a little bit, the advantages would by far surpass the disadvantages. Of course he had no guarantee that his plan would work, however sometimes you had to take risks.

A few days after Harry had made his final decision on what he would do, he received an opportunity to put his plan into action.

He was in his room at the orphanage waiting for the matron to make her rounds and see him in his room when he heard something tapping at his window. Curious he looked over and saw an owl sitting on the window sill, and if he hadn't seen the envelope on the owls leg he would have thought that it was just an ordinary owl. Shaking his head, he got up from his bed and went to open the window. Harry still found the way wizards sent their mail rather strange, though he admitted that it appeared to be quite effective.

The owl came inside as soon as the window opened and landed on his bed, sticking the leg that had the letter on it out.

Taking the letter, he looked at the bird; he could have sworn that he'd seen it somewhere before.

"I assume that you are waiting for an answer since you're still here?" Harry asked, keeping an eye on
the owl. When it hooted and got into a more comfortable position, Harry shook his head; it couldn't be normal how smart those birds were.

Focusing on his letter, he read.

'Dear Harry,

I know we didn't plan anything when we were at Hogwarts, but I was wondering if you would like to spend the rest of the summer break with me?

We could invite the others to join us as well, however if I'm not mistaken Blaise as well as Theo are out of the country until August, so I think that they would only be able to come after they came back.

Send your answer back with Ares, and if you want to then we will meet tomorrow at ten at the Leaky Cauldron, alright? However, if you would prefer another day or another time, I'm sure that could be arranged.

Hope to see you soon,

Draco Malfoy'

A small smile appeared on Harry's face when he finished the letter. Spending his summer away from the orphanage? He didn't have to think about it twice. Besides, now he could see if the Malfoy library was as good as Draco boasted. Quickly, he wrote an affirmative response and gave it to Ares, the bird took flight the next moment and Harry closed the window. Harry sat back on his bed and started to read a book. Now he only had to wait for the matron and inform her that he would be leaving the next day.

A little over half an hour later, Harry heard a knocking on his door.

"Come in." he said, lifting his head from his book. Just as he was expecting, Mrs. Brown's head appeared in the crack of the opened door.

"Good evening, Mrs. Brown."

"Good evening, Harry. Lights out in an hour." she told him, just like every other night, it was almost mechanic.

Harry nodded, though before she was able to close the door he called her. Her astonishment was plain on her face, generally Harry didn't speak to anyone at the orphanage.

"Yes?" she asked, and Harry could see the fear on her face, he found it strange that she feared him so much, considering that she had never seen what he did.

"I will be leaving tomorrow." Harry informed her.

"What?" the shock she felt made the fear that was always in her eyes disappear.

"I said that I will be leaving tomorrow."

"I heard what you said, but what do you mean you will be leaving tomorrow? I am responsible for you, you can't leave just like that."

Harry withheld a sigh, he had hoped that she would simply let him go, considering how much she feared him. However, her sense of responsibility surpassed the fear that she had of him. If it were a different situation Harry could have felt a bit of respect for her, in this case, however, the situation
only annoyed him.

"Mrs. Brown, let's be honest. I don't like being here, you don't like having me here. Taking that into consideration, and seeing that a friend of mine from school invited me to spend the summer break with him, wouldn't it be better, for everyone, to simply let me go?"

Several emotions flashed across Mrs. Brown's face, it was clear that her sense of responsibility was trying to assert itself over her desire to see him go. However, humans were creatures that mostly lived based on their desires, and Mrs. Brown was no exception.

"Very well, will they be picking you up here?" she inquired, trying not to show the relief she felt at Harry leaving.

"No, I will be meeting them where we buy our school supplies. I will see you next year Mrs. Brown."

The matron only nodded and closed the door. A little smile appeared on his face, he was free of the muggles. With that in mind, he packed the few things that he had taken out of his trunk and went to sleep; thoughts about leaving the orphanage running through his head.

The following morning Harry woke up quite early, he had no wish to have breakfast at the orphanage, even if it meant he had to wait at the Leaky Cauldron until Draco arrived.

Just like the previous year, Harry had no difficulty in reaching the Leaky Cauldron and though it was a little before nine o'clock it was fairly full. It wasn't the first time that he was thankful that the public in general didn't know what 'Harry Potter' looked like. He didn't even want to think about what it would be like if everyone in the pub knew who he was.

Not wanting to linger on those thoughts, he went up to the counter.

"Good morning, Mr. Tom." Harry had to practically shout to be heard above the noise in the pub.

"Good morning lad, how may I help you?" the old barman asked, leaning a bit over the counter so that he could see Harry better.

"I want to have some breakfast while I wait for my friend to arrive, if it isn't too much trouble."

"Of course lad, no trouble at all. Pick a table, they all have a menu, and choose what you want to eat by touching it with your finger and I'll take it to you."

"Alright, thank you." Harry answered with the biggest smile he could.

Going for a table a little away from the racket of the pub, Harry selected his breakfast and waited for Draco to arrive while he ate.

A little after an hour of waiting, the fireplace on the other side of the room lit up again, Harry was sure that if he hadn't already read about the Floo Network he would have freaked out the first time he saw someone enter or exit a fireplace, and a blonde boy about as tall as Harry exited. As soon as he was out his eyes scanned the pub and when he found Harry his eyes lost that cold look and a smile appeared on his face. He paid no attention to the people around him and almost ran in Harry's direction. Harry only had a few seconds to understand what was about to happen and the next moment, rather resigned to what was happening, he had the blonde's arms around him.

"Harry, I missed you." Draco's voice was a little above a whisper and Harry chuckled, 'One would
"Hello Draco." Harry replied with a soft voice and he chuckled again, yes he was quite fond of his snakes.

Only a few moments after Draco arrived, the fireplace lit up again and a man that could only be Draco's father stepped out. His gray eyes scanned the pub and almost immediately spotted his son who had his arms around a raven haired boy, who he thought was Harry Potter. He couldn't be sure, since the boy had his back turned to him and even if he wasn't him Lucius wasn't sure if he would have been able to identify him, considering that he had never seen the boy.

He approached the two and cleared his throat, gaining both boys' attention. Draco let go of the other boy but the joy on his face was there for all to see, the boy that Lucius thought was Potter turned and Lucius had to control himself to not show his shock.

The child was beautiful, there was no other word to describe him and Lucius could see some Malfoy traces in him, however it was clear that he was a Potter. What truly surprised him though were his eyes, he had seen the 'Avada Kedavra' hundreds of times and never before had he thought the color of death to be mesmerizing. But seeing the innocent smile on the boy's face, the thought that the color didn't match the child briefly passed through his mind; after all he seemed so innocent, how could that color match him.

"Father, this is Harry Potter, my friend." Draco said, bringing his attention back to his son, and it was impossible to miss the pride in Draco's voice as he spoke, "Harry, this is my father, Lucius Malfoy."

"It is a pleasure to meet you Mr. Malfoy, and thank you for allowing me to spend the summer vacation in your home."

Lucius almost smiled, the child even had an innocent and melodic voice. He couldn't help but wonder how he had been sorted into Slytherin of all places.

"The pleasure is mine Mr. Potter and there is nothing to thank me for, Draco was so insistent that there really was no other choice if I wanted to have a moment of peace. Not that I didn't want you in our home, I just thought that you would have liked to spend some time with your family."

For a fraction of a second Lucius thought that Potter's expression had become colder, that he had lost that innocent air, however the next moment it was gone and he decided that it had only been a trick of the light.

"You may call me Harry, Mr. Malfoy."

"Hmm, very well, Harry then. I hope you don't mind but I have some business to take care of at the Apothecary, since we are here, so I won't need to make the trip twice."

"I don't mind at all." the boy replied with a small smile and Lucius nodded, motioning for Draco and Harry to follow him.

Lucius knew that taking Harry Potter along wasn't one of his brightest ideas, he really did, but he had no other choice. He'd been notified that his order had arrived that same morning and he knew that if he didn't go to the Apothecary before twelve o'clock on the day that it arrived, the shop owner would get rid of it. It was a safety measure that Lucius understood, considering the times they lived in, and usually he had no trouble with it, however he had to admit that his order arrived at a really bad time. Narcissa was in France until August so there really was no choice but to pick up Harry himself and then take them along, he couldn't leave them alone at home. If he hadn't already paid for it, another
of those pesky security measures, he wouldn't have bothered with the thing.

Containing a sigh, he looked back and saw that both boys were following him. Draco hadn't stopped talking for a second and Lucius was able to hear several references about what they would be doing that summer. Harry, on the other hand, just nodded once in a while with a small smile. Suddenly, the image of an older brother indulging his younger sibling came to mind.

He wasn't really sure how the dynamic between the boys worked. His son appeared to want to impress Harry, though he hadn't heard him once use his usual *I-am-a-Malfoy-so-I'm-better-than-everyone* tone he used every time he was trying to impress some of his other friends.

Shaking his head and telling himself that he had the whole break to study the dynamic of the boys' relationship, Lucius told the boys to walk in front of him so that he could keep a better eye on them, after all in Knockturn Alley it was better to be safe than sorry.

"Draco," he called when he saw the apothecary, "You know what to do, right? You will stay at the Apothecary's door, I won't take more than ten minutes. Don't go anywhere, understood?"

"Yes father."

"Yes Mr. Malfoy."

Both boys answered and seeing that they weren't lying Lucius nodded and went into the store. If it were another store he would have no problem in taking the boys inside but the Apothecary had things that he preferred that his son and his friend didn't see, at least not while they were so young.

However he had been a Slytherin, so as soon as he knew where he would have to go he had cast a charm on his son; if anyone with bad intentions approached the boys he would know immediately, so he wasn't that worried. Besides, it was morning and Knockturn Alley was rather calm during the mornings, the usual clients preferred the night to do their business.

Lucius was almost done with his business when he felt the charm that he had cast on Draco flare to life.

Cursing, Lucius turned to the front door and was preparing himself to curse the idiot that dared to try something against his son, when he saw something that made him freeze.

The front of the store was charmed to show what was going on outside and let sound through while looking like a normal wall on the outside and Lucius couldn't believe what he was seeing.

Draco had his wand out and was pointing it at a man's chest, he had such a rage filled expression that Lucius could hardly believe that it was his son. He felt Anthony join him but he didn't take his eyes off what he was seeing. Both boys were facing the front of the store so he could see their faces clearly. Draco with his wand in hand, his face contorted in rage and disgust, while Harry was completely expressionless and his eyes shined, looking more than ever like the Killing Curse.

"How dare you," Draco growled and Lucius was surprised with the amount of hate his voice had, "You're not even worthy to kiss the ground he walks on much less breathe the same air as him."

"Don't be like that lad, you're really pretty too, I could have fun with you as well... But your friend over there... Oh, your friend... I'm gonna make him scream so prettily."
Disgust and hate coursed through his body like never before, Lucius already had a hand on the doorknob when he heard something that made his blood freeze. A dark, cold, low chuckle was coming from the front of the store. Lucius looked to his left and his eyes fixed on Harry, where previously he was expressionless now he had a sadistic smile, Lucius eyes opened wide, this Harry was nothing like the child he had meet less than an hour ago.

"Did you hear him Draco?" Harry asked with a cold and smooth voice, Lucius looked at his son and saw him lower his wand and a smile only a little less sadistic appeared on his face, Lucius knew that expression well, it was similar to the one he had when he tortured someone for his Lord. He never thought that he would see a similar expression on his son's face, especially not on his twelve year old son, "He's saying that he's going to make me scream."

Harry lifted his hand and pointed in the man's direction and he fell to his knees. Lucius could hardly believe his eyes, he had never seen an eleven year old that was able to control their magic like that.

"Tell me," Harry spoke again in that cold, smooth tone however now it was different, now Lucius could feel Harry's magic in his voice, he could feel Harry's magic surrounding the man, imposing itself above the man's magic, making him obey Harry, it was almost like a rudimentary Imperius Curse. Lucius was thankful that he was behind the store's wards and that they absorbed most of the magic, he didn't want to know what the bastard outside was feeling, not that he cared, "Do you have any family?"

Lucius had to resist the urge to answer, and going by the sharp intake of breath from Anthony, he was sure that he had to too.

"No." Lucius wasn't surprised at all to hear the wizard's voice trembling.

"Hmm, so if you went missing... Would anyone notice?"

"No," the man's voice failed a little bit at the end and Lucius saw Harry's eyes shine with excitement, he couldn't believe he hadn't seen it before; Harry was having fun.

"So sad, don't you agree Draco? His whole life goes by and if he disappears nobody notices, it is sad, isn't it?" Harry inquired and he had an innocent smile on his face, for those who didn't know any better they would believe that it was nothing more than an innocent question from a child.

"Very sad." Draco replied, he looked like a kid waiting for the show to start.

"Hmm, yes very. It is sad when a person is nothing." Harry's voice changed a little, it was gentler, sweeter, and Lucius also felt Harry's magic change. Before it was forceful, it made you do things even if you didn't want to, now though the magic was softer, it wasn't forcing, it was persuading, it was molding what it came in contact with. Again Lucius thanked Merlin that he was behind the wards, he had no wish to see what the magic would do to him if he weren't. Though considering that Draco was outside and not showing any adverse effects to the magic, he suspected that Harry was directing it to his victim and that the only reason they were feeling it was because Harry didn't know they were there and was letting his magic run free on their end, "Because that is what you are, you know? Nothing. You are nothing."

Lucius could feel the magic hold on, for lack of a better word, to that thought and lodge it firmly in the wizard's mind. The only reason he could feel it was because the magic was so strong that the intent of it wasn't absorbed by the wards, the only reason the magic wasn't doing the same to them was because they were not the magic's target. It was the same with the Dark Lord; when he was truly angry he didn't even have to curse you, you would feel the intent behind the magic when he was torturing one of the other Death Eaters. That was why he knew what Harry was going to do and he
felt a shiver go down his spine.

"You are worth nothing. You have no use. You. Are. Nothing."

At the last 'nothing' Harry's magic grew and Lucius heard the man cry, beg, only a few words were possible to identify between the sobbing, the main being 'no' and 'please'. Harry started to walk around the kneeling wizard and Lucius couldn't help but compare him to a predator observing its prey. The man was following him with his eyes, as if he was hypnotized, when he turned enough for Lucius to see his face Lucius almost took a step back seeing the terror in his eyes. Lucius didn't think that it was possible for the terror in those eyes to increase, but then Harry laughed, proving him wrong.

"You wanted to hear me scream," Harry remarked, as if he was talking about the weather, "And I want to hear you beg. It seems that at least one of us will get what he wants."

"No! Please, no! I'll do anything! Please! Please! Have mercy!"

Hearing that terrified voice Lucius knew that the man knew what Harry's magic was doing to him, knew what was going to happen to him, could feel what was happening to him and it terrified him, not that Lucius blamed him.

"Oh Merlin..." he heard his colleague whisper and he nodded, understanding what he was feeling, if he weren't seeing it with his own eyes he would not have believed it.

"Anything?" Harry's sweet voice asked, "Even let me kill you?"

"Yes! Please, yes."

Both boys laughed and Lucius looked at Draco, he had almost forgotten that Draco was there, he saw the look both boys shared and could only stare. It was hard to believe that they were having fun; however the evidence was there, right in front of his eyes.

"Hmm, you know what, I don't think I will." Harry told the wizard, "After all you are nothing, why should I deal with nothing? Don't you agree, Nothing?"

Lucius saw the terror in the eyes of the man, he saw him fighting to hold on to the traces of himself that his mind still remembered and every time he failed his terror grew, every time he lost a part of himself that made him somebody he begged even more, only for the child in front of him to smile, laugh and deny him the mercy he begged for, having fun while the human being in front of him slowly ceased to exist, because that was what he was doing. When Harry's magic was done with the man he would be nothing, he would lose all sense of anything, only knowing that he was nothing.

"All your life you were nothing, now you will die as nothing."

When Harry said the last 'nothing' Lucius saw the man's eyes glaze over and the sobbing stopped, the tears stopped flowing and all signs of struggle or resistance disappeared and Lucius knew that Harry's magic had done what it intended.

Lucius looked at the man in front of him and felt a shiver go down his spine, it was similar to the Dementor's Kiss, the only difference was that the man in front of him still had his soul, though Lucius doubted that it served the man any form of consolation.

"You see Draco, I told you he was nothing." Harry laughed looking at the man that he had destroyed with a sadistic smile, "Let's go to the store next door, it's a bookshop, we could see what they have, it will be far more interesting than staying here looking at nothing."
Draco nodded and both boys started going in the store's direction when they heard Harry's voice again, it was just a soft whisper and Lucius was sure that the only reason they could hear it was because his magic still laced his voice.

"Oh, that's right, I almost forgot. As I said, you will die as nothing."

Lucius eyes went wide and the next moment the nameless wizard's neck was in an impossible position and the life had completely left his eyes. When the body hit the ground with a loud, at least it appeared loud in the silence of the morning, 'thud' Harry's cruel and sadistic laughter rang through the street.

Lucius would never admit it but he was shocked speechless, how had he missed this when he had met the boy? How had he not even suspected? How could a child be that sadistic, that powerful?

"Who is he?" Anthony asked, his voice held as much fear as awe.

Lucius didn't really know what to tell him, until he remembered his son having gone to speak to him during the Yule break, about a boy that had defined the Slytherin hierarchy in five minutes. He also remembered Severus having gone to the manor after the Yule break, as he did every month, to tell him how Draco was doing. He remembered asking if Severus was alright, because he'd appeared to be more agitated than usual and Severus telling him that a Slytherin Court had been established. He remembered asking if that wasn't good news considering that it was a way for the fights in Slytherin to stop at least for as long as the Court lasted and now he clearly remembered the apprehension that briefly passed through his friends eyes and he heard Severus' words in his mind clearer than ever "Lucius, the child will bring only death."

At the time he'd thought that Severus was being his usual dramatic self, but now...

"He is the new King of Slytherin." he ended up replying, knowing the other would understand.

"But... But he's only a child."

Lucius had to contain a laugh, as far as he had seen that was a demon pretending to be a child.

"Do you truly believe that? That he is nothing more than a child?" seeing Anthony's look Lucius almost smiled, "Exactly. Anthony..."

Lucius didn't have to say any more, Anthony was already shaking his head.

"You know perfectly well that I didn't see anything Lucius. Everyone knows, I am completely neutral, I don't get involved with whichever sides there might be."

"I know Anthony, just had to make sure."

Anthony nodded and gave him the package that contained Lucius order.

"Do me a favor, yes?"

Lucius lifted a brow, telling him to continue.

"Next time you come here, don't bring him."

The request was made half-jokingly, though real fear was present in his eyes and Lucius didn't blame him, if he hadn't been in the presence of the Dark Lord he would probably feel the same.

Nodding, Lucius pocketed the package and left the store. He passed the body of the wizard not even
looking at it and went to meet the boys that were looking at the bookstore's showcase with some interest.

"Didn't I tell you to stay near the door boys?" he asked, as if he hadn't seen the raven-haired child torture and kill a man mere minutes before.

"I'm sorry Mr. Malfoy, but I saw the bookshop and was curious." Harry answered and his innocent smile was back, together with that child-like air and Lucius almost forgot what the boy was capable of; almost.

Laughing he shook his head; and he had wondered how Harry Potter had been sorted into Slytherin.

"Come boys, let's go home." he told them, motioning for them to hold onto his cane, whispering a word he activated his portkey. The last thing he saw before the portkey took them away was eyes the color of death and he almost laughed; apparently he was also wrong in that aspect, he couldn't imagine a color that matched the child better than the color of the 'Avada Kedavra' curse.

Harry stumbled a bit when he landed, he knew what portkeys were, he had just never used one before, and he found the transportation method a bit disconcerting. Draco prevented him from falling by holding his arm and with a smile on his face he said.

"Welcome to Malfoy Manor."

Harry looked around, they were in, what he assumed to be, the entrance hall. Harry had to contain a smile, the place practically screamed 'we have money'.

The floor looked like black marble, or something like it, Harry was no expert in those things. The walls were a pearly white with several paintings hanging on them, giving the room some color. To his left was a fireplace with two big windows that occupied almost the entire wall on either side, showing part of the beautiful grounds around the manor.

"Yes Harry, welcome." the voice of Lucius Malfoy interrupted his observations, "I hope you make yourself at home. Until, approximately, mid-August it will only be the three of us; Narcissa, my wife, is in France attending several charity functions. She is sorry for not being here to welcome you, however it was impossible to alter the dates of the events and she couldn't miss it."

"It's alright Mr. Malfoy. I'm sure I will have the opportunity to meet Mrs. Malfoy at a later date."

"Hmm, then I shall be leaving you boys; I still have some work to do. If you need anything at all, find an elf to go find me Draco. I'll see both of you at lunch."

"It was much less formal than what I was expecting." Harry remarked, after Lucius had left them.

Draco laughed and started pulling him in the direction of the stairs that were on their right.

"At home my dad is much more relaxed than what he usually shows in public. You know how it is; generally Slytherins never stop using their masks unless they feel safe. Come, I'm going to show you your room."

In Harry's opinion it wasn't only the Slytherins that used masks, they were just more honest about it.

Harry took the opportunity to study the blonde while he was being dragged to his room. He was quite happy with Draco's reaction to what had happened. Harry admitted that he had lost control but he couldn't help it; as soon as Harry knew what the man wanted to do to him, he was dead. He could
have killed him and made it look like an accident. Nobody would have blamed him, especially if he
told them what the man had said, they would have just assumed that it was accidental magic because
he was afraid. However the idiot had to dig himself in deeper and he lost it for a bit. For a few
moments after he had killed the man he thought that maybe it had been too much for Draco, but
before he could say anything the blond had whispered "He deserved it, what he said... What he
wanted to do... He deserved it."

Harry had just nodded and they stayed silent, looking at the showcase. Harry could tell that Draco
was thinking about something, but he wouldn't force him to talk about it; when Draco wanted to he
would come to him he would.

"You will be sleeping here. My room is the first one on the left."

Draco's voice brought him back to reality and he noticed that he was in front of a door with Draco
looking at him expectantly. He supposed that Draco wanted him to open the door, so he turned the
doorknob and entered what would be his room for the rest of summer break.

Harry had to control himself to not show the surprise he felt. The room was huge, as far as Harry
could tell his old room at the orphanage could fit five times in it. He wasn't really sure what to do
with that much space, if he was being honest. The wall that faced the door was made completely out
of windows, showing the vast grounds surrounding the manor. The room itself was decorated in
shades of green and black. The double bed had what must have been dozens of pillows on it, starting
at the foot of the bed with a really light green and as the pillows got closer to the headboard they
would darken a few shades, it created a rather beautiful effect.

"I saw that you liked green, so I asked the house-elves to decorate your room in that color, do you
like it?"

Harry could see that Draco was a little nervous, so he smiled and sincerely answered.

"It's perfect Draco."

Two weeks had passed since Harry had accepted the invitation Draco had made to stay with him,
and he was quite happy he had accepted.

The Malfoy's library was as good as Draco said, if it were up to Harry he would have spent the
whole summer in the library reading, however Draco would drag him out of his new found paradise,
saying that the summer break was made for students to relax and that he should at least get a little of
fresh air.

Harry ended up always giving in to the blonde, though rather reluctantly.

After Lucius found them in a rather funny situation, where Draco was trying to drag Harry away by
pulling on his arm and Harry was completely ignoring the blonde, reading the book that he was
holding in his other hand, he offered to let Harry take as many books as he wanted to Hogwarts, he
would gladly let Harry borrow them. After that offer, Harry left the library with much less reluctance.

Speaking of Lucius, Harry almost never saw the older Malfoy. However, every time they were in
each others' presence he could almost feel Malfoy's eyes on him, as if he was studying all of Harry's
movements, all of his actions. However, he didn't appear to be doing it with malicious intent, the few
times he caught the elder Malfoy looking he could only see curiosity in his expression, which didn't
mean he didn't have malicious intentions, it just meant that he couldn't find them. And that was the
reason why he always had his child-like mask on when Malfoy Senior was present. Harry was so
used to that mask that it had become something of a defense mechanism.

Draco, naturally, noticed the drastic change every time his father was present, though he just shook his head the first few times and didn't mention it. He knew perfectly well that that was who Harry was and that it didn't matter how many times he said that his father was trustworthy, Harry wouldn't lose his mask. He considered it a major victory that Harry was himself in his presence, and for the moment he would be content with that.

The morning of the 31st of July, Harry woke up like all the previous mornings. He knew it was his birthday, but it wasn't something that he paid much attention to. He had never celebrated his birthday, nor had he had anyone to celebrate it with, and considering he hadn't told anyone when his birthday was he wasn't expecting it to be any different this year, so when he entered the dining room he was quite surprised by what he saw.

Seated at the table were Draco and his father, but what surprised him was that Theo, Blaise, and Marcus were there as well.

The first to see him was Theo, and a huge smile appeared on his face.

"Happy birthday, Harry." he said as soon as his eyes landed on Harry, making the others look in his direction and make the same exclamation.

Harry was quite surprised; he didn't remember anyone ever wishing him a happy birthday. He sat at the table, and though he still felt a little stunned, he said.

"Thank you," and it was one of the few times that he was really thankful, "Aren't you supposed to be out of the country?" he asked looking at Theo and Blaise, trying to get back to what he considered safe ground. Though he felt rather comfortable with almost everyone in the room, showing certain feelings still made him uncomfortable.

Seeing the looks exchanged between the other four, he knew that they knew what he was doing, though they didn't protest the change of topic.

"And we are, we just came to spend the day. I will be back on the 15th and Blaise said that he would return on the 25th, right?"

Blaise nodded, serving himself some pancakes and orange juice.

"My grandfather's birthday is on the 23rd, so we generally stay until his birthday when we spend a longer vacation in Italy."

Harry nodded and started on his breakfast, he was happier than he thought he would be having them come to celebrate his birthday. He was even thinking of them as friends and, as strange as it seemed, it wasn't a thought that bothered him as much as he thought it would.

"So what are today's plans?" he asked, looking at his friends, trying to ignore Malfoy's eyes that were observing his every move.

"Well, first we have breakfast. Then we can go flying and have some fun till lunch, we'll have lunch followed by presents. Theo and Blaise will leave a bit after that, they can't stay longer unfortunately. But Marcus will stay and if you behave we could spend a relaxing afternoon in your favorite room in the manor."

Draco informed him with a mischievous smile, making the others laugh, they knew all about the constant war Draco had to wage to get Harry out of the Library; Draco swore that if Harry could, he
would eat and sleep in there too.

"Well, I'll leave you boys to it. I'll see you all at lunch." Mr. Malfoy said, inclining his head in his guest's direction.

As soon as Malfoy left the dining room, Harry visibly relaxed and let his masks fall away, something that his whole Court noticed but didn't comment on.

"Shall we go outside?" Draco asked, looking at Harry.

Harry smiled and nodded, following Draco through the manor. Harry didn't feel like flying, so they sat on the grass and enjoyed the warm weather.

"You will be leaving after this year." Harry remarked, breaking the comfortable silence, looking at Marcus.

"The Court will be losing a member." Blaise said, looking at Harry and Harry could see a bit of uncertainty in his eyes. Not that he doubted Harry, however when Marcus finished school the Court in Hogwarts would be made out of four third year students, and some idiot could get dangerous ideas.

"The Court will not lose any members," Marcus almost snarled, "Even if I leave Hogwarts I will still be a part of the Court."

"I know, Marcus," Harry said in a smooth tone and with a small smile on his face, calming Marcus almost immediately. The Slytherin Court wasn't a simple school group, the Court represented so much more. Even after graduating, the Court would continue to influence it's members, and those in any way related to the Court or the members. The members would always do everything in their power to enable their 'King' to have the best opportunities to realize his goals. Leaving or betraying the Court, always had severe consequences, and in some cases they were fatal.

"And that wasn't what Blaise meant. What he means is that when you leave Hogwarts the Court at Hogwarts will be made only of third year students and he fears that some idiot will have some ideas that he really shouldn't have, isn't that it Blaise?"

Blaise nodded, looking rather relieved. Though all the members got on really well and considered themselves friends, none of them could deny that Marcus was quick to anger and when that happened he got somewhat curse-happy and preferred to settle matters with his wand. And though they were the best students of their year and were somewhat advanced, Marcus was the best of his year and none of them, beside Harry, could really take him on. Though even Harry doubted that he would be able to win a real duel against Marcus, he may be more powerful, but he was still a first year, soon to be second year. So Harry could understand the relieved expression that Blaise was wearing.

"Hmm, I hadn't thought about that." Theo commented, completely ignoring the explosive situation they had avoided. Out of all of them, Theo was by far the most easy-going, it was rare that something affected him. However behind that calm and relaxed air was a bloodthirsty, sadistic, and intelligent mind that showed itself whenever something truly angered him, "We are, without a doubt, the best students in our year, but that doesn't change the fact that we will only be third years after Marcus leaves us and some older student may do something stupid. Any suggestions?"

Harry had already thought about several things they could do. Even so, he didn't say anything, he wanted to see what solutions they would come up with on their own. Besides, the idea he had was more to solve the future Dark Lord problem, or at least try to solve it, though it could be tweaked to
serve both purposes.

"We could always train, duels and things like that." Draco suggested, and it was possible to see a little twinkle in his eyes, showing them just how much the idea excited him.

"It isn't a bad idea and we will be doing that, but we will not be learning all that much in a year," Harry replied, in reality the idea pleased him a great deal, you never know when it could be useful to know how to duel, "Marcus, I know that it is your last year but do you think you would be able to find some time for training? The only way to learn and get better is to fight against someone stronger."

Just like every time Harry ordered something, or better yet, disguised his order as a friendly request, Marcus lit up like a Christmas tree, making the other members smile. Things may have started out badly between Harry and Marcus, but there was no doubt in any of their minds that Marcus was Harry's man through and through.

"Of course I will!" he exclaimed, smiling widely, "We just need to make some sort of schedule when we arrive at Hogwarts."

"But that doesn't help us with the problem," Theo reminded, before Harry and Marcus got lost in their own little world making training plans.

"I suppose that the easiest way would be to expand the Court." Blaise said, looking at Harry, and Harry smiled. Blaise was the most reserved member of the Court; he was silent more often than not. Blaise had admitted that it was a childhood habit; the men his mother chose to marry weren't always the best, and many of them preferred it if he was practically invisible. In some cases, it was the only way to avoid rather violent encounters with his stepfathers. However, Blaise hadn't let that get him down and Harry respected him for it.

"Marcus knows the older students better," Theo added, "Any suggestion?"

"Depends. What year would you prefer?" Marcus asked Harry, it may look like a fairly democratic process but they all knew that the final decision would always be Harry's.

"Fifth year, I suppose, will be good. They would still have two years when we go into third year, so it should be fourth years that will enter fifth next year. It will be enough time to convince all the idiots that going against the Court is suicide. We shouldn't worry too much with the younger years, we will have enough time with them to make them stand with us if something does happen."

"In that case, I would consider Pucey and/or Montague. Montague has a bit higher marks though Pucey respects you a bit more. Not that Montague doesn't respect you, he just has a little more difficulty in accepting your beliefs about blood. He doesn't go around spouting about blood purity, he just doesn't respect muggleborns all that much."

"And would they get on well with the rest of the group?" Draco inquired, looking around himself a bit worried. They had only been together for one year but they got along really well, including a new member could cause trouble.

"I believe so, yes. The both of them have a lot of potential."

"Very well, after we get back to Hogwarts we will keep an eye on them, we'll decide after Yule break." Harry decided and they nodded.

"Ah, I almost forgot," Theo exclaimed suddenly, looking at Harry, "How is your plan to deal with the future Dark Lord business coming along?"
Harry smiled and his eyes shone, if the others weren't so used to seeing him like that they would have found it a bit disturbing, they were sure that smiles weren't supposed to look so feral.

"It's going great, I will just need to know when we will be going to Diagon Alley before we actually go, alright?" he said, glancing at Draco. When he nodded, Harry continued, "Though the plan's changed a bit. Tell me, what do you think of not only a Slytherin Court but a Hogwarts Court as well?" The reactions he got were exactly what he was expecting, and a few moments later his malicious smile joined theirs.

That night, when Harry was preparing himself to go to bed and was pondering if he should read a bit of one of the books that he had gotten that afternoon, it really didn't surprise him that they all had gotten him books, Blaise had said that it was to indulge his inner Ravenclaw, he heard someone knock on his door. Wondering who it might be, Harry told them to come in.

The door opened a little bit and Draco's head poked inside.

"Harry, can we talk?"

Seeing that Draco appeared to be a little nervous, Harry nodded and pointed at his bed, indicating for Draco to sit; he was curious to see what Draco wanted to talk to him about. He had noticed that Draco had wanted to speak to him the last few days, but he had decided to wait until the blonde came to him. It seemed that Draco had finally found the courage to broach the subject, whatever it was.

Draco sat on the bed, and that nervous air around him decreased a little.

"You know that morning in Knockturn Alley?" Draco started, looking attentively at his hands in his lap, "I don't feel even a little bit of remorse, he was a person and just like that he was dead and I don't feel bad about it. I... I'm even happy that he's dead. I liked seeing him cry, watching him beg; I thought it was fun. Does that make me evil?"

Draco finally looked up then, and he looked so much like the child he was that it surprised Harry for a few moments. Then Harry remembered that he was only twelve, no matter how mature he may act, just like himself. Sometimes it was so easy to forget that they were, except for Marcus, only children. Bloodthirsty and sadistic children, but children nonetheless, and some of them were more innocent and naive than what they showed. 'Not for long though,' thought Harry, looking at Draco. They were, after all, a part of his Court. That was also the reason why he opted to be honest instead of offering false platitudes.

"Yes," he answered, looking Draco in the eyes, "Most living beings would consider you evil. They would shun you, despise you, fear you even. However, I don't see why that matters to you. You are Draco Malfoy, you are a part of my Court and as long as you are a part of my Court we will accept you just the way you are, sadistic tendencies and all."

And that was the complete truth; as long as Draco was one of them, they would always accept him.

Draco must have seen the sincerity in his eyes, because the nervous air he'd had around him vanished completely and he smiled.

"Thank you, Harry. I think it's better if I let you sleep now, it was a long day," Draco said, getting up from the bed and walking to the door, "Good night."

"Good night, Draco." Harry replied before the door closed completely.

A small chuckle was heard in the room, and if anyone had heard it they would have felt a shiver go
down their spine. 'Next time, maybe I should let Draco play a bit,' Harry thought, getting comfortable and turning off the lights, 'I would love to see what he's capable of.'

A few days after his birthday the Hogwarts letters arrived and Draco, remembering what Harry had told him, asked his father when they would be going to Diagon Alley to get their school supplies. The date was arranged for the following week because the elder Malfoy had some business in Gringotts, so they could take care of everything the same day. As soon as Harry had a date he set his plan in motion.

"You know what to do, Draco?" Harry asked as soon as Mr. Malfoy left them in Flourish and Blotts and went to take care of his business in Gringotts, with instructions that if they finished before he came back, to wait for him at the Leaky Cauldron.

"Buy both of our school books, if my father comes back before I finish and you aren't here, I tell him that you weren't feeling well and that I told you to wait in the Leaky Cauldron. If when we arrive at the Leaky Cauldron you aren't there, I will tell my father that I am going to see if you are in the loo and then I will go call you in the private room at the back that you reserved. If I finish before either of you come back, I'll wait for you in the Leaky Cauldron."

Harry nodded, Draco remembered everything. The instructions weren't difficult to follow, even so they lost nothing in making sure that he remembered and if he had just a little bit of luck they wouldn't even need to use any of it.

Leaving Draco, he went to the Leaky Cauldron. As it was after lunch, the place wasn't as full as it usually was, something that pleased Harry a great deal.

"Good afternoon, Tom," greeted Harry when he approached the counter. He had a friendly smile on his face, though that innocent air that he usually had was missing, "I reserved the back room for a meeting, can you tell me if the other person has arrived?"

Tom looked at him, slightly surprised. Harry didn't know if it was because of his behavior or because a child had reserved a room for a meeting, Harry suspected it was the latter, though Tom didn't react other than showing that bit of surprise and replied.

"Yes, approximately ten minutes ago."

"Very well, thank you."

When Harry turned to go to the private room at the back of the pub, a little smile appeared on his lips, apparently his guest was either eager or anxious, showing up almost twenty minutes before the appointed time.

When he went into the room, the person was already seated at the table and looked in the door's direction, seeing that it was a child she stood up rather abruptly.

"Is this some kind of joke?" she almost yelled, looking at him furiously, "If I knew that it was some brat that had scheduled the meeting, I wouldn't have even come. What could a little brat possibly have to offer me."

Harry narrowed his eyes at her, and in a calm voice, ordered.

"Sit down, Ms. Skeeter."

Harry was sure that the fact that he had imbued his voice with magic had contributed greatly to his
order being followed. It was pathetic how weak her will was, if it had been someone with a stronger will, then his magic would not have been able to make them obey so quickly or so thoroughly. Seeing her eyes go wide with shock showed him that she at least knew that she hadn't done that voluntarily; at least she had some intelligence.

Harry walked calmly to the table and sat on the available chair in front of Skeeter. They stayed silent for a few moments until he addressed her.

"Now that you've had a little time to calm down, do you think we could start the meeting like two relatively mature people?"

Seeing Skeeter nod a little fearfully, he continued.

"I am Harry James Potter," Skeeter's eyes almost fell out of her head in her shock, "And like I told you in the letter I sent you, I have a proposition for you, are you interested in hearing it?"

Skeeter nodded again, she seemed to have momentarily lost her ability to speak, not that he was complaining, the woman's voice got on his nerves.

"Very well, as you must know I have never given an interview. What I am offering is an opportunity to interview me, and every time there is a need for me to talk to the press I would talk to you exclusively," Harry saw the greed appear in her eyes behind those horrible glasses and he had to contain a sneer, "However, all the interviews, all the articles about me, or stories that I send your way, will be done in the light that I want it. I don't want even a dot somewhere that displeases me, do you understand?"

Harry saw Skeeter starting to get angry, he had read many of her pieces and he was certain that she liked to embellish her stories with supposed facts that were everything but facts, and what he was suggesting would practically put a leash on her, it didn't really surprise him that she didn't like it.

"And if I don't agree? What do you think you can do, boy?" she inquired in an arrogant tone. Apparently she had regained her ability to talk, it was a shame really, things were going rather well before that.

Harry let his magic flow, he didn't want it to do anything, he just wanted it to flow freely. Going by the sharp intake of breath from Skeeter, he knew that she could feel it, could feel his magic flood the room they were in, when fear appeared in her expression, Harry continued.

"I don't think that you really understand the position you are in. I do not need you. There are dozens of journalists that would kill to have the opportunity that I am so generously giving you. It is a unique opportunity for you and I am not asking for much in exchange, surely you can see that? Well, do we have a deal, Rita?" Harry asked, holding his hand out, waiting for her to shake it. Then, just to make his point a bit more clear, he focused his magic around her, making it feel far more oppressive.

Slowly, as if she was afraid of moving too fast, Skeeter lifted her hand and shook his.

"We have a deal." she had lost that arrogant tone from before and though she was trying to control it, Harry noticed that her voice wavered a little.

The smile that appeared on Harry's face left Skeeter with the feeling that she had just made a deal with the Devil.

Almost an hour later they had everything settled and he was ready to leave. When he reached the door, he turned around.
"Do not disappoint me Rita, you will not like the consequences if you do."

He could not stop the dark chuckle that escaped him when he saw Skeeter pale. Well that had gone far better than what he was expecting.

He had no difficulty in finding Draco, the blonde was sitting at a table in the back of the pub that had a clear view of the door, Harry knew that he was keeping a look-out on the entrance in case his father arrived before Harry.

"Everything taken care of?" he asked as soon as Harry sat down.

Harry nodded, "Have you been here long?"

Draco shook his head, "About ten minutes, now we just need to wait for my father and do the rest of the shopping. I'm sure that he sent us to the bookshop first because he knew that it would take him a bit longer at Gringotts and he was sure that you would spend an eternity looking at the books."

Draco teased him, they had both thought the same thing, that was why he told Draco to buy some extra books for him, there was no need for the older Malfoy to suspect anything. He would know that something happened the next day, but that was rather unavoidable, "So..." Draco started, trying to appear nonchalant, "Will you tell me who you were meeting?"

Harry laughed when Draco looked at him with puppy dog eyes.

"You'll find out tomorrow Draco."

The pout that followed that answer was extremely entertaining to Harry.

Ten years, ten years where he was little more than a spirit. However he had prevailed and now he'd done it, he had his body back. And when he said his body, that is exactly what he meant, his body, the body of Tom Marvolo Riddle and not that thing he'd had the night he attacked the Potters. It was incredible that people really believed that he wanted to look like that, it was plain ridiculous. It was just as ridiculous as Dumbledore's belief that he hated his name. Sure, when he was younger he had wanted nothing to do with anything related to his father so he created that anagram, but he grew out of such childish behavior. He grew older, wiser, and he realized that no matter what he did he would always be Tom Riddle. Sure he still used the name Voldemort, but it wasn't some misguided attempt to distance himself from his 'muggle' name as Dumbledore thought. The simple fact was, The Dark Lord Tom didn't sound all that intimidating, the same could be said about The Dark Lord Riddle.

It was the same with that snake-like body he had. Dumbledore firmly believed that it was the result of rituals he'd preformed to distance himself from being human, that he'd wanted to look that way. The only true thing about that thought was that it was because of a ritual.

A ritual he was doing reacted badly to the fact that he was an animagus, it was as simple as that. When he'd first done the ritual he didn't notice any changes, but he later learned that when someone who was an animagus did the ritual, certain aspects of their animal form would start to show in their human form over time. Unfortunately, he'd found out that the effects were irreversible, so he was stuck looking like a human-snake hybrid. At first he'd tried to create a ritual or a potion that would give him his old body back, but then the war had started and he simply hadn't had the time. So he was resigned to looking like that.

Now, though, he was himself again, he had his old body back. Well, that wasn't completely true. His eyes were still red, though he had to admit that he kind of liked the eyes, they were unique.

Looking at his reflection again, Tom speculated that he appeared to be around 25 years old, maybe a
little older, it was hard to define his exact age. Not that it mattered much to him, what mattered was that he had his body back. He may be repeating himself, but he was rather excited and there was no one there to see him.

He was still surprised by how easy it had been to get passed the defenses that protected the stone, even a first year student would have been able to get through them. Maybe not every first year student, but he was sure that a particular first year with 'Avada Kedavra' green eyes would've been able to.

In the privacy of his mind he admitted that the last protection, Dumbledore's Mirror of Erised, was quite ingenious and he probably wouldn't have been able to get the stone if he was somebody else. But he was rather brilliant and when you know how to break enchantments you don't need to get passed them. He'd needed a little more time to break them than what he'd expected, but he'd had to do it carefully or he would've risked losing the stone.

Preparing the necessary ritual didn't take all that long and mere weeks after having stolen the stone he had his body back. Unfortunately, his body was rather weak and he was almost completely magically exhausted, so he'd needed a little time to recover. However, two weeks ago he'd felt that his magic was strong enough to get in contact with the Dark Marks of his followers. Not to call them to him but to remind them who their Lord was, to warn them that he was back.

But he would not meet them until he had his full power back and before he met with all his Death Eaters that were free, he would contact some of his Inner Circle and make some plans. Plans, he had a great number of them and they all more or less revolved around the first year Slytherin that'd caught his interest.

While Tom pondered whom of his Inner Circle he should contact, an owl flew into his room carrying the Daily Prophet. Paying the owl Tom put the paper aside to read while he ate his breakfast, but the headline caught his eye. Any intention he had of reading the paper later left his mind when he saw what it said, because there, on the front page, in big bold letters, was the headline; 'Wizarding World Fails it's Savior'.

He sat down on the sofa and started to read:

'Wizarding World Fails it's Savior

by Rita Skeeter

My dear readers, when yesterday I decided to spend some time in Diagon Alley, I couldn't have imagined that I would get the story of the year handed to me on a silver platter.

I was having lunch at the Leaky Cauldron when I saw a boy walk in, you cannot imagine my surprise when I found out that the boy was our very own Boy-Who-Lived. That's right dear readers, the boy was no other than Harry James Potter.

Not wanting to lose what was, without a doubt, a unique opportunity, I approached the young Potter, hoping he would allow me to interview him. Seeing as it is widely known that the young hero had never addressed the public, I was quite excited about the prospect. After introducing myself, the Potter heir agreed to give me an interview.

My fellow witches and wizards, the following moments left me speechless and feeling like I had failed someone who gave everything for us.

Like many of you, I believed that Harry Potter lived with family, someplace away from the
Wizarding World so that he could have a normal childhood. With the first question I asked, that belief was completely shattered. What else do you believe you know about our Savior? I can guarantee that what you believe to be true most probably isn't.

My fellow witches and wizards, I invite you to read the following interview and find out the truth about Harry James Potter.

RS: I have to thank you for giving me this opportunity, Mr. Potter.

HP: There is no need to thank me, and please call me Harry. Mr. Potter makes me feel like I'm at school and got into trouble.

RS: So Harry, how was your life with your family? As far as I know, they are muggles, correct?

HP: I don't know who told you that Ms. Skeeter but the only thing that's true about that statement is that I grew up away from the Wizarding World. However, I wasn't raised by family; I grew up in an orphanage.

RS: (as you can imagine, dear readers, I was quite shocked) In an orphanage?

HP: Yes, a small orphanage for boys. The matron told me that I'd been there since the 5th of November of 81.

RS: You were never adopted? How was your life at the orphanage? Did you make many friends?

HP: A few couples did take me home with them. However, before the adoption process was completed they always brought me back. I had very active accidental magic, though at the time neither the couples nor I knew what it was, so when strange things happened around me they would take me back to the orphanage; they thought I was a problem child, because they didn't know what was happening. At the orphanage things were no better. The accidental magic, as you can imagine, didn't stop, so I was quite isolated from the other children. They didn't want to play with the 'freak', you see.

That was one of the main reasons that I was so happy when I received my Hogwarts letter. It was proof that I wasn't a freak and I thought that I could finally make friends, because in the Wizarding World they would be just like me. But when I started Hogwarts I realized that it was the same as it was at the orphanage, they just considered me a different kind of freak.

RS: (as you can imagine I was rather surprised by these revelations, however what really broke my heart was when our young savior said that things hadn't changed in Hogwarts) What do you mean? How didn't things change?

HP: I was sorted into Slytherin and practically the whole school went into shock. They started saying that I was a Death Eater, that I was a future Dark Lord, that I was evil. They hadn't even spoken one word to me and they were already against me. At least the other children at the orphanage were afraid of my accidental magic, they had reasons to avoid me, because that is what people do when they don't understand something. But at Hogwarts? They had absolutely no facts to base their accusations on. They were just being petty and bigots. Being a bigot isn't only about pureblood supremacy, you know? Shunning someone based on a house they are sorted into when they are eleven is just as prejudiced as the talk about pureblood superiority.

You know I still ask myself how an eleven year old could be a Dark Lord. It is completely ridiculous.

Slytherin house isn't the house for all the evil people, it's the house for the ambitious. As far as I
know, evil and ambitious are not synonyms. Do you want to know what my greatest ambition is?

RS: (I could only nod, I was far too astonished to form any words)

HP: My greatest ambition is to be the best wizard that I can to make my parents proud. They gave their lives for me, tell me Ms. Skeeter, wanting to be the best wizard that I can to honor their sacrifice, is that really so bad? Does wanting them to be proud of me make me truly such an evil person?

RS: (my fellow witches and wizards I have to admit that I needed a few moments to compose myself) No Harry, it doesn't. I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity, for talking to me.

HP: You're welcome. I want to thank you for listening to me instead of judging me immediately like everyone else seems to do.

And so ended my interview with our Savior. And let me tell you, we failed him. Instead of making sure that he had a family that loved him, we let him be raised surrounded by muggles who ostracized him because he was different, that called him a freak because he was different. We let him grow up not knowing about magic, about his heritage, about his birthright. Tell me, dear readers, do you think that is what a child deserves? And not just any child, a child that lost everything so that we could be free from those dark times, so that we could have peace?

And if that wasn't enough, our children treat him the same way, and why? Because he is a Slytherin.

I have to admit, I haven't felt so ashamed in a long time. What type of people are we if we raise our children to believe that an eleven year old child is evil just because of the house they are sorted into?

I tell you again, we failed him, and I can only hope that I will have the chance to atone for it.

The article ended there and Tom put the newspaper aside.

Harry was always surprising him; it hadn't even crossed his mind that Harry would do something like this. He would have liked to know what Harry did to Skeeter for her to write the article like that.

Tom didn't believe even for one second that she had done it because she wanted to. As soon as she knew that Harry was a Slytherin she would have joined those that called him a future Dark Lord. She would have written a story calling for his head, and telling all those who wanted to read it that the reason why he had gone to kill the Potters was because he didn't want the competition, or something just as foolish.

However, that was beside the point, the article was a brilliant move. Tom didn't think that it would change the opinion of those that truly believed that Harry was the next Dark Lord. However, all the others that didn't want to be shunned in their own houses would feel a lot more comfortable in approaching him, and Tom was almost completely sure that that was Harry's objective.

Harry really wasn't anything like he was expecting. Harry was so much like him but at the same time so different.

He was astonished when he saw that Harry had established a Court, but on the other hand the fact that Harry had done it didn't really surprise him. He expected Harry to be extraordinary, so when Harry did extraordinary things it didn't surprise him. However, it made those things no less incredible.

Harry and he were probably the most brilliant students to have ever gone to Hogwarts, and Tom was
sure that in a few years Harry would be one of the most powerful and skilled wizards alive, it could be no other way.

Harry and Tom, Tom and Harry. He laughed, it was ironic that two so extraordinary wizards such as them had such ordinary names. Apparently, their similarities even extended to such trivial things.

One thing was clear though, if Harry did become a Dark Lord he had to find another name, after all the Dark Lord Harry was as terrifying as the Dark Lord Tom.
Chapter Notes

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Beta: noirekitsune

Chapter 9 – Blood and Magic

Albus was feeling old, he couldn't remember the last time he'd felt like this. How had things gone so wrong? He was sure that the Stone was safe but now it was gone and it was highly likely that Voldemort had it. Only Merlin knew what Voldemort would be able to do with an artifact that powerful.

The past year hadn't gone as he had hoped. Beginning with Harry and ending with the theft of the Stone, he hadn't seen any of it coming.

He knew that Voldemort wanted the Stone, he knew that Voldemort was in the castle, but throughout the year there was no attempt to steal the Stone. Albus even thought that Voldemort wanted to give them a false sense of security, but when the Christmas break had come and gone and there was still nothing, Albus started to think that maybe he was wrong.

And it wasn't only the fact that Voldemort hadn't tried anything against the Stone, it was also the fact that he hadn't tried anything against Harry that had left him astounded.

Not that he wanted Harry harmed but it was something for which he had prepared, however, nothing had happened. He had thought that it would have been impossible for Voldemort to resist attacking Harry but as far as he knew not even a hair on Harry's head had been touched. Of course, he was happy that nothing had happened to Harry but it was still something that he wasn't expecting.

Harry, Harry was another factor that had surprised him, he was expecting Harry to be sorted into Slytherin, what he wasn't expecting was what Harry had done in Slytherin.

Considering that many of the Death Eaters' children were in Slytherin and many students there believed in pureblood ideals, he was expecting that Harry would be quite isolated there. He had thought that Harry would keep his head down, trying not to be noticed. He had been partly right, at the beginning Harry was isolated, only talking with young Theodore Nott, and hadn't that in itself been surprising? Of all the students, Nott wasn't the one that Albus had thought would befriend Harry, considering the loyalties of his father and grandfather. However, they had become quite close and later Marcus Jugson, which Severus was certain Harry had sent to the Infirmary with broken bones, joined the little group.

That was when he started to fear the paths that Harry could take.

Marcus Jugson was a self-declared pureblood supremacist and Albus was certain that Harry despised muggles, who could say that he didn't feel the same for muggleborns?
Albus’ worries grew after the Christmas break. He may not have been a Slytherin but he knew what a Court was when he saw one. And in the middle, clearly showing his position, was Harry.

Albus supposed that he should have expected something like that, and a part of him told himself that he hadn’t been the least bit surprised, that he was expecting it, but the purest truth was that Harry establishing a Court hadn’t even crossed his mind.

Albus’ worries grew drastically, he was expecting students from other houses to be attacked, he was expecting insults, he was expecting the Slytherins, especially the members of the Court, to walk around Hogwarts as if they owned the place, he was expecting a lot of things. So saying that he was dumbfounded when nothing happened was an understatement.

Contrary to what he was expecting, the Slytherins appeared to be calmer; they didn’t start any fights, they didn’t make fun of or insult other students, they didn’t cause any trouble at all. They looked like exemplary students. And it wasn’t only their behavior that had changed, most of the Slytherins had higher grades, they seemed to be doing their best to get the highest grades they could.

Albus had no idea what was going on but he was sure that Harry was the one responsible, now he just needed to know what Harry’s objective was. If it were another situation, he would have found it ridiculous to think that a child had plans, objectives. However, from what he had seen from Harry, he thought that the right question to ask was what those objectives were, not if he had any.

Shaking his head slightly, he looked at the windows just in time to see an owl with the Daily Prophet in its claws flying through. It was later than he’d thought if the newspaper was being delivered, he hadn’t noticed that he’d spent so much time pondering the happenings of the last school year. The professors that were in the castle were more than likely almost finished with their breakfast, it would be better if had his meal in his office, he could always call a house-elf to deliver it.

Any thought that he had about calling an elf disappeared from his mind when he saw the Daily Prophet’s head-line.

He read the interview in an instant and when he was done he could only look at the newspaper, stunned. He guessed that he should have seen it coming but just as with the Court he hadn’t even thought about the possibility, after everything he knew he should have but he hadn’t. It was like playing chess with an opponent that followed a different set of rules; you couldn’t predict his next move because you were playing two different games, even if the name of the game was the same.

His attention was taken from the newspaper when he received a warning from the wards that he had around the entrance to his office, telling him that someone was on their way. Albus would bet all his lemon drops that it was Severus.

A few seconds later, he heard a knock on the door and before he had the chance to say ‘enter’ the door was opened and Severus practically stormed in, a copy of the Daily prophet in his hands.

He didn't need to be a Seer to know what Severus wanted to talk about.

"I suppose you read the Prophet?"

The only answer Albus got was a glare while Severus sat on the chair in front of him.

"I knew the brat was just like his father. He only wants fame and attention."

Albus lifted an eyebrow; of all the things he had thought about the interview, that hadn't been one of them.
"Do you really believe that?" he asked his Potion Master, paying close attention to him. Severus seemed to age in front of his eyes.

"Of course not, the brat is completely different from Potter, but believing that is better than the alternative."

"And what is the alternative?"

"That he is using the press to further his objectives, though I have no idea what those objectives are. He lost no time in using his position as the Boy-Who-Lived for his own gain." Severus stated with a sneer, just because he didn't think he was like his father didn't mean that he liked the brat.

"He never asked for that position, we were the ones that gave it to him. We were the ones that created the 'Boy-Who-Lived'. The world wanted a hero, so it created one. He is a Slytherin, does it really surprise you that he took advantage of the situation?"

Severus didn't answer, and Albus knew that he wouldn't. They were both aware that they should have thought of the possibility of Harry using his fame, it shouldn't have been that big of a surprise.

"What are you going to do about the article?" Severus inquired.

"Do? What do you mean do?"

"Everyone in the Wizarding World is going to read that the Boy-Who-Lived lives in an orphanage, I'm certain that more than one family will want to adopt him. Maybe it's best if we took him to the Dursleys."

"There is nothing I can do, aside from asking a few families that are trustworthy to try and adopt him. I'm not very worried at the moment, you know that those things take time. Besides, Harry is already twelve, at that age they ask the child if he wants to be adopted by the family; I don't think that Harry will let just anyone adopt him. Making Harry go to the Dursleys would be one of the biggest mistakes I could make. The whole reason for him to have been sent to the Dursleys in the first place was because of the protection Lily's blood gave him. However, that protection is long gone. In any case, you know as well as I that Harry despises muggles, I don't even want to think about what he would do to the Dursleys if they angered him."

"He would kill them." Severus told him with certainty; he didn't doubt even for a second the truth of his words.

"Severus..."

"Don't you 'Severus' me. You know as well as I do what he did in that orphanage. What guarantee do you have that he won't do the same here? How do you know that he hasn't already done it? I knew we should never have brought the brat here. He should have died that Halloween, at least then we wouldn't have to deal with him!"

Severus almost shouted, surprising Albus. No matter how much Severus hated James and everything Potter, no matter how apprehensive he was towards Harry, he never thought that he would wish Harry dead. And Severus wanted that, hadn't said it just to vent, it was truly what he felt. He couldn't understand how someone could wish a one-year-old child had died. Disappointment filled his being; he had hoped that Severus would have been able to get over his bitterness, apparently that hope had been in vain.

"Is that so? Do you want to take care of it now then? Do you want me to hold him down while you fire an 'Avada Kedavra' at him?" though his tone was light, his eyes had lost their usual twinkle and
were as cold as ice.

"Don't look at me like that!" Severus snarled, "You know he tortured those children and that boy they said killed himself! I know it was him who killed him. He should at the very least be in Azkaban!"

Albus knew that what he was going to say next was a low blow, but Harry was his student and as long as he was he would do his best to protect him.

"What makes you so different from Harry?"

Severus looked at him through narrowed eyes.

"What do you mean?"

"You tortured and killed in the name of the Dark Lord Voldemort and for his cause. You have a second chance, why doesn't Harry, a child, deserve one?"

Albus saw Severus pale and something like betrayal flashed in his eyes. He contained a sigh, he knew it was a low blow, he knew that Severus regretted everything he had done in the service of the Dark Lord, he knew that he spent many nights awake haunted by those memories, but Albus didn't regret what he'd said. Harry was his student and he wouldn't allow any of his students to be threatened. Besides, Harry was their only hope against Voldemort.

"That may be true," Severus answered, badly concealing his anger, "Though I didn't start torturing and killing before I was even old enough to come to Hogwarts. I didn't establish a Court before I even finished my first year. I didn't surround myself with the best students in and out of my year. I didn't give an interview to influence the public's opinion of me. I don't behave like a rising Dark Lord." by the time Severus reached the last sentence he was standing and had his robe's sleeve pulled up, showing the Dark Mark on his arm. It was pitch black and even Albus, who was sitting on the other side of the desk, could feel the magic of it. "Considering everything, what makes you believe that he won't have one of these, what makes you believe Potter won't join him? He is back, Albus, you know he is. We can't fight two Dark Lords."

Albus sighed, he had asked himself the same question and the only consolation he had when he couldn't find an answer, was that Voldemort would never share power, much less with Harry Potter; the boy who caused his downfall.

"Do you really believe that Voldemort would ever accept the Boy-Who-Lived in his ranks?" he asked, certain that he was right, "Also there is always the prophecy..."

"The prophecy?" Severus asked looking at him incredulously, "Where, in that damned prophecy, does it say that the one that has the power to take out the Dark Lord is Light? Where, in that damned prophecy, does it say that he is going to kill him to save us? As far as we know, Potter could do it to take his place! And you do nothing while he creates his support base, while he grows and gets more powerful, gains more knowledge. You should act! Act now when it is still possible to control him, even if you have to break him and make him the perfect little weapon!"

By the end of it he was almost shouting. He was so beside himself, that he didn't even notice that the office had gotten colder. Only when several things in the office started to shake, did both men notice how much of Albus' magic was loose and Albus quickly controlled himself. Severus paled a bit, for a moment he had forgotten that Albus Dumbledore was the only one who could stand on equal ground with the Dark Lord.
"You are talking about a human being Severus," Albus ended up saying, when he had his magic under control, "A child. A child that I will protect to the best of my abilities, just as I try to do with all my students!"

After a few seconds, Severus shook his head.

"That... child, is what I consider pure evil. I only hope that when you finally see it, it won't be too late."

Severus left the office, not waiting for Albus' reply, leaving the Headmaster feeling older than he was.

Albus shook his head, Severus couldn't understand how difficult the whole situation was for him. He was neither blind nor stupid. He knew perfectly well what Harry was capable of, but that didn't change the fact that he was a child. A child like his little Ariana, a child like little Tom Riddle. He had failed them, but by Merlin he was going to do everything in his power to not fail the child that Harry was more than he already had.

The Malfoy's and Harry were having breakfast when a house-elf popped in and gave Lucius the newspaper. He didn't miss the way Harry's eyes were immediately drawn to the paper, or the malicious little smile that appeared on his lips. His son noticed where Harry was looking, and his eyes filled with realization.

Curious about both boys' behavior, Lucius opened the newspaper and had to control himself not to show his reaction to the front page.

He read the article in record time and when he finished he couldn't help but look at Harry and when he saw that satisfied smile he knew that it hadn't been a coincidence, he knew that Rita Skeeter didn't just bump into Harry. He had planned it and he would bet that there wasn't a single word in that article that Harry didn't want there, because he knew what type of articles Rita wrote and she would never have written that particular article in that angle. He would have liked to know what Harry had done to make her write it that way.

Lucius was sure that interview served a purpose, Harry hadn't just given an interview because he felt like it, he just didn't know what Harry wanted to achieve with it.

He had no problem admitting that Harry fascinated him; the child behaved like a Dark Lord.

Many people would say that he behaved like a Slytherin, that it was impossible for a child to act like a Dark Lord, but Lucius couldn't agree. Yes, Harry was a perfect Slytherin but from what he'd seen, especially when his friends had come over for his birthday, it was the behavior of a Dark Lord. First he had established his base, then he'd spread his beliefs, and finally he achieved a position of power, those were the first three steps a Dark Lord had to take, it was incredible that Harry had already done it at twelve. Granted, it was a rather small power base, only a few students, but that didn't matter, he was sure that Harry could take it further.

People could consider it the fundamentals for a politician, or for anyone who aspired to hold a position of influence, and normally Lucius would have agreed but in this case he couldn't, not after seeing the expressions from what he supposed was Harry's Court. Those weren't expressions of greed or temporary interest that would disappear as soon as a better opportunity appeared. No, the expressions he had seen were the same as the ones he had seen on many Death Eaters from the Inner Circle, they may not have been as intense but they were there and that fascinated him as much as it terrified him.
It fascinated him, because he truly believed that he was witnessing the rise of a Dark Lord.

And it terrified him, because he believed his son had already chosen a side and he didn't think it was the same one he was on.

It was something he had already thought about but only about two weeks ago did it start to frighten him, because two weeks ago his Dark Mark had burned and had become as dark as the day he had received it, and he knew then; his Lord was back.

For several minutes, he hadn't been able to do anything; he had simply looked with incredulity at his mark. After ten years, he had lost hope that his Lord would ever return, even knowing that his Lord had said that he was immortal, those ten years with no news had made him believe that his Lord had truly been destroyed, so he wasn't the least bit prepared when his mark started to pulse with magic.

After getting over his stupor, he had become almost hysterical. His Lord was back! The Dark wasn't lost! His Lord would fight for their ideals and this time they would win.

That euphoric feeling and relief had lasted until lunch time.

When during lunch he saw that damned scar on Harry's forehead, he had frozen for several seconds.

How could he have forgotten that Harry Potter was his Lord's enemy?

Of course he hadn't forgotten who Harry Potter was, but he was so different from what he had imagined that, for a few moments, he had forgotten that his Lord saw Harry Potter as an adversary. For a few moments, he had forgotten that they were enemies.

That was also the moment that he saw his son look at Harry and he knew, just as he knew that following his Lord was the right choice, that Draco had chosen his Lord and it wasn't the same as his.

He admitted to himself that just thinking about it terrified him, he would never force his son to follow in his footsteps. No matter what the Light said, his Lord never marked anyone who didn't truly wish to follow him and Lucius loved his son too much to force him into being something that he didn't want to be.

He'd just never thought that a situation like the one he was in would ever occur, his son and he were on opposite sides and if a war were to break out...

Lucius didn't even want to think about it. If he was being honest, he didn't even know how to imagine the situation. He just couldn't imagine Harry fighting for Dumbledore, or for his ideals, he couldn't see Harry fighting for the Light.

For a fraction of a second, he entertained the idea of Harry joining his Lord, but it was such a ridiculous notion that he had to contain a snort, that child hadn't been born to follow.

Then what would it end up being? A battle between two Dark Lords? Dark against Dark?

Again it was something that scared him as much as it fascinated him, it didn't matter who won, he was sure that it would have been a confrontation that would go down in history.

The news that his Lord was back hadn't only made him realize that he had in his home a potential enemy, it had also made him change several of his plans.

At the beginning of the summer, he had thought about using a certain diary that his Lord had left
with him to ruin the Weasleys. However, now that his Lord was back, he didn't believe that it was a good idea. The best option was for him to wait for his Lord to contact him.

"May I see the paper, dad?"

His son's voice brought him back to the present and he saw Harry looking innocently at him and Draco with a little sparkle in his eyes, filled with anticipation.

Apparently, they were expecting the interview. He would have really liked to know how Harry had planned everything without him noticing.

"Of course." he answered, paying close attention to his son. He wasn't the least bit surprised when he saw a malicious smile appear on his face.

"I don't know if I want to know what you did to her for her to agree to write this."

Draco said, in an impressed voice. Lucius had to admit that he wanted to know the same. Rita never wrote anything good about anyone.

"Draco, if someone hears you they are likely to believe that I go around torturing people left, right, and center," Harry answered with a smile that was only a little sadistic, Lucius wasn't sure if he wanted to know what went on in that mind, "I just showed her how insignificant she was and that there were dozens of journalists that would kill to have the opportunity that I was so generously giving her."

"I wonder if you showed her the same way you showed Marcus that blood doesn't matter, only magic."

Lucius started to pay much more attention to the conversation, he had never heard what Harry's beliefs were, maybe they were similar to his Lords, maybe they didn't need to be enemies. He didn't believe that either of them would submit to the other, but maybe they could share.

Lucius had to contain a snort. The idea seemed completely ridiculous, without his permission an image of his Lord and Harry sitting in an office drinking a cup of tea with a map of the world in front of them, trying to decide which one of them could have what, appeared in his mind. He didn't know what was more absurd; the idea that his Lord would share, or the idea that his Lord would treat Harry as an equal.

Shaking his head, he focused on the conversation between his son and Harry.

"Marcus was different, he annoyed me, he made it so that I had to change my plans. Rita... she was insignificant. As I said, there were dozens that could have taken her place, I chose her because she is one of the most known reporters. However, considering the interview was with me, it wouldn't really matter who wrote it; the end the results would have been the same."

"If that was you annoyed, I don't think I ever want to see you angry."

Lucius noticed his son shiver and saw Harry glance briefly in his direction before focusing on Draco again, that's when he noticed that Harry wasn't using his child-like mask in front of him.

"Are you afraid of me?" Harry's voice was mesmerizing, sweet and cold, innocent and dark, Lucius didn't know how it could be all that at the same time, but it was and his eyes shone with a fire that made them even more captivating than they usually were.

"Yes." Draco answered with no hesitation, surprising Lucius a bit; he was expecting Draco to deny
"Only a fool wouldn't be afraid of you. But my respect for you is greater than my fear, and my loyalty to you surpasses my fear."

Harry looked at Draco for several seconds, he must have been satisfied with what he saw, because he nodded, went back to his breakfast and asked.

"Do you think that the others are going to like it?"

"Marcus is going to love it; it surprises me that we can't hear him cackling from here. I don't think that Theo and Blaise read it yet, they are still out of the country..." suddenly, Draco turned to his father, "Dad, could you duplicate the paper? Two times? I'm going to send it to Blaise and Theo, so they know what's going on."

Lucius nodded, took out his wand and cast the charm to copy the newspaper and Draco almost ran out of the room with the copies, leaving Lucius alone with Harry for the first time.

Lucius looked at him, trying to see if he was uncomfortable being alone with him, but if he was, it was impossible to tell. Harry continued eating his breakfast as if there was nothing amiss.

"Do you have something on your mind, Mr. Malfoy?" Harry asked in that melodic voice of his, Lucius was sure that, in a few years, that voice would be far more effective than Veritaserum.

"Why do you ask?"

He couldn't tell the child that he had hundreds of questions that he wanted to ask him, he couldn't tell him that he spent hours trying to understand him. Knowing what he knew about Harry, he didn't doubt that Harry would be able to use the information against him.

When he looked at Harry again, eyes the color of death froze him in place and he was unable to look away.

"I know that you've been observing me," Harry remarked as if he were talking about the weather, "Tell me, is that something you do with all of Draco's friends, or am I a special case?"

"Why do you believe I would observe you?" he asked with his usual superior tone, trying not to show how surprised he was by the direction the conversation was taking.

"I may not meet all the expectations but that doesn't mean that I am not the Boy-Who-Lived, and you are still a loyal Death Eater."

"I was under the 'Imperius'."

Lucius answered almost automatically, Harry's answer had surprised him, and nowadays very few people had the courage to say that to his face.

A smile appeared on Harry's face and if it weren't for those cold eyes looking at him, Lucius would have considered it a warm, innocent smile.

"Mr. Malfoy," Harry began and Lucius felt a shiver go down his spine, his voice was smooth, if Harry wasn't twelve he would have said that it was seductive even, and charming, he had never seen this side of Harry, "Do you really want me to believe that you are so weak, that you are so pathetic, that you couldn't break the 'Imperius'? Do you really want me to see you as a man that has such a weak will that he lets himself be controlled by others? Is that how you want me to see you? Weak, pathetic, a puppet for those that truly have power... nothing more than a marionette."
Lucius was shaking his head without noticing. Harry seeing him like that was something that he wouldn't be able to stand, appearing weak in front of Harry was far worse than telling him that he was a Death Eater, that he was still loyal to his Lord. He was opening his mouth to confirm that he had always been loyal to his Lord, when he remembered how stupid it would be to do that, and that's when he noticed that Harry's magic was subtly touching his, it wasn't doing anything, it was just there. He shivered and his eyes focused on Harry; his magic was addictive, it was the same as his Lord's, he glared at Harry, trying to look as intimidating as he did to everyone else, he didn't really know what he was expecting but Harry laughing wasn't it.

"This was fun, Mr. Malfoy. I hope we can play again."

Lucius was left staring as Harry left the dining room. When he was alone, he breathed in deeply and shook his head, he was certain that the child would be the death of him.

Harry looked around himself when he went through the barrier in King’s Cross, no matter how much he had liked his time with the Malfoys, he was happy to be going back to Hogwarts.

He didn't miss the fact that he was receiving much more attention than the first time that he had taken the Express, now everyone knew who he was. He supposed that the only reason they weren't crowding him was because of the man at his side, no matter what they said about him, Lucius Malfoy was an intimidating man.

Feeling Malfoy's eyes on him, he looked up at him, not even trying to hide the smirk that appeared on his face. The last few weeks had been fun, at least for him; every time he let his magic loose near the elder Malfoy he would get a glazed look in his eyes, almost as if he was drugged. Harry had no idea that it was possible for his magic to have that effect on someone, especially when he didn't ask it to do anything. It was something he had to experiment with. Though, from what he had seen, only those that were more sensitive to magic felt it when he just let his magic loose.

Mrs. Malfoy and Draco came out of the barrier next, and Draco joined him immediately. Mrs. Malfoy had arrived from France two weeks ago and though she was a rather warm and caring person in the privacy of her home, in public she had a mask as perfect as the one her husband used.

Harry clearly remembered the day he met her. Narcissa Malfoy was the first person to have ever given him a maternal hug, sure it was more than likely that his mother had done it, however it was something he didn't remember.

Though it was something that had left him a bit uncomfortable, he truly believed that Mrs. Malfoy could be someone that he could learn to respect, considering that under that maternal air was a witch that was just as deadly as her infamous sister Bellatrix Lestrange. Of course he hadn't seen Mrs. Malfoy duel or anything like that, but it was the impression he had of her from the little time he had spent with her, only time would tell if he was right.

Saying good-bye to the Malfoys, Harry and Draco boarded the train, both ignoring the looks from the other students. However, Harry noticed a new emotion in some of the students' eyes; shame. He had to contain a smirk, apparently the interview had worked better than he'd expected.

Draco and he went to the last carriage, where they entered the last compartment, just as they had agreed on his birthday, and waited for the others. The first to arrive was Marcus, and as soon as he saw Harry, he smiled.

"Harry," he said, sitting beside him, "How are you?"
A small smile appeared on Harry's face, Marcus was always so energetic.

"I'm well, and you?"

"Me too. I can hardly wait to arrive at Hogwarts."

"Oh? Why?"

"I want to see the reactions that people will have to the article," he answered with a malevolent smile. "That was a brilliant move."

Draco snorted, "I honestly found it strange that we couldn't hear you cackling in Malfoy Manor the morning the article came out."

Harry shook his head and took a book out of his pocket that grew to its normal size automatically, when those two started bickering with each other, few things were able to stop them. Fortunately, they were only teasing, otherwise Harry was certain that there would have been curses flying.

Five minutes before the train was scheduled to leave, Blaise and Theo appeared together.

"I was wondering where you were."

Harry remarked, looking up from his book and stopping Draco's and Marcus' bickering.

"We had a little setback." Theo answered, sitting on the opposite side of Harry. Seeing Harry's look, Blaise elaborated.

"Five older Gryffindors were messing with us."

"And you got away?" Marcus asked a bit incredulous, sure they may be the best students in their year but it was five against two, which in itself was already a disadvantage, not to mention the fact that they were up against older students.

"If it hadn't been for some unexpected help, we wouldn't have," Theo answered, it was clear that he was still stunned about what happened, "You may not believe it, but the Weasley twins stunned them from behind. That distracted the other three and Blaise and I were able to stun two, while one of the twins stunned the last one."

"The Weasley twins?" Harry hadn't thought that it was possible, but the incredulity on Marcus' face grew, "The Demons of Gryffindor? You are talking about those Weasleys? Are you sure?"

"Yes Marcus, those Weasleys." Blaise confirmed, trying not to smile. Apparently, he found Marcus' expression as funny as Harry did.

"And they didn't prank you?"

"As far as we could see, no." Theo told him, still looking a bit stunned, though nothing compared to the look on Marcus' face.

"Apparently, we will have to keep an eye not only on Pucey and Montague, but the Weasleys as well. We never know what we could gain from it."

The four nodded, they lost nothing if they observed them as well.

"Have you decided who's going to talk with the first years?" Blaise asked, looking at Harry. They had agreed that one member of the Court would talk to the first years on the first night, telling them
the rules of the Court, it was better than leaving everything to the prefects. It was a way to see the new students and to let the new students see them, so they had no excuses; like saying that they didn't know who was part of the Court.

"Theo," Harry answered, looking at said boy, "You are the calmer one; you're more laid-back compared to the rest of us. I think you will be able to tell them the rules without scaring them too much. You already know what to say to them, correct?"

Theo nodded, smiling. It was clear that he was proud to have been chosen by Harry. The others didn't begrudge him this, they would have been proud as well, though they admitted that for this particular job, Theo was the best suited for it.

The trip went by without anything interesting happening, nobody disturbed them and Harry wasn't able to stop the smile from appearing on his face when the train stopped. He was finally home.

Harry was sitting in what had become his usual spot. It was an armchair by a fireplace in the back of the common room, there were two couches with three places each and another four armchairs around it, there was also a table in the center. His Court was sitting around him, and though there were many places free, nobody else was sitting there. Moreover, if anyone entered the common room they would have seen a clear separation, all the other couches, armchairs, and tables were further apart from that part of the room than normal, creating an invisible line between the Court and the rest of the common room, a line that only a few Slytherins could cross.

Harry got comfortable in his seat and contained a sigh, though he knew it was something that they had to do, he was tired and wanted to go to his room. The train ride had been long and the feast loud, he was sure that if it had lasted just a bit longer he would have had a horrible headache.

However, that didn't matter at the moment, what mattered were the first year Slytherins that were entering the common room.

After the fifth year prefects gave them a speech similar to the one he had received, instead of sending the first years off to bed, they took them to the Court. They made them stand in front of them, in a single line and they could see the confusion on their faces.

They stayed silent for a few moments, until Harry looked at Theo and nodded. Knowing that Harry wanted him to start, Theo got up from his seat and went to stand in front of the first year Slytherins. The height difference between Theo and the first year students wasn't much, however, the aura around Theo made him look much more intimidating.

"Good evening, welcome to Slytherin," Theo started and he had a little smile on his lips, "I am Theodore Nott and I am part of the Slytherin Court. Considering your expressions, I can see that you have no idea what that is. In that case, listen carefully, because I will not repeat myself.

The Court is created by a student that is able to control the house, by a student that makes it impossible for anyone in Slytherin to go against him. It doesn't really matter how he achieves it, only that he was able to do it. That student becomes the Slytherin King and the people he deems worthy become his Court. Our Court was established last year.

The King rules Slytherin and the members of the Court make sure that all of the King's rules are followed. The rules must be followed no matter what. If they aren't, the people who didn't follow them will have to suffer the consequences of going against the Court. Believe me, that isn't something that you want to experience.
We only have three rules that have to be followed:

The first one: Do not spread around your beliefs of pureblood supremacy. If you want to defend that stupidity, do it in the safety of the common room. However, if any of us hear it, do not doubt that you will suffer the consequences. If I were you, I wouldn't even think the word 'mudblood' outside of the common room.

The second rule: If you are going to bully other students, at least be smart enough not to get caught, use glamors or something similar to disguise yourself. We are trying to make people stop thinking that every Slytherin is pure evil, we have plans and we don't need a few brats that believe they are strong and powerful just because they bullied some helpless Hufflepuff to mess them up.

The third rule: You are going to choose a person from your year to talk with us in case there is a need for whatever reason. That person, and only that person, will be able to come and talk with us, unless we initiate the conversation ourselves.

Those are the rules, as you can see they are all really easy to follow.

Any questions?" Theo asked, looking at the students.

All the members of the Court had noticed the brat that had looked at them, mostly at Harry, with contempt and disgust, so when said brat opened his mouth; Harry wasn't the least bit surprised.

"Why in the name of Morgana should we follow your rules? You're only second year students," the boy answered with contempt, not noticing that everyone in the common room was looking at him horrified, "Besides, I don't see why I should follow a half-blood. I don't even know how...

The kid stopped talking abruptly when he felt the tip of a wand at his neck.

Harry smiled, the brat wasn't the only one surprised by Blaise's sudden appearance behind him. Nobody had noticed Blaise leave his seat, only the Court.

That was what Blaise was good at; he could go unnoticed until he wanted to be noticed. Harry was sure that Blaise's magic helped him, just like his own magic had helped him in countless situations.

"How dare you talk about him in that tone of voice?" Blaise snarled, showing a side that very few knew, "Adolebit." Blaise almost whispered the word, but the room was so quiet that everyone heard him.

A sadistic smirk appeared on the face of every Court member but most of the students in the common room where looking confused, as far as they could see nothing had happened.

However, Harry was paying close attention to the brat, they all knew what the curse did and Harry was looking for signs that showed that the curse was active.

To his immense joy, he saw the kid loosen his tie, his face started turning red, and you could see sweat starting to appear on his forehead.

"Merlin, how can you stand this heat!" the boy exclaimed, looking at the rest of the students.

Marcus started to laugh, his eyes filled with malevolence, the other students looked at him and the fear in their eyes made Harry chuckle. Really, the night was turning out to be far more interesting that what he'd expected.

The first year that had dared to go against them fell to his knees and started to moan in pain.
Draco’s cruel laugh joined Marcus’ and the boy started screaming.

The curse was starting to reach the more interesting stages. It wasn't a well know curse, Harry had found it in the Malfoy's library and had shared it with his Court. The longer the curse was cast on a person, the more painful it became. It would raise the body's temperature every ten seconds, and it continued until the person the curse was cast upon would feel like they were being burned alive.

The boy was now on the floor, rolling back and forth, no doubt trying to ease the pain or trying to extinguish a fire that wasn't there, agonizing screams leaving his throat, while most of the Slytherins looked on, horrified by what they were witnessing.

"Stop!" yelled a sixth year student, that Harry only knew because Marcus had said that he was one of the best Runes students in Hogwarts, though he didn't even remember his name. If he wasn't mistaken, it was Jason something or other, or maybe James, not that it really mattered at the moment, "Please stop!"

The older student wasn't begging Blaise though, he was in front of Harry, he had gone down on his knees and was looking at Harry with tears in his eyes.

Harry only lifted an eyebrow.

"Please!" begged the Slytherin again, "He's my younger brother. I'll talk to him, it won't happen again! Please!"

Harry looked at the older boy for a few moments, the screams of the boy's brother in the background growing louder and rougher, Harry was sure that he had damaged his vocal cords. He came to a decision and looked at Blaise, the next second the curse was lifted, the screams stopped and the only sound in the room was the brat's sobbing.

"He is your responsibility," Harry told the older student, who was still on his knees in front of Harry, "Every time he crosses the line, you will be the one to suffer the consequences."

The boy bowed his head and nodded, and only when Harry told him that he could go, did he get up and move to his brother, lifting him of the floor and carrying him to the sixth year dorms.

"You are dismissed." Theo told the first years in front of him, they seemed petrified by what they had witnessed. However, when they heard the order that Theo gave them, they left the common room so fast it almost seemed that they'd apparated, Harry's dark, sinister chuckle following them to their rooms.

Looking around and seeing the terrified faces of the other students, Harry smiled; it had been a far more interesting first night than he thought it would be.

Harry sat on his bed, looking around his room; it didn't look much like the rather spartan room he had seen that first night he spent in Hogwarts.

The furniture was still dark, however the walls were a light grey and the floor, instead of the previous stone, was wood.

On the wall to his right were two windows that went from the floor to the ceiling. He had tried to make it so that they showed a specific part of Hogwarts' grounds, but he hadn't been able to. It was a rather complicated enchantment, so he had to make do with windows that only showed if it was day or night; it was better than nothing.
Aside from that, the room looked the same. Harry had looked up spells to change his room more, but most were far too advanced for him. Though that didn't mean that he had given up, now that he knew which spells were needed, it was just a matter of practicing them until he could cast them successfully.

Sighing, Harry got up. It was the last day of winter break, the students would be coming back, of all the Slytherins he was the only one that had stayed in the castle. He had received invitations from all the members of his Court to spend the holidays with them, but he had preferred to stay at Hogwarts; it was the only time that he could be alone. He may have gotten used to being with his friends, but he still enjoyed every opportunity to be by himself.

The last few months had gone by relatively quickly and they had been far less irritating then the first months of the previous year.

The interview had the effect he'd intended, the students weren't whispering about him every time they saw him, they weren't gossiping about him being the next Dark Lord. Most treated him the same way that they treated the other Slytherins, with indifference and mistrust. However, a few students, Ravenclaws especially, greeted him in the corridors. Considering the previous year, Harry thought that it was an enormous improvement.

The professors weren't indifferent to the interview either. Most of them became even more enchanted with him. They marveled that he was still such a kind and innocent soul even after everything. They were delighted with his manners, awed by his talent, bewitched by his charms. To almost all the professors, he was an example that all students should follow.

Unfortunately, not all of the professors shared the same opinion.

Snape seemed to hate him more than ever and Harry was starting to think that it did him no good to maintain that child-like air around him. Harry was certain that the professor didn't believe the mask. However, he couldn't just stop, he would start to be less child-like over time, so the other professors would believe that the reason he was behaving differently was because he was becoming more mature.

Though, Snape wasn't the only professor that gave him homicidal tendencies.

Gilderoy Lockhart, the new professor of Defense Against the Dark Arts. Harry truly believed that every day that went by that Harry didn't murder him, was a miracle. He thought that he should have received some sort of prize for his impeccable self-control, because if he didn't have such self-control, that thing that called itself a wizard would have been dead the first day that Harry met him. He was the most unbearable person Harry had ever met and made him remember why he generally didn't like people.

His Defense classes were spent imagining ways to torture the man, who knew; maybe he could make them happen one day.

At least he had stopped calling on Harry to play out bits from his books. Harry didn't remember ever being so grateful for being able to control his magic the way he did. Though he suspected that the fact that Lockhart had even less of a backbone than Skeeter, had greatly contributed to the fact that he hadn't had to do much for the man to stop calling on him.

Harry sighed again and started to get ready to go to the Great Hall; it was almost time for the feast to start and he was sure that it was going to be a long night.

Just like they had agreed, they would be talking to Pucey and Montague after the feast.
They had observed both of them and Harry found them rather interesting, they were quite good students and though Montague didn't appear to be open to the idea of muggleborns, they had never heard him speaking about them in a negative light, or even look at them with disgust. He didn't let his opinions show and if he had to interact with a muggleborn he was polite, though rather cold.

So they had agreed to talk with Montague; if they knew the reason why he didn't tolerate muggleborns, maybe they could find a solution and the Court could gain more than one member.

Harry sat in his usual place and waited for the students to arrive, doing his best to ignore the looks that Snape gave him. Harry had to stop himself from rolling his eyes, it was difficult to believe that the man was a Slytherin; he could at least pretend that he wasn't watching Harry, at least like that, Harry wouldn't have a reason to be prudent.

Voices coming from the entrance hall brought Harry back from his thoughts, he looked to his right and saw several students starting to enter. Amongst the small crowd, he could see Marcus and guessed that the other three were somewhere around him. It was rare that they weren't together. It didn't matter if they were studying, training, or just hanging out. Harry was quite happy with that; they weren't only loyal to him but to each other as well, which could stop many internal conflicts in the future.

"Harry" Marcus greeted, sitting on his left side with a big smile on his face, the other three not far behind him.

"Good evening, how was your break?" asked Harry, looking at his Court.

"It was good," Marcus answered still smiling, "I talked with my father about the decision we made, considering what I will be doing when I finish this year. He was really surprised with my choice but on the other hand I don't think I ever saw him that happy. If I'm not mistaken, it will be really easy to get the position we talked about."

"I wasn't expecting you to obtain results that quickly." Harry remarked, but the small smile he had showed just how pleased he was with the news.

"He's a Jugson," Draco said, "Jugsons are only a bit less influential than the Malfoys."

Theo and Blaise nodded; according to rumors, the Jugsons were involved in almost every area of the Ministry and several commercial empires as well, it was one of the main reasons why Marcus had been able to stay at the top of the hierarchy for two years before Harry arrived.

"Are we still gonna talk with them after the feast?" Blaise asked, changing the subject; the Great Hall wasn't the best place to have the sort of conversation they were having.

"After the feast Marcus will call them. We can talk in the common room, even if others listen in, it wouldn't be a problem. A few of them may even change their minds."

The rest of the evening went by quickly, and before he knew it he was sitting in his armchair in the common room.

As the following day was a Saturday, there were still many students in the common room, a few talking with their friends about the winter break, others doing the last bit of homework they had pushed to the last minute of the holiday. When he saw the two that they wanted to talk with, he nodded to Marcus.

The moment that Marcus got up from his seat and started to go in the direction of the other Slytherins, the mood changed drastically. Before, the students were relaxed, enjoying the last
moments of holidays that they had left. Now, they were tense, some of them showing a bit of fear in their eyes, Harry was sure that some of them were asking themselves if anyone had done anything to displease the Court.

When Marcus approached Pucey and Montague and told them to follow him, Harry saw Montague pale; without a doubt, he thought that he would be punished for his belief in pureblood supremacy.

Pucey and Montague appeared a bit fearful of crossing that invisible line that separated the Court from the rest of the common room, but they took a deep breath and followed Marcus, sitting on the sofa that Marcus showed them to, placing them right in front of Harry.

"I'm sure you are asking yourselves why you're here," Harry started as soon as Marcus was sitting on the armchair at his side. Seeing Pucey nod, a small smile appeared on his lips, "You don't need to be so tense, you're not in trouble. It's quite the contrary, in fact."

Harry tried to reassure them; for what he had planned, they needed to be a lot more comfortable. Seeing them relax, he continued.

"We've been watching you and have come to the conclusion that both of you would be good additions to the Court," as soon as Harry stopped speaking, the expressions on both Slytherin's faces changed; they weren't able to hide the shock and excitement they felt. Harry gave them a few moments and started again, "As I said, we've been watching you, so we have a few questions that we would like to ask you, especially you Montague."

Montague paled a little again and sat straighter in his seat, Harry pretended he didn't notice.

"I want you to be completely honest in your answers. I don't want you to tell me what you think I want to hear, I want your honest opinion, understand?"

Seeing both nod, Harry got more comfortable in his armchair. He had thought about many ways in which he could ask what he wanted, but discarded all of them.

Pucey as well as Montague were possible future members of his Court, so he would treat them as such; there was no need for word games. What he wanted was true loyalty and for them to really believe in his ideals, and to obtain that, the best way to go about it would be to be direct.

"I would like to know what you really think about muggleborns and pureblood supremacy. Don't tell me what you think will make me happy. I guarantee that there won't be any consequences, you may say whatever you want. I just want to know what you think."

There were several seconds of complete silence, until Pucey took a deep breath and answered.

"My family has always considered muggleborns to be inferior. I was raised with that belief, but when I started Hogwarts the way I saw things changed. The muggleborns weren't weaker; some were quite good actually, better than many purebloods. I am still proud of my family, my blood, but the disdain that I had for muggleborns is gone. There are some attitudes that some muggleborns have that I don't like, but aside from that... They are as magical as I am."

When it appeared that Pucey had said everything that was on his mind, Harry looked at Montague to see if he had anything to add. Harry could imagine what it was that Pucey didn't like, Draco and Blaise had complained about the same thing. Though, after Harry talked to them and explained a few things, they became much more tolerant about the whole situation. He was hoping that it would be the same with Pucey.

Seeing that the whole Court was looking at him, Montague tried to relax, though it didn't appear to
"They're different," he blurted out, and seeing how he paled, Harry guessed that wasn't what he'd intended to say. Montague took a deep breath and started again, "My line has existed for generations, we are so old that our line developed it's own magics, family magic. That magic isn't always active but it passes down to the line's descendants. Muggleborns don't have that, and that makes purebloods superior, it's impossible for muggleborns to have family magic."

Harry was aware that the entire common room was listening to the conversation, he didn't mind. It was an important discussion and maybe it would make some of the students think for themselves, instead of blindly following what their parents believed.

Montague continued to be a bit pale and he was shaking a little, but he still maintained his conviction in his beliefs and for that Harry had to respect him a bit.

"I see," and he really did, but Montague was forgetting something really important, "and I agree that family magics are important but you are forgetting something rather significant. I am not a pureblood and I am the most powerful student at Hogwarts. Dumbledore, you may not like him, but even those that can't stand the man say that he is one of the most powerful wizards since the founders and he is a half-blood." Harry almost laughed when he saw the shocked expressions on most of the students faces, many people thought that Dumbledore was a pureblood. He himself only knew that he wasn't because he had found a book in the Malfoy's library that had famous wizards' family trees in it and Dumbledore happened to be one of them.

"There are always exceptions." Montague argued and that was what Harry wanted. He wanted them to argue, wanted them to defend their point of view; because that way, when he disproved everything they said, it would have a bigger impact.

"Yes, that is true. However, if you exclude all of them right away how will you know who the exceptions are?"

Montague opened his mouth to answer but closed it abruptly, not able to give an answer that would defend what he believed in.

"We don't." Pucey answered after several seconds.

"No, you don't." Harry agreed, "But that isn't all. Take the Black line for example, everyone knows them, what is the most well-known talent that the line possesses? Aside from their talent for the Dark Arts."

"Metamorphmagus." Montague replied almost automatically, making Harry nod.

"And when did the talent last manifested itself?"

"Four or five generations ago." said Pucey after some time.

"Wrong," answered Harry, surprising everyone but his Court, "Nymphandora Tonks, she was a seventh year student last year, from Hufflepuff, daughter of Ted Tonks, a muggleborn wizard, and Andromeda Tonks nee Black, a pureblood witch, making her a half-blood. The most recent metamorphmagus of the Black line."

"But that... that is..." Montague didn't seem to know how to finish his sentence.

The reaction pleased Harry, as long as he didn't deny it right off the bat, it showed that he was at least willing to listen, which was more than what Harry was expecting and a very good sign.
"The family magics existed in Andromeda but they weren't strong enough to manifest, it needed the new magic from Ted Tonks so that it could manifest in their daughter," seeing that he had the complete attention of not only the two possible future members of the Court, but from every Slytherin in the room, he continued, "I believe that muggleborn wizards and witches are needed. Look at Crabbe and Goyle, the obsession of keeping the line pure produced two beings that can hardly string two sentences together, and they are just a little better than that when it comes to magical talent. Now imagine that Parkinson marries one of them, just to keep the line pure. The magic that any of their future children would inherit would be, in the best case scenario, extremely weak. If you don't infuse new magic in the old lines, the magic will start waning until it dies out. Now imagine that Parkinson marries Wayne Hopkins, a muggleborn that is a prodigy with Charms and is quite strong magical wise. Their children would gain their mother's family magics and the father's new magic, giving new life to the magic from an old line."

Discretely, Harry looked at the other Slytherins in the common room, some of them appeared to be skeptical but most seemed to be thinking about it and Harry was rather pleased with the outcome.

"While everyone was obsessing with keeping their lines pure, they forgot a fundamental truth; every line that exists originated from a muggleborn, or at least a half-blood."

Seeing the incredulous looks on almost all the students present, Harry shook his head. He didn't know if they were stubborn, or if it was stupidity that made it impossible for them to think logically when it pertained to blood purity. However, considering that he had a similar conversation with his Court, and they were all much more logical about it, he was more inclined to think it was stupidity.

"Think about it logically. The first wizard to have ever been born had to have muggle parents, it's simple logic."

When he saw Pucey nod, Harry almost sighed in relief; at least there was some progress.

"So you believe that muggleborns are born to strengthen the old lines?" Pucey inquired, and Harry knew that he was trying to understand and analyze what Harry's beliefs were.

"Yes, but that isn't everything. Think of muggleborns as first generation witches and wizards. Wizards that can lead to new lines, which can develop new talents, new family magics."

Montague appeared to be absorbed in his own thoughts and Harry was happy to see that he hadn't reacted in a negative way to what he'd said. Pucey was nodding, though he was also frowning; showing that something was still on his mind.

"I think that is rather logical, that would be a good explanation as to why first generation witches and wizards never seem to be magically weak," Harry was rather pleased with Pucey's use of the term 'first generation wizard', he hated the word muggleborn, "But that doesn't change the fact that there are several that have attitudes that I don't like."

"And what are those attitudes?" Harry asked, wanting to know if it was the same thing that Draco and Blaise had complained about.

"They don't know our traditions, they come here, they don't respect our culture, and they cling to the muggle traditions. Halloween, for example; it isn't one of our traditions but for the first generation witches and wizards to feel more comfortable, we celebrate Halloween instead of Samhain."

Several students were nodding and Harry sighed, it was exactly the same thing that Draco and Blaise had said.
"Did you ever think that the reason that they cling to the muggle traditions, is because they are suddenly sent into a world that they know nothing about? Where they are away from their friends and family? Imagine that it was the other way around; wouldn't you cling to what was familiar to you? Did it never cross your mind that they don't celebrate our traditions because they don't know them?"

"Then why don't they learn them?" muttered Montague, with several other nodding. It was quite easily solved in their opinion; if they didn't know, they could learn. Usually, Harry would agree but not in this case.

"Because they can't."

That simple statement caught the attention of both boys sitting in front of Harry.

"What do you mean, they can't?" Pucey asked looking at Harry confused.

"Things aren't as simple as they appear. The truth is that most books about those traditions belong to pureblood families and are in their private libraries. There are few for sale, those that are for sale the Ministry controls to whom they can be sold, because some traditions were forbidden by the Ministry. Generally, they only allow people to buy them if they are taking their Masters in History, or something similar. And those that aren't controlled by the Ministry, are very hard to find, not even Hogwarts has them. Taking all that into consideration, how do you expect a first generation wizard, an eleven year old, to get the information?"

Seeing that both Slytherins were immersed in their thoughts, Harry got up followed by Theo, Draco, and Blaise and left for his room, it had been a long night and the best thing he could do now was to leave both boys so that they could think everything over.

Marcus stayed, and while Pucey and Montague were thinking about everything they had heard, he observed the rest of the common room.

Many appeared to be absorbed in their own thoughts, while others were talking in low voices with their friends. He had no doubt that they were discussing everything Harry had said.

"Is it really true? About the traditions?" Montague asked almost in a whisper.

"It is." Marcus assured him, looking in his eyes.

"I always thought that they didn't learn about our traditions because they thought that they were above it."

"How come we never noticed that there were no books?" Pucey asked, incredulous.

"Adrian, we grew up in this world, we never needed to look for that information and if we didn't know something we could ask our parents. To us, it is common knowledge."

Both boys nodded and Marcus got up, gaining their attention.

"Adrian, Graham, think about what Harry said. If you accept the invitation, you have to be sure that you believe what he said. You have until Monday to make your choice, if you don't think that you can follow his beliefs, or you don't want to follow his beliefs, then things will stay as they are, no hard feelings. Harry thinks that everyone is free to believe in whatever they want, so he won't force you. Have a good night."

Marcus hoped that both Adrian Pucey and Graham Montague would join the Court. After all, he had
been far more extreme in his belief of pureblood supremacy and Harry had managed to convince him with far less.

A month had passed since Harry had talked with Adrian and Graham, and both of them had joined the Court. Harry was happy to see that they got along well with the other members.

During the first week, they'd appeared a bit apprehensive every time they talked with him, but seeing that Harry never did anything to any of them, they quickly relaxed and started treating him like the others treated Harry.

Having two older students also helped with the training sessions that they had every night with Marcus, especially since their best subjects were different and so they could help each other in the fields they knew best.

A scream followed by laughter caught his attention and Harry looked to the middle of the room where Theo, Blaise, Draco, Marcus, Adrian, and Graham were dueling. Theo against Marcus, Blaise against Adrian, and Draco against Graham, the pairings were chosen randomly and because they weren't an even number one was always left out. However, just because the one that was left out wasn't dueling, didn't mean that he had nothing to do; while the others dueled the one that was out would read, study, or practice with several different spells. Which was what Harry was supposed to be doing but when he saw Draco he couldn't contain his laugh, now he knew where the scream had come from.

They trained every day, for approximately three to four hours after dinner. Though when they stayed a little longer for one reason or another, there was always someone who suffered some kind of prank. Harry didn't mind, they were still young and they needed to relax and have a bit of harmless fun now and then. This time, the poor victim had been Draco. His hair was Gryffindor red and gold and he had a sign around his neck proclaiming his undying love for everything Gryffindor. Though Draco had overcome many of his childish grudges, he still couldn't stand Gryffindors in general, something that his friends couldn't help but tease him about.

Harry shook his head and was going to go back to reading his book, when the door to the room they were occupying opened.

They were immediately on alert, they were using an abandoned classroom in the dungeons. It was quite a bit away from the usual corridors that the students used, so it was improbable that whoever it was had found the classroom by mistake, meaning that they were probably looking for them specifically.

Harry was prepared for many things, but he had no problem in admitting that seeing the Weasley twins enter and close the door behind them wasn't one of them, and considering the reactions of his friends, he guessed that it wasn't what they were expecting either.

A few moments went by where they were all silent, just looking at each other. When it became apparent that no one else was going to say anything, Harry lowered his wand, put it away, and approached the twins. He knew that his Court would protect him if needed.

"Good evening, to what do we owe the honor of receiving a visit from the Demons of Gryffindor?"

The twins smirked and bowed; when they looked at Harry again, their eyes were shining and filled with mischievousness.

"It is an honor," one of them started.
"to know that," the other continued.

"the Slytherin King," they changed again.

"holds us," and again.

"in so high esteem." they finished together, and Harry was starting to get the beginnings of a headache.

"Slytherin King?" Harry asked. He wasn't going to pretend to be an innocent child, but he wasn't going to tell them that they were basically right either.

The twins shared a look, it was like they had an entire conversation in a fraction of a second, and one of them nodded and looked at Harry again.

"Contrary to what most of Hogwarts thinks, we aren't dumb." the twin that had nodded said.

"Exactly, just because we aren't interested in exams or grades, doesn't mean that we aren't intelligent or observant." the other one added.

Apparently, they had opted to not talk the way they usually did, something for which Harry was thankful; he didn't know if he would be able to follow a conversation with them if they hadn't.

"Since last year, when you started to sit in the middle of the table, the Slytherins have been behaving differently. We don't see them bullying anyone, we don't hear them speaking badly about muggleborns, and many of them look at you with awe and fear"

Harry was rather impressed with what he was hearing, most ignored Slytherin so much that they hadn't even notice the change in the seating arrangements. Well that wasn't really true, they had noticed, they just didn't analyze it the way the twins had done. For them, it was just people changing where they were sitting, nothing more. And if they noticed that the Slytherins were behaving differently, they sure hadn't done anything about it. Besides, Harry was sure that the students that were more prejudiced against Slytherin would say that it was all some evil plot and that was the reason why they were being nice... Well, alright, Harry admitted that it was an evil plot, but still, there was no way for others to know that, so it was only their prejudice against Slytherins that made them think that.

"So?" Harry asked raising an eyebrow, "I hope you don't think I'm trying to lead the poor, misunderstood Slytherins to the Light." he added sarcastically.

"You rule Slytherin; we aren't naive enough to believe that you would be able to do that if you were the innocent little orphan that many think you are, especially after that interview."

Harry nodded, at least that showed that he wasn't dealing with two fanatic Light followers that only saw what they wanted to see about the Boy-Who-Lived. But that didn't answer the question that he'd been asking himself since he'd seen who had stepped into their room.

"What do you want?"

The twins shared another look; both nodded and took a small step forward.

"Hi, I'm Fred Weasley." the twin on the right said, it was the one that had talked more.

"And I'm George Weasley." added the twin on the left.
Harry shook their hands.

"I'm Harry Potter, pleasure," this made things a lot easier for him, they had observed the twins and Harry had been rather intrigued with the Demons of Gryffindor, but as the two had approached them he didn't have to come up with some way to invite them to join the Court, "let me introduce you to my friends."

The months leading up to the summer holidays went by in an instant.

Fred and George started to go to all the practices they had. Harry was surprised by the ease with which the others accepted them. In little less than one month, the Twins were completely part of the Court; however, it was something that the rest of the school wasn't aware of.

Fred and George proclaimed that they were the Court's spies and they had fun researching spells and enchantments that would help them accomplish their spying duties.

Harry usually left them be because they could give him information that the other members would have difficulty obtaining.

The exams went by and to no one's surprise the first places were occupied by Harry and his group. Marcus also felt that he had done well in his N.E.W.T.'s and was preparing himself to start working in a few weeks after he graduated.

All in all, when Harry was taking a Taxi to go to the orphanage, he was rather satisfied with what he had achieved in his time at Hogwarts and he could hardly wait for the holidays to be over.
Chapter 10 – The Lion and the little Raven

Harry woke up rather suddenly, and it took him several seconds to realize what had woken him up. When he heard the noise again, he was slightly more awake and he was able to identify it as several owls hooting outside his window, he could hear quite a few knocks as well. The fact that it was more than one owl surprised him a bit; he received letters from his friends, but they usually arrived at different times, so he normally only had one owl coming and going from his room.

When he heard the noise that the owls were making increase, he sighed and got out of bed. Though it was really useful to hear what was going on outside of his trunk, in certain circumstances he would prefer it wasn't possible.

As soon as he left his trunk and looked at the window, he saw seven owls sitting on the window-still. He recognized them immediately; they belonged to the members of his Court. However, knowing to whom they belonged didn't help him in knowing why they were there, he had sent a letter to Marcus the previous day and it usually took him a day or two to answer. For all of the owls to be there, something must have happened.

Opening the letter that was closest, he became even more confused. It was from his Demons and said;

'HARRY, 

Please be careful. Never go anywhere without your wand and don't go anywhere alone.

We will see you soon.

Fred and George'

Not even taking into account that it was a very short letter, it wasn't written in their usual style. Besides, why were they so worried about his safety?

Putting the twins' letter aside, he picked up the next one.

'HARRY,

Don't make any hasty decisions.

Don't go out at night.

And please be careful.
Adrian

'Harry,

I've spoken to my mother, we will go back to England as soon as possible.

Don't go anywhere alone.

Blaise

'Harry,

Be careful.

No matter what, stay at the orphanage, don't go wandering around.

Keep your wand with you.

Graham

'Harry,

We're coming back to England.

Theo

Harry was officially confused, what the hell was going on with his Court? It was obvious that they were all worried about him but he had no idea why, his summer vacation had been extremely boring. The most exciting thing that had happened was when he had set his couch on fire when he was trying a spell in his trunk. Even though he couldn't use his wand, he had accidentally done a wandless spell. A true wandless spell, not the wandless magic he usually did that consisted mostly on his will and not real spells. Naturally he had tried to repeat the feat. It was difficult, and he was exhausted by the end of it, but he had done it again. Aside from that, everything had been rather quiet.

'Harry,

As far as I know you don't get the Daily Prophet, so I don't know if you know. There's been a breakout from Azkaban.

According to several people, Sirius Black, the fugitive, was the Dark Lord's right hand, and according to some rumors, he escaped so that he could get revenge for what happened to his Lord, so it is believed that he will be after you.

So, I beg of you, please be careful. Don't go anywhere alone.

As soon as I have more news, I will tell you.

Marcus

Well, at least Marcus' letter explained why all of his friends were almost having a panic attack. They assumed that he already knew about Sirius Black, so they hadn't given him a reason for their anxiety.

He supposed that he should subscribe to the Daily Prophet, but, to be completely honest, it hadn't occurred to him. At Hogwarts there was always a newspaper available if he wanted it and he had spent most of the previous summer at Malfoy Manor, so he had always had a newspaper there as
well. There really hadn't been any need for him to get a subscription.

Picking up the last letter, he felt a little shock race up his arm the moment he opened it. He frowned, having no idea what had happened.

'Harry,

We will be there in ten minutes.

Draco'

'Hmm, Draco must be really worried,' he thought. At least now he knew what that little shock was, it must have been a tracking spell being activated. That only showed just how worried Draco truly was, to risk angering him like that.

Well, seeing as the Malfoys were, apparently, on their way, he should probably get dressed and pack his things. He doubted that he would be staying at the orphanage for much longer.

About ten minutes later, there was a knock on his door.

"Yes?"

"Harry," Mrs. Brown said, looking through the half-opened door, "You have guests in the common room."

Considering her tone, Harry suspected that it was the Malfoys; they had that effect on people when they saw them for the first time. They were, after all, a rather stunning family.

"Just let me finish getting ready, I'll be down as soon as I'm done."

Mrs. Brown just nodded and left, still looking a little dazed.

Harry hurried a little more than usual, he didn't care that the Malfoys were waiting for him, but if the Malfoys were there for the reason he thought, then the sooner he was done, the sooner he would be able to leave.

When he reached the common room, he was able to identify the Malfoys immediately, he didn't even have to search; they stood out quite a bit. He had to admire the fact that, even in the small run down living-room that served as a common room for all the boys, they looked every inch the aristocratic family they were.

Unfortunately, they weren't alone in the room; almost every boy in the orphanage was present. Considering that it was rather early and that breakfast would be served soon, it didn't really surprise him, they were all waiting to be called to eat, the only ones not there were the ones that had to almost be dragged out of bed by Mrs. Brown.

"Harry!"

That was his only warning, and in the next moment he had a blonde in his arms, hugging him as if he hadn't seen him in years.

"You're alright, you're alright, you're alright." Draco was muttering, far too low for anyone but him to hear, and he let out a small chuckle.

"Yes, Draco, I'm fine."
Draco let him go and Harry was able to see a small blush on his cheeks.

"Good morning, Mr. Malfoy, Mrs. Malfoy."

"Good morning, dear," Mrs. Malfoy greeted him, giving him a hug, "And didn't I tell you to call me Cissa?" she continued after letting him go.

Harry smiled, it had been one of the first things that Mrs. Malfoy had asked of him.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of your visit?" Harry asked, after indicating the vacant chairs for them to sit.

"We came to get you, so that you could spend the summer break with us." Draco answered, looking at him with his big silver eyes, silently begging for him to accept.

"Hmm, and has this sudden invitation anything to do with Sirius Black?"

Draco blushed a little but didn't say anything, he only looked at him with determined eyes and Harry knew that the blonde wouldn't leave if he couldn't drag Harry with him back to Malfoy Manor.

"I see," whispered Harry and looked at Draco's parents, who had been quiet, "Considering the life experience that you have Mr. Malfoy, do you think that Black is a threat? Did you and he deal with the same crowd?"

Harry knew that Malfoy would understand what he was asking. He had no intention of refusing the invitation, but maybe he would be able to gather some more information first.

"I cannot say that Black and I dealt with the same crowd, we were usually in separate groups, though you have to consider that I do not claim to know everyone," Malfoy had understood what he meant. It was interesting to know that not only did Malfoy not know the supposed right hand of Voldemort, when he himself was rumored to be an Inner Circle member, but that they were also in separate groups. Knowing what he knew about the war, which wasn't as much as he wanted, he knew that there were two 'groups'; the Dark and the Light. If Malfoy was so clearly Dark, then to be in a different group Black had to be Light, it was truly fascinating but it didn't answer any of his questions, it just added new ones to the ones he already had. Of course, there was also the possibility that Malfoy was lying, but Harry had the feeling that he wasn't. "However, you must take into account that Black did something that many considered impossible, he must have had a reason to do it."

Harry had also thought about that, he was really curious about how Black had managed to escape Azkaban. Maybe it would be something that Black would be willing to share, but he wasn't counting on it. Considering that Black, apparently, wanted to kill him, he probably wouldn't agree to have a cup of tea and have a conversation about the finer points of jail-breaking, no matter how much fun Harry believed that would have been.

"All right, I'll just go pack my things, just give me a minute."

When he got up, he saw Mrs. Brown sitting on a couch a little bit away from them, just like the boys in the room she was trying not to look at them, or more like stare at them, but she wasn't having much success. Harry didn't truly blame them, the Malfoys were beautiful, and they had never seen people like them at the orphanage, aside from himself, of course, and they were already used to him, so they didn't stare as much.

"Mrs. Brown," he said, making the matron focus on him, "I'll be leaving today, I'll be back next summer."
"But..."

Seeing Harry's look, she didn't say anything else, she just nodded. They both knew that she wasn't able to stop him, and even if she was, those eyes promised consequences that she was sure she didn't want to deal with.

Seeing that he was not going to have any trouble there, Harry nodded and went to his room to pack the things that he hadn't had the time to previously. He did it far faster than before; he could hardly wait to go back to the Wizarding world.

He was tired; unfortunately, the years hadn't been easy on him and every year that went by it became more difficult to deal with his condition.

He still didn't know if he had made the right decision, but the temptation was far too strong for him to resist. Every opportunity he had to see the last member of his pack was a godsend, even if his cub didn't know who he was, it was better than nothing.

Trying to find a more comfortable position, he tried his best to ignore the noise that the students were making outside on the platform. No matter how tired he was, all that noise was making it quite difficult for him to sleep. In some situations, having such acute hearing was really more of a curse than anything else.

However, other times it was a blessing, he had no doubt that if it weren't for his hearing he wouldn't have heard the footsteps coming his way. Before he had the time to even think about it, he had cast a spell that projected to everyone that looked at him the illusion that he was sleeping, he used the spell so much that it became almost second nature. Every time he used muggle transportation, or even when he was at Hogwarts and wanted to have a bit of a quiet time, or listen to some conversations without giving himself away, so it was such an ingrained habit that he only noticed that he had cast the spell when he felt the magic around him. He thought about canceling the spell, but it was too late, the people he had heard coming in his direction were already opening the door to his compartment.

He stayed in the same position but looked at the door, and he was suddenly glad he had cast the spell, because at least it made it impossible for other people to know that he was staring. He may never have met the boy in front of him, but he knew immediately who he was, because in front of him was a miniature Lucius Malfoy, the boy could only be his son.

"There's already someone in the compartment." the boy said, looking to his right, he supposed he was talking to his friends.

"Then make him get out, it is my compartment." answered a voice, and he knew, instinctively, that whoever had spoken was the leader. Which surprised him, considering that, from what he remembered, the Malfoys ruled Slytherin.

"It isn't a student. Besides, he's sleeping, and he doesn't look like he's going to wake up anytime soon."

He heard a sigh.

"Nevertheless, this compartment is mine and it's in it that we are going to stay."

Malfoy nodded and went inside, followed by a boy that he also recognized, the boy looked a lot like Tadeus Nott, so he supposed that the boy was his son.

He contained his sigh with some effort; it was just his luck to end up in a compartment where the
children of Death Eaters usually sat. He didn't even want to imagine who their leader was, but he was sure that he had to resign himself to a ride filled with talks about pureblood supremacy.

Another two boys came in, though he didn't know these two, and then another one came that he only recognized because of his scent. He felt his heart stop when the boy entered the compartment, he may not recognize him by his looks, but his scent was unforgettable, it may not be identical to what it used to be but it was the same scent, it was the scent of his cub, in front of him was Harry James Potter, the last of his pack.

He could hardly believe it, he was finally near his cub, though he didn't know why Harry was in a compartment filled with Death Eater children. Only then did he notice the uniform the boy had on; instead of the expected red and gold, it was green and silver, instead of a lion, it had a serpent. Harry, James' son, was a Slytherin. How had that happened?

"Who do you think it is?" asked the dark skinned boy that followed Harry and closed the door behind him, before sitting down beside Harry. Only then did he notice that they were all, aside from Harry, looking at him.

"Considering that Lockhart isn't at Hogwarts anymore, I believe he is the new DADA professor." answered Harry and he was surprised to notice that the voice that he thought belonged to the leader of the little group was Harry's.

Harry was the leader of Slytherin? How had the Boy-Who-Lived ended up ruling a group of Death Eater children.

Nott's cruel laugh made Harry look at him, raising an eyebrow.

"After what you did to him, it really doesn't surprise me that he didn't stay."

"I don't see where you got the idea that I did anything to him." answered Harry with one of the most innocent expressions that he had ever seen, and if he hadn't seen James use that same expression, then he had no doubt that he would have believed it to be genuine. The other five boys started to laugh, showing that they believed it as much as he did.

"Of course you did nothing," Malfoy agreed, "Lockhart starting to see his biggest fears every time you were even in the same corridor as him was pure coincidence."

Harry nodded and with a completely serious expression said, "We must have had a boggart infestation."

The boys continued to laugh until they felt the train starting to move.

"It's strange being here without Marcus." one of the boys he didn't know remarked.

"He spent so much time with us over the summer that for a few moments I forgot that he finished Hogwarts last year." Malfoy added with a small smile.

Harry laughed.

"You all practically moved into Malfoy Manor over the summer."

"What were you expecting?" Nott asked with a serious tone, he was surprised to see that the other four were looking at Harry with the same serious expressions.

"I don't need to be protected." Harry stated in a voice so cold that his eyes went wide, even his wolf
became more alert, he also noticed the fear that appeared on the other boy's faces for less than a second. However, their determination didn't lessen.

"Just because you don't need it, doesn't mean we won't do it." Nott replied, and it was plain to see he meant every word, "We are your Court, we will always do everything we can for you, we'll swear it on our lives and our magic, if that is what you require of us."

When he finished, the other four nodded and he was surprised to see the loyalty and reverence in their expressions, he remembered seeing such looks when he went to Hogwarts and also after he left Hogwarts. It was the look the Death Eaters had when they talked about their Master. What the hell had Harry done to receive such looks?

"That won't be necessary." Harry answered and his voice had lost that coldness, making the others smile.

"Who is going to talk to the first year students?" asked the boy that was seated right beside him; he looked to be the oldest there.

"Theo," answered Harry, looking at Nott, "You did a good job last year. And there is nothing new to add."

"I hope none of them are as stupid as the one from last year." added the same boy and Harry laughed, it was cold and cruel and it gave him goosebumps.

"Oh, I don't know. It was rather fun watching Blaise take care of it." Harry commented, looking at the dark skinned boy.

"It was my pleasure." answered the boy, Blaise, with a sadistic smile.

It was becoming hard for him to process everything that was happening. His cub was nothing like he'd thought he would be; from what he was seeing and hearing, his cub was cruel, sadistic, and manipulative. He couldn't associate the boy in front of him with the innocent baby he had loved as if he were his own.

However, as the time passed he saw all the boys behaving like children; they played chess, they read, and told jokes, in a way they reminded him of his own train ride, in a compartment full of his friends.

And now he could see Harry's parents in him. He could see James with his charisma and leadership skills, captivating all those around him. He also saw Lily in him, with her intelligence and thirst for knowledge.

And while he remembered both of his friends, he also remembered the fierceness they had when they fought and no matter how much he considered James his brother, he knew how vindictive he could be, but James was a Gryffindor and a Potter, so no one would ever say that James was Dark or evil, no matter that the Death Eaters that faced James in battle never came out of it alive, nobody commented on the curses that they knew were Dark, because it was war. But he knew how much James loved to fight, how excited James became when there were raids. James loved Lily to death, and Harry was his entire world, but James had a mean streak several miles long and a malicious streak that wasn't far behind.

A small smile appeared on his face, maybe Harry was more like his parents than he had originally thought.

The compartment door opened, taking him out of his thoughts, and two boys came in, he recognized them immediately, that hair was unmistakable; both boys, identical twins by the look of it, could only
be Weasleys. The moment he saw the Gryffindor emblem on their robes, he prepared himself to intervene in case there was trouble, and considering that it was Gryffindors and Slytherins the outcome could only be trouble.

However, the twins smiled as soon as they saw who was inside.

"Harry!" both exclaimed in unison.

"We are," started the twin on the left.

"So happy," continued the twin on the right.

"To see," the twin on the left again.

"That you're alright." the right twin finished.

"Demons, I wasn't expecting to see you so early on the ride." Harry said, looking at them and completely ignoring what both had said.

"We didn't see you the entire summer." answered the twin on the right as if that explained everything, sitting on the floor and leaning against the door, his brother following his example. Considering the looks traded between the other boys, he supposed that it did explain everything.

"And being a whole summer without seeing me is unbearable for you?" inquired Harry, just a little touch of sarcasm in his voice.

The twins didn't answer, they just smiled and their eyes had a twinkle in them that he had seen hundreds of times in the eyes of his best friends.

Harry shook his head and laughed. The fond smile that Harry gave them lit up his face and made every boy smile.

"I was thinking," Harry said, looking at the twins, "Tonight, when we go back to our common room, and introduce the Court to the new Slytherins, I want both of you there."

The surprise was visible on all of their faces; clearly it wasn't something they were expecting.

"Harry no one knows we're part of the Court, that's the reason we're such good spies." answered the twin on the right.

"That and the fact that no one would believe that two Gryffindors would ever join Slytherins." added the other one.

"Fred," Harry said, looking at the twin on the right, "George," he continued, looking at the twin on the left, "You are a part of my Court and it is time that the Slytherins know that. I have no intention of letting everyone know, only the Slytherins."

"And how do you know that the Slytherins won't say anything?" asked Fred.

The smile that appeared on Harry's face was so sadistic that he couldn't help but shudder.

"I am the King of Slytherin." his tone had an arrogant quality to it that he had heard hundreds of times before, it was pure James.

The others laughed and Fred shook his head.
"Very well, oh powerful King of the Serpents. When the feast is over we will go with you, we will make it so that nobody sees us."

"I trust in your infiltration capabilities." replied Harry, voice thick with amusement.

"You do know that if anyone finds out that the Demons are a part of the Court, they will accuse us of corrupting the poor, innocent Gryffindors." the boy sitting beside him said.

"Well, considering that they are the Demons, maybe we will be able to convince the people that they were the ones that corrupted us." remarked the other boy that he didn't know.

The boys laughed, completely ignoring the indignant expressions on the twins' faces.

"You are completely right Adrian," exclaimed Nott when he was able to stop laughing, "The twins are the professors' terror, besides we could always use our secret weapon!"

"What secret weapon?" asked the boy at his side.

"Graham, Graham, Graham... How do you not know our secret weapon?" Malfoy asked dramatically.

"Yes, Graham, how don't you know?" inquired a voice that was so innocent that it took him a second to identify it. Harry looked so innocent that it was hard to associate what he was seeing with the Harry he had seen before.

"That isn't fair!" exclaimed George indignantly, though the smile on his face betrayed his true feelings.

"Yes! With those looks, who will believe us?" added Fred.

"Exactly!" agreed Blaise, "It's our secret weapon." he looked so incredibly smug that the others could contain their laughter.

He shook his head, in some ways the group reminded him of his own school days and his friends.

They had been arrogant, they had had no doubt about their superiority, especially James and Sirius. They had been the unofficial Kings of Gryffindor, apparently James' son had followed in his footsteps.

Feeling the train slow down took him out of his thoughts. He looked around, confused; it was too soon for them to have arrived.

"What's going on?" asked Malfoy, though he wasn't looking at anyone in particular.

Harry was sitting near the window and looked outside, he frowned.

"I can't see all that well, but it looks like something's moving outside." he told them, still trying to get a better look.

As soon as he said that, the posture of the other boys changed. They all took out their wands and positioned themselves in front of Harry, blocking him from the door.

He was a little surprised to see their determined expressions and the protectiveness in their eyes. However, he didn't have the time to think about it, because the temperature dropped rather suddenly and then he knew what was going on. Though knowing didn't help him in understanding it; Dumbledore had said that they wouldn't be allowed on the train.
"Harry, are you alright?" asked Nott, and only then did he notice that Harry was extremely pale, his eyes were glazed and he was shaking.

"What's going on?" asked Blaise, looking at Harry worried, though never lowering his wand from the door.

The boy named Graham cursed and looked at Adrian.

"Dementors." was all he said, and a look of understanding appeared on their faces.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck," cursed Adrian, "How the fuck are we going to protect him from dementors?! None of us knows how to cast a Patronus."

"Fire." the twins answered in unison, and Nott nodded in agreement, "It's better than nothing." he added.

They were all pale now, and Blaise was shaking slightly. He prayed to Merlin for the train to start up again so that they could leave the creatures behind, but when it became even colder and the sensation of despair grew stronger, he knew that his prayers hadn't been answered.

It was with a feeling of dread that he saw a rotten hand open the door to their compartment.

The boys lost all the blood they had left in their faces but he was rather impressed when he saw that they were still in front of Harry, trying to protect him. He was expecting for the Dementor to go away, but the creature entered the compartment and turned towards the boys, only when he heard a moan coming from Harry did he act.

"Expecto Patronum." he chanted, getting up from his place, breaking the illusion and standing in front of the boys.

The creature left the compartment immediately, and some moments later the lights flickered back on and the temperature went back to normal.

He looked back and saw that the boys had gained a little color back. Nott was beside Harry, who looked to still be in the same state.

"Is everyone alright?" he asked.

"Does he look alright?" Nott snarled, glaring at him for a few seconds, before focusing on Harry again.

Malfoy looked at Harry briefly and then at him.

"I apologize for Theo. He is far more polite usually. He's just worried."

"It's completely understandable," and it was, it was clear as day that they were all worried about Harry. "If you'll excuse me, I'm going to talk to the driver and send a message to Hogwarts and explain what's going on with your friend."

Before he could even move, he had the twins blocking his way.

"You can't do that." Malfoy told him calmly.

"May I ask why I can't inform the school about what happened?"

"Do you not know who he is?" asked the boy named Adrian, looking a bit incredulous.
He just looked at the boy, of course he knew, but he was interested in knowing why they didn't want him to warn the school.

"He's Harry Potter." answered Adrian, assuming that his silence indicated that he didn't know.

"The Boy-Who-Lived." added Blaise, "If anyone that wants to harm him knows about what happened, he will be at an enormous disadvantage. And if you inform Hogwarts, everyone will know, and even if it's only hearsay, it is something that can be a big problem."

He had the feeling that there was more to it than what they were saying, and he suddenly remembered what Harry had said, maybe the title 'King of Slytherin' wasn't only metaphorical, and in that case, showing any kind of weakness could be fatal.

Containing a sigh, he looked at the boys again.

"Very well," from his pocket he took out three chocolate bars and gave them to the boys, "Share it between yourselves, chocolate helps to fight off the effects the Dementors have," when none of the boys showed they were going to eat, he sighed, of course they were suspicious, "You can eat it, I guarantee it isn't poisoned." to prove that, he broke a piece from Malfoy's bar and ate it.

Following his example the boys ate the chocolate. However, he didn't miss the fact that Nott only gave Harry the chocolate after he had tasted it.

For a few moments, no one spoke, though a soft voice ended up breaking the silence.

"Thank you."

Looking in that direction, he saw that it was Harry and he seemed to be better. The relief was palpable in the compartment.

"You're welcome." he answered, "I'm Remus Lupin, you're new DADA professor."

Harry nodded with a small smile on his lips.

"I am Harry Potter, beside me is Theodore Nott, then we have Blaise Zabini and Draco Malfoy, the two closest to you are Adrian Pucey and Graham Montague, and the two red-heads are Fred and George Weasley." Harry introduced them, pointing to each of them respectively.

He supposed he shouldn't have been surprised when he recognized all the family names from the Slytherins. They were, after all, in one way or another, associated with Death Eaters.

Again, he couldn't help but ask himself how Harry had ended up the leader of this little group.

"At least we know that he is more competent that the previous professor." remarked Blaise, son of the Black Widow, suspected of more than twenty assassinations ordered by the Dark Lord. Now that he knew whom the boy was the son of, it was easy to spot the similarities.

Malfoy laughed, "Can you imagine Lockhart facing a Dementor?"

Several of them laughed, but Harry and Nott exchanged a look.

"Speaking of Dementors," said Nott, making the laughter stop abruptly, "What were they doing on the train?"

Suddenly all eyes were on him, but it was the eyes the color of death that captivated him and made him talk.
"They were looking for Sirius Black, they'll be at the school too."

"They are putting Dementors in the school?" asked Graham Montague, son of Gregory Montague, suspected of having been one of the Dark Lords most sadistic torturers, at least that had been the information the Order had, "Who would be stupid enough to put Dementors in a school?"

"The order came from the Minister," he answered, not taking his eyes of Harry, "They were put there for the students' protection."

"I believe we need a new Minister." commented Adrian Pucey with disdain, son of the Dark Lord's top interrogator, according to the information that the Order had, Julius Pucey was able to make anyone talk and never used truth serums to do it.

Again, the question of how those particular Slytherins ended up so close to Harry came to mind.

"Are you going to teach the Patronus to students?" Harry asked, ignoring the previous comment.

"To the seventh years, it's part of the curriculum. Though, usually, less than half are able to do it."

Malfoy looked like he wanted to comment, but one look from Harry made him shut his mouth, it was rather astonishing how they obeyed Harry without a second thought.

"Fred and I better go," George said, looking at Harry, "We must be almost at Hogwarts and Lee must be wondering where we are."

"We'll see you later." Fred said, also looking at Harry, receiving a small nod they smiled and left the compartment.

The following half an hour went by without any more incidents, but he did notice something different, their behavior had changed a little, they seemed somewhat younger. Though he believed that he was only able to see the difference because he had seen them interact when he believed he was sleeping, when they felt they were 'alone' they acted more freely with each other.

He didn't quite know what to make of it, so he did his best to put the boys' behavior out of his mind. At the very least, it was going to be an interesting year.

Harry and his Court were the first to arrive at the entrance to the Slytherin common room. He wanted to see the reactions the students would have when they saw the two Gryffindors in their midst. Speaking of Gryffindors...

"Demons?"

A small chuckle came from the shadows and the twins started to appear, he was happy to see that they were taking their infiltration and spying work seriously, they had found dozens of spells that could be useful for it. Not even he knew what the spell they had used was, but it made it look like the shadows were literally dripping of the twins. He had to ask them where they'd found it, it had a rather wicked effect.

"Memorize this place, and every month on the first ask one of us to give you the password" Harry instructed, seeing them nod, he turned back to the wall. "Wolfsbane."

The first password of the year was always chosen by Snape and it was always related to potions. Fortunately, during the year it was the prefects that selected them.
After entering, he let the twins have a look around, and showed them where the Court always sat.

A few moments after they were comfortable in their seats, the other Slytherins started trickling in. At first none of them seemed to notice the twins, but someone must have noticed them, because suddenly they started pointing and whispering and Harry had to contain his laugh when he saw how horrified some of them looked.

However, before anyone was able to make any comments, the first years entered the common room, following the new fifth year prefects. It still miffed him that neither Adrian nor Graham had been chosen, though he knew that it was not their fault. The prefects were chosen by their Head of House and he was sure that Snape would never, even under torture, do something that would give him more power, so naturally he would never choose someone on his Court for prefect. Even if they would have been the best choice, the man was just that stupid. Besides, the prefects obeyed him anyway, so he had no idea what the man was trying to accomplish. Maybe he was trying to make it easier for him to think up ways to finally kill him, or maybe he was trying to inspire him to think of more creative ways to torture him. There were, after all, all kinds of people out there, who knew what rocked the esteemed professor's boat.

The prefects gave the first years a similar speech to the one from the year before and then they ushered the first years in front of his Court.

Considering the slight fear that appeared on their faces, Harry guessed that these students already knew who they were. He supposed that some of the older students must have told them during the feast, maybe the second years, they must have asked why the seating arrangement was the way it was.

However, Theo was able to calm them and still inform them about the gravity of breaking the rules defined by the Court. By the end of it, when Theo asked if there were any questions, one of the students was even brave enough to raise his hand.

"Yes?" Theo asked, looking at the little boy. He was the smallest first year there, and his blond curls, baby blue eyes, and fair skin made him look like a porcelain doll.

"What are they doing here?" he asked, pointing at the twins, "I thought that Slytherins didn't like Gryffindors." the child look honestly curious and that was the only reason Harry even thought about answering.

He looked at the twins, who were lounging on the sofa on either side of him, and laughed, gaining the attention of all the students.

"They... they are my Demons." Harry answered, and the smiles that appeared on the twins' faces lived up to the name that Harry had given them.

Seeing the terror on some of the students faces made Harry laugh again, this promised to be an interesting year.

The first week was almost over and Harry was already bored to death in his usual classes. Sure they had started new subjects, and he had three new ones, having chosen Ancient Runes, Arithmancy, and Care of Magical Creatures, but he had been studying independently for Ancient Runes and Arithmancy since first year, so he was a little above what they were doing. Though he had to admit that COMC was rather interesting, even if the professor was a bit biased towards Slytherins. He was, however, proud of his snakes, even Draco behaved well in class, listening to Hagrid, even though he couldn't stand the man. Naturally, the other Slytherins followed their lead, so the classes went by
without much trouble. And Harry had to admit that the man knew a lot about the creatures, even if he had a somewhat unhealthy obsession with dangerous beasts. Fortunately, he still had his training with his friends; otherwise, he would have gone crazy from boredom. He didn't know if it was possible, but he truly thought that if things continued like they had been then he would find out.

However, he was rather hopeful that today would be different. They would have their first DADA class and he was curious to see how Remus Lupin would do. The twins, Graham, and Adrian had already had his class and they said he was good. Harry knew how much it took to please Graham, so that sparked his curiosity.

After lunch he went to the Defense classroom, Draco, Blaise, and Theo following and they were quite excited, though no one would have been able to know it looking at them; they had perfect masks.

They were the first to arrive and sat in the front row seats. Lupin hadn't arrived yet, but a little over two minutes later he entered the room, a big, old looking chest floating in behind him. When he saw them sitting there he smiled and Harry smiled back, making his friends look at him slightly surprised, it was the first time they saw him smile like that at anyone that wasn't part of their circle. Harry didn't know how to explain it, but he felt somewhat connected to professor Lupin, something about the man was familiar.

A little over five minutes later, all the students were present and the professor began his lecture.

"Good afternoon. As all of you must already know, I'm professor Lupin. My classes will be mostly practical, most of the theory on the subject will be your homework. We will have about half an hour in every class to clear up any doubts or questions that you may have and then we will have practical work; unless, for whatever reason, we need to spend more time on theory. Do you have any questions?" he asked, looking at the students. Not seeing anyone with their hand up, he continued, "Very well, let's start then. Put your books away, wands out, get up from your seats and stand near the back wall, please."

The students quickly did what the professor told them to, and were standing in a more or less organized manner by the back wall.

"Very well," Lupin said, leaning against his desk, "Who can tell me what a boggart is?"

It didn't surprise Harry the least bit that Granger was the only Gryffindor with her hand up, while glaring at his group. Apparently she was still angry that they bested her in all the exams, not that Harry cared one bit about how she felt.

His friends had their hands up as well but Harry didn't bother, he was busy thinking about what the professor had said. Lupin had said that classes would be practical, and considering the chest he had brought with him, it wasn't all that difficult to guess what they would be doing this class.

Honestly, he didn't know if he was happy about it or not. Seeing the other students' worst fears was something he really wanted, it was a unique opportunity and he could think of hundreds of situations where the information could be quite useful, but on the other hand, the other students would see what his biggest fear was and that didn't please him one bit.

And speaking about biggest fears... what was his?

For a fraction of a second, he thought about Dementors; he hated feeling weak and the Dementor sure made him feel that way. However, that idea was quickly put aside; there were ways to defend yourself against Dementors, it was only a question of learning them, so he really had no reason to
"Exactly, five points to Slytherin."

Lupin's voice brought him out of his thoughts. Apparently, Draco had answered the question correctly.

"Inside this chest is a Boggart, the spell to fight the Boggart is 'Riddiculus', repeat after me. 'Riddiculus'," the class chanted in unison, "Again, 'Riddiculus'." he told them, making the students repeat it again, "Good. I want you to form a line. You will face the Boggart one at a time. As Draco said, you have to think of something funny, laughter is the greatest weapon against a Boggart. Are you ready?" he asked looking at them.

Several students nodded and Harry wasn't surprised to see that the Gryffindors were the first in line, eager to show that they weren't afraid of facing their fears.

He was the last in line, though he was curious to see what his biggest fear was, he wouldn't lose any sleep over not knowing. Though he had to admit that he was rather curious to see what his friends' biggest fears were. From what he had seen they didn't appear to fear much.

A scream brought him out of his thoughts and he saw a giant spider in front of Weasley, who was shaking quite badly and seemed to have lost all color, turning his skin sheet white, it was interesting knowing his fear, especially if the red-head continued to get on his nerves as he had the last two years.

The students went by, and there were fears as simple as Weasley's spider and as complex as Longbottom's Snape, he didn't believe that Longbottom was scared of Snape, sure he might be afraid of him personally, but Harry doubted that it was his biggest fear, there must be something more complex to it, maybe he was afraid of what Snape represented?

The students passed quickly and the only one that Harry found interesting as well as quite entertaining was Granger's. Her Boggart transformed into professor McGonagall and told her she would never be as good as Harry. He had to restrain himself from laughing, especially when Granger ran out of the room crying, not even trying to face the Boggart. Harry shook his head, it was truly pathetic.

However, when it was his group's turn he paid much more attention.

Theo was the first that went against the Boggart and Harry knew that every student was paying close attention, they were all curious to know what his group feared. They were, after all, as much revered as they were hated, and for one reason or another people were curious about them.

Theo took a deep breath and stepped forward, it was the sign that Lupin needed to open the chest again, freeing the Boggart.

Harry had prepared for many things, but nothing like what appeared even crossed his mind.

Theo's Boggart looked like Harry. However, he was lying on the floor, covered in blood and wounds, his eyes were glazed over and a pale lifeless green, they looked nothing like his vibrant green eyes, full of life and magic. And though the Boggart Harry was still alive, his breathing was shallow and weak, and it looked like every breath he took pained him.

"Theo..." the Boggart Harry's voice was as weak as he looked, it was little more than a whisper and Harry looked at the Boggart Harry with disdain, he would never be that weak, "I trusted you... you failed me."
Now Theo started to shake.

Harry didn't know what to think about what he was seeing but he knew what he had to do.

"Theo," he called, moving so he was a bit to the side and behind Theo. Theo looked at him and Harry could hardly believe it when he saw the despair in those eyes, Theo should never have that look in his eyes, he smiled and in a calm and warm voice he said, "I trust you." and he was completely honest, he did trust Theo.

For a fraction of a second, Theo looked shocked. However, in the next moment a huge smile appeared on his lips and he stopped shaking.

"Riddiculus." he said confidently, focusing on the Boggart again.

In the dying Boggart Harry's place appeared a Harry with a Gryffindor uniform, holding a big sign that said 'I love Weasley'!

His group wasn't able to control their laughter, completely ignoring Harry's glare. But Harry didn't say anything, he could detect the slight hysterical edge to Theos laughter, far too subtle for those that didn't know him to notice, and he could also see the relief in Draco and Blaise, they may not have shown it but they had been affected by Theo's Boggart, so he let them be, knowing they needed it.

While his friends tried to bring their laughter under control, Lupin managed to put the Boggart back in the chest, though Harry did notice that he too appeared to be a bit pale, it looked like seeing a student on death's door had affected the professor.

When the laughter stopped and his friends looked like they were back to normal, Lupin opened the chest again.

This time it was Draco that went against it.

Draco's Boggart appeared confused, for a second it looked like it would transform into Lucius, but then it shrunk and the hair color became darker, but instead of taking a defined form, it grew again and gained a certain similarity to Lucius. It did the same thing for two or three more times, until it decided on a form.

And again Harry saw a copy of himself in the room.

Though this time he wasn't hurt, this time it was truly himself they were seeing, without any masks, his eyes glowed like the 'Avada Kedavra', and the light from the windows made his hair shine blood red in certain parts. The smile that the Boggart Harry had was so sadistic that Harry saw several students take a step back, wanting to put some distance between them and the Boggart. Lupin however was looking at the Boggart like he was trying to solve a puzzle.

The Boggart Harry's cruel laugh was heard and he saw more than one student shiver.

"I knew that you weren't worth anything," said the Boggart Harry, in a cold, detached voice, looking at Draco with eyes filled with malice, "You are nothing more than a spoiled brat. You have no use to me," the Boggart continued viciously, his smile growing and his eyes filled with cruel amusement, loving every second of pain that he was causing Draco, "Hmm, then again, maybe you do have some use," said the Boggart Harry looking thoughtful, Draco looked at Boggart Harry with so much hope that it was painful to see, "Yes... you can always scream for me." Boggart Harry finished malevolently, pointing his wand at Draco.

Just like Theo, Draco started to tremble and was extremely pale and Harry acted without even
thinking about it.

"Draco," Draco looked at him, he seemed lost, "I'm proud of you."

Draco's eyes opened wide, and Harry knew that he was searching for any sign that Harry was lying, not finding any, he smiled.

"Riddiculus." he chanted and the Boggart Harry gained bright pink hair with blue strips.

It was nothing all that funny, but it was rather difficult to maintain that demonic air with bright pink hair.

Several students laughed and Lupin put the Boggart in the chest again.

This time it didn't take as long for the students to calm down and less than thirty seconds later, Blaise was facing the Boggart.

Harry didn't know if he should be surprised or not when he saw that Blaise's Boggart also turned into him.

But again it was a different Boggart Harry; this one seemed more innocent and had a warm and heartfelt smile on his face, only when you looked in his eyes was it possible to see the malevolence in them.

"Oh Blaise," Boggart Harry whispered, "You didn't really think you belonged, did you?" Boggart Harry asked in a sweet and understanding voice, "Oh Blaise. I'm so sorry," and if it weren't for those eyes shining with malicious glee everyone would have believed those words, "You should have realized Blaise, that someone like you would never be worthy of belonging, of being near me. You know that, don't you? You simply aren't worthy."

That said in that sweet and caring voice, and looking like an innocent angel, coupled with the perverse amusement that was in Boggart Harry's eyes, was far worse than if the Boggart Harry looked like Draco's did.

"Blaise," Harry said almost whispering, putting his hand on Blaise's shoulder, "You are one of us." though his voice was far colder than Boggart Harry's, his eyes showed Blaise that he meant it, and that was more than enough.

"Riddiculus." Blaise said, focusing on the Boggart again.

The Boggart Harry's clothes changed to something more childish, and he had a white teddy bear in his right hand and a pacifier in his mouth, he didn't look older than two or three years old. The Boggart Harry started to have tears in his big green eyes, and he had the world famous puppy dog look, he looked like a cherub. Harry heard more than one person go 'awwww', and Blaise started laughing, followed closely by Draco and Theo.

Harry shook his head; he would find a way to get revenge.

Harry was preparing to face his Boggart, when Lupin ended the lesson.

When everyone was packing he told his friends to wait, the other students were so engrossed in talking about the lesson that they didn't even notice that the four Slytherins stayed behind.

When Harry saw that they were alone, he walked to Lupin's desk, where the professor was sitting looking at some notes he had taken during class.
"Professor, I have a question."

Lupin looked at them, his eyes landing on every one of them, filled with curiosity.

"What's the question?"

"Why didn't you let me face the Boggart?"

Lupin looked surprised for a little bit before he answered.

"I think it's obvious," he said, not denying that he hadn't let Harry face the Boggart, "I believed that Voldemort appearing in the middle of the room wasn't a good idea."

Now it was Harry's turn to be surprised.

"Voldemort?"

"I assumed that he was your biggest fear, though considering your reaction it appears I was wrong." explained Lupin, looking at Harry curiously.

Theo nodded.

"It is rather logical that people assume that your biggest fear would be the Dark Lord."

"Yes," agreed Harry, "But he didn't even cross my mind." admitted Harry, not surprising his friends.

They had all heard him talking about the Dark Lord, and the only emotion he showed when talking about him was admiration and fascination, something that had surprised them a lot the first time. Considering everything, they were expecting him to at least hate the Dark Lord, but Harry never spoke badly about him, and more than once said that he would have enjoyed talking to him. The first few times they believed Harry to be crazy, people usually don't want to talk to Dark Lords, they want to run as far away from them as they can, even his followers feared him and the only ones that even dared to talk to him a little more freely were the very first Inner Circle members, and very few of them were still alive, most having died in the first war, Theo's grandfather being one of the few still alive, but even they were extremely respectful toward him and far too afraid to have a conversation like Harry wanted to have.

Lupin looked even more surprised than they had but didn't press the matter.

"For a fraction of a second I thought about Dementors," Harry continued, completely ignoring Lupin's look, "Though I discarded that quickly, I may not like how they make me feel, but there are defenses against them, I find no reason to fear them. Honestly, I have no idea what my biggest fear is, I was quite curious in seeing what was going to appear."

Lupin had that curious look again, Harry was starting to wonder what the man's fascination with him and his friends was.

"You don't know your biggest fear?" he asked, his tone conveying his incredulity.

"No, I can't really think of anything."

Remus shook his head, he didn't know if it was arrogance or something else but Harry's answer left him perplexed. Harry was thirteen years old, it was natural for children his age to have fears. It was one of the main reasons they taught Boggarts to third years, they usually already had defined fears but they generally weren't too complex, normally it was something simple, like Weasley's spider, or
Patil's snake.

'Though there are always exceptions,' he thought, looking at the three students standing around Harry. He hadn't expected to see what their Boggarts became, he could hardly believe how loyal they were to Harry. Honestly, he didn't even know if the relationship they had with Harry was healthy, it appeared to be almost obsessive. That level of dedication and loyalty couldn't be normal for thirteen year old students.

But on the other hand, it was impossible to deny that the dedication and loyalty was real, the friendships were real, and that couldn't be bad, right?

Though getting back to the original reason they were there, considering that his friends were exceptions, he shouldn't be surprised in Harry being one as well.

"Why do you want to know?"

"If I don't know what my biggest fear is, how can I overcome it?"

For some reason Harry's answer didn't surprise him. Looking at his watch he saw that there were still twenty minutes till the next class, it was more than enough time for Harry to face his Boggart.

"Do you want to face it now?" he asked, studying Harry's reaction.

"Why not? It's more than enough time." he answered with a small chuckle.

Remus nodded and got up, telling the boys to follow him.

Harry stopped in front of the chest and the other boys leaned against the wall on the right. If he hadn't seen their Boggarts, he would have believed that they weren't the least bit worried.

"Are you ready?" he asked, looking at Harry.

Getting a nod in return, he opened the chest.

He didn't really know what to expect, a small part of him was still expecting to see Voldemort pop out of the chest, because even if Harry didn't recognize it as his biggest fear, his subconscious might have, but after he saw Harry's Boggart he had no idea what to make of it, what it meant.

Harry's Boggart was Harry but he was a bit different. His hair was shorter, grew all over the place and it had lost that blood red shine it sometimes had. He didn't have that regal gait and natural grace that Harry had. And though he was still handsome he didn't have Harry's angelic beauty. Though in his opinion the biggest difference were the eyes, instead of the vivid 'Avada Kedavra' green that almost glowed with magic, they were emerald green, rather pretty, like Lily's, but they were nothing compared to Harry's own.

Remus had no idea what the Boggart meant, considering that he looked like a perfectly normal boy.

A laugh caught his attention.

Harry had no idea what to expect from his Boggart, so he wasn't surprised when he saw what it turned into.

He studied the Boggart for a few seconds, but when he understood what the Boggart represented, he couldn't help but laugh.

His biggest fear was being normal, ordinary, a boy like any other. His laughter only grew when he...
realized how ridiculous that fear was.

'I am, after all, Harry Potter,' he thought with all the arrogance and superiority only a teenager can have, 'I was born to be extraordinary.'

"Really? That's my biggest fear?" he asked, looking at the Boggart with disdain, "You will have to do better than that, I will never be ordinary," he concluded, turning his back on the Boggart and looking at Lupin, "I suppose you can lock it back in the chest, I have no use for it anymore. It was a rather interesting class professor, I hope the rest will be the same."

Not saying anything else, Harry walked out the door, his friends following him and leaving a shocked professor behind.

He wasn't the least bit surprised with the visit he received after dinner, considering the rumors that spread throughout the castle that afternoon, he was rather surprised that he had managed to wait that long to bring up the subject.

"Good evening Severus." he said as soon as the spy sat down.

"Albus."

They sat for several seconds in silence, Albus didn't want to start the conversation that he was sure Severus wanted to have. If he was honest he didn't even know if he wanted to have that conversation at all, because no matter how hard he tried he couldn't help but feel worried.

"Is it true?" Severus ended up asking.

"I fear you will have to be more specific, my boy."

"Is it true what they have been saying about the Defense class for third year Slytherins and Gryffindors?"

"If you are referring to the form that the Boggart of several Slytherins took, then yes, it is true." Albus answered with a heavy heart.

How he wished it were a lie, or to at least be able to see it with different eyes, like most of the other professors. More than one of the professors had become even more enchanted with Harry and his friends, but especially with Harry. They didn't spare compliments and were all so impressed with the strong friendship between the boys and they were so proud of the influence Harry had on his friends. Naturally, they also noticed that the Slytherins were different, and were causing less fights, and somehow they were sure that it was Harry's doing, that of course just proved to them just how special Harry was.

Albus, on the other hand, wasn't able to see the situation in the same light. Even before that afternoon's Defense class, he had been seeing a boy creating his power base, an intelligence network, he had seen a child capable of controlling an entire school, but even not seeing it like the other professors, until that afternoon he hadn't known what Harry was truly capable of doing.

It was difficult to believe that a thirteen year old child had such a profound control over those boys. They were so afraid of disappointing him, of not being useful to him, of not being able to continue to be at his side, it wasn't normal, and he felt a shiver go down his spine when he thought about what those boys would be like in a few years, or what Harry would be able to do in a few years.

For the first time in a long time, he felt afraid and he could only hope that Merlin had mercy on their
souls, because he was starting to believe that Harry wouldn't.

Severus didn't want to believe the rumors, and even now that Albus had confirmed it to be true, he still didn't want to believe them. But even not wanting to believe them, he knew that it was the pure truth, and he also knew that there was nothing he could do about it.

Again he had to sit by and watch as a Potter took what was most precious in his life. First Lily, the only woman he had ever loved, and now Draco, his godson, a boy he loved as if he were his own son.

In moments like these, he couldn't help but wonder if the Potters had been put on Earth to cause him pain, to make him suffer.

Why? Why had Harry James Potter been born? He wasn't a particularly religious man, but he was certain that they must have angered the gods for them to subject them to a being like Harry Potter. He was certain that it could only be a punishment from the gods, otherwise how could they explain how a thirteen year old child was able to control people that easily, how could they explain the obsessive loyalty and dedication of the three Slytherins, especially his godson, how could they explain his power, how could they explain anything about him really, if they didn't think of it as a punishment from the gods?

He wondered if Lucius knew that he had already lost his son. In any other situation, the thought that he was exaggerating may have crossed his mind, but he knew what having a Boggart like that meant.

Draco's biggest fear was disappointing Potter, not being useful to Potter, so it would be only natural to do everything he possibly could for that not to happen, even if it meant going against his father.

So, no, Severus didn't think he was exaggerating.

"Albus..." for the first time since he could remember he didn't know what to say.

"I know." answered Albus, looking far older and more tired than he had moments before, "However, I fear there is nothing we can do. There are no potions involved, no spells. They... they follow him of their own free will."

And both knew that was true, loyalty and dedication like that could only be freely given.

"They are thirteen," exclaimed Severus, exasperated, "How can it be possible?"

A small chuckle captured their attention.

"I don't see what's funny." Severus almost snarled.

"I am sorry Severus, but I did warn you," answered Alistair, the Sorting Hat, "I told you he was a perfect Slytherin."

"Wasn't it the Hufflepuffs that were supposed to be fanatically loyal?" he asked just to be petty, he knew it was childish, but right at that moment he couldn't stop himself.

"Just because it was a definition of Hufflepuff doesn't mean that he isn't able to use it on others," replied Alistair, ignoring Severus' tone, "I told you that if he was able to succeed in Slytherin then there wouldn't be anything stopping him from being great, he always had that potential. Although, I have to admit that I wasn't expecting for him to be able to succeed so quickly."

Severus never though he would hear the Sorting Hat sound so surprised. He looked back at Albus,
he didn't want to think about Alistair's words, and he didn't want to think about what Potter was capable of doing if he had surpassed even the Sorting Hat's expectations.

"Have you talked to Draco?"

Considering Albus' look, he didn't think he had been able to hide the pain that the question caused as well as he'd thought.

"The last time I spoke to Draco, outside of a class room, about anything relating to other matters aside from school, was on the Christmas break in their first year," seeing Albus' surprised expression, he added, "Apparently, he noticed that I can't stand Potter, and evidently, between me, a person that he considered a second father, and Potter, his Lord, his Master, he chose his Master."

"Severus!"

"It doesn't matter how much you try to deny it Albus," said Severus, he almost sounded defeated. He contained a sneer, in his opinion it was perfectly natural for him to sound defeated, after years of thinking of and working on ways to keep Draco from being marked by the Dark Lord when he came back, to keep him safe, and he ends up losing him to a completely different Dark Lord before he even knew what was happening. So yes, he was allowed to sound defeated, "He is their Lord, their Master, they don't need to be marked to belong to him."

Not wanting to hear false platitudes, he got up and left Albus' office, he had a bottle of Firewhiskey with his name on it. Who knew, maybe if he was drunk enough he wouldn't dream about eyes the color of death.

Harry was quite excited, it was the end of October and they were having their first Hogsmead visit. Considering that the only magical place he had visited was Diagon Alley, he was quite curious to see what a completely magical town looked like.

Theo, Draco, and Blase, though they had grown up in the magical world, were excited too. However no matter how excited they were, they tried thousands of things to make him change his mind about going, and of course, if he didn't go, they wouldn't either. He had to admit that he didn't understand why they were worrying, and he knew that they truly did worry. A while back he may not have believed that they truly cared, but after seeing those Boggarts...

They didn't talk about it, but since that day they had become closer and the way they treated him had also changed, it wasn't something obvious, none of the other students would notice, however everyone in the Court noticed. They were more... affectionate was maybe the most appropriate word.

Harry didn't say anything, if it were anyone else he would never tolerate it, but his Court was different, the Court belonged to him, they belonged to him, so they had freedoms that others never would.

Graham and Adrian, who had planned to stay at the castle, decided to go with them as soon as Blaise informed them that they hadn't been able to convince Harry to stay in Hogwarts.

He wanted to be angry with them, but he wasn't able to, he knew that they were extremely worried about him, especially since an article in the Daily Prophet said that Black had been seen near a village that was only a few miles away from Hogsmead.

Though he couldn't understand how they were more worried about the whole Sirius Black thing than he was, however he didn't say anything. He had tried over the summer to talk them out of their irrational worry, but it had led nowhere, so he thought that he would spare himself several hours of
futile arguing. Besides, he had to see the positive of the whole Sirius Black ordeal; the Court was applying itself far more in their training, even the twins.

Harry was rather proud of the twins, he knew they were intelligent, but they didn't worry about their grades. However, the moment Harry introduced them as a part of the Court they started to apply themselves. When Harry asked them why, they replied that they didn't want to let him down. When Harry told them that it wasn't necessary to do it, they laughed and said that they weren't doing it because it was necessary, but because they wanted to.

He chuckled, and left his room, meeting the rest of the Court in the common room, it was time to visit Hogsmead.

Harry was reading a book near the fireplace with all the members of his Court, not counting the twins, lounging around him, entertaining themselves with various things.

The Hallowe'en feast, or Samhain, like most of the Slytherins preferred to call it, had ended a little over thirty minutes ago and after having spent the day in Hogsmead they were all a little lethargic and were more than happy to indulge in a quiet night with no training.

Unfortunately, his quiet night was about to be interrupted.

Harry looked up when he heard the entrance to the common room open and was rather surprised when he saw Snape enter.

Curious, he observed the man. His eyes looked around the room, staying a bit longer on their corner of the room, until they landed on Malcolm Linndon and Alexis Rosier, the seventh year prefects, and he walked towards them.

Snape had his back turned to them so he wasn't able to see his expression, but Rosier paled a little and Linndon looked far more serious than usual.

Curious about what was going on, he got up and walked towards the trio, knowing that the others would follow him.

'Black had managed to get inside the castle,' Severus thought, and no one was able to enter the castle, they had made sure of that. And no matter how much he wanted to blame the wolf for having helped his old friend, he knew that the he wouldn't be able to break the enchantments that Albus had cast.

He focused on his prefects again, when he saw Rosier pale even more and Linndon's eyes open wide. Noticing that they were looking somewhere behind him, he gave in to temptation and looked back.

He did everything he could not to show any reaction, but it was hard. Potter and his Court were walking towards them. Now that he saw them in the common room the effect was different, they may be only six in number, but it was clear why only six students were able to control the House, even if they were so young.

They had a regal air about them, though they also looked cold and aloof, the students followed them with their eyes, the emotions in them far too complex to identify. However, the reaction they had towards Potter was the most relevant. They moved out of his way and the younger ones looked as much terrorized as awed, leaving them not knowing what to do, or how to act.

Again, he couldn't help but ask himself what Potter had done to get those reactions. However, when
he saw the look of one of the second year students when he saw Zabini, he almost wasn't able to stop his eyes from widening. The boy was looking at Zabini with unadulterated fear, and the smiles that appeared on the Court members' faces could only be called sadistic, he had no idea that Draco was able to have that kind of expression.

He wasn't sure he wanted to know what the Court was capable of, but in that moment he agreed with the other professors, Potter had influenced the Slytherins, but he, unlike the other professors, couldn't see anything good about it.

"Good evening," Potter's warm and smooth voice caught his attention. Apparently, Potter had no intention of appearing child-like, "Is there a problem Linndon?"

Severus wanted to growl and send the brat away, but he was a Slytherin and he knew that if he did anything against the Slytherin King, outside of the classroom, and in front of so many other Slytherins, it would be suicide.

They may do nothing against him directly, but any respect, trust, and control that he had over them would be lost, and then the House would be completely in Potter's hands, something that he wanted to avoid at all cost.

"Sirius Black was seen in the castle," Linndon answered before Severus could make a decision about what to do and he almost wasn't able to stop cringing, he knew that tone and he could hear the 'my Lord' at the end of the sentence, "Professor Snape just informed us that we will be sleeping in the Great Hall."

"Very well. Rosier, Linndon, make sure that all the years stay together and that a prefect is sleeping near each year. Tell the younger ones that if they have a problem that they should speak to the prefect sleeping near them. You don't have to worry about the Court."

Potter instructed, it was obvious that he expected to be obeyed without a second thought, and considering the instant and in unison response of "Yes.", he didn't think that the prefects had even thought of not obeying.

Apparently satisfied, Potter turned his back to them and walked away.

He didn't know how, but in that moment he hated Potter even more, and now it had nothing to do with who his father was.

More than a week had gone by since Black had been seen in the castle, apparently he had tried, and almost succeeded, to enter the Gryffindor common room. According to the twins, Black had the password but the painting that protected the entrance refused to move because he wasn't a student or a professor, after that Black tried to enter by force and that was what alerted the rest of the tower that something was going on. Though the situation had been relatively interesting Harry was rather annoyed. Since it happened, his Court wouldn't leave him alone for a second, he knew that they had even pondered the possibility of one of them always sleeping in his room, he was quite happy that they had given up on that idea, otherwise he would have had to interfere.

It was the first night he had been able to get some alone time and he was going to enjoy it for as long as he could.

He was thinking about spending a bit of time in the library when he heard a noise that made him stop. It appeared to come from the classroom on his left, which was rather odd, considering that the classroom wasn't used.
Not being able to contain his curiosity he opened the door and went inside, trying not to make much noise, and was quite surprised by what he saw.

A boy, who looked to be around his age, was sitting in a corner of the room, his clothes were torn and Harry could see more than one bruise and a few cuts.

Harry stood still for a few seconds, analyzing the situation, on one hand the boy hadn't heard him coming into the classroom, so he could leave without getting involved, but on the other hand, if he did get involved he could take advantage of the situation and even if the boy turned out to be useless Harry could always make him useful, it may be a bit more work but it was better than having no use at all for the boy.

"Hey," Harry said, making a decision, "Are you alright?"

Even though his voice was low, calm, and soft the boy almost jumped out of his skin and Harry saw tears running down his cheeks when the boy lifted his head and looked at him. Though what surprised him more was seeing who it was, Longbottom lost all color when he saw him.

When several seconds went by and Longbottom still hadn't said anything, Harry walked a few steps in his direction, trying to keep a calm and serene air about himself. When he saw Longbottom starting to shake, he stopped, it would do no good to scare the Gryffindor even more.

"I'm not going to hurt you," Harry assured him, keeping his voice calm, "But to be able to help you, you'll have to tell me what's wrong."

For several moments Longbottom didn't say anything, and Harry was pondering several other tactics he could use when the Gryffindor spoke.

"Why do you care?" it was little more than a whisper, but even then it was possible to hear the bitterness in his voice.

"Does it matter why?" Harry asked, he didn't want to lie to Longbottom, he generally didn't lie, it complicated things. In his opinion, most people weren't worth the effort it took to lie, "You don't look so good, tell me what's wrong so that I can help you."

Again, several minutes went by before Longbottom spoke.

"It's only some bruises and small cuts."

"Do you want to tell me what happened?" Harry knew it wasn't likely that he would, but it was worth a shot.

"I hate them," Longbottom almost snarled, surprising Harry, "They're always saying that Slytherins are evil, that they aren't trustworthy, and look at what they've done. If that's being good, I don't know if I want to know what being evil is."

Well, it didn't answer his question directly but it was better than nothing, and he could guess who had attacked him and who the 'them' was, but it was almost curfew and the classroom they were in wasn't the best place to have the conversation he knew they would have.

"Can you stand?" he asked, making Longbottom focus on him again.

It took a while but Longbottom nodded, though when he got up he lost his balance and almost fell, only Harry's fast reflexes managed to prevent it.
"Lean on me." Harry told him, he didn't particularly like serving as a crutch to the boy but if he didn't help him, they would take years to reach the common room.

"Where are we going?" Longbottom asked, after they had left the room.

"Slytherins' common room." Harry answered casually.

"What?" squeaked Longbottom, trying to get as far away from Harry as possible, though it was slightly difficult, considering he wasn't letting go.

"Don't worry, you're with me, nothing will happen to you." Harry assured him, if he played this right he would have a new member in his Court.

Longbottom looked at him incredulously but didn't try to pull away, he considered that a good sign.

When Harry said the password and went inside with Longbottom, he couldn't say who looked more stunned, the Slytherins or Longbottom.

Harry almost dragged Longbottom to where his Court was lounging. When Longbottom saw who was there, he almost went into shock.

"You!" he exclaimed, pointing at the twins, who were sprawled on a couch reading a book.

Hearing Longbottom's exclamation all the members of the Court looked at them, making Longbottom pale a bit and start to stutter. Containing a sigh, he pushed Longbottom to the nearest couch.

"Adrian, take care of him." Harry instructed, going to sit in his armchair, he picked up a book that was on the table and got comfortable, he knew that his Court would take care of everything.

Adrian didn't even think about asking Harry why he had brought the Gryffindor, other people may have found it odd that he, or rather they, because the other members did the same, followed Harry with such ease, with so much dedication, but to them it was as natural as breathing. If anyone asked him why he wouldn't be able to answer, or at least give the person who asked an answer that would satisfy them; after all, he doubted that they would accept or understand the answer 'because he's Harry'.

"Hey, little lion," he said softly, he didn't want to stress him more than he was, "Can you tell me what your wounds are?"

When he didn't say anything, he contained a sigh and looked at the twins.

"Neville," Fred said, kneeling in front of the couch Neville was sitting on, "You can trust Adrian."

"What are you doing here?" asked Neville, looking at Fred shocked.

"We'll talk after Adrian has looked you over, ok?" George tried to persuade him.

Seeing Neville nod, Adrian started to work. He was no specialist, but he knew some diagnostic spells and a few healing ones. Harry had suggested that it might be useful to know, especially when they trained.

"It's only some bruises and a few cuts, the deepest one is on your chest, but when it's healed it won't even scar," Adrian informed them, looking at Graham he continued, "Can you go to my room and get the bruise balm that's in a blue container on the second shelf on the stand near the couch?"
Graham nodded he looked at Neville again, "I'm going to heal your cuts and fix your clothing, the balm is for you to put on before you go to sleep, tomorrow you'll be as good as new."

"Thanks." Neville whispered.

Adrian laughed, "There is nothing to thank me for, you're one of us now."

"What?" Neville exclaimed, perplexed.

"Well, Harry brought you," explained Theo with a small chuckle, "That makes you one of us."

"B-b-but.. b-b-but...

"Don't worry," added Draco, having stopped reading for a moment, "We take care of our own."

Neville appeared to be in shock, not knowing what to do, he looked at Harry. Almost as if he felt the eyes on him, Harry lowered his book and caught Neville's eyes. Harry just nodded, but for Neville, a boy that had always been alone, that never had anyone who truly looked like they cared about him, that nod was more important than he could ever explain. With that simple gesture, the Court had gained a member that would be fanatically loyal.

Seeing Neville calm down a bit and a small smile appearing on his face, Fred decided to ask again.

"Can you tell us what happened?"

"How about this, Fred and I will tell you why we're here and you tell us what happened." George suggested when he saw that Neville was a bit uncomfortable.

Neville nodded and the twins sat on the couch in front of him.

"As you know, Fred and I came from a big family. And for everyone who sees it from an outside point of view, our parents are perfect. But the truth is... well it's difficult to explain. But it's like Fred and I don't fit the mold that they thought all their children should have."

"Our father isn't present that much, he is always working and when he isn't working he's in his shed, playing with muggle things, and that leaves a clear path for our mother. I cannot remember a day when George and I weren't compared to our brothers, especially Percy."

"We don't blame Bill or Charlie, they left as soon as they finished Hogwarts, and they never liked what our mother said, but Percy..."

"Percy used every opportunity he had to tell George and I that we were a disappointment, that our mother would prefer that we were like him."

"And our mother, well, she never denied it."

"Then we have Ron and Ginny. Ginny is the baby, the only girl, she could kill someone in front of our mother and she would say that it wasn't Ginny's fault. And Ron... Ron believes that he has so much to prove that he became an ignorant, self-delusional, bigot that believes that he has the right to anything just because he wants it."

"Fred and I, we don't feel like we are a part of the family, just like Bill and Charlie. We heard them talking once, but we were far too young to understand what they meant then."

"And last year we found Harry. We found a place where we belong. They don't care if George and I don't fit the mold. As long as we're one of them, they accept us just the way we are."
They stayed silent for a few moments, Graham had come back in the middle of the conversation and had put the container with the balm near Neville, before he sat beside him. It showed how much Neville was focusing on the Twins' story that he hadn't even noticed.

"I lost the parchment with the password to enter the Gryffindor common room, that's how Black knew the password," Neville looked ashamed to admit it and he didn't look like he wanted to say anything more, but after taking a deep breath and gathering his Gryffindor courage he continued, "The Gryffindors were instructed not to give me the password..."

"We heard nothing about that." the twins interrupted in unison.

"You weren't in the common room. Percy gave the order as Head Boy; he said I was a disgrace to Gryffindor and that the other Gryffindors couldn't allow me to further disgrace our House. Some students, especially the ones from my dorm, decided to show me what would happen if I didn't behave like a Gryffindor and stopped embarrassing them. Percy saw what they did and he said: 'Make sure that you look presentable, don't you think you have shamed Gryffindor enough?' And he left me in the classroom Harry found me in."

"I'm sorry, but your brother is a bastard." Blaise remarked to the twins when Neville didn't say anything else for a few moments.

"We know." the both of them replied, looking uncommonly serious.

"Hey Neville," he said when he noticed that Neville looked a little fearful, "You don't have to be afraid. You're one of us now. You're a part of Harry's Court."

Lifting his head, Neville looked around and saw that they were all smiling at him. He smiled back, he may not know what the Court was, but he was part of it and he would do anything he could to be worthy of what Harry had given him.

It was almost the end of November and Harry was in the training room with his friends, only the twins were missing.

In the last two weeks the twins had been rather distracted, but they had never failed to show up to training. If they didn't show up before the end of it, Harry would have to talk to them. It wasn't even because they didn't show up for training, but they were behaving oddly and he was starting to worry, not that he would ever admit it.

"That's it Neville!"

Theo's shout caught his attention and he looked to where they were all standing. The Court members were all surrounding Neville, teaching him a new spell.

They had spent the last weeks training Neville, so that he could be at their level. During the first few days Harry couldn't understand why Neville never seemed to be able to cast the most basic of spells, especially because Harry was able to feel his magic and knew that it was a fair bit above average.

Only after Neville confessed that his grandmother forced him to use his father's wand, did they realize the problem. As they couldn't do anything about it at the moment, they decided to help him as much as they could and at least make sure that he had the theory down.

They agreed to meet up at Diagon Alley during the Yule break, where they would be buying him a wand, and there would be no need to tell his grandmother. At the beginning Neville was a bit against it, he was afraid of what his grandmother would do, but Harry was able to persuade him.
Neville fit in well with the group, it was astonishing the changes he was going through. He was still a little shy but they were taking care of it and Harry was sure that by the end of the school year Neville would be a completely different person.

Hearing the door opening, Harry looked back and as soon as he saw his two Demons he knew that something wasn't right.

"Fred? George?" he asked, looking at both, making the others look in their direction.

The twins sat on the chairs available in front of him, and the others joined them when they saw their expressions.

The twins put an old, worn out parchment on the table and Harry raised a brow.

"George and I found this parchment in our first year. How we found it isn't important, if you want to know we can always tell you later."

It was extremely rare to see Fred and George with such serious expressions, so they listened closely, though Harry had a bad feeling about this, because the fury in the twins' eyes was visible for all of them to see, and to leave the twins in that state, well, it couldn't be anything good.

"The important thing is to know what this parchment does," George continued when Fred stopped, "The parchment is a map."

"A map of Hogwarts." added Fred.

"That shows were everyone is in the castle, and on it's grounds."

Harry was certain that he had the same expression as his friends. His Demons had a gold mine in their possession. And that certainly explained how they had been able to find them the previous year and how they could walk around the castle without being caught.

"Since we heard that Black managed to get inside the castle, we are always looking at the map. We take turns, even at night, first one of us sleeps then the other. A couple of weeks ago Fred saw something, someone, that shouldn't be on the map."

"He shouldn't be alive much less on the map."

"And you have to take into account that the map is never wrong."

"Who appeared on the map?" Harry asked, keeping his voice calm and controlled.

"Peter Pettigrew."

"The wizard Black killed?" Graham asked incredulously.

"The same wizard." confirmed George.

"As you can imagine, we found that rather odd, so we sent a letter to Marcus, to see if he could get us the files on the Black trial, just so we could confirm the name, who knows, we might have heard or read it wrong, it wouldn't hurt to make sure we were right," Fred explained, "Marcus answered back last week, he said there were no files whatsoever about Black's trial, there wasn't even a record of there ever having been a trial for Black."

"They put Black in Azkaban without a trial." Draco whispered.
"That's what we thought too." agreed George.

"George and I started to keep a closer eye on the dot that said Peter Pettigrew."

"You can't imagine how shocked we were when we saw the dot was almost always in the Gryffindor common room, or in the boys' third year dorms. And there was always someone close by, usually our brother Ron."

"But we managed to get it alone two days ago and followed him."

"It was trying to leave the castle, it was a rat," George told them, "But it wasn't just any rat, it was Scabbers, our brother's pet."

"For just a few moments we thought that the map was wrong. We stunned it anyway, better safe than sorry, you know? We were thinking about what we should do, when we remembered certain coincidences."

"Yes, for example, the rat appeared in our backyard, the day after Pettigrew's death. It was missing a finger, and the only thing they found of Pettigrew was his finger. Besides, rats don't live for over a decade."

"Animagus. That was the first thing that came to our minds." Fred ended their explanation gravely and Harry understood why.

Only a person who was guilty of something would spend over a decade alone, hiding as a rat.

"Where is the rat?" asked Harry, his thoughts on overdrive.

Fred and George shared a look and took out of the backpack they had with them a glass container, and inside of it was an ordinary, fat, gray rat.

"We've been keeping it stunned, or immobilized, and we charmed the box unbreakable. We have been learning a spell that can be cast on animals to show if they are an animagus or not; if it glows green it's an animal, if it glows red it's an animagus. That's why we didn't say anything before; we wanted to have the means to prove it, one way or another." Fred informed him.

"Wake it up and cast the spell." Harry ordered, his voice colder than usual.

Fred nodded and pointed his wand at the rat, Harry wanted to see how the thing behaved when it was awake. As soon as it woke it looked around, and when it saw them looking at it, it started to run around the glass box, trying to get away, though Fred's aim didn't fail and he hit the rat with the spell. They were all holding their breath, and after what felt like an eternity, but was no longer than a few seconds, the rat glowed red.

Harry knelt on the floor, so that he was at the same height as the rat, who had stilled completely in its cage, and was looking at Harry with what appeared to be panic, though he wasn't sure, it was quite difficult to tell, with it being a rat.

"Well, well, well, what do we have here?" Harry asked voice filled with malicious glee, "Hello Peter."

"What did you do with the rat?" Blaise asked the following morning.

"It's in a safe place," answered Harry with a wicked smile, "I'm still deciding the best use for it."
None of his friends could help the chuckle that escaped them, they knew perfectly well what kind of treatment Harry was going to give the rat. They had heard often enough how he didn't have anyone to test some curses that he found interesting on.

They shook their heads and left the common room, it was the week-end and most students were still sleeping, the only reason they were up was because they wanted to have a little morning training.

So it was pure coincidence that they happened to pick a different route to their training room, and that they were up that early, it was pure coincidence that made them go past that particular broom cupboard.

"Shut up." ordered Harry, trying to better hear the sound that he knew he had previously heard.

The other five went immediately quiet, looking at Harry curiously. Draco was about to ask what was wrong, when they all heard the noise.

It was coming from behind the door on Harry's right, and he had heard enough to identify it as someone crying.

He thought about ignoring it. It was, after all, not likely that it had anything to do with him, but he remembered Neville and changed his mind, maybe he could get something out of it.

Signaling his friends to stop, he walked towards the door and opened it. It was a broom cupboard, it was full of junk and what he assumed were cleaning supplies, and sitting on the floor was a girl. A naked girl.

Harry's brain needed a few seconds to process what he was seeing, but as soon as he did, he started to analyze it.

The girl had a few scratches throughout her body, but aside from that she looked fine, and Harry thanked Merlin that the girl hadn't been more hurt, or worse, raped. No matter how sadistic he was, there were several things he didn't tolerate, and rape was one of them, especially since the girl didn't look older than eleven, twelve at the most.

"Hey," he said in a soft and warm voice, not wanting to scare the girl.

A silvery blond head, with long hair framing a doll-like face, with big blue eyes filled with tears, looked at him. The girl didn't try to cover herself, nor did she speak.

"I'm Harry, what's your name?"

"Luna." the girl answered after several long seconds, in a sweet and dreamy voice.

"Hello Luna. Aren't you cold?"

Luna nodded, it was a very small movement, almost non-existent, but it was enough for Harry to smile, at least the girl was reacting. Not even thinking about it he took off his coat and wrapped it around Luna.

"Luna, I would like for you to come with us, so we can heal those scratches and give you something to wear. Alright?"

Luna's eyes found his and Harry felt like she was looking at his soul, but even so he didn't break eye contact. What seemed like an eternity later, Luna seemed satisfied with whatever it was she had seen, because she nodded and got up, holding the coat close to her body.
"Draco, go get the other three. As soon as they arrive, take them to my room." Harry instructed, wrapping his arm around Luna's waist and pulling her close. He didn't know if they would run into someone, but in case they did he would prefer to have Luna close to him, and started walking back to the Slytherin common room. The others, seeing Harry's intention, walked around them, forming a barrier that hid Luna from view.

Fortunately, they didn't meet anyone and the common room was also empty, which wasn't really that surprising; it was a little after half past six in the morning, and it was a Saturday, so it was no wonder that the students were still sleeping, or at least in their rooms.

After Harry gave Luna permission to enter his room, he sat her on his bed, while the others sat on the couches that were near the windows, where Harry had created a small sitting room.

"Luna, Adrian is going to heal all these scratches, ok? You can trust him."

Again, it felt like Luna was looking into his soul.

"I trust you, Harry Potter." she ended up answering in that same dreamy tone.

Harry smiled and called Adrian over, after seeing that Luna had no trouble with Adrian, he stepped a bit away.

"Dobby." he called, not raising his voice above more than a whisper.

Almost instantaneously a house-elf appeared. Though he belonged to the Malfoys, he was fanatically loyal to Harry. Lucius had even said that he had pondered giving him to Harry as a birthday gift, since the elf was so loyal to him, but Harry refused, saying that he had no house for the elf to work in, but that as soon as he got a place, and if the offer still stood, then he would accept. But that didn't stop Dobby from doing everything that Harry asked of him, even if Harry wasn't his Master.

"Young Master Harry Potter sir, what can Dobby be doing for the young Master?" and it also didn't stop him from calling Harry Master.

"Dobby, I need you to buy some clothes for Luna, you have my permission to take the money from my vault. Buy whatever you think is necessary and bring it to Luna."

"Yes Master." and with a soft pop he was gone.

"You didn't have to do that. My clothes would have ended up appearing somewhere."

Harry turned around and saw Luna looking at him, with her big blue eyes a bit glazed over, as if she wasn't really there.

"I know that I didn't have to. I did it because I wanted to. Why don't you go take a warm bath, so that you can warm up a bit?"

"Alright Harry Potter, I'll go. You can talk to your Court."

Trying not to show how much what she said had shocked him, Harry showed her where the bathroom was and where she could find towels and such, and when he was done he went to sit with his friends. A little more than a minute later Draco appeared, followed by Fred, George, and Neville.

"Hey, what's going on? Draco didn't say." asked Fred, sitting in an empty spot.

Harry told them what had happened and Fred and George traded a look.
"Is she blond, small, with big blue eyes, and looks a bit dreamy and not all there?" asked Fred. When Harry nodded, George continued.

"She's Luna Lovegood. She lives near us, her father owns the Quibbler. Most people call her Loony because she's a bit odd."

"She was always ridiculed by the students, I guess the bullying escalated." added Fred.

"I'm relieved that she wasn't raped." confessed Graham, his eyes were haunted and they all looked at him with sympathy. Few people knew, but Graham had a younger sister. During Graham's second year, his parents had gone to muggle London on business and had taken the little girl with them. They ended up separating and his parents lost track of her in the crowd. She was found a few hours later, murdered and brutally raped, she had been only nine. They never found who did it, they don't even know if it was a muggle or a wizard, though the Aurors believed it to be a wizard, because there were traces of accidental magic. So they believed it was a wizard because they don't think that a muggle would have been able to do what had been done, considering the way the little girl's magic had reacted, it had blasted a hole in the brick wall, and there were several burn marks, showing signs of something burning, they were certain that a muggle wouldn't have been able to deal with it. The best theory that they had, is that someone snatched her in the crowd, either someone who had a grudge against the family, or simply someone who saw her as easy prey. Harry was sure that this situation had brought back all those bad memories.

"If that had happened there would have been one less person alive in the castle by the end of the day." Harry said, making more than one of them shiver; those eyes promised a long and agonizing death.

Neville was the only one who had never seen that side of Harry; he knew that it existed, since the other members had told him about several situations that had happened before he joined the Court.

At first he hadn't known how he would react if, no, not if, when, he saw that darker side of Harry, but at least now he knew why the others had that awed tone when they spoke about certain situations. Harry's magic was addictive, and every time he let down his mask, every time he showed that darker side of himself, his magic almost poured out of his body, letting them bask in the feel of it surrounding them.

Never in his life had it occurred to him that he would associate with someone like Harry, but here he was, being a part of a group in which most members were somehow connected to the people that tortured his parents to insanity, Draco was even their nephew. Not for the first time he asked himself what his parents would have said about the situation. He asked himself what the future would bring, since he was surrounded by people that were so obviously Dark, and he knew that he was being influenced by them. Only last month he would have freaked out if he had heard anyone talk about killing someone with such ease in such a matter of fact tone, now though, the only thing that had crossed his mind was that he hoped that Harry would prolong their death for as long as possible and make it as painful as possible. Did that make him a Dark wizard? Did it make him evil? He honestly didn't know, and a part of him told him that he should be more worried about it than he was. But another part of him, a bigger part of him, remembered how the Light had treated him, and if he had to choose between one or the other, well, let's just say that it wasn't a choice at all, he would pick the Court any day. They accepted him just the way he was, and if Luna had been raped and he told them that that he wanted the one responsible to suffer, he was sure that they wouldn't judge him. He knew that they would continue to treat him as they always had, by Morgana, he was certain that they would even teach him a few curses to cause the suffering.

It was funny how that thought was strangely comforting. Being accepted unconditionally was
strange, something he had never felt before, but it was what Harry and the Court were offering, the least he could do was return the favor; accept them just as they were, unconditionally, sadistic tendencies and all. And knowing that they trusted him enough to share that side of themselves with him was, as he'd said, comforting.

The door to the bathroom opened and took him out of his thoughts, it caught the others' attention as well.

"Luna, I hope that you like the clothes." Harry said, gesturing to an armchair for Luna to sit.

"Oh, yes," Luna answered, giving a little twirl, making the bottom half of the dress spin a little, "It's really pretty." and Luna was right, the dress was rather nice, it was a silver color, and the material it was made of, made it look almost liquid, and the blue belt complemented the dress rather well. Harry would never admit it, but the dress made her look even more like a doll.

After Luna sat down, Harry asked the question that had been on his mind.

"Who did that to you?"

"They think I'm strange. Sometimes girls can be far more cruel than boys." she answered, though it wasn't an answer that satisfied him, it was better than nothing. At least they knew that it had been girls from Ravenclaw, at least he hoped it was only Ravenclaws.

"You will be having breakfast with us, at the Slytherin table." Harry informed her.

"I know," Luna answered serenely, "Are you going to hurt them?" she asked in that dreamy voice of hers.

"I don't know yet. It depends on the reaction that they have after today."

"Hmm, alright." she replied smiling dreamily.

"I want you to tell me if they do anything, no matter what it is."

"Of course I will," Luna answered as if it was the most natural thing in the world, "I wouldn't be a very good minion if I didn't do what you ordered." she added, before she started humming a tune.

Harry traded a look with the others, they seemed just as lost as he was. Well, she really was quite odd, but who was he to judge? From what he had seen they were all far from normal, besides, who the hell would want to be normal. She would fit right in.

Laughing, Harry got up, followed closely by the others, and gave Luna a hand to help her up.

"Well, little Raven, welcome to the Court," said Harry with a smile.
Chapter 11 – Damned if you do, Damned if you don't

It was the last Saturday before the students went home and it was the last visit to Hogsmead for that term, and Harry was walking towards the gates with his friends, when he was run over by a little blond missile.

"Luna." he murmured with a small smile.

Two weeks had gone by since the morning that they had found Luna, and they could already see the differences in her. She was still a bit dreamy, but she looked much happier.

Harry remembered perfectly well the reaction several girls in Ravenclaw had when Luna sat with them. Everyone in the Great Hall was surprised, well, shell shocked may better describe how they had looked, but only those girls in particular looked that enraged. It was also that same day that those girls proved that just because you were in Ravenclaw didn't mean you were smart.

As soon as Luna left the Great Hall and their presence, the girls followed her, something that didn't go unnoticed by any of them. Naturally they followed, and they arrived just in time to see one of the girls shove Luna against a wall.

The girls stopped as soon as they saw them, they tried to convince them that they had only been playing around, that they had been worried about Luna, of course Harry hadn't believed them, however he didn't let it show, and thanked the girls for looking after Luna. Convinced that they had gotten their way, the girls left, and as soon as their backs were turned, Harry cursed them.

It was an undetectable curse, and it was practically invisible while being cast, something for which he was grateful, it made cursing them without attracting their attention much easier. The curse would start working when they thought or talked bad about Luna, or when they thought or talked about hurting Luna, and it only started working three hours after being cast, and considering that he had no
intention of being anywhere near them when that occurred, it would be almost impossible to blame him.

The curse itself wasn't one of the worst that he knew, but it was one of the safest that he could cast at school. Any time that they talked, or thought negatively, about Luna they would start to feel pain. At first it would be nothing bad, it would be as if they had been pricked with a needle, however the more they thought, or talked, about Luna the worse the pain got. First the amount of needle pricks would grow, until they felt that they were being pricked all over their bodies, and then the intensity of the pain would grow, until it felt like they were being poked with hot needles all over their bodies. According to the book, there was the possibility of the person subjected to the curse to go insane or even die because of the pain but Harry wasn't holding his breath, they were Ravenclaws, he guessed that they would eventually discover what was causing it and stop it.

However, the girls in question didn't appear to be the most intelligent, considering that the night before at dinner, two of the five girls he had cursed started screaming in pain and had to be taken to the Infirmary.

He was hoping that nobody would find the curse for a little while longer; it would be rather entertaining to see how long it would take the girls to find out what was going on.

"You should look out for the Grim." Luna's voice brought him back to the present and he looked at her curiously.

"The Grim?"

She nodded, for a moment looking quite serious, though she quickly reverted back to her dreamy expression, letting him go and continuing on her path towards wherever it was that she was going as if nothing had happened.

Luna sometimes said things that made absolutely no sense, though one way or another it ended up being something important. For a few days he thought that she was a Seer, though after his curiosity got the better of him and he asked her, she denied it.

She said that she wasn't a Seer, at least not the more common interpretation of one, she didn't speak prophecies, she didn't have prophetic dreams or visions, she couldn't even predict the future. However, sometimes, she just knew things. She didn't know how, nor did she know the importance that something did or didn't have, and most times what she knew made no sense at all, but she'd gotten used to knowing things. And sometimes, very rarely, she knew that what she knew was more important than it seemed, and that was when she tried to tell other people about it, as was the case here.

'Look out for the Grim' didn't make much sense, but that didn't mean they wouldn't be doing what Luna had said.

They left Hogwarts and walked through Hogsmead, most of the students from third year and up where there, buying last minute gifts. Not wanting to be in such a crowd, they decided to go to the Three Broomsticks, hoping that the crowd would have lessened a bit by the time that they left.

Harry was about to go inside when Adrian stopped him.

Looking at him Harry lifted a brow.

"I may be wrong," Adrian started, looking a bit startled, "But doesn't that look like a Grim?" he was pointing at a dog, half hidden by some bushes beside the pub. The only reason why they had no
difficulty in seeing the animal was because it's black fur made a rather stark contrast with the snow around it.

"Hmm, it does look like one." Harry answered, while he started to go in it's direction.

"What are you doing?" asked Graham, looking at him incredulously.

"What does it look like?" he answered, continuing to walk towards the dog.

A second later he heard several of them curse, followed by footsteps following him. He smirked, sometimes his Court was extremely predictable.

It was so cold, though unfortunately it was something that he had gotten used to. Besides, it was always better to be out and searching for food when it wasn't snowing. What he wasn't expecting was to see so many people out in Hogsmead and it took him a second or two to remember that it must be a weekend visit to Hogsmead for the Hogwarts' students. Not that it was strange that he had lost track of time, after all there was no need to know the days of the week when the only company he had were Dementors.

Hearing footsteps coming in his direction he prepared to run, but before he could follow his instincts, a scent that was engraved in his memory invaded his senses. His whole mind was filled with only one thought: 'Harry'. Completely ignoring his instincts, he turned in the footsteps' direction and he knew that if he were human he would be gawking.

Harry, his pup, was so big, so beautiful.

"Hey boy."

While he was lost in his thoughts, Harry had approached him and was crouching in front of him, his hand held out, so that he could smell it.

Not able to resist the temptation to be near his pup, he got closer and licked his hand.

"Good boy. Aren't you cold?" Harry asked him in a sweet, warm voice. The sound far more beautiful than anything he had ever heard, though he admitted that his opinion may be biased.

He barked and wagged his tail, of course he was cold, but if he could stay near Harry then he would stand in a snow storm.

"Harry, I don't think this was one of your better ideas." a boy behind Harry said, making him almost jump out of his pelt.

He had been so focused on Harry that he hadn't even noticed the other boys, five of them. Though when he looked at the boy who had spoken, he almost felt his heart stop, he could have sworn that it was Nott. If he didn't know for a fact that Nott was still in the cell in front of his old one, he would have been sure that the boy behind Harry was Nott; logically, he knew that it must be his son, though sometimes his sense of logic took a few minutes to make itself known.

"Don't pay him any mind," Harry told him, petting his head, "Do you want to come with me? You'll have food and it will be far warmer."

He barked again and wagged his tail. He knew that it wasn't a brilliant idea, but he could always leave after he had eaten something and at least he would be someplace warm for a few hours.
"Harry, you can't have dogs in the castle." Nott's son remarked, he sounded slightly exasperated, it was the same tone Moony had when he and James were doing something stupid.

"And who's going to stop me?" Harry asked, laughing. When no one answered he smiled, "Exactly. Let's go boy."

Wagging his tail and completely ignoring the voice in his head that was telling him that this was a terrible idea, he followed Harry and his friends to the castle.

During the entire walk none of the boys said a word and they were looking unnaturally alert, it took him a while to remember that there was a supposed mass-murderer on the loose. He was so immersed in his thoughts that he didn't even notice that they were already in the castle, he only noticed when they started towards the dungeons. What the hell were they doing going to the dungeons? When they stopped in front of a wall he was starting to believe that they were even crazier than he was, but then Harry said with a smile, "First Generation." and the wall moved and he knew where they were.

What was his pup doing in the Slytherin common room?

Only when he saw the door that said 'Harry Potter' did his mind process what he already knew. Harry, his pup, was a Slytherin.

He was rather surprised, though he was really shocked to notice that he was only surprised, there were no other negative emotions that he usually associated with Slytherin. 'Well, look at how being a Gryffindor turned out...' a little voice in his mind remarked bitterly, and he had to stop himself from snarling. Maybe it wasn't so strange that he didn't have his usual feelings, he hoped that Slytherin would do for Harry what Gryffindor hadn't done for James, Lily, and himself. At least in Slytherin he was far away from the rat and that was something that brought him a lot of relief.

"Come here boy," Harry called him, and he looked towards where Harry was sitting, by huge windows with the five boys around him. Only now was he seeing his Harry's room, and he was sure that if he were human he would be gaping, they didn't have rooms like this in Gryffindor. The walls were a bright green that made the room look brighter, there were also some patterns in gray made in thin lines. The floor was black stone, though there were several plush carpets in several shades of green spread out on the floor that looked rather comfortable. By the wall with the windows was what looked like a small living room, with soft gray couches and armchairs. There was also what appeared to be a study area and the wall that was facing his bed and the door was filled with shelves that had more books in them than he had possessed all his life, and there were also a multitude of other things; like quills, ink bottles, potion vials, etcetera. And in front of that was a big desk, with several pieces of parchment on it, he would guess that it was Harry's homework. Seeing a door that lead to a private bathroom, he shook his head, which looked rather funny in his animagus form; if he had known that Slytherin had rooms like this, he wouldn't have tried so hard to convince the Sorting Hat not to put him in Slytherin, "Sit." Harry told him, after he was standing in front of him.

Harry petted him some more when he sat down, it was something that he could get used to.

"Graham, you have a dog, don't you?" asked Harry, looking at one of the older boys who was slouching on a couch, he looked almost asleep.

"Yes, he was my sister's. My parents didn't really like dogs, but after what happened they weren't able to give him away. She loved the big ball of fur."

Harry nodded, his eyes a bit warmer.
"Do you know any spells to take care of dogs?"

"I know the basic ones, but if you want something specific I would have to look it up."

"Take care of our friend then."

Before he was able to react, he was frozen in place and he couldn't do anything when he saw the spells coming.

As he was on the verge of a panic attack, it took him a minute to understand that the spells hadn't caused him any harm. Quite the contrary actually; his fur was shiny and clean, and the fleas that made his life hell were gone. A few moments later he felt that he could move again and he shook himself, it had been years since his fur felt so free.

"That's much better. Now we just have to name you," Harry remarked absently, "What do you think of..."

They never found out what Harry was going to say, because in that moment the door to his room was rather violently opened, making most of them look at the door, startled, himself included.

For a few seconds he thought that he was seeing double, however his mind quickly processed the fact that they were twins. The twins entered the room, closely followed by another boy and a girl.

The twins ignored everyone in the room and went immediately to Harry and gave him something.

He didn't know what to do, but considering that none of the others appeared worried about the new arrivals, just curious, he opted to just wait and see what would happen.

That was when he heard a chuckle that made a shiver go down his spine and looking to where it came from, he saw that the twins were behind Harry, one on his left side, the other on his right, their eyes cold and locked on him.

"Well, well, well," Harry said, looking at him, "Welcome, Mr. Black."

As soon as Harry said his name he knew that he was fucked, the eight wands pointing at him almost immediately were also a dead give-away.

The only ones not pointing their wands at him were Harry and the girl, the girl was looking at the wall behind Harry's bed, with her head tilted to the side, and she was humming. She didn't appear to be all there, and Harry seemed to be enjoying himself.

He supposed there was no need to continue in his animagus form. A little over a second later in the place of the dog was a tall, thin man with black hair and gray-blue eyes.

"Hello Harry," he said, with a voice hoarse from disuse.

The man in front of him looked much cleaner than he'd expected, he supposed that it was mainly due to the spells that Graham had cast, but even so, the man looked far better than the picture of himself in the Daily Prophet.

"You seem rather calm for someone who, supposedly, escaped from Azkaban to kill me," Harry remarked.

"It's not you that I want to kill," Black growled, sounding more like a dog than a man.

"Oh?" Harry asked curiously.
"It's a long story." Black seemed reluctant to continue and Harry laughed, it promised to be an interesting afternoon.

"Look around you Mr. Black, they won't let you leave with your life if they think you're a threat to me. Honestly, the only reason you are still breathing is because I want you to be. So the longer you entertain me, the longer you'll live."

Sirius wanted to think that Harry was lying, but looking at those eyes it was difficult to believe that Harry wasn't telling the truth. He didn't know what surprised him more, the fact that Harry apparently didn't care about taking a life, or the fact that his friends were ready to kill for him. He didn't really know what to feel about either situation, but he was certain about one thing, he couldn't die with the rat so close to his pup.

"Alright." he said, trying not to show how defeated he felt. It wasn't that he didn't want to tell his pup the truth, it was more that he was afraid of how Harry would react when he told them what he'd done, when he told them that it was his fault that Harry's parents were dead.

"Very well," Harry said with a smile, "Feel free to sit, have a cup of tea. Boys."

With a last glare in his direction the other boys lowered their wands, though he noticed that they didn't put them away, and they continued to be alert and surrounding Harry. Now that he had the opportunity to really look at them, it became clear the image that Harry presented. He looked like a Lord, beautiful but deadly, a being that couldn't be a simple mortal and that in exchange for the honor of them being in his presence he demanded loyalty and obedience, and they, mere mortals that they were, were more than happy to give him that and so much more. Well, at least that was what his mother had told him about Voldemort, and he preferred not to think about why he associated that description with Harry.

Slowly he sat on the chair that was facing Harry, trying to ignore the hostility in the other's eyes.

"I guess it all started when I came to Hogwarts for my first year. My family and I didn't get along, and I was glad to leave that part of my life behind.

That's when I made three friends that meant everything to me, Peter Pettigrew, Remus Lupin, and James Potter," Sirius saw Harry's eyes narrow and become colder, "A year or so later we found out that Remus was a werewolf," he saw several of the boys nod and he wasn't able to contain his curiosity, "What is it?"

"We suspected, no, we were certain that professor Lupin was a werewolf, though it's good to have a confirmation." Harry answered, and it lacked the usual disdain that accompanied other people using the word 'werewolf'.

"How did you know?"

"Snape wasn't particularly subtle," Harry remarked, contempt dripping from every word, "He may not have been allowed to tell us directly, but that didn't stop him from pointing us in the right direction, all the students in Slytherin know."

"How does he still teach here?" Sirius wasn't quite able to hide the astonishment he felt; as far as he knew, Slytherins in general weren't the tolerant kind.

One of the older boys laughed, the one that had cast the spells at him, if he wasn't mistaken.

"The Court likes him." he said, as if that explained everything, and considering the others' expressions maybe it did, though he had no idea what the Court was. Though, looking at Harry, he
thought it would be best not to ask and to continue his story. Harry's words still rang in his mind, and he didn't intend to die, at least not at that moment.

"Alright... Well, James, Peter and I decided to become animagi, so that we could be with him on the full moons. It took a while but we made it, Peter was a rat, James was a stag, and I became a dog. After that we became even closer, even after we left Hogwarts we were as close as brothers, closer even. James even picked me to be your godfather." he wasn't able to stop the smile when he remembered the first time he'd held his pup, "I accepted immediately, and the following day I went to Gringotts and had you appointed as my heir.

As you know, we were at war at the time, your parents, Remus, Peter, and I fought for the Light. By the time you were born, your parents had become targets of Voldemort and they decided that it would be best to hide; they were more worried about you than about the outcome of the war. They decided to use the Fidelius, do you know what that is?" seeing all of them nod, he continued, "James asked me to be the Secret Keeper, however I had a brilliant idea," no matter how much he tried he wasn't able to stop the bitterness from showing, "I was his best friend, his brother, everyone would think that they would have picked me, but if we changed it and didn't tell anyone about it, I would be the bait and no one would suspect that someone else was the Secret Keeper.

James agreed and we switched; Peter became the Secret Keeper.

On the 31st of October, I went to Peter's house, we had agreed that I would go check on him every few days, just to make sure that he was alright. He wasn't home and he was supposed to be there, he had told us he would be staying home for Samhain. I was afraid that something had happened to him, so I went to Godric's Hallow for help. When I got there, the house was destroyed. I... I found James first. When I saw him, it... it felt like a part of me had died. But then I heard you crying and that was the only reason I didn't break down completely right then. I searched for you, I found you in your crib in the nursery and Lily was on the floor, in front of you, it was as if even in death she wanted to protect you. They both loved you more than anything on this earth, you know? Even their own lives, they would consider it a rather cheap price to pay if it meant you were safe and alive." he had to stop for a moment, he couldn't talk about that day, the memories always crushed him, left him a broken man that cursed and hated himself more than anything, more than Peter, more than Voldemort. It wasn't even because he felt guilty about their deaths, it was because of the choices he had made afterward, and he could only hope that James and Lily could forgive him, because he was sure that he would never be able to forgive himself. He had failed to do the one thing that James and Lily had entrusted to him, he had failed their son.

"I held you," he continued after taking a deep breath, he was thankful that none of them had said anything while he was trying not to break apart, "You stopped crying when I held you, you recognized me. I didn't know what to do, I could smell the burned wood, feel the magic that saturated every inch of the room, and I knew what I had to do, but I was in shock. I don't know how long I was there, with you in my arms, just looking at the destruction around me. I don't know how long it took me to realize what had happened, but when I did, when my mind understood; my blood boiled, the only thing I could think about was killing him, making him suffer." he didn't really know what he was expecting when he confessed one of his darkest secrets, it wasn't even the fact that he wanted to kill, it was that he wanted to torture. He was sure that he would have enjoyed it greatly, the rat's screams would have been music to his ears and he didn't regret for one moment having that desire, that bloodthirstiness. However, when he saw understanding in most of their expressions he almost couldn't believe his eyes, it took a moment or two to remember that these were the same teenagers that had threatened to kill him, so maybe their reactions weren't so surprising.

"That's when Hagrid showed up," he decided it was best not to linger on his thoughts about the boys in front of him, he didn't think he would find anything out, and besides it was best to get all this over
with. He didn't even know if by the end of it they would believe him, he could only hope, "He told me to give Harry to him, that Dumbledore was going to take Harry to his family. I didn't want to, but Hagrid insisted and I was thirsty for vengeance, so I gave Harry to him and went after the rat. I told myself that as soon as I had hunted down the rat that I would go back to get Harry, and raise him just like James and Lily had asked of me.

But nothing went as I'd thought it would.

When I caught the rat, he started shouting that I had betrayed Lily and James and then he blew up the street, killing several muggles in the process. In the midst of the confusion he cut off his finger, changed into a rat, and disappeared amongst the other rats in the sewers.

I think I went into shock. I started laughing and I think only a few moments later the Aurors started to arrive. They took one look at me and the destruction around me, and sent me to Azkaban. At first I still had hope that someone would come to free me, or at least to give me a trial, but as time passed it became quite obvious that it wasn't going to happen."

"You didn't betray them?" Harry asked after it looked like Black wasn't going to say anything else. The story was quite unbelievable, and if he didn't have a certain rodent in his possession he didn't think he would have believed him, but he had the rat, and they had already suspected that something with the whole Sirius Black story wasn't quite right, so he just needed the confirmation, just needed to see his reaction.

"Never." Black answered, and there was so much desperation, so much rage, so much hate, and also so much hope in that single word that Harry nodded. Emotions like that, reactions like that couldn't be faked, no matter how good an actor you were, and Black didn't seem like the type.

As soon as Harry nodded the tension in the room lessened. Apparently, as long as Harry believed him, it was good enough for the others. Not that they trusted him, far from it, but they weren't ready to kill him at a moment's notice, and that was an improvement.

"How did you stay sane? And why did you only escape now?" Nott's son asked curiously.

"I'm an animagus; Dementors can't feel animal emotions, so I was in my animagus form most of the time. And when I was human, what was constantly on my mind was that I was innocent, that isn't a happy thought, so the Dementors can't feed from it. And I escaped now because I discovered that the rat was at Hogwarts, near Harry, in a perfect position to harm him, I couldn't allow that."

Aside from Harry all the others nodded, and Sirius even saw a bit of respect in some of their eyes, apparently wanting to protect Harry was something they all had in common.

"Well, Mr. Black..."

"Call me Sirius."

"Alright, Sirius. As you already know I'm Harry Potter, the twins behind me are Fred and George Weasley; fifth year Gryffindors. On my right are Theodore Nott; third year Slytherin, Blaise Zabin; third year Slytherin, Draco Malfoy; third year Slytherin and Luna Lovegood; second year Ravenclaw. On my left we have Neville Longbottom; third year Gryffindor, Adrian Pucey; fifth year Slytherin, and Graham Montague; also a fifth year Slytherin."

Sirius didn't know if he should be surprised that he recognized most names because they were associated with Death Eaters, he really had no idea how he should feel about it. Harry was nothing like he had expected, neither were the people he befriended.
"Now we just have to decide what to do." Harry remarked, gaining his attention.

'Do? What does he mean...' Sirius thought, a little apprehensive.

"We all go home tomorrow," Malfoy told him, "Do you need anything from outside of Hogwarts?"

"Talk to Marcus, tell him what happened, and then tell him that I want him to persuade the right people to come to Hogwarts. Tell him to warn me as soon as they come." Harry ordered, and he was rather curious to know who Marcus was and what people were supposed to come to Hogwarts.

"I need several witnesses to see Sirius Black away from Hogwarts," Harry continued to instruct, looking at the twins, "Be careful."

Both nodded and Sirius was impressed with the ease they followed Harry's orders, because they were orders, no matter how you looked at it.

"Luna, we need the Quibbler."

"Maybe another publication would be better," Luna suggested, "Not many people believe in what daddy says." she continued with a serene smile. Not for the first time, Sirius wondered if the girl was all there.

"We don't have another one." Harry told the girl, looking at her curiously.

"When my mother asked for a license to open her own business, she Knew that she should ask for two, so she did. One in hers and daddy's names, the other in my name, along with another person of my choice. It's a lifetime license, and can be used when we want and in the type of business we want. My mother said she Knew it would be useful. And my daddy said that I could use his printing equipment whenever I wanted."

For several seconds no one said anything, then Harry started laughing. It wasn't a laugh that Sirius had expected to come from a child, it was full of joy, true, but it was impossible not to hear the maliciousness behind it. And the others, though they still looked a little stunned, were gaining that little spark that he remembered seeing in his own eyes when they were about to pull a particularly malicious prank.

"We have our own publication." Harry almost whispered, and the smiles on their faces grew.

Sirius didn't blame them, they were Hogwarts students, the oldest among them hadn't even finished their fifth year and they had at their disposal the means to influence the magical population of Britain, and Sirius had no doubt that that was exactly what they intended to do. Many had tried it, but it wasn't easy. It was the reason that so many people tried to buy their way into the Daily Prophet. Not everyone can buy a license to have their own business, much less one that has no expiration date, and that has no limitation on what business they can open. As far as he knew those licenses were banned a few years before the war with Voldemort escalated and they never reinstated them again, otherwise he was sure that people like Lucius Malfoy would have had his own newspaper by now. However, because Luna's mother had it made at the same time as the one for the Quibbler, there is no way that it can be revoked. It is a binding magical contract so to speak, so even if the Ministry doesn't like what they're printing, there is nothing they can do about it. So, really, they had a very good reason to be excited about it, they had managed to do what even Voldemort and Dumbledore had failed to achieve. Because the Daily Prophet didn't belong to either of them, and it's news would depend on what would sell the most, or on the political climate, but they were never able to control what was printed or how. These students though, they had that now, and there wasn't anyone who could stop them. When he didn't look at them as children what he saw was a Lord and his followers
that were making plans to control Wizarding Britain, and that made him shiver, he couldn't help but wonder what the hell he had gotten himself into.

"Graham, Adrian, I need you to deliver a letter to my favorite journalist and I want you to help Luna, I want everything ready for the first week after the holidays. Neville, Blaise, and Theo; the three of you will define the sections of the newspaper, how big it's going to be, and everything else you can think of. You can talk to the others about it of course, ask them whatever you want. After you get back to Hogwarts I will look it over, if I find nothing wrong with it, we will start any articles that we want in it and publish the first print on the first Sunday after you're back. Luna, can you talk with your father? Also we won't be able to take care of the printing while we are at school, though I can always tell Marcus to look after it when he is done at work."

Luna nodded, a serene smile on her face, humming and looking around, as if following something invisible. Harry smiled; he didn't think that he would ever understand the girl.

Sirius almost held his breath when Harry looked at him.

"Sirius, from today on, until you get a trial, you'll be my dog."

"What?" he didn't think he had heard him right.

"I'm doing everything I can to make it so that you get a trial to prove your innocence. It would be a waste of time if, after all this work, you were to get the Kiss because you were wandering around. So you will stay here."

Sirius knew that he was the adult, and that Harry had no authority over him, he also knew that Harry was only a child, however, even knowing all that, when he looked into those eyes, he could do nothing but nod.

"Great, your name, while you're here, will be Shadow. You cannot leave the common room, in my room you don't have to be in your animagus form but outside of it you have to. In my room you can do whatever you want, as long as you don't destroy anything, I have a lot of books, feel free to read as much as you want. If you want anything specific, ask me and I will try to get it. Understood?"

Sirius, again, could do nothing but nod, and just like that his immediate future was decided, and for the first time in more than a decade he felt hope. He didn't know why, but he really believed that Harry would be able to get him free, however long it may take. He had the feeling that Harry wouldn't rest until he got what he wanted, and, for whatever reason, what he wanted was Sirius' freedom.

Clearing his throat, he looked at Harry, he was sure that Harry wouldn't accept what he was about to offer, but even so he had to ask.

"Harry," he almost stopped talking when they all looked at him, "As you know, I'm your godfather and your parents wanted me to raise you. I will understand if you don't want to, of course, you must be happy with your family, but, if you want, you are always welcome in my home." Sirius couldn't remember having ever been that nervous.

"I don't have a family. I live in an orphanage." Harry told him, not betraying any emotions, and it took him a few seconds to understand what Harry had said.

"What? Since when?" he growled, sounding much more like his animagus form than a human.

"The matron told me that I've been there since November of '81." again Harry spoke in that emotionless voice, making him shiver.
"As soon as I'm free, I'm going to take care of the papers to adopt you. MY godson should never have gone to an orphanage. There must have been dozens of wizarding families that wanted to adopt you, how did you end up in an orphanage?" the question was muttered under his breath, he wasn't really expecting an answer. He was so consumed by his thoughts that he wasn't paying attention, but if he had been, he would have seen Harry's predatory smirk, as well as the brief flash of triumph across Harry's face, before he was back to his emotionless mask. He didn't know it, but he had reacted exactly the way Harry had wanted, and now it was only a matter of time until all his other plans fell into place.

The next morning the students went home, and Harry was left alone in Slytherin, compared to the previous years the castle was almost deserted. Parents wanted their children home, the fear of Sirius Black was still present, and they wanted their children with them, especially because of the reported Black sightings near Hogsmead and the fact that Black had supposedly entered the castle. Even the Malfoys were a bit afraid, they had almost begged Harry to go home with Draco, well at least they begged as much as a Malfoy can beg. He did receive several letters from Narcissa, asking, well it was more on the line of trying to strongly persuade him, to go home with them.

Speaking of Sirius Black, it promised to be an interesting holiday with him around, maybe he would be able to have that talk about prison breakouts. He had to admit, even if only to himself, that he was a little disappointed that Black wasn't Voldemort's right hand, but even so he was satisfied with the way things turned out. If everything went the way he wanted, not only would he be out of that orphanage but he would also gain access to the Black resources, especially the libraries, the Black's collections were practically legendary.

Black had also been a pleasant surprise. After hearing several talks between Lucius and Narcissa, he had expected Black to be a slightly more refined version of Ronald Weasley, but he had been wrong. Though Black seemed a bit impulsive from what he had seen in the little time they had spent together, he was intelligent and far darker than what he had expected. Though, he supposed, a decade in Azkaban would be enough to change anyone.

Speaking of Azkaban... That damned rat had a lot to answer for, he may not have known his parents, but they were still his parents, and the thought that it was that worthless wizard who had betrayed them made his blood boil. People may think it irrational for him to blame Pettigrew and not Voldemort, but in his mind it wasn't. Voldemort was their enemy, they were on different sides of the war, they never pretended to be anything else but enemies. But Pettigrew... Pettigrew was their friend. Pettigrew was someone they trusted, someone they thought they could depend on and that made all the difference in Harry's mind. Hell, he was sure that he could have understood if Pettigrew had been a spy from the beginning, he may not have liked it, but he would have understood, war was an ugly business and sometimes certain things had to be done, he understood that. But that wasn't the case. Pettigrew had truly been their friend and he betrayed them. If he had to take a guess, he would say that it had been out of cowardice, which, in his opinion, was even worse. If Pettigrew had been fighting for something he believed in, well, that he could understand as well, not that he would have forgiven the betrayal, but still, he would have understood. But this... This he couldn't forgive, much less forget.

He knew that the quickest way to deal with the Black situation would be to give Pettigrew to the DMLE, but he didn't want to do that. Now that he knew what had happened, he had plans for Pettigrew, and he had no intention of giving up the traitor.

Containing a sigh, he continued towards the library, it did him no good to think about what he wanted to do to Pettigrew. He didn't think that he would have that many opportunities to have fun, at least not while Black was around.
"Harry."

A voice that he recognized rather well made him stop and look around. Lupin was a few steps behind him, with several books in his arms and a few more levitating behind him.

"Do you need help?" he asked almost automatically. Being polite was a reflex, he didn't really want to help, but it was polite to offer and being polite was a part of almost every mask he had ever created.

"Hmm?" Lupin appeared more distracted than usual and Harry looked at him more closely, "Oh, no. That's alright. Are you going to the library?"

Harry nodded, continuing his way when Lupin was beside him.

"Holidays just began, wouldn't you prefer to have a little fun? Away from the library?"

"All my friends went home. Besides, the castle is almost empty."

"What are you going to do in the library?"

"I'm just going to see if I can find some books for Defense. It's one of my favorite subjects and I like to learn new things."

They were silent for a bit, with Lupin looking at him several times. He seemed to have something on his mind, though he looked a bit afraid to say what he wanted.

"If you want to, I can give you some extra lessons during the holidays." Lupin ended up offering, though he seemed a little unsure. Harry didn't know why, but he could make a pretty good guess. There weren't that many possibilities, and he was inclined to think that it had more to do with who his parents were than with the possibility of looking like he was favoring the Boy-Who-Lived.

"I would love that, professor." Harry answered with a smile, and he didn't even have to fake the excitement.

Seeing Harry's easy acceptance, Lupin smiled, and they continued on their way in a comfortable silence.

Harry was in a far better mood than before; it appeared he had been right, maybe the holidays wouldn't be a complete waste of time.

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"Hey."

It was with great effort that Harry stopped himself from cursing Black; for a fraction of a second, he had forgotten that Black was in his room.

"Hi. Did you have lunch yet?" Harry asked, sitting in his usual armchair.

"Oh, yes. That elf brought everything I asked for and more."

Harry nodded and picked a book from the table, considering that Black couldn't leave the common room, Harry took a while to find the perfect solution on how to get him food and other things he may want. Though he had found a brilliant solution once he had a moment to think about it; Dobby. The little elf was more than happy to take care of everything, the only thing Black had to do was call him and ask for what he wanted.
"You took longer than what you said." Black remarked, looking through a book, Harry recognized it as one of the books he had taken from the Malfoy library. Not really Light, but not one of the Darkest he had in his possession, either.

"Hmm, I meet Lupin on the way. We talked a bit and he ended up offering me extra lessons. I took a little longer because we were agreeing on a schedule." he answered, never looking up from his book, so he didn't see Siriu's eyes go wide open.

"Are you having so much trouble that you need extra lessons?"

Only then did Harry look up from his book, and he would deny it until he died that he was gaping at Black. He stayed that way for several seconds, then he started laughing. He had been called many things, but dumb had never been one of them, no matter how indirect it may have been. The simple notion of him having trouble was so ridiculous that he couldn't stop laughing.

"I'm sorry," he said, through his chuckles, when he saw that Black was looking at him as if he had lost a few marbles, "But the notion that I would have trouble with DADA is so ridiculous that I couldn't control myself. I guess that it's such common knowledge about me that I got used to people knowing certain things."

"So... You're not having trouble?"

"No," he answered with a small smile, "I'm not having any trouble."

And that was when, just for a moment, he saw the emotion in Black's eyes, he had never seen so much sadness, so much bitterness, and he thought that he knew why. The man was his godfather, the person who should have raised him, and he knew nothing about him.

"If you have any questions that you want to ask, you are free to do so." Harry told him, not taking his eyes from Black's. Truthfully, the idea didn't please him one bit, but if his plan worked, he would be spending a lot more time with Black, so maybe it would be better if the two of them had a closer relationship. True, he was already counting on the gratitude that Black would feel for getting his name cleared, but it was a good idea to make sure that he had Black's support, and what better way to do that than to develop the relationship that Black wanted?

Black -well maybe it was better to start thinking of him as Sirius, considering that he was trying to form some kind of relationship with him- looked at him for several seconds and then Harry saw hope appear in his eyes, there was such an overwhelming look of pure hope on his face that, for a few moments, Harry felt something akin to pity, and an even smaller part of him regretted using Black like this. But it was a fleeting moment, besides he wasn't doing anything wrong. It was an excellent deal where both parties gained what they wanted, he would obtain the Black resources and Black, no, Sirius would gain a relationship with his godson, everybody won.

"I don't think you will ever understand how much it means to me that you believe in me and that you are giving me this chance." Sirius said, his voice catching a bit, "I want to know everything about you, everything I missed."

"There's not much to say," he had no intention whatsoever of having a deep and meaningful conversation, but he had to share something, or it would get him nowhere, "Aside from that little thing with Voldemort, I'm just a boy. I have a group of friends, subjects that I love, others that I hate, professors that I can't stand. All in all, I think I have a fairly normal life."

Sirius looked at Harry for a few moments and nodded. Sirius didn't mention the fact that most teens didn't have plans to manipulate the population of Britain. Besides, Harry was doing it to help him,
what kind of thank you would it be if he accused him of anything.

"Tell me about your friends?" he guessed that friends was a fairly safe topic.

"Well, Theo was the first friend that I made at Hogwarts," there was no need to mention that Theo had been his first friend ever, "He worries so much about me, it's as if he's my mom, but he's a really good friend. The twins are terrible, they are always up to no good. Blaise is the quiet one, he prefers to read a good book and have a quiet night instead of getting into trouble. Marcus loves Quidditch, and if he could he would spend all his time playing, though he isn't that good on a broom. Adrian gets on well with everyone and is always in a good mood. Graham is a good guy, he always tries to help his friends, even if he sometimes comes across as a snob, but he is from an old family, it's the way he was raised. Draco is a diva, but he is a Malfoy so what can you expect? Neville is a little shy, but after he knows someone he becomes much more relaxed. And Luna... I think it's impossible to describe Luna. We may seem like a mismatched group, but we're all really good friends."

"I can see." Sirius smiled, remembering the group he had met the previous night.

Then there was silence, heavy, uncomfortable silence and Harry sighed.

"Look, I'm not expecting that we become something to one another overnight. We don't know each other, it's perfectly normal for there to be some awkwardness. But we don't have to define our relationship this evening. Now that you are out of Azkaban, we have all the time we want."

"Time..." whispered Sirius, "Yes, we have time." he agreed with a smile, he sat back on the couch and started reading the book he had been looking through.

Harry also went back to his book, he could only hope that this situation with Sirius would work, at least he hoped that the conversations between the two of them stopped being so stilted and awkward.

"Very good, Harry!" Lupin exclaimed with a smile, looking at the Slytherin leaning on the wall, sweating and breathing heavily.

"I couldn't even hold the shield for a minute! And this was without anyone shooting curses at it." Harry answered, looking quite frustrated; it was the fifth time that he was trying the charm and he was never able to keep it stable for more than a minute.

Lupin shook his head and a small smile appeared on his lips, causing Harry to glare at him venomously; he knew that the wolf was finding this situation funny.

"Come, have a seat," Lupin said, offering him a butterbeer. Harry did as he was told, trying not to show how relieved he was to be able to sit down for a bit, he didn't know how long his legs would be able to hold him up, "You did really well," Lupin assured him, after Harry had sat down on a chair in front of him, "That shield is taught to seventh year students and only towards the end of the year. And out of all the students, only about a quarter of them are even able to do the charm, much less maintain it steadily for more than a minute. Usually, those that can are the ones that want to become Aurors and have extra training. Trust me, you are progressing just fine, if you continue like this I'm sure you'll be able to hold the shield in the next lesson." Harry contained a snort, next lesson? He had no intention of going to bed before he managed the shield.

"After you have the shield spell down, I was thinking about teaching you the Patronus charm. What do you think?"

The Patronus? The idea pleased him a great deal, he had already discussed it with his Court and they had decided that they would try it after the break. However, having Lupin teach him the charm
before-hand wouldn't hurt. At least he would be able to help the others if they had problems.

"I think that would be great. That just makes me want to do that damned shield right. I swear the charm is making me have homicidal tendencies." Harry almost snarled, which didn't help Lupin in controlling the laughter that he was trying to hide.

Harry glared at him again, though there was not even a hint of malice in his eyes, he liked Lupin and he knew that Lupin wasn't doing it out of spite.

They were silent for a few minutes, Harry felt comfortable with the professor but there was something that was leaving him quite curious, and every second he was with Lupin his curiosity only grew.

"What's it like?" he asked, looking at Lupin curiously. It may not have been a brilliant idea to breach the subject but he was curious, and he never was good at controlling his curiosity. Seeing Lupin's confusion, he elaborated, "Being a werewolf."

In any other situation, Lupin's expression would have entertained Harry immensely.

"You know?" his voice was no more than a whisper, but the despair was almost palpable. Harry just nodded, not taking his eyes of Lupin's, his expression didn't betray anything, "Since when?"

"September; Snape wasn't particularly subtle with his hints. Every Slytherin knows."

"How wasn't the school swarmed with Howlers from parents complaining that their children are being taught by a monster?"

Harry almost laughed; Lupin was as much a monster as he was. Well, truthfully, it was much more likely that he was more of a monster than Lupin could ever be.

"You are not a monster." Harry told him with absolute certainty, "You are a competent professor, there's no reason for there to be any complaints."

"I'm sorry, but, from what I remember, Slytherins weren't exactly tolerant." Lupin was still pale but he seemed to be coming out of the state he'd been in before.

"Hmm, that's true," Harry remarked, surprising Lupin, he guessed that Lupin was expecting him to deny the accusation, "And it's rather hard to change a person's opinion overnight. But they are Slytherins, so they follow the Court's orders. Besides, from what I've seen, the majority of the younger students really like you and don't care that you're a werewolf, and the older ones are so grateful to finally have a competent teacher that they're willing to ignore the fact that you're a werewolf."

Lupin looked at him, incredulity written all over his face, and then he started laughing. Harry ignored the fact that there was a slightly hysterical edge to the laughter and let Lupin get it out of his system. It wasn't difficult to see that being a werewolf was something that tormented him, talking about it didn't appear to be something that he did much.

"And what is your opinion?" Lupin asked as soon as he had controlled himself, and Harry was quite surprised to see the amount of emotion in his eyes, though, maybe he shouldn't be. According to Sirius, Lupin had always seen him as his cub, and that was a connection that didn't disappear, it didn't matter how much time went by. So, Harry supposed that it was only natural for Lupin to be so emotional about it.

"I don't care," he answered, "The only thing that matters to me, is how useful someone is, or can
become. If you were incompetent, I wouldn't be able to stand you, but it would be because of your incompetence, not because of you being a werewolf." and it was the complete truth, even the muggles that he so despised could be useful and those that were useful, had to be tolerated. Not that he liked it, or wanted to do it, but still, sometimes it had to be done.

"That's a really Slytherin mentality."

"Well... I am a Slytherin."

"Yes," Lupin remarked, and there was a small smile on his lips, "I suppose you are. The Court... Do I want to know what it is?"

Now it was Harry's turn to laugh, "The Court... Well, the Court rules Slytherin."

"And how is that Court defined?" Lupin appeared truly curious, and that was the only reason why Harry answered.

"There are three objectives that must be fulfilled. If a student is able to do it, he can create a Court. But the Slytherins own nature makes it an almost impossible thing to accomplish. As far as I know, the last Court was fifty years ago, and the one before that was about 180 years earlier."

"And what is your relation with the Court?"

Harry just smiled, Lupin wasn't a fool. Considering everything he had heard and seen, Harry had no doubt that he knew, or at least suspected, what his role in the Court was, but that didn't mean that he was going to outright tell him. Besides, he didn't think that Lupin truly thought that Harry would answer.

"Going back to your question," Harry looked at Lupin, he had half expected for the man to ignore the question, "I suppose that your question was about the transformation and not my daily life, correct?"

"Yes," Harry answered, nodding his head, "I know that most people are prejudiced about anything not Light and good and wizard, so I took what was in the books with a grain of salt."

"I see. Well, to be honest, it depends on the books. There are a few that are somewhat true, considering that the people who wrote them never went through the transformation themselves. It's... Well, it's horrible, feeling our bodies change like that, it's incredibly painful. Our bones weren't meant to be like that, our whole anatomy is changed, and if it weren't for our magic we would die from it. That's the reason that most squibs die after the first few transformations, they just don't have enough magic for their bodies to handle the strain. That's also the reason the muggles never make it past the first transformation. Aside from that, you have the emotional shock of the first times that you change. Though, for me, the worst wasn't even the pain, the worst was having no control whatsoever, there is nothing we can do but let it run it's course. That's why I take the Wolfsbane potion, it doesn't stop the transformation, but at least I have some control, at least I'm able to decide what to do."

That was something that Harry could understand. He couldn't imagine what he would have felt if he weren't able to make his own choices, if he had no control over what his body did. He was sure that the feeling of impotence would drive him to insanity, well, more than he already was that is.

"I understand."

Lupin looked at him for several moments and nodded, apparently satisfied with whatever he had seen.
Harry said nothing else, just sat back on his armchair and continued to drink his butterbeer, feeling strangely comfortable in Lupin's company.

"Oomph... Get off me, you mutt." Harry was sure that would have been much more intimidating if he hadn't been in his pajamas, hair sticking every which way and sleepy eyed, but even so he glared venomously at the man that had moments before jumped on him in his dog form. The deadliness of his glare went up when he saw that Sirius didn't look the least bit repentant for waking him at this ungodly hour.

"What?" he snarled, wanting to go back to his interrupted sleep.

"It's Christmas!" exclaimed Sirius with a huge smile and Harry groaned, falling back on his bed.

"And it will still be Christmas in a few hours." he grumbled, doing his best to ignore the man and go back to sleep.

"Come on Harry, it's the first Christmas we spent together, well, not the first, but you know what I mean."

Harry contained a sigh and started to get up. Well, on the bright side, being alone with Sirius wasn't as awkward anymore.

"I'm up. Happy?" he wasn't grumpy, he wasn't, no matter how much Sirius' eyes told him otherwise.

"Presents!" Sirius started to drag him towards the pile of presents, not even letting him change in to something other than his pajamas.

Harry had to admit that he had fun opening his presents, though it had nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with the gifts that the twins sent for Shadow. And he didn't snicker every time he saw the dog collar, leash, and chew toy.

He got the usual books from his Court, though this year there was a small pile of presents from the other Slytherins, especially the younger ones. They were simple things, chocolates, scarfs, gloves, things like that, but it was a good sign. Just as Marcus had said, they were starting to worship the Court, starting to feel like they should please him, and as the years went by they would start to feel it was only natural to follow him and do what he wanted, even after they left Hogwarts.

"It's still too early to go to the Great Hall; do you want to go to the common room?" Harry asked, picking up the book that Adrian had given him about ancient magic, seeing as it would be impossible to go back to sleep, at least he would be doing something interesting.

"Oh, yes. I can lie down in front of the fireplace." Sirius replied enthusiastically, making Harry shake his head. Every time he was in the common room, Sirius would lie down in front of the fireplace, only leaving when he was hungry.

Harry had asked him why he was so obsessed with the fireplace, and Sirius answer showed him, more than anything else, how much Azkaban had broken his mind.

"It helps me remember." Sirius had told him, "That this is real, that I'm not in my cell. When I was in Azkaban, sometimes... Sometimes, my mind played tricks on me, you know? It made me see things that weren't there; I only remembered that they weren't real because of the cold. The cold, it felt like it could freeze my bones. It didn't matter what time of the year it was, it was always so cold. But the fireplace helps, the heat is something that proves that this is real, that my mind isn't playing tricks."
After that, Harry just nodded and let Sirius spend as much time as he wanted in front of the fireplace. That he started to look for enchantments to put a fireplace in his room after that, was only a coincidence.

He sat on the couch near the fireplace and got lost in his book, the only noise in the room was the crack of the wood in the fireplace and Shadow's breathing. Harry took a deep breath and completely relaxed, moments like these were by far some of his favorites.

Harry had no idea how long he was there, so when the door to the common room opened, it took him completely by surprise. Especially when he saw who it was that was entering the common room, and it took all of his skill not to show his confusion and surprise.

"Potter!" snarled Snape, every letter of his name dripping contempt.

"Professor." Harry replied respectfully, he may not be able to stand him but he couldn't afford to lose his cool, at least not yet.

"Potter, you must think you are so special! Just as arrogant as your father!" Snape growled, and Harry looked at the man incredulously. Either the man had lost it completely, or something had happened that Harry wasn't aware of, "You must think yourself far too important to go to the Christmas feast. Everyone must go, but why should Harry James Potter have lunch with mere mortals."

Each word was saturated with hate and Harry could do nothing more than look at the man. All of this because he hadn't showed up for lunch? He'd been right, Snape had lost it.

"If you had asked, professor, you would know that I just lost track of time, it's as simple as that." Harry answered, still calm and collected, though his eyes betrayed him. They promised painful consequences if Snape continued.

Either Snape didn't see it, or completely ignored the warning, which served only to add another nail to his coffin.

"Listen here, brat," he snarled, his wand appearing in his hand, though pointing at the floor, while he walked closer to Harry, "I don't care who you think you are, but you will respect me!"

Harry's eyes narrowed, and he knew that he was about to do something stupid, when a low threatening growl was heard.

Harry looked to his left and saw Shadow coming out behind the couch, his fur melded with the shadows around him, making him look like a Grim more than ever. For a few moments he had forgotten that Sirius was there, and he had to admit that Snape's reaction was quite entertaining. He paled even more, and stumbled backwards a few steps. Unfortunately, he didn't fall, but you can't have everything.

"Shadow." Harry called, and the growling stopped immediately with Shadow sitting down beside Harry's legs, his eyes never leaving Snape.

"I'm going to make sure that you are expelled after this!" Snape exclaimed. He looked strangely triumphant, considering that Harry hadn't done anything worth getting expelled for. Well, at least not at that moment, "Threatening a teacher, not even the Boy-Who-Lived can get away with that."

Harry had no idea if the man truly believed what came out of his mouth, or if he simply wanted to take advantage of the situation to get him in trouble. Either way, Harry had had more than enough and was rather annoyed.
"Threaten?" Harry asked with a small chuckle, breaking Snape's triumphant delirium, "My dear Professor, that wasn't me threatening you. Believe me, if I did threaten you, you would know the difference. There is no chance of you ever winning against me Professor, surely you must realize that." Harry had a little smile on his lips and he had dropped all his masks, it may not be a brilliant idea, but Harry was getting angry and nobody could fault him for losing his cool.

"How arrogant of you to think you can best me in a duel." Snape's sneer was back and apparently so was his confidence, but Harry laughed.

"A duel?" he said, "Dear Professor, who was talking about duels? I'm talking about power." Harry told him, letting his magic, that was always tightly under control, loose. In less than a second, Snape was assaulted by all of Harry's magic; it was saturated malicious intent and sadistic glee, the same emotions that were visible in Harry's eyes.

Severus felt his knees go weak from the sudden pressure. This was Potter's power? This was what they had to fight against if, no, when Potter turned on them? And it wasn't only the quantity of magical power he had, it was the sensation that came with it. It was cold, terrifying, it was... it was evil, there was no other word that could describe it. He had felt Dark magic before, and this, this was different. The only other time he had felt something similar was in the presence of the Dark Lord, and thinking that there was another person, a child, with similar magic was terrifying. He couldn't help but think about the damned prophecy, '... the Dark Lord's equal...' it had said, he wasn't able to repress a shudder and the oppressive magic danced across his skin. The message was quite clear; he was alive only because Potter wanted to play with him.

"Naturally, I'm not only talking about raw magical power," Potter said, his smile making him shiver, "Just as you pointed out, I'm the Boy-Who-Lived, and you... well, you are nothing more than a Death Eater that was lucky enough to escape Azkaban. In a political battle between us, who do you think would win? The child that saved them, or the Death Eater? Even if Dumbledore saved you in the last war, who do you think he will side with now? Me, or you?" Severus didn't answer; Potter's magic was still dancing around him, filling every inch of the room, making it difficult to breathe. He knew, just as he knew that the sun would rise in the morning, that if he took one step in the wrong direction he would die and the last thing he would see would be that cruel, mocking smile on the child's lips. In any other situation he would have fought, he would have collected his own raw magic and tried to, at the very least, shield himself from the foreign magic pressuring him, but he was intelligent and coherent enough to know that in this case it would be futile. It would be like facing a dragon armed only with a simple sword. He may have more experience, more knowledge but it wasn't worth anything in this situation. Just like Potter had said, it wasn't a duel, it was a battle of power, of pure raw magic, and that was something that Potter had in spades. And there was nothing he could do about it. They were born with the amount of magic that they would wield all their life, that's why some wizards were as weak as squibs, or as powerful as the Dark Lord and Dumbledore, with all manner of different levels in between. But even if they were born with all the power they would have through their lives, it was blocked. It was a natural block that started to dissolve when they reached eleven, that was the reason why they started school at eleven. When they reached seventeen was when the last of the natural block dissolved and they had access to all of their magic. However, they were magical by nature, so even when they were children and their core was almost completely blocked, strands of magic still leaked out and that was where accidental magic came from. Supposedly, everyone was the same in that respect, but once in a blue moon, there were children that had no block, children that had access to all of their magic from a young age, and they were able to do indescribable things if they set their minds to it. Dumbledore had been one of those children, as had the Dark Lord, and, apparently, so was Potter.

And just as Potter had reminded him, it wasn't only magical power that he had. Politically, few had as much power as Potter and Severus was sure that Potter knew just how to use it. But, even
knowing all that, he wasn't able to stop the sneer nor the look of contempt that he threw at the boy.

Potter chuckled, and Severus was certain that he wouldn't like what was about to come out of the boy's mouth, "Imagine the people's reaction when they learn that a Death Eater is going around harassing the Boy-Who-Lived, and it would be even worse if the man's own godson would testify against his godfather," and there was what Harry wanted to see; pain. A pain so deep, so sharp that it left it's mark on a person's soul, and that was what Harry wanted, Snape's suffering. It provided far more entertainment than just killing him, "Yes, it's painful, isn't it?" he asked with a sadistic smile on his angelic face, and Severus knew that he was having fun, "How does it feel, to know that a person that you love like a son would choose me instead of you? Even knowing that that choice would lead to you being sent to Azkaban? How does it feel, to know that he wouldn't lift a finger to help you if I decided to kill you? How does it feel, to know that he is mine?"

Every sentence was like a knife to the heart and Severus was certain that Potter was able to see it, because Potter laughed, a cruel, malevolent laugh and said, "And the best thing about it, my dear Professor, is that you know I am telling the truth. After all, why lie, when the truth is so much more entertaining."

And the magic around him was vibrating with dark amusement, reflecting Potter's feelings, and in a small part of his mind, a part disconnected from everything that was happening, Severus couldn't help but ask himself how a child could be so cruel, so evil. Then he remembered something his mother used to tell him, when he came home after being bullied by other children, when he raved and cried at the cruelty shown to him just because he was different, 'Children, when they are born, they aren't good, or evil, or guilty, or even innocent, they just are. That's why children are some of the most cruel beings on Earth, they don't know any better. It is their parents that have to show them what's right and wrong, it is their parents that have to teach them love, kindness, and even mercy. However, they are children, so it takes time for them to learn, and some never learn it, some have no one to teach them. Some children, my son, are taught hate, cruelty, and to be unmerciful. You should never blame them, my son, they weren't taught any different. They don't know any better, we can only ask Merlin that when they grow, they learn the difference, or that someone teaches it to them. You should pity them, my son, those children never knew love.' Looking into those mocking, cruel eyes Severus couldn't believe what his mother had told him, at least not about the boy sitting in front of him. He was certain that Potter knew exactly what he was doing, he was enjoying himself and he couldn't help the shiver that went down his spine when he thought about what Potter would be able to do when he grew older, he didn't think the Wizarding World would survive.

Suddenly, the magic saturating the common room and making it difficult to breathe disappeared and he almost fell to his knees because of the sudden loss of pressure, pressure that he was coming to realize had been the only thing that had made it possible for him to stand. However, he was able to recover quickly and only stumbled a bit. Though, before he was able to say anything, the door to the common room opened and Albus and Minerva came through.

He looked at Potter and had to contain a snarl, the Demon that had been talking to him was gone, and in his place was the Potter they saw every day; the prodigy, respectful and polite, and so charismatic that he captivated anyone.

"Is everything alright? You were taking a long time, Severus." Albus asked and Severus was able to see worry in his eyes, though he had to ask himself, for whom that worry was for. Severus would like to believe that it was for him, but Potter's voice was in his head, mocking him, telling him that Potter was the Boy-Who-Lived, and he... he was nothing more than a Death Eater.

"It's my fault professor," Potter replied, his voice innocent and looking a bit sheepish, and Severus
hated him more than ever, "It was because of Shadow, Professor Snape was telling me I had to get rid of him, and I was trying to make him listen to me, but he didn't care."

Severus had completely forgotten about the mutt and he was tempted to say that Potter was lying, he wanted to tell them what the brat had said and done, but he didn't say anything. He just glared at Potter with all his might, showing him just how much he hated him. At that moment, there was nothing he could do. Potter's threat was still in the forefront of his mind, and the cold, malicious feeling of his magic still present.

"Shadow?" Minerva asked, looking curiously at Potter, until her eyes landed on the gigantic dog at his feet.

"My friends and I found him yesterday, he was half frozen to death and starved, we couldn't leave him," Potter told him, all the necessary emotions present to look like the innocent and compassionate teen that he wanted to portray. Severus could see that Albus and Minerva believed every word that came out of that mouth, "I know that we shouldn't have animals that aren't on the list, and I have already asked my friends to see if they can find someone to take him. But I couldn't just leave him to die."

When Albus and Minerva's eyes warmed, he knew that the brat had won.

"Alright, Harry," Albus replied with his baby blue eyes twinkling, and Potter's smile lit up his face, only he knew what that fake smile hid, "But he can't leave the common room, and he can only stay till you find someone to take him in. You can't bring him back next year."

"Oh, thank you, Professor. I promise that the rest of the school won't even notice that he's here. I'll take care of him."

"I know, my boy. Now, we should be heading back to lunch, yes?"

"I'm sorry. I lost track of time."

"It's alright my boy. Pack up your things and meet us there. Minerva, Severus, let's go."

Severus could do nothing but follow, though he did look back one last time, and saw Potter's smug smirk, and more than ever he wanted to curse that smirk of his face.

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Harry couldn't help but smile when he looked around and saw all his Court. They had come back from the holidays and, without him even telling them to, they had gone to the Slytherin common room. However, no matter how much he liked to see them all so relaxed, they had work to do.

"Adrian." he said, and that was all he needed to say for the boy in question to raise a silencing charm and for him to have everyone's attention.

"I hope your break was a good one, and though I know that you would rather relax these last few hours before school starts again, we have many things to do." they all sat a bit straighter, even Luna looked more focused, "Fred, George, I don't know how you did it, but good job on the Sirius Black sightings."

A few days after the break started, there were several witnesses that saw Black, all of them in London, quite far from Hogwarts. For days, the Daily Prophet published speculations as to why Black was in London and warning the Wizarding population to be careful.

"Ah, you know, for geniuses like us, it was as simple as breathing." Fred answered, looking a little
"A charm here and there, and voilá, one Sirius Black ready to be seen far away from Hogwarts." George added.

"What about the restriction for underage magic?" Neville asked curiously.

"As long as you cast the spells in a place like Diagon Alley, the Ministry has no way of detecting it." George replied.

"That's why we took almost a week to arrange the first sighting," Fred explained, "We had to ask our father how it worked, but we couldn't outright ask, or else he might suspect something. This way, it's probable that he won't even remember talking to us." no matter how hard he tried, he wasn't able to hide the bitterness in his voice when he said that last sentence.

"Any wizard would have noticed that it was glamours, at least if they had seen us up close, but the muggles had no idea, we just had to make sure that several muggles saw us at approximately the same place." George took over from Fred, sending his brother a sympathetic look.

"You did very well," Harry complimented them, "What about everything else?"

"Marcus started to whisper in the right person's ears, though he thinks that it will be much more effective when the paper is out." Draco replied.

"She agreed," Graham informed them, "Not that she had any other choice," Adrian interrupted, "Her contract ended and she didn't renew it, she's waiting for you to contact her." Graham continued as if Adrian hadn't said a thing.

"Very well. Luna, did you bring everything we need?"

Luna nodded and pulled a parchment out of her bag, "It just needs a name and for you to sign it, I already did."

Harry took the parchment and signed, then, after thinking it over for a few moments, he put the name down. For a while nothing happened, then the parchment started glowing and captured the attention of the whole common room. It folded itself, then tripled itself and then one of the copies disappeared. Harry gave Luna one of the parchments left, and laughed.

"Well, it looks like we have a newspaper."

The others laughed too, it was an exhilarating feeling being able to accomplish what they had set out to do. And this was only the beginning. They could feel it in their bones, they knew things were going to change, and they would be involved in it, one way or another.

"We have a lot of work to do, I want everything ready for tomorrow. I want to send everything to Marcus then, so that he has time to contact Skeeter and so that he can send it back to me so that I can look it over. Then we need to change everything that needs changing, though I don't think there will be much, and then we have to send it back to Marcus, so that he can take care of everything with Mr. Lovegood."

They took out quills and parchment. Neville, Blaise, and Theo started to describe the layout of the newspaper, and not losing any time, they started working. It was going to be an incredibly long night, but it was worth it, losing a night's sleep was nothing compared to reaching their goals.
No matter how hard they tried, no member of the Court was able to hide their excitement. It wasn’t something all that noticeable; however, it was noticeable enough for more than one person to look their way.

Any other day, Harry would have been annoyed with them for being so obvious, but that day Harry didn’t blame them, considering that even he was struggling to act normal.

And then he heard the sound he had been waiting for, hundreds of owls entered the Great Hall, all of them with the same thing in their claws and every professor and student from third year and up got the identical packages. Harry almost couldn’t stop his cackling, because there, in his hands, was the first edition of Magic Today, his newspaper.

'Magic Today'

'Dear readers, we present to you the new newspaper of the British Magical Community. We are a newspaper for the everyday witch and wizard, a newspaper that tells you how things are and not how people want you to believe things to be.

As stated before, we are a newspaper for the everyday witch and wizard, what you think, what you have to say; matters. Taking that into account, we have a section in our newspaper dedicated to all of you, it’s called "The people's voice". We want you to send us what you think, it doesn't matter if you are a Hogwarts student or a Ministry employee, we will treat all of your letters with the respect and attention they deserve.

We hope that you have a good reading.

May Magic bless you and yours.'

Then several articles followed the brief introduction, it started with Sirius Black's escape, of course, and the Ministry's reaction to it. After that, came several articles about public safety and another one that discussed the possibility of future escapes from Azkaban. Another article questioned the Minister's choice of putting Dementors at Hogwarts, going into incredible detail about how a Dementor made someone feel, and asking if it was wise to have them so near children. Then there was another article that debated how ethical it was to even use Dementors, that even if the inmates of Azkaban had committed terrible deeds they were still human beings and deserved to be treated as such. Harry didn't care either way, but it would be something that would gain the main public's attention.

Of course, there was also a section for sports and business and another part dedicated to learning, where they had simple potions recipes for everyday life, as well as an assortment of spells.

And even though Harry was quite satisfied with how everything had turned out, none of it was the most important part of the newspaper. The most important thing in all of the newspaper was the small sentence at the end of the introduction. The sentence served two proposes.

It was a blessing that all the old families should know, and Harry hoped that it would contribute to them subscribing to the newspaper. On the other hand, because it was such a simple blessing, it wasn't likely that some Light family would recognize it; at least, not the ones that didn't follow traditions because they believed them to be Dark.

The second propose, was to teach the first generation witches and wizards. Harry thought that if they started with small things, the first generation witches and wizards would start to assimilate it into their daily lives, just like they changed the 'Oh, God' to 'Oh, Merlin'.
Later, he planned on introducing more obscure traditions, maybe to the learning section, or maybe he could add a new section of Wizarding History and teach the traditions from a historic point of view. However, at the moment, it couldn't be more than something small here or there, they needed to gather a following first, then, well, time would tell.

Surreptitiously, he looked around the Great Hall, the Slytherins all had their noses in the newspaper and a few were talking with their neighbors, commenting on one thing or another.

Harry wasn't surprised when he saw that the Ravenclaws were looking at the educational section. The spells that they had chosen were nothing special, though, because they were so old, they looked impressive. In reality, it was a simple shield that protected against mild curses and hexes, like *diffindo* and *stupefy*, and a spell that helped grow plants in greenhouses or gardens. Both spells hadn't been used in around 250 years and were fairly unknown.

Out of the two of them, though it didn't look like it, it was the second spell that was riskier to publish. It may look like a charm, which had been what they had been going for, but in reality it was elemental magic, and all elemental magic had been classified as Dark Magic by the Ministry. Harry thought it was stupid, but he knew that he couldn't do anything about it, at least not yet, but if he introduced some simple spells to the population, maybe he could start changing how they saw magic that is considered Dark. But, even so, they had taken all the precautions they could, that specific spell wasn't on any of the Ministry's outlawed lists and with the similarity it had to a charm, Harry was sure that he would be able to pretend that he didn't know if someone called them on it.

However, he wasn't really worried about it, he doubted that anyone would notice, and those that did notice would be the ones that practiced the Darker Arts, so there would be no need for them to divulge the information.

The Hufflepuffs were reading the newspaper but they didn't seem to be focusing on anything specific and the same applied to the Gryffindors.

The professors were also discussing the newspaper, some the articles, others the educational section. All but one, Snape had his eyes fixed on Harry and the accusation in them was impossible to miss. Really, Harry wasn't the least bit surprised that Snape thought that Harry was somehow responsible for the new newspaper, Harry had no doubt that if there was an earthquake in France Snape would believe that Harry was the one behind it.

Movement at the end of the table made him look around again and when he saw the majority of the students filling the subscription at the end of the paper, he wasn't able to contain his smirk.

Now he just had to talk with Marcus and see if the reaction at the Ministry had been the same.

Summer break would begin in a bit over a month and even though it was perfect weather to be outside, most students were in their common rooms, or in the library, trying to memorize as much information as they could for the upcoming exams, especially the students that would be taking their OWL’s and NEWT's.

Harry was one of the few that was completely relaxed. Even his Court had succumbed to the madness that was pre-exams study time, which amused Harry greatly.

Harry didn't understand why they were so nervous, they were the best students at Hogwarts, even Neville, now that he had a proper wand and the right motivation. However, he didn't say anything about it, if his Court wanted to join the pre-exam insanity, who was he to stop them?
Fortunately, they weren't as obsessed as the others and they could occasionally enjoy a relaxing afternoon near the lake. Even if only his Slytherin Court members and Luna could join, Neville and the twins were still not known members to most of Hogwarts, it was better that way. Though they couldn't be together every time they wanted, it was far too big of an advantage to waste. Besides, from what he had seen, Neville and the demons enjoyed being the 'secret members'.

An owl landing in front of him brought him out of his thoughts, also gaining the others' attention.

Curious, he took the parchment that was clutched in its talons.

'Now.

Marcus'

Without a word, he gave Theo the parchment, got up, and started walking towards the castle. Finally, the time he had been waiting for had arrived. There were so many things that depended on how the following moments would run that he was hardly able to control his nervousness. But, even so, his mind was analyzing the dozens of ways that things could turn out and the ways he should react to them. However, there was always the possibility of something going wrong. He could do nothing but hope that the information that Marcus had given him was correct.

He was so focused on his thoughts, that he almost missed the fact that he had arrived. He took a deep breath and his mask slid into place, his emotions completely controlled.

"I wish to see the Headmaster." he said formally, and just like it said in 'Hogwarts: A History' the stone gargoyle moved and revealed the stairs that lead to the Headmaster's office. Harry smiled, only those that read between the lines would be able to know this little detail. The book said, that as long as the Headmaster was in his or her office, students could go talk to him or her as long as they wished it. The password that every Headmaster had and changed whenever they wanted, was only for when the Headmaster wasn't in his office.

As he went up the stairs, he started to hear voices coming from the office and his anticipation grew; it was almost time.

He took another step and knocked.

The voices stopped abruptly, and a moment later the door opened.

Harry stayed where he was, not looking at anyone in the office, he looked a bit sheepish.

"I'm sorry, I didn't want to interrupt."

"It's no problem Harry, my boy."

"Harry? Harry Potter?" a second voice interrupted whatever Dumbledore was about to say and someone, who Harry supposed was the person who had spoken, grabbed his arm and pulled him inside the office, closing the door behind them.

Harry had to control himself so that he wouldn't rip the man's hand off, he hated when people touched him, well, at least he hated it when he didn't know the person. Ignoring his desires, he looked at the man quizzically, hiding all the disdain that he felt. One look was enough to know who the man was, Fudge was just like Marcus had described him.

"I'm sorry sir..." Harry started, feigning confusion.
"Oh, of course, of course. I didn't even introduce myself, I'm the Minister of Magic. Cornelius Fudge," Fudge informed him, looking far more pompous than Harry thought possible. He looked at Fudge with all the nervousness and awe that was appropriate for a situation such as the one he was in, apparently the reaction pleased him, because he continued to introduce the other people in the office, "This is Lucius Malfoy, a good friend of mine," he couldn't be that good of a friend, otherwise he would have known that Harry already knew the man, thought Harry smiling shyly at Lucius, "You may know the young man at his side, Marcus Jugson, Junior Undersecretary."

Harry nodded and smiled timidly.

"Ah, that's good, good. You know, Harry my boy, we were talking about you just now."

"You were?" Harry asked innocently, just a bit more and he would have Fudge just where he wanted.

"Of course, of course. We worry very much about your safety, you know?" Fudge was doing everything he could to look like a concerned uncle, looking after his favorite nephew, but Harry was a master at the game they were playing and Fudge... well, Fudge didn't even reach amateur level, "But you don't have to worry, my boy, I gave the order for Black to be given the Dementor's Kiss on sight." Fudge told him pompously, sure that he had gained the favor of the Boy-Who-Lived. He was so absorbed in his own self-importance that he didn't even notice the changes in Harry, though it was something that didn't go unnoticed in the other three and Harry was almost able to feel their emotions. A shark like grin appeared on Marcus' lips for a second, long enough for Lucius and Dumbledore to notice, but Harry wasn't that worried about it, he was certain that both knew that Marcus was his.

"Are you sure you want to do that, Minister?" his voice was soft, silky, any trace of shyness or embarrassment was gone from his posture and Harry could feel Dumbledore's and Lucius' eyes on him.

"My boy, you're still young and you don't quite understand these things, when you're older you'll see, you'll understand." Fudge replied and Harry didn't think it possible for the man to sound more condescending, even if he tried.

"Hmm. Yes, I'm already seeing the headlines," Harry remarked, his smile was far too innocent, "'Minister gives Dementor's Kiss to a Lord of an Ancient and Noble House'."

"Why would the Prophet publish something like that?" Fudge asked incredulously, "And Black is a convicted murderer!"

"Are you sure about that Minister? Besides, I wasn't talking about the Prophet." it was rather gratifying to see Fudge pale.

"Wha-what do you mean?" he stuttered, and Harry's smile became predatory, oh how he loved to play with his prey.

"I mean, that I looked for the records of that particular trial and there were none." Fudge's eyes opened wide, at least he was intelligent enough to understand what that meant.

"But everyone knows he was the one who did it!" Fudge looked to be on the verge of a panic attack and he started to sweat, his eyes jumping from Lucius to Dumbledore, "Everyone knows that he's guilty!"

"Ah, I'm sorry Minister," Harry said, gaining Fudge's attention again. He had no idea how the man
didn't hear the mocking every time he used his title, "But 'everyone knows' isn't a good argument. If I'm not mistaken, fourteen years ago everyone knew that it was impossible to survive the Killing Curse and yet, here I am."

"What does that have to do with anything?" apparently Fudge couldn't process more than one emotion at a time, since the panic in his eyes disappeared to give place to perplexity. Well, Harry couldn't allow that to happen.

"It has everything to do with it Minister, it proves that what everyone knows isn't always right."

Fudge look at Lucius again, his eyes pleading him to do something but Harry continued before Lucius could interfere, no matter how much he wanted to play with Lucius, now wasn't the right time.

"Tell me, Minister, what will you do when the public accuses you of murder?" Fudge gawked at him, the fear that was in his eyes made Harry want to laugh, "Tell me, Minister, what will you do when the public starts to doubt their own safety, considering that a Lord from an Ancient and Noble House doesn't even get a trial before he is condemned to something worse than death. What rights do the everyday witch and wizard have if the Minister kills a Lord, just like that? And I'm not even thinking about the other Lords' reactions, how do they know that they won't be next?"

Harry's eyes shone with unholy glee. Fudge had lost all of his color. It seemed that he wanted to say something, but the words wouldn't come out, not that Harry had any intention of letting him gain back any semblance of coherent thought.

"And if you do nothing, they will accuse you of being weak and of not being worried about their safety, isn't that right Minister?"

Fudge looked like he wanted to cry and Harry wanted to laugh, he had never met anyone as pathetic as Fudge.

"Hmm, poor Minister," while his voice was soft, sweet, and understanding, his eyes were cold, shining with amusement and pleasure, and were looking at Fudge with disgust so well hidden that Fudge wasn't able to identify it, "Damned if you do, damned if you don't."

The panic was back and Lucius held back a sneer when the man looked at him again. When he'd agreed to come to Hogwarts he hadn't expected to see something like this, and no matter how much he wanted to believe that it was a coincidence that Harry was there, he couldn't, not with Marcus there. Not that he was complaining, it was fascinating seeing Harry like this, though he admitted, if only to himself, that Harry's mind was as terrifying as his magic. If Lucius had to describe him at the moment, he would say that Harry looked like a predator playing with its prey.

"You know what to do, don't you Minister?" his tone was as condescending as Cornelius' had been, though there was a mocking quality to it.

"Do? There is nothing I can do! It has no solution!" Cornelius lamented, and a triumphant shine appeared in Harry's eyes. Lucius still didn't know what Harry intended, at first he thought that Harry had been doing it to have fun, that he was destroying a man because he could and wanted to do it. Now, however, it was obvious that even though he was having fun, all of this had an objective and Lucius asked himself how long Harry had been waiting for this moment, how long he had schemed and plotted and laid in wait for the right moment, like a snake.

"Of course it has a solution," the hope on Cornelius' face was ridiculously pathetic, "You just have to prove to the public that they are wrong."
"How?" Cornelius asked desperately, Lucius looked at him with contempt for a fraction of a second. What a sorry excuse for a wizard, asking for political advice from a child, even if it wasn't a normal child, Cornelius had no way of knowing that.

"How? Ah... Well, that's rather simple Minister. You know Rita, don't you?" Cornelius nodded frantically, "You just need to talk with her, tell her that you were searching for the records of Black's trial, that you needed to verify some information. Naturally, you were beyond shocked when you saw that there were no records. Which could just mean one thing, Sirius Black didn't have a trial."

"That's going to ruin me." Cornelius complained, still pale, shaking, and sweating, but he looked a bit calmer. Apparently, the possibility of saving his political career had broken the panicked state he had been in.

"Of course it won't ruin you. After all, you are only a man looking for justice. Correcting the mistakes of his predecessors," Lucius saw Cornelius' mind starting to work, if there was something Cornelius was good at it was blaming others, "Naturally, you don't blame them," that simple sentence made Cornelius look as if he had been told that Yule was every day but he wouldn't get to have any presents, "It were difficult times, and to err is human and what are we if not human."

It wouldn't surprise Lucius if that sentence appeared in the interview that Cornelius would be having with Skeeter. Harry was practically informing him that he would have an interview with Skeeter and was giving him the answers to questions that he had obviously already defined.

"Then you just have to make sure that Black gets a trial, preferably before school lets out, since I will go to the trial. Just to make sure that everything works out alright, you understand, don't you, Minister?"

Lucius almost laughed, it was an order and a threat so well disguised that he was sure that it went completely over Cornelius' head.

"And be he guilty or innocent, you Minister, have only something to gain from it, one way or another."

Lucius had never seen the Minister so excited, he was looking at Harry as if he was the answer to all his prayers, and Lucius admitted that it looked like he was, but he was sure that the Devil looked like that too, until he came to collect his due.

"Ah, my boy, this will surely help me a great deal, I mean, it will help the government with the Black issue." Cornelius shook his hand and pulled him a little closer, only Lucius and Marcus saw Harry's smirk.

"Don't forget, Minister," Harry whispered and Lucius almost wasn't able to hear it, "I could destroy you just as easily. The only reason I don't do it is because you have your uses at the moment, you understand, don't you, Minister?"

Cornelius paled again, but Lucius saw his eyes narrow and knew that Cornelius was thinking about something and that whatever it was would hurt Harry. Apparently, Harry saw the same, because he chuckled, the same chuckle Lucius had heard that fateful morning in Knockturn Alley.

"Don't even think about turning against me," braver men than Cornelius would have been paralyzed with fear hearing that voice, so it came as no surprise to Lucius that Cornelius lost all the color on his face and started shaking, "If such a thing even crosses your mind, I will destroy you completely. Starting with what you value most, like your political career. Think about what people would say if they knew that their very own Minister was tormenting, antagonizing a thirteen year old boy, an
orphan, one who lost his parents so that the Wizarding World could be safe from Voldemort."

Harry stepped away, and Lucius knew that he had won this round and he didn't know if he should be impressed, or terrified. Maybe a bit of both would be appropriate, he was after all a thirteen year old boy who had followers, well it was only one follower but still, in the Ministry, in a position of power. Aside from that, he had just put a leash on the Minister; it was impressive. On the other hand, he was a thirteen year old boy who had followers, a follower, in the Ministry, in a position of power, and he had put a leash on the Minister; it was terrifying.

"Marcus will make sure that you meet Rita as soon as possible, don't worry about it, you just have to be ready for when Marcus tells you. He'll take care of everything, correct?" Harry asked, looking at Marcus.

"Yes." Lucius was certain that he wasn't the only one who heard the unspoken 'my Lord'.

"It was a pleasure meeting you, Minister."

Cornelius nodded, said something that could pass as "Likewise." and disappeared through the Floo. Marcus stayed long enough to give a small bow and followed him out.

"This was fun." Harry whispered with a small chuckle.

"So, you decided to stop using masks?" Dumbledore asked, his eyes on Harry, and Lucius was quite curious to see what Harry came up with to get out of it.

"Masks, Headmaster?" Lucius lifted an eyebrow, he couldn't possibly believe that Dumbledore would buy that act.

"You know perfectly well what I mean."

"No, I really don't. If you are referring to my behavior, I guarantee that it is no mask. As far as I know, people aren't one-dimensional, they have more than one facet, several people see different sides of the same person, but that doesn't mean they are masks. They simply behave according to the situation, or the people they're with. Take me, for example, I love to learn new things and to have a quiet moment with a book; however, I also enjoy having fun with my friends, going flying or playing Quidditch with them. Those are two completely different sides of me, but they are still me."

If Lucius didn't remember the first time he had seen Harry, he would have believed him, but he knew that this Harry, this polite, charismatic, prodigal Harry, was as much a mask as the child-like Harry he had met, no matter how genuine it seemed. The best lie was always based on truth, just like the best mask was the one that had some truth to it.

"I see. I'm sorry, my boy, it was not my intention to offend you," Dumbledore replied, and Lucius didn't remember ever seeing the old man so defeated, "Tell me, my boy, why did you come to my office?"

Harry blushed, and Lucius couldn't tell if it was fake or not.

"It was because of Shadow. We found him a home," his smile was huge and his eyes shone with joy, "I just wanted to tell you that he will be gone the next Hogsmead weekend."

"I'm happy to hear that he found a home. I will tell Professors McGonagall and Snape."

"Thank you, Headmaster. Good afternoon, Professor, Mr. Malfoy."
And Harry left without a care in the world, as if he hadn't threatened the Minister of Magic, leaving Lucius and Dumbledore with more to think about and even more questions about Harry Potter, their Savior.

The following morning, all the students that received 'Magic Today' were outraged, Harry had to admit that Rita knew how to play the public.

'Innocents in Azkaban' read the headline, and Harry thought that it had come out better than he had expected.

'Innocents in Azkaban'

by Rita Skeeter

'My dear readers, you have no idea how much I want to tell you that the headline is a lie. We all know how horrible the creatures known as Dementors are, thinking that an innocent may have been subjected to such beings is unimaginable. However, unfortunately, I cannot tell you with absolute certainty that it isn't true.

You must be wondering how I came to such a conclusion, if I were in your place I would too, so let me tell you what happened the previous afternoon.

I was in my office, going over an article for the following edition, when my Floo connection opened and Cornelius Fudge, our Minister of Magic, came through.

As you can imagine, I was rather amazed, it isn't every day that we receive a visit from the Minister himself, but even in my state of shock, it was impossible to miss that our Minister was pale and shaking.

Naturally, I asked the Minister if everything was alright, if he needed help. The Minister just shook his head and sat down. He was silent for several moments, until he looked at me determinately. "Rita," he said, "It's time that we correct a mistake made more than a decade ago. It's time that justice is done."

I'm sure that you can imagine my reaction, but our Minister didn't give me time to think about it, and even before I could ask him what he meant, he started telling me the reason he was there.

"I never thought that I would be in such a situation," confessed the Minister, "Yesterday I needed to verify some information pertaining to the trial of Sirius Black. No one likes to think about those times, about the crimes that were committed, but sometimes it's necessary to go over some of those cases, for several reasons, in this case it was because I was thinking about giving Black the Dementor's Kiss. Though the information had to be verified before the order could be given, it's a safety precaution, as you can imagine, "I was rather relieved that our Minister was so worried about us, even about citizens that were nothing more than monsters in the eyes of the rest of the population, "You can't imagine my shock when I saw that the records of the trial didn't exist. At first, I thought they were simply misplaced, which is why I did everything I could to find them. However, I found out that the records never existed and that could only mean one thing."

For those who don't know, every time there is a trial the magic that is invoked at the time the panel of judges is formed, creates a record of the trial. Those records cannot be falsified, nor destroyed; as such, if there are no records, then there was no trial.

Yes, my dear readers, Sirius Black spent more than a decade in Azkaban without ever having been
given a trial. How could something like that have happened? How can a man be thrown into Azkaban without ever having a trial? Who condemned someone, who could be innocent of the crimes he is accused of, to something worse than death?

"Who did it doesn't matter," answered our Minister, "It was difficult times, and I am certain that they didn't do it with malicious intent. It was a mistake, a horrible mistake, but a mistake nonetheless. To err is human, Rita, and what are we if not human?" our Minister showed that he was a compassionate man, knowing that someone like him is responsible for our world leaves me feeling thankful, it is good to know that there are politicians who value the people more than their political careers.

"What's important now is to do what is right," Fudge continued, gaining even more of my respect, "All orders in regard to Sirius Black were suspended. And I ask Sirius Black to present himself at the Ministry as soon as he can, so that he can have the trial that he never had, if he is innocent, he has nothing to fear."

And here it is, my dear readers, the horrible truth, did an innocent man spend more than a decade in Azkaban?

We here at 'Magic Today' hope that Sirius Black presents himself at the Ministry so that justice can finally be done.'

Harry had to congratulate Marcus, he couldn't have done a better job. And the article praised the Minister enough, so that would make him happy as well. He had to use a bit of force so that Fudge knew how things were, however, the article served to show him how useful it could be for him if he stayed in Harry's good graces. If Fudge behaved, they would all get something out of it.

Harry looked the newspaper over again, skimming the other articles, one about Sirius Black before he had gone to Azkaban, with a little help from Sirius of course, another about Fudge's career, portrayed in a very good light and, naturally, one about the person responsible for sending Sirius to Azkaban.

It wasn't in the front page, it didn't even have that big of a headline, but it was enough to damage the people involved, especially Crouch.

Harry had nothing against the man, but his politics were so anti-Dark Arts that having him in a position that was the least bit influential was dangerous. Not that Harry intended to play with the Ministry as of yet, but it didn't hurt to neutralize possible complications before they appeared.

At least everything was on track, now he could do nothing but wait.

Harry had to wait for less time than he had expected, a week after the article came out he received a letter from Marcus, telling him that Sirius had shown up at the Ministry, which surprised Harry, he had thought that Sirius would take longer to make it to London, though he supposed that Sirius was anxious to finally be free.

And three days after that he got a letter from the Minister, informing him of the date and time of the trial, and that was why he was in Dumbledore's office at the moment. Since Dumbledore was Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, he would take part in the trial and would be taking Harry with him to the Ministry. Fortunately, Dumbledore wasn't inclined to have any type of conversation, aside from the usual pleasantries, so they got to the Ministry rather quickly and a bit earlier, because Dumbledore had some things to take care of beforehand, at least that had been what he'd said, not that Harry was complaining. He was glad that they arrived earlier than expected, he had no wish to
face the masses. Luckily, at the moment not many people knew what he looked like, as he'd managed to avoid having his picture in the papers. He wanted to enjoy the anonymity for as long as he could, since he had a feeling that, after the trial, anonymity would be a thing of the past.

Seeing as the trial was considered the event of the century, courtroom ten was quite full. All the Wizengamot was present, and on a dais in the center of the rows of seats of the members of the Wizengamot, were the four people that would preside over the trial.

Harry knew the Headmaster and Fudge, and though he had never seen the other two, he would bet that they were Amelia Bones and Rufus Scrimgeour. He didn't know much about them, only that Amelia Bones was fair and strict and one of the few ministry employees that was impossible to bribe. She came from an old family and even though she and her family were Light, they didn't consider all of the traditions Dark. They still practiced some of them, though not many, and were firmly on the side of the Ministry, usually not associating with either Dark or Light Lords. And as far as Marcus knew, Bones was quite content with her place in the Ministry, and had no aspirations to be anything aside from what she was. Rufus Scrimgeour on the other hand was an ambitious little bugger, he couldn't wait to get his claws on the Minister's position. However, he wasn't the type to be bribed either and he was quite biased to anything Dark, which was rather strange, because, as far as Harry knew, the Scrimgeour family had always followed the belief that magic should be free, not restricted according to some wizards beliefs. Harry wasn't sure if he really believed it or if he just followed whatever was the most popular belief; considering how ambitious he was, it could very well be that he just spouted what people wanted to hear. If that was the case, well, any and all respect that Harry could have for the man went out the window.

Harry looked around and saw Rita with the other journalists, Marcus was a little behind her, no doubt whispering instructions in her ear. His eyes caught Harry's briefly and he inclined his head, telling him that everything was going according to plan and Harry smiled, it was just a minuscule upturn of his lips, but still, a smile is a smile. When he looked again, Marcus was gone and he saw him reappear behind the Minister without anyone noticing.

"Order. Order in the courtroom." Dumbledore exclaimed, beginning the procedure, and gaining everyone's attention.

"I hereby declare the beginning of the trial of one, Sirius Orion Black, accused of having murdered fourteen people; thirteen muggles and one wizard by the name of Peter Pettigrew. Sirius Black is also accused of having betrayed the Potters to the Dark Lord Voldemort and of being the Dark Lord Voldemort's right hand. Aurors, bring in the accused."

Harry saw Sirius entering the room with his head held high and sit in the chair with the chains that was in front of the four judges as if it were a throne, and he had to contain a smile. Well, no matter what they said about the man, there was no doubt that he was a Black.

"Sirius Black, the Wizengamot was informed that you refused legal aid and that you agreed to testify under Veritaserum, as long as the court only asked questions pertaining to the crimes you are accused of, is that correct?"

"Yes, the faster we get this over with, the better."

"Were you informed that you have the right to refuse the use of Veritaserum?"

"Yes, Dumbledore. Now let's get this over with, I have a godson that I want to meet."

Harry snorted, sometimes he asked himself what he had done to have a godfather like Sirius, a godfather that clearly had no filter between his brain and his mouth.
"Very well. Administer the Veritaserum." Dumbledore instructed, and the Auror closest to Sirius dripped three drops of the potion onto Sirius' tongue.

"State your name." Dumbledore instructed.

"Sirius Orion Black." Sirius answered monotonously, with his eyes unfocused and slightly glazed over.

"The Veritaserum is working. You may start the questioning, Madam Bones."

"Thank you, Chief Warlock. Did you kill fourteen people on the first of November of '81?"

"No."

That small, simple word caused total chaos and Harry didn't even try to hide his smile.

"Order! Order!" exclaimed Dumbledore, trying to gain back control. However, only after several more tries and some loud noise coming from the wands of the Aurors, did the crowd settle down.

"Do you know who killed those people?"

"Yes, Peter Pettigrew."

"Pettigrew? How?"

"Yes. He blew up the street, cut off his own finger, and disappeared down into the sewers with the other rats."

"Why would he do that? And what do you mean by 'the other rats'?" Bones looked incredulous, but it was impossible to deny that it was the true, no matter how far-fetched it sounded.

"Because he knew that I was going to kill him. Peter is a rat animagus." again there was an explosion of sound, some were screaming about Sirius being a killer, while others looked shocked about the revelation that Pettigrew was an animagus. It didn't really surprise Harry; as far as most people knew, there weren't that many animagi around. What people failed to realize, was that just because they weren't registered, didn't mean that they weren't out there.

"Why would you kill him?" this time it had been Scrimgeour that asked the question, the buzzing from before had disappeared completely, everyone present was completely focused on Sirius, anxious to hear what he was about to say.

However, Harry noticed understanding appear on several faces, and others were pale, they were starting to realize that they had sent an innocent man to Azkaban.

"Peter was the Secret Keeper, he gave them to Voldemort. He killed them."

Five seconds.

That was how long it took for the crowd to process what Sirius had said, after that there was pandemonium.

Most were outraged, it didn't matter if they were Light or Dark, betrayal like that was considered the worst thing that a person could do. Being considered a Secret Keeper was an honor, it was old magic, something that no one truly understood, because the secret wasn't in the Keeper's mind, it was in their soul, and soul magic, no matter what form, was something that no one truly knew the workings of. Being a Secret Keeper required complete trust in the Keeper, otherwise the charm
wouldn't be able to hold, the Secret would be told to the Keeper, but it wasn't really spoken, it was from one soul to another, and something like that didn't work without complete trust. The Keeper could share the Secret however he wished afterwards, but before the charm is completed, the one telling the Secret to the Keeper must truly trust them. In the eyes of all those present, for Peter to betray something like that was worse than anything they could think of, and the scorn they felt for Peter was visible for all to see. It was rather obvious that more than one of them wished that Sirius had been able to kill the little traitor.

"Are you, or have you ever been, a Death Eater?" Bones asked, after several minutes. Even she looked disgusted and had to have a few moments to control herself.

"No."

"Administer the antidote." Dumbledore almost whispered. However, the room was so quiet that everyone heard it and the Aurors quickly obeyed. It was clear that Bones and Scrimgeour wanted to ask more questions, but they already knew everything related to the crimes he was accused of, and those were the only questions that they could ask under Veritaserum. Technically, they could pose several other questions and make them relate to the crimes, but Dumbledore was the Chief Warlock and they couldn't go against him. Dumbledore himself looked defeated, old, as if he had no fight left in him. Harry could understand that, he may not like the man all that much, but he knew that the man did care about the people in general, and he supposed with Sirius being in his Order and a former student, Dumbledore felt responsible for him. Knowing that he, the Chief Warlock had let an innocent man, not only an innocent man, but one of his own, suffer in Azkaban, must be killing him.

"I think we've heard enough," declared Fudge, standing up, "I, Cornelius Fudge, Minister of Magic, declare Sirius Orion Black free of all charges. For every year that you spent unjustly imprisoned in Azkaban, the Ministry will give you one million galleons. I know that no gold in the world will make up for what you went through, however, I hope that it can help in some way, no matter how small. Session adjourned."

Harry wasn't the only one surprised by what the Minister had done. Usually the verdict would be voted on by all the members of the Wizengamot, but what Fudge did was to completely clean Sirius' records. Not even Lucius had managed to get that, Lucius had gotten off without as much as a slap on the wrist, but there were records of him, of the crimes he was accused of, not only in the records of the trial that he had, but a criminal file that was in the DMLE. In this case, there would be a record of the trial, but there would be no criminal file against Sirius. Fudge was turning out to be far more useful than what he'd thought.

However, the shock passed quickly and suddenly Sirius was surrounded by people. Harry almost didn't see him in the midst of the crowd.

Containing a sigh, he let his magic loose, not all of it, only enough so that the people near him, or those sensitive to magic, could feel it. Just like he'd expected, people started to move away from him, and he was able to make his way to Sirius.

"I'm sorry," he said looking at the crowd that was again trying to surround them, "But I must ask you that you let me talk with my godfather, in private. As you can imagine, we have a lot to talk about. You understand, don't you?" Harry had to hold back a sneer when he saw most of them nod. They were all nothing more than sheep.

"Of course, Harry," Fudge answered, appearing at his side with Marcus and a toad a bit behind him, "Marcus and Dolores will show you a private room."

Apparently, the toad had a name. Well, maybe it wasn't so strange, people did tend to name their
"Thank you, Minister." he replied, ignoring the toad and looking at Marcus. He understood immediately what Harry wanted and took them to a hidden door behind the Wizengamot seats.

"Mister Potter, I am Senior Undersecretary Dolores Umbridge." the toad informed him.

"Harry Potter."

"Yes, everyone knows who you are. You know, Mr. Potter, I heard the ridiculous rumor that you had convinced the Minister to arrange this trial, a trial that could have ruined his career. Naturally, it's absolutely ridiculous, isn't it, Mr. Potter? I am sure that you know your place and you know that it certainly isn't in the Ministry, you are after all nothing but a silly, I mean, small child."

If the amphibian didn't have to use all of it's brain cells to talk it would have noticed the difference immediately, it would have seen the change in Harry's posture and it would also have noticed the wand in Marcus' hand.

"Miss Umbridge, was it? Senior Undersecretary, did you say? Tell me, if something happened to you, who would take your place?"

"Are you threatening me, brat?" she screeched, her eyes wide open and Harry sighed.

"Marcus, did you hear me threaten anyone?"

"No. And answering your question, if we don't have an Undersecretary, I would replace her. Though, it would be only temporary because of my age. I would have to be at least twenty-one to keep the post."

"Remind me, when is your birthday?"

"August 10th."

"And you are eighteen now, right?"

"Yes."

"Hmm, it seems that I know what I'll give you for your twenty-first birthday." Harry remarked nonchalant, entering the room that Marcus was showing him, ignoring the toad that was gawking at him.

As soon as Marcus and Sirius were inside he closed the door, leaving the amphibian in the corridor, and looked at his two companions.

"This went rather well." he concluded, making Sirius and Marcus shake their heads and laugh.

Lucius hadn't seen him, but he knew he was there as soon as he felt his magic. He didn't have to wait long, the crowd parted to let him pass, as if subconsciously they knew that he was their superior. And there he was, in a room full of important people he was still the center of attention, even if they had no idea who he was, well, at least they had no idea until he referred to Black as his godfather.

"I didn't think it was possible." remarked a voice behind him, and he tensed.

"What do you mean?" he had to make a conscious effort to not add the 'my Lord' that was on the tip of his tongue.
He could clearly remember the shock he felt when his Dark Mark had burned, telling him his Lord was calling. And just like hundreds of times before that, he had conjured his mask and his robes and focused on his Dark Mark, letting it lead him to his Lord.

He had appeared in a large room, it's floor had been in black marble and the walls a deep emerald green. By the far wall had been a dais, with a throne made of silver, beautiful serpents carved in the metal and emeralds as the serpents' eyes. Sitting on the throne had been a man. Without thinking about it, he had gone down on his knees and bowed his head. Mere moments later he had felt a second presence beside him, but he hadn't dared move to see which of his fellow Death Eaters it was.

"Lucius," a voice that he knew so well, that had tormented his dreams and haunted his nightmares, after all these years, it still made a shiver go down his spine, "Teodred, welcome."

"My Lord," both replied, Lucius had clearly heard the relief and joy in Teodred's voice, and he had known that he sounded quite similar.

"Stand, my friends."

Lucius had done as he was told, looking at his Lord for the first time in over ten years. Only the years of training had stopped him from showing his shock. The half-human, half-snake being was gone. In it's place was a twenty something man. An elegant, handsome man, with demonic eyes, and Lucius had been sure that he was looking at sin personified, there was no one that could ever compare. Then he had remembered Killing Curse green eyes and he had to correct his statement, maybe there was one who could.

"I'm back, my friends. And we have a lot of work to do."

Lucius hadn't been able to mask his excitement any more than Teodred.

"Harry," his Lord's voice brought him back to the present, "He is beautiful, always was, I didn't believe it was possible for him to become even more so."

"He's the new King?" Teodred asked, looking curiously at Harry, "Young Jugson already belongs to him. He's working faster than you even, not even you had followers in the Ministry at his age."

A small chuckle passed his Lord's lips and Lucius had to control his expression. It was fascinating to see the familiarity with which Teodred talked with their Lord, he was one of the few who did. Teodred Nott, just like his father, Abraxas Malfoy, had been some of the first Death Eaters, the first in the Inner Circle. They had been with the Dark Lord since the beginning, and all of those Death Eaters had a different relationship with their Lord. They still respected him, worshiped him even, but they were far closer to him than any others. And Teodred was one of the few that was still alive, or out of Azkaban.

"You're right." replied his Lord, "I'm quite curious to know what else my little King has managed to do these last few years." and his eyes shone blood red for a moment and Lucius couldn't help but ask himself what the future would bring, because in those eyes he had seen more interest and possessiveness than he had ever seen his Lord show.
Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: This story is based on characters and situations created and owned by J. K. Rowling. No money is being made.

Warnings: This story will be Slash. There will be torture, though not much gore.

Beta: noirekitsune

Chapter 12 – Playtime

Sirius could hardly believe it, he was a free man. All because of Harry. Not that he thought that Harry didn't have any ulterior motives, because after spending so many months with the boy, he didn't think that Harry ever did anything without ulterior motives. But it was still thanks to Harry that he was a free man and he was, if nothing else, extremely grateful. Still he couldn't help but let his thoughts wander to his godson.

Harry, his Harry, was so different from what he'd expected. His name may be Potter, but he had so much of the Blacks in him that he could pass as his son. Not that James didn't have several characteristics of the Blacks, with Dorea being his mother it was only natural. However, Charlus' characteristics were much more pronounced. He wasn't only talking about how they looked either. Harry was the kind of boy that Walburga, his mother, would have liked to have as an heir. Harry was the kind of boy that his mother wished he had been.

At first, he hadn't known how to react to that. Harry was everything he never wanted to be. Yes, he knew that Harry would be any parent's pride and joy, being as intelligent and charismatic as he was, but underneath all of that he was so overwhelmingly Dark.

Occasionally, he behaved like any other teenager and Sirius knew that Harry wasn't acting those times, since he only did it when he was with his trusted circle of friends. Most of the time though, Harry showed a side of himself that left Sirius speechless, he was cruel, sadistic, merciless, conniving, intelligent, powerful; the perfect Dark pureblood heir. He knew that most Dark purebloods would have given anything to have an heir like Harry, his mother certainly would have, she would've been all too eager to be rid of him and have Harry as an heir to the Black name. Well it was kind of ironic that her desire to have the perfect pureblood heir ended up being fulfilled, Harry was the Black heir, after all. Containing a laugh, Sirius went back to his original thoughts. No matter how Harry acted, the reason Sirius was sure that Harry was so overwhelmingly Dark was his magic.

That day that Snape had confronted Harry, Sirius hadn't been able to do anything. He had been frozen in place. He knew how Dark magic felt. Neither James, nor Remus, not even Lily had been completely Light. James, because the Potters had always been as much Light as Dark, and usually were always in the shades of Gray. Though the general population always saw them as everything a Light wizard should be. Then when you added the Black blood from Dorea, who had always been Dark, it was no wonder that James was a darker shade of Gray. Remus, as a werewolf, was naturally inclined to the Dark. Lily was fascinated with Magic, all Magic. She didn't care if it was Light, Dark,
or Gray; all that mattered to her was that it was Magic. And he, he was a Black, it didn't matter in what House he was sorted, it didn't change his nature, it didn't change the fact that he was a Black.

He couldn't believe how he hadn't seen it when he was younger. They had been so blind. They had done everything they could to be the perfect little Light wizards and witch. They had done everything to prove they were Light.

James worshiped his father, his biggest wish was to be just like him. And Charlus had been a Light wizard through and through, though he hadn't been as prejudiced against the Dark as Light wizards tend to be. So James had done everything he could to make his father proud, to be a good little Light wizard just like him.

Remus wanted to forget the fact that he was a werewolf, wanted to be associated with werewolves as little as possible. What better way to do that, than to be a Light wizard? What better way to prove that he wasn't a mindless monster, than to be completely dedicated to the Light.

Lily was a muggleborn, and as such it was unthinkable for her to be anything other than a Light witch. Of course she would side with the people that were fighting for those like her, of course she would be Light.

And he, well he wanted to be everything his family wasn't and if there was one thing that his family wasn't, that was Light. It was the perfect solution really.

They had fooled themselves and everyone else too.

Only during the war did they give in to their desires. Only when they confronted the Death Eaters did the rest of the world see their true colors. It was only during those times that they felt their magics, they felt the truth that their own magics were telling. Only then did they see the truth that everyone, aside from them, refused to believe.

It didn't matter how violent the curses were, that it was forbidden magic. It didn't even matter how many they killed. The rest of the world only saw what they wanted to see and the world wanted to see them as the definition of Light that they had portrayed themselves to be.

During those times it was easier to feel the magic around him, so he knew perfectly well how Dark magic felt. Not that all Dark magic felt the same, but it had that same base feeling. No matter who was casting it, the root was the same. Harry's magic, however, though it had a touch of Darkness in it, was different. His magic was frightening, and he wasn't referring to the quantity of it, though that in itself was rather impressive. He was talking about the feel of it.

Magic responded to their emotions and when a wizard or witch was more powerful than the everyday witch and wizard, their magic often adapted something of their personality, something that made that person who they were. That was why Remus' magic had a wild touch to it. James' was protective and possessive. Lily's was warm and inquisitive. His was a bit cold and vindictive. However, it wasn't overwhelming and not everyone developed those characteristics, he only knew how theirs felt because he spent so much time with them. Otherwise he wouldn't know the difference, just as he didn't know how other people's magic felt. Harry's though, it was impossible not to feel the maliciousness his magic had projected. And if that wasn't enough the feeling of his magic changed according to his emotions.

Ordinary wizards weren't able to control their magic like that, and Sirius preferred not to think about those that could.

He preferred not to think about the stories his grandfather told about Grindelwald. That he was able
to terrify a crowd of hundreds of wizards with just the feel of his magic.

He preferred not to think about how his father would whisper about how Voldemort was able to make them tremble in fear with just projecting his intentions with his magic.

He preferred not to remember how Voldemort had made them weak in their knees and close to begging, while he only stood there with his magic saturating everything around him.

And even though he preferred not to think about it, he just couldn't get it out of his head.

'… The Dark Lord will mark him as his Equal...' How could they have been so stupid.

They had completely ignored the most important part of the whole prophecy. They had been so focused on the part that said that he had the power to vanquish the Dark Lord, that they hadn't seen what was right in front of them. Who could be a Dark Lord's equal, if not another Dark Lord?

Another Dark Lord. He never thought that he would live long enough to see the rise of another Dark Lord. Not only see the rise of him, but to actually see his birth, watch him grow.

Was that what the prophecy meant? Not the fall of a Dark Lord but the birth of another? Had Dumbledore, no, had the Wizarding World put all their hopes on a Dark Lord?

Sirius didn't know if he should laugh or cry. He had no doubt that that was what Harry was, or at least what he was becoming.

The confrontation with Snape was what gave Sirius the certainty of what path Harry was taking. The question now was; what would he do about it?

If he was being honest with himself, he didn't want to do anything about it. He knew that a few years back he would have been completely opposed to the idea, he would have fought against Harry just like he had fought against his family. He would have gone straight to Dumbledore and would have warned him about Harry, about the Court, but now? Now he didn't care, Harry could burn the world to the ground for all he cared.

They had given everything to the Light. Sirius wouldn't allow the Light to take anything more from him.

He would rather see Harry strong, powerful and Dark, than broken and Light.

And since he was being honest with himself, he had to admit that he could hardly wait to see what Harry would do to the Wizarding World.

"Sirius?"

Remus' voice brought him out of his thoughts and he couldn't help but smile.

Remus. It was good to have his friend back.

As soon as he'd left the Ministry he'd gone home and not a second later Remus was knocking on his door. It was a rather emotional reunion, with heart-felt apologies from both of them, they had, after all, thought that the other was the spy. The situation was a bit uncomfortable at first, but they were brothers, more than brothers, they were Pack and things were slowly going back to normal. Not how it used to be. None of them were the same people they had been all those years ago, both of them were far too broken, far darker than they used to be. But at least things were going back to normal, or as normal as things had always been between them.
"Ready to go get Harry?" Remus asked and he smiled again.

"Yes, let's go get our pup."

Harry would never admit it out loud, but he was nervous. On one hand, his plan had worked out perfectly; he was leaving the orphanage for good. On the other hand, he was going to live with Sirius. Not that he wasn't fond of Sirius, but he had gotten used to certain freedoms and he knew he would have to be more careful with Sirius. Fortunately, Sirius knew that he wasn't the Golden Boy that everyone expected, otherwise he would have gone insane. At least he didn't have to hide as much as he did at Hogwarts.

He looked at the clock again and contained a sigh, in a little over twenty minutes Sirius would be there to pick him up. A small smile appeared on his lips, he was rather curious to see Mrs. Brown's reaction when she saw with whom he would be living. Sirius was as infamous in the Muggle World as in the Wizarding World. The news stations were still going on about how Sirius was cleared of all charges, but as they couldn't tell the muggles that the one responsible had evaded capture because he was a rat, they told them that Sirius' attorney had managed to get him out on a technicality. So most still believed that Sirius was a mass murderer, Mrs. Brown was one of those. It promised to be entertaining.

A little after three there was a knock on his door and he opened it, on the other side where three people.

"Professor Lupin," he greeted, slightly surprised, he hadn't been expecting anyone aside from Sirius, "Sirius, you came a bit earlier than I expected."

Harry completely ignored Mrs. Brown, but he had been right, her expression was hilarious. The only other time he had seen her that frightened was when she was dealing with him.

"Hello Harry." Lupin greeted back, "You may call me Remus, I'm not your professor anymore."

Harry had to contain a growl. Snape had gotten Remus sacked at the end of the year. Dumbledore had forbidden him from telling the students, but he hadn't forbidden him from telling the parents. Snape went through the trouble of sending a letter to all the parents of the Slytherins, expressing his concern because the students were neglecting their grades because they were afraid of their professor, who was a Dark Creature. Naturally, the parents reacted just like Snape wanted and by the end of the year Remus was fired. The only reason that Harry even knew about it was because Theo's grandfather forwarded the letter to Theo. That day he had been consumed with the overwhelming urge to kill something, preferably Snape. Fortunately he had the rat to let out some of his frustration on, though Snape's life expectancy was dwindling by the day.

"And we already have all the paperwork taken care of, so there was no need to wait any longer to take you home." Sirius said, bringing him out of his thoughts.

"So, we can go?" Harry asked enthusiastically. He didn't even have to fake it, he was really happy with finally being able to leave.

"Yes, I already signed the necessary paperwork. We just need to get your things."

Picking up the trunk that was beside the open door, Harry smiled.

"There, all done. We can go."

Sirius laughed and took the trunk from Harry, starting down the hallway. Remus inclined his head to
"Goodbye, Mrs. Brown." Harry said without any emotion, "I hope, for your own good, that we never meet again." with a low malicious chuckle he followed the two men, leaving the pale and shaking matron behind. He was finally free of the damned orphanage.

"So, where are we going?" Harry asked when they were out of the orphanage.

"We are going to the Ancestral Black home, Grimmauld Place," Sirius replied with a small grimace, "Not my favorite place in the world to be honest, and the house is in need of a good cleaning. It's a dump really, but it has the best wards in the world and your safety is one of the most important things to me. Aside from that, I know you like reading and Grimmauld Place has a library as good as, if not better, than the Malfoys. It will just take a while until it's completely clean, though our bedrooms, the library, and the kitchen are already in working order."

Harry wasn't really paying attention anymore, his mind had shut down when he heard that he now had access to a library that was even better than the one the Malfoys had. He could hardly wait to see what treasures he would find.

"Ready, Harry?" Sirius asked, handing him a piece of rope that could only be a portkey and he nodded. He was more than ready.

Making sure that all three of them were holding it, Sirius activated the portkey and Harry felt the peculiar sensation he always felt when he traveled with portkeys. The next moment he felt his feet hit the ground and had to balance himself so that he wouldn't fall.

When he was sure that he wouldn't fall flat on his face, he looked around. The first thing he noticed was that the place was rather dark and even though it had the potential to be majestic it needed to be cleaned and restored.

However, before he could comment on it, the painting of a woman on the wall started to shout. Sirius swore and he and Remus quickly tried to close the curtains in front of the painting.

Harry followed them and looked at the painting curiously, he had to admit that she had quite the pair of lungs, if paintings had lungs, that is. When she saw him she stopped her screaming.

"Who are you, boy?" she asked, and both Sirius and Remus stopped struggling with the curtains in their surprise at the almost polite question.

Harry lifted an eyebrow, it had been a while since he was treated with such disrespect. He didn't like it at all.

"Harry Potter." he replied nonetheless, no emotions showing in his face or eyes.

"You're a Potter? The half-blood who defeated the Dark Lord? You look nothing like what I thought the Light's pet would look like. Even so, you are nothing more than a worthless half-blood." the women sneered, and Harry narrowed his eyes at the painting.

"I am aware that it must be difficult for you," Harry told her in a cold emotionless voice, making the women gape, "But you will watch what you say. I have no problem in destroying you completely."

"As if a little brat like you would be able to." she scorned.

"Sirius, will the Ministry be able to tell if I use magic here?"
"No," he answered, shaking his head, "The wards are far too strong, they don't let anything go through."

"Hmm. Fiendfyre." whispered Harry, and a serpent made of fire came out of his wand.

Both Remus and Sirius took several steps back, but there was no need for it. Harry had the fire completely under his control, and the serpent was just there at his side, as if it were a faithful pet, it's fiery eyes fixed on the painting. Remus and Sirius knew that Harry was a magical prodigy, but even so they were awed by the ease with which Harry had cast the curse. A curse that many believed was uncontrollable. They knew that it wasn't true, but the only time they had seen it done was in an attack during the last war, by Voldemort himself. He too had a snake, though it had been far bigger; over fifty feet. They never thought that they would see Harry doing the same thing, even if it was on a much smaller scale. But still, it didn't change the fact that he could control Fiendfyre.

Though Harry was acting as if it was nothing, he was focusing on the curse. He had learned about it a few years back and found it ridiculous that people truly believed that it was uncontrollable. He just didn't understand how people could believe that. The same way he couldn't understand how wizards limited their magic. How they constricted it with rules and regulation. Magic was free, and the only limits it should have was a person's own limitations. They shouldn't impose those limitations on others. The Fiendfyre wasn't an easy curse, it was one of the most difficult curses he had found, but it certainly wasn't uncontrollable. It was a matter of strength of will. Nothing more, nothing less. Fortunately, his friends were starting to see things like he did, they were starting to lose the limitations that they had grown up with. They were starting to see that magic truly had no limits, the only limits there were, were their own capabilities.

"You know," Harry said conversationally, "I always wondered how sentient a painting was. Do they feel pain? If they do, how strong is that feeling?" he looked at the painting curiously, his eyes shining maliciously, "What do you think about conducting a little experiment? If they do feel pain, can you imagine the possibilities? I can bring you to the brink of destruction, only to repair you and start all over again. I could do it for years and years on end. And you would never feel the sweet freedom of death."

The serpent started to move towards the painting, it's tongue flicking out to lick the edge of the painting. The fire spread, still under Harry's control. When it burned through the frame and touched the canvas the women started screaming. Screams filled with terror. Agonizing screams. Harry chuckled darkly, ignoring the eyes of Sirius and Remus on him. He called the fire back to his side, leaving behind burned wood and canvas.

"Apparently, you do feel pain." he remarked with a sadistic smile, "I believe we've reached an understanding?"

When the women nodded frantically, Harry's smile brightened.

"Perfect. Sirius, I'm going to look for the library." Almost as an afterthought, he canceled the curse and started going up the stairs.

Only after Harry had disappeared from view was the silence broken.

"Who is he, Sirius?" Walburga asked, and there were traces of fear in her eyes.

"He is Harry Potter, just as he said. He is also the Black heir, my heir. I thought it would please you. You finally have the heir you always wished for." he couldn't help but sound bitter.

"He's the Light's pet. How can he be so Dark?" Walburga whispered.
"Harry is nothing like the Wizarding World thought he was." Remus informed her, and Walburga didn't even sneer at him.

"He's the Slytherin King," added Sirius, "He rules that house with an iron fist. If I were you mother, I would do as he says. Those that dared to go against him didn't end up well."

"He's a Slytherin?"

Both men just nodded.

"How long has he been King? Who's in his Court?"

"From what I understood, since the second term of his first year. His Court members are: Theodore Nott, Blaise Zabini and Draco Malfoy, Slytherins that are starting their fourth year. Adrian Pucey and Graham Montague, Slytherins that are starting their sixth year. Marcus Jugson, Slytherin, already left Hogwarts and is now Junior Undersecretary to the Minister. Luna Lovegood, Ravenclaw that will start her third year. Neville Longbottom, Gryffindor, he will start his fourth year. And George and Fred Weasley, Gryffindors, and they will start sixth year."

"He already has someone in the Ministry..." she whispered, "I see. And they follow him?"

"They worship him." Sirius almost whispered and Walburga's eyes opened wide.

She knew what Sirius meant. How could she not, coming from the family that she did.

"I hope you know what you're doing Sirius," Walburga murmured, surprising him, "I used to know a boy just like him. He only brought death to this family."

"I thought he was the kind of heir you wanted. I thought he was the kind of person you wanted me to be, intelligent, powerful, Dark. I thought our family always followed Dark Lords." remarked Sirius, looking at his mother in surprise.

"We did, and look where that got us. We used to be one of the biggest families around and now look at us. You are the only true Black left. Our name will die with you, if you have no children. We fought, we bled, we died and for what? Everything is the same if not worse for the Dark. Nothing changed for us. Our name is thought of with disgust and contempt." Sirius had never seen his mother look so defeated, "They brought our family only death." she repeated.

"He's my godson. My Heir."

Walburga closed her eyes and sighed.

"I hope that will be enough to protect you." she murmured so low that Sirius almost didn't hear her.

Shaking his head he followed Harry up the stairs, Remus close behind him.

"It's the first time that I've seen your mother truly worried." Remus remarked casually. He had wanted to talk about Harry with Sirius, he just didn't know how to broach the subject. He knew how Dark Harry was, he could feel it, his wolf could feel it. He had come to terms with it but he wouldn't mind talking about it. Especially with someone who didn't see the Harry Potter that the rest of the world saw. Besides, he was rather curious to know how Sirius was dealing with it, he had always been the most outspoken against the Dark.

"First time for me as well." replied Sirius.
"Do you agree?"

"Harry helped me when he had no reason to do it. I know he's Dark, I know he's cruel, merciless, deadly. I know that. But I don't think he is like that if you don't give him a reason to be. I have no intention of doing it."

"Are you afraid of him?" Remus asked, looking curiously at Sirius. Sirius had never shown any kind of self-preservation. He had openly mocked Death Eaters, he was reckless. The more dangerous it was, the more he liked it.

Sirius snorted. Afraid? Of course he was. Harry was terrifying. However, he truly believed that Harry wouldn't harm him, at least not without cause. He had seen Harry harm the students, hell some people would even say torture the students, but he had never harmed his Court. And he knew that it was because they had never given him a reason to, not because he wouldn't do it.

"Yeah, I am." he ended up replying, "I suppose that I am as afraid of him as the Death Eaters were of Voldemort. Though that didn't stop them from following him."

Remus nodded. That answered his question about what Sirius thought about Harry being Dark, though he wasn't expecting the comparison to Voldemort. He had to admit that Sirius knew Harry a bit better than he did. They had interacted more as teacher and student, while Sirius had been with Harry while he wasn't wearing a mask. Still, he wondered if the comparison was exaggerated, or if Sirius truly believed that Harry could become a Dark Lord. How did one even know if a person was becoming a Dark Lord? How does it even start? Grindelwald, Voldemort, they had to have come from somewhere. Did they start out like Harry, magical prodigies that just snapped, or did they not snap at all, had they been planning it from the beginning, waiting for the right moment? Were they born like that, or was it the way they were brought up? Were they witnessing the rise of a Dark Lord? If they were, should they interfere, or let things be, hoping for the best? He had no idea. But Sirius didn't seem worried, and from what he had seen of Harry he couldn't say that he was biased. Sure, he didn't like the muggles, but aside from that he seemed like he didn't really care about what blood you had or if you were a creature. As far as he was concerned, that was much better than some Light wizards who loved muggles but treated him like filth because he was a Werewolf. He may be biased about it because, well, Werewolf and all, but still. No, as far as he had seen, Harry had a good head on his shoulders. And really, if that head thought that being a Dark Lord was the right way to go, than maybe it was. Who knows, maybe things would finally change for beings like him.

He was so immersed in his thoughts that he almost didn't notice that they had reached the library. They found Harry sitting in an armchair with a huge book on his lap, looking thoroughly absorbed in what he was reading.

"I guess I should congratulate you." commented Sirius, "I have never seen anyone frighten my mother like that."

"That was your mother?" Harry asked, lowering his book.

"Yes. Walburga Black."

"Hmm. Absolutely charming."

Sirius wasn't able to hide his sneer.

"You have no idea. Though I doubt she will bother you again." he pulled out his wand and conjured an armchair similar to Harry's and sat in front of him, Remus taking the vacant one at his side. "I received a letter from Gringotts about you." remembering the owl that had come that morning.
Harry put the book down completely and looked at Sirius curiously, he had never gotten any correspondence from Gringotts.

"I'm your guardian now, some information will go through me. It is also my duty to answer any questions you have, be they concerning your inheritance or the Potter bloodline. You father told me all about the Potter bloodline, though only after I was sworn to secrecy, because I'm your godfather. All godparents go through the same thing. It's in case of the child being the last of the line, as is your case, so that the history of the bloodline and any gifts that the bloodline has aren't lost."

"I see," muttered Harry. It made sense. The purebloods always valued their bloodlines and the Potters were pure, no matter how little prejudice they had towards muggles and first generation witches and wizards. "What was the letter about?"

"It was a reminder that after your fourteenth birthday, you will be able to take books and other things from the family vault. On your birthday you will get a specific list of the things you can't remove before your seventeenth birthday. Any questions?"

"Yes, it's more curiosity than anything else, but what's the exchange rate between galleons and pounds?"

"It depends," Remus answered, "The rate can be between 4.5 and 5.5 pounds per galleon. However, the Goblins normally keep the rate at 5 pounds a galleon. If I'm not mistaken, the only times it did change was in times of war and only when it affected the gold supply of the Goblins. Though I know that when your mother married your father and she exchanged all the muggle money she had into galleons they lowered the rate to 4.7, but it was only because she was exchanging everything she had, she was leaving the Muggle World for good and had no need for pounds. In situations like those, the Goblins usually lower the rate a bit. No matter what people say about Goblins, they are magical creatures and they don't like to interact with beings that aren't magical. I think it's seen as some form of reward for those muggleborns that completely embrace the magical world."

"First generation witches." Harry automatically corrected, he really didn't like the word muggleborn. It made sense, though he didn't know the creatures well enough to know if it could actually be true. However, he trusted Remus' insight, he knew a lot more about creatures than the average witch or wizard and if he thought that that was probably the case, than he knew what he was talking about.

"What?" Remus asked a bit confused.

"Don't say muggleborn. They are first generations witches and wizards. There is no need to always associate them with muggles."

Remus nodded. It surprised him, he didn't know that Harry's disdain for muggles went that deep, even if he didn't hide his dislike for them. Sirius, already knowing of his dislike for the word, brought the conversation back on track.

"You don't really have to worry about the rate. It isn't something that really matters to us. Generally only first-generations need to know it. I didn't know what it was, never knew, never needed to know, never bothered to know."

Harry nodded, really he couldn't imagine the purebloods bothering to know something like that, unless they had business in the muggle world, but most didn't. If they could get anything they wanted from the Wizarding World why would they go to the Muggle one.

"Why did I have so much money in my personal vault?"
"It's a Potter tradition." explained Sirius, leaning back on his armchair, "When a Potter is born, they open a new vault for them and deposit fifty thousand galleons. Then on their birthday they deposit another fifth thousand every year. On the child's eighth birthday, they're allowed to take money out of the vault, no more than a few galleons a month, it depends on how much the parents allow. Your father couldn't take more than 5. Then when they go to Hogwarts they can take out as much as they want. On their seventeenth birthday the last deposit is made and it's expected for them to make do with what they have in the account. Some of them were able to invest what they had and make new fortunes, others had no nose for business and went broke, while others just spent everything they had in other ways. And a few lived comfortable lives never making any investments and having a job they liked, or not working at all. It varied from Potter to Potter. It was a good way to make sure that the family fortune wouldn't diminish, the children couldn't waste the money. With you, it's a bit different. You are the last Potter, so all of it is yours anyway. However, it's a tradition that you can continue when you have children."

He liked that, the success of each person depended on themselves. They gave their children a good foundation and then expected them to work for what they wanted. If they wasted it when they were young, then they only had themselves to blame.

"Your father never took more than 20 galleons a month when he was at school, not counting Yule, when he would spend a little more. So he didn't make much of a dent in his personal vault before he turned seventeen. So do you have any more questions?"

"Can't think of anything at the moment, though I want to see if there are any books about the Potters in the vault, like the Malfoys have; I would like to know where we come from."

"There are, all the old families have them. After you read it, if you have any questions about any of it, feel free to ask. Now, do you want to see where you are going to sleep?"

Harry nodded. He was quite curious to see his new room. It couldn't possibly be worse than the one at the orphanage, even if the house needed a bit of repair.

"Great! Let's go." Sirius exclaimed, already half way out of the library.

"Aren't you forgetting something Sirius?" Remus asked, looking slightly exasperated.

"Ah, yeah, kinda forgot about that, as you can see the house needs a bit of work. Remus and I are taking care of it, but the house is rather big, so it may take a bit for everything to be ready. So, until we have everything taken care of, you might run into a Boggart or something if you go exploring. So I would prefer if you stayed in the rooms that we already cleaned and repaired. However, if you want to explore and run into something that you can't deal with, call the house-elf. His name's Kreacher and he's completely senile, but he can't refuse a direct order from you, since I ordered him to obey you. I think that's everything. It's everything, isn't it Remus?"

"Yes Sirius, it's everything." replied Remus, shaking his head and Harry had to stifle a smile, they made him think of Graham and Adrian.

"Well, let's go then." exclaimed Sirius, continuing his way out of the library with a smile on his face, Remus not far behind him.

Harry shook his head again, he had a feeling that his holidays would be far more exciting, for lack of a better word, than what he was used to.

"You called, dad?"
"Yes. Come, sit."

Draco went inside and sat on the chair in front of his father's desk, looking at him curiously.

"We haven't talked in a while, son. You're always with your friends. You're changing Dragon, I feel like I don't know you anymore."

Draco contained a sigh, it was true. He couldn't remember the last time he truly talked with his father.

"I'm still the same Draco I always was." he replied, knowing it was a lie. He wasn't the same. How could he be? Being part of the Court had changed him in ways that he hadn't thought possible.

"Is that so?" Lucius asked, lifting his eyebrow, "Then why don't you ever speak with Severus now, when you could barely go a day without talking with your godfather before."

Draco couldn't help the sneer that appeared on his face.

"He should be thankful to still be breathing," Draco snarled, surprising Lucius, "How dare he treat Harry the way he does? He's lucky that we have orders not to do anything to him at the moment, but that won't keep him safe forever. And when Harry lifts his order, then Snape will learn to respect his betters."

Lucius didn't show his surprise. This wasn't the reaction he had been expecting. The word 'orders' didn't go unnoticed. What kind of control did Harry have over the members of his Court?

"Since when are you ready to kill for Harry?"

"I don't know," replied Draco after a few moments of silence, and Lucius didn't know what to think about it. He had half expected for Draco to deny that he would do anything like that, "When did you realize you were ready to kill for your Lord?"

"Lord? You consider him your Lord?" he shouldn't be surprised, he really shouldn't, but he was. He needed to hear it from his son's mouth. It was one thing to see how they behaved, it was different to actually hear his own son saying it.

"What else could he be, dad?" Draco asked with a small laugh, his eyes shining with his enthusiasm, "You've never seen him without his masks. You've never felt his magic free, free to do as he wants. Magic, to him, comes as easily as breathing. What he's able to do with and without a wand is incredible! And his mind! What I wouldn't give to be able to know how his mind works. We won't even see a problem and he's already found five or six solutions.

Harry... Harry is going to rule this world. And I pity the poor souls that think that they can stop him."

Lucius wasn't expecting the conviction behind the words, he wasn't expecting to hear the absolute certainty in Draco's voice. He was as certain of this as he was that the sun would rise the following morning. It was easy to see that the simple notion of Harry failing was inconceivable, he knew that Draco was not even thinking of that possibility.

"And you are ready to follow him? Ready to kneel in front of him and call him Master? Being his follower and being his friend are two very different things. Do you think you will feel the same dedication when he is torturing you, for one reason or another?"

Lucius expected to see apprehension and some uncertainty in his eyes, but Draco only laughed.

"Let me tell you what happened this last year," Draco told him, containing a shiver, no matter how
much he respected and loved Harry, he was terrifying, "Harry is Slytherin's King, a merciless King, but even so the Slytherins have a lot of freedom. There are only three rules that they must follow. One of those rules is to never utter the word mudblood outside of the common room. He doesn't care what they think or believe in, however, certain behaviors were only making things harder for the Slytherins and Harry had several plans that could be compromised if people only associated Slytherin with pureblood supremacists. Besides, he doesn't believe in all of that talk about blood. He is a half-blood, he would never believe in or support something that would consider him inferior to someone else.

Anyway, the rule was simple.

I don't know if it was always followed but we never caught anyone breaking it. That changed last year.

We were in the library, in a somewhat hidden corner that Harry likes, when two boys sat in a table near ours, not paying attention to what was around them. It was a Ravenclaw and a Slytherin, both seventh years; the Yaxley cousins. I don't know what they were talking about, but Garrick Yaxley, the Slytherin, turned towards his cousin and said: 'Fucking mudblood. I'll show him what happens when you mess with a pureblood.'

Before he could say anything else, Harry snapped his book shut. The noise caught their attention. When Garrick saw Harry he paled. I don't think I have ever seen anyone that pale.

But Harry didn't do anything. He just picked up his things, his book, and left the library. That same day, after dinner, the seventh year Slytherins were sure that Harry was just talk. They thought that he shouldn't be King. Yaxley was sure that Harry was afraid of him," Draco couldn't quite hide how funny he found that, "Harry laughed so much when he heard that one. That night the seventh year students didn't do anything, but they were planning to confront Harry the next day.

The following morning, Garrick Yaxley didn't wake up."

Lucius had to control himself so that he wouldn't react. Harry had killed a student? But that was impossible. He was on the Board of Governors and they hadn't received any information about any of it.

"He didn't die," Draco said, seeing his father's expression, "Though maybe it would have been more merciful if he had," the second part was no more than a whisper and Lucius barely heard it, "Garrick just wouldn't wake up. He wasn't in a coma, he was just sleeping and nothing that the professors did would wake him up. He was three days in the Infirmary, sleeping.

All the Slytherins knew that Harry had done something, but no one, not even us, his Court, knew what it was.

When Garrick woke up, we knew right away that he was different. Outside of the common room it wasn't so visible, but in the common room it was easy to see. His left hand didn't stop trembling. When someone touched him or just brushed against him he would flinch violently. He would sit as far away from the fireplaces as he could and every time he saw Harry he would go deathly pale, and would start shaking and stuttering. His roommates were heard whispering that he had horrible nightmares, that he would wake up screaming, terrified beyond belief. They even said that on more than one occasion, he had wet his bed; that was how frightened he was. They tried talking to him, but he would never tell them anything. We tried to get Harry to tell us a few times, but he would just laugh. So we were certain that we would never know.

However, almost a month after the incident, we found out. It was mere chance that we did, too.
We were in the library again, waiting for Harry who was with Lupin talking about something, when the Yaxley cousins sat at the same table near ours.

Garrick’s cousin was ranting about something, it was about another Ravenclaw that always bested him in exams, or something like that. Garrick didn’t seem to be paying him much attention at all, until he said: ‘Those filthy mudbloods should know their place.’

Garrick paled, and almost shouted at his cousin to not say that word. They argued a bit, Garrick not wanting to explain his reaction and Cygnus insisting that he was different since the incident. Cygnus wanted to know what had happened, after a bit Garrick gave in.”

Draco clearly remembered Garrick's expression. He had never seen eyes that were so filled with terror. It was fascinating. Knowing that Harry had caused it made him feel strangely proud and smug. It just proved that Harry was no ordinary wizard, it proved that Harry was so much more.

He could feel his father's eyes on him so he continued.

"Garrick's voice shook," Draco closed his eyes so that he could better remember, "Cygnus already knew about the Slytherin Court, so Garrick went straight to what had happened to him, 'It wasn't three days for me,' he whispered, we were barely able to hear him, 'It was three years.' Cygnus looked confused, I must confess that we didn't understand either. But Garrick continued talking, 'My mind was completely awake. I didn't even know I was inside my mind, I just learned it the last day I was there. Up until that last day, I was certain that I was in a dungeon being tortured by Harry. And I believed that for three years. The first day of my torture started with me chained up to a wall in the dungeons, and Potter standing in front of me. He told me that I had to learn. He told me I should be grateful for being taught what he was going to teach me, because it would help me avoid my death. Then he smiled and started throwing curses at me. I don't know how long we were there but after a time he stopped and just left, saying that he would come back the next day. The moment he left the dungeons my wounds started to heal. A few minutes after I was completely healed, he appeared again. 'Good morning Garrick' he said with a warm, tender smile, 'Today we are going to play with knives.' It went like that every day. For three years. It never was the same torture, either. I was drowned. Electrocuted. Skinned alive. Burned at the stake. Eaten alive by rats. And I never, never, had the sweet freedom that is Death.'

Cygnus wasn't the only one that was looking at Garrick with wide eyes and fortunately he asked the question that we were all asking ourselves, 'How do you know that it wasn't only a nightmare?'

Garrick let lose a slightly hysterical laugh before he answered, it was rather creepy. He unbuttoned his shirt. On his chest, right above his heart, was a huge scar in the form of an H.

'This was his good-bye gift. I was chained to a stone table of some sort, Potter was beside me with a small smile. He never stopped smiling, you know? But the most terrifying were his sweet, warm smiles. I was sure that I was looking at the Devil every time he tortured me with those smiles on his lips... He said that he knew that it wasn't really done like he was going to do it, but, considering the situation, he said he found it fitting. He carved an H on my chest and then he started to pull the skin and muscles back till the bone showed. He broke the bones and ripped my heart out of my chest. Even with my heart in his hands I didn't die. He told me not to forget that he could keep me there for far longer than three years. He told me to remember that the next time I even thought about going against him. And at the end he whispered: 'Wake up'.

I woke up in the infirmary.'

Do you understand, father?" Draco asked, opening his eyes and looking at his father, "I know perfectly well what Harry is capable of doing. I know what he could do to me if I displease him. It's
a price I am willing to pay."

Lucius didn't really know how to react to the information his son had given him. He was no stranger to torture, but even he felt a shiver run down his spine. However, he could understand where his son was coming from. Some people were just born to be followed.

"I see." he whispered, and Draco smiled, he wondered if his son would be able to smile so freely if he continued down the path he was on. Many of his fellow Death Eaters didn't even remember what a smile was.

"I'll see you later, dad. I was in the middle of my homework." Draco said, getting up from his chair.

"Draco," Lucius called, when he was already by the door, "How do you know that Harry won't get angry with you because of what you told me?"

Draco laughed.

"You were there when Harry dealt with Fudge. He knew that you would try to gain information about him and told me I could tell you anything that I wanted about him."

"If you could tell me more, why didn't you?"

"He is my Lord, my King," Draco replied, a small content smile on his lips, "I have no wish to reveal his secrets, not even to you father." with one last smile Draco left the office, closing the door behind him.

As soon as the door closed, a ward went up, ensuring privacy and a spell that had been concealing the other occupants of the room dropped, revealing Teodred Nott, Theodore Nott's grandfather, sitting on the sofa and the Dark Lord sitting on an armchair.

"Well... That was interesting." remarked Teodred.

"Yes, it was," Tom agreed, "My little King is always surprising me. Torturing someone for three years, well, he certainly doesn't lack creativity." he added with a sadistic smile, making the other two shiver. Their Lord, even looking so human, was terrifying.

"He is nothing like I thought the Boy-Who-Lived would be. Will you try to recruit him, my Lord?" Teodred asked curiously.

"Do you think that he would follow? That he would bow?" Tom inquired, raising an eyebrow.

"No." Lucius answered immediately, "He wasn't born to follow."

"No, no he wasn't." whispered Tom, "We will continue with the plan. One way or another, the matter will be dealt with in the end."

"Yes, my Lord." both replied in unison.

"Any news about Magic Today?" Tom asked, looking at the newspapers spread across the cafe table.

"No, my Lord," Lucius seemed rather frustrated, "I can't get access to the licenses and, according to the information I obtained, even if I had access it would do me no good, because the license is in the confidential section and only certain people are able to actually see it."

"What does that mean, though? Aside from the obvious, of course." Teodred asked. He had never
been much of a business man, or a politician for that matter. He was more of a scholar. He enjoyed learning magic, all kinds of magic, really, which made him neglect other types of knowledge a bit, such as business and politics. So he wasn't all that knowledgeable about the more in-depth ministry procedures.

"There are three ways in which the licenses can be considered confidential. The first one is the most used, it's when whatever the license is used for is for charity and the founder wishes to remain anonymous. The second one is when the person who has the license has a criminal record. In those cases, it's more to avoid retaliation by a third party. The third case; is when the owner of the license is a minor."

Minor. That was the only word that Tom needed to hear for everything to become clear in his mind. How he hadn't seen it before, he would never know. Now that the thought entered his mind, it became rather obvious. He couldn't help the dark chuckle that left his lips. Both of his followers looked at him curiously.

"My little serpent, you really are full of surprises." he murmured, more to himself than the other two in the room.

"My Lord?"

"Tell me Lucius, do you not find it strange that my little King was so sure about what would be published in the newspaper? Whether or not Fudge agreed with the Black situation? Or that all the names of the journalists writing for the paper, aside from Skeeter, are aliases?"

It took Lucius a while to process what his Lord was implying. Not because he was slow on the uptake, but because what he was hinting at was simply impossible.

"But... But it's not possible," he voiced his thoughts, "He's only thirteen. I know that he is a magical prodigy and extremely intelligent. But this?" Lucius said picking up a newspaper and looking at his Lord incredulously, "This is a completely different situation. Whoever is the owner of this newspaper isn't simply reporting the latest news. They are influencing the public, they are making them think. They are making them use and teaching them ancient traditions and Dark magic. They are reeducating the population without them even noticing. It's someone that is preparing the people for something, setting his base so that everything is ready for something bigger. Whatever that may be. He couldn't... He wouldn't be able to..."

"You are right Lucius, it is all that, for those that can read between the lines." Tom said, interrupting Lucius' rambling. When he looked at Lucius, his eyes were shining with enthusiasm and in an almost reverent tone he continued, "But what if it is him?"

It had been a long time since Teodred had seen is Lord that excited. It was difficult to keep Tom Riddle's attention. No one could match him and he lost interest in the people around him rather quickly. As the years passed, and he saw his Lord drift further and further away from human company, he was sure that the solitude, the loneliness, would end up being his Lord's downfall, one way or the other.

But when his Lord came back, he was more like the Lord he had known in the beginning, and he wasn't thinking about his physical change. His Lord seemed to have gained back some of his passion for life.

He couldn't help but wonder if it was because of Harry Potter. Was the boy that had destroyed him the reason that his Lord was back to actually living? Everything pointed to that being the case.
Seeing the enthusiasm in those blood red eyes, Teodred couldn't help but hope that that was the case. It was about time that his Lord found his match.

"Well," he said smiling, "If it is him, then the future is certainly going to be interesting."

Those red eyes shone with life and anticipation and he couldn't help but smile. Yes, it was about time.

Harry was exploring his new home. His home. He never thought that he would be able to think of a house as his home. He may have stopped praying and hoping for someone to adopt him, for someone to want him, but a small part of him, the child that they had killed with their neglect and abuse, was happy.

He wasn't a freak, people wanted him.

Shaking his head, he continued exploring. He was far too old for such sentimentality. This situation with Sirius was just because it provided him with useful assets, the fact that he and Sirius got along well was only a bonus.

Distractedly, he looked around. The room he was in, like all the others in the house, had a regal air about it, even if it was filthy. He guessed that all the Ancestral Homes had that air of nobility about them, it was just another way to show others how superior purebloods were. He understood the objective of it, of course, but he didn't particularly like it. He never had anything growing up and just look at him, he was better than any of those pompous fools. Still, just because he didn't like it didn't mean he couldn't use it if need be.

Something golden in one of the dusty glass-fronted cabinets standing on either side of the mantelpiece caught his attention. They were crammed with an odd assortment of objects: a selection of rusty daggers, claws, coiled snakeskin, a number of tarnished silver boxes inscribed with languages Harry could not understand, and an ornate crystal bottle with a large opal set into the stopper, full of what Harry was quite sure was blood. However, no matter how interesting Harry may find those, what caught his attention was the golden locket with an S covered in emeralds on it.

Almost without knowing what he was doing, he opened the cabinet and took out the locket.

As soon as he picked it up he almost dropped it. A feeling like a small shock had raced up his arm.

The metal was strangely warm to the touch and his magic was happy, it was the only word that he could apply, it practically sang in his body. However, the strangest thing was the feeling he got from the locket. It was as if it was happy to be in his possession.

Harry felt the strange need to keep the locket safe.

Harry was many things, but dumb wasn't one of them. He may not know all there was to the Wizarding World, but he knew that the reactions he was having to the locket weren't normal.

So he did what any curious teenager would do, he put the locket in his pocket and went to his room.

He didn't even think about hiding the locket in his room. No matter how much he may like Sirius, he didn't trust him to that point.

No, the locket needed to be kept safe in the one place that only he could access. The place that he hid everything that he wished to keep secret; his trunk.
Opening his trunk, he went down the stairs and directly to his room. He took it out of his pocket and put it in the drawer in his nightstand. Now, anytime he wanted he could study the locket. He wanted to see if he could find out why he reacted to it the way he did.

Satisfied, he started to leave, when his eyes caught a small cage on the kitchen island.

A huge smile appeared on his lips. Sirius and Remus weren't home. Sirius had weekly meetings with a mind healer in St. Mungos and Remus always went with him, emotional support and all that. Which gave him about three hours where he was home alone. Three hours with nothing to do and it had been such a long time since he had some fun.

A sinister laugh passed his lips and he stopped in front of the cage.

"Well, hello Peter." his smile did nothing to hide his malice.

He had cursed the rat already, several times in fact, but it had always been in his rat form. But now he had time to be creative. However, he didn't want to play with the rat, he wanted the human. He wanted to see his eyes fill with fear, hear his agonizing screams, and his supplications. Another laugh passed his lips. He would have so much fun.

"I have been a horrible host. It's been rather rude of me to ignore you so. But don't worry Peter, this afternoon is all about you."

Harry didn't know that it was possible to show so much terror when you were an animal, apparently you learned new things every day.

He picked up the cage and took it to the bathroom; no matter how much he wanted to play he had no wish to dirty his living room or kitchen with blood. The tiles in the bathroom would be much easier to clean. Even so, maybe it would be better to transfigure the bathroom for a bit. Make the room right for Peter, he didn't want his guest to feel uncomfortable, after all, and it was rather rude to play with him in a bathroom.

Nodding, he put the cage on the floor in front of the door.

"Wait here, Peter. I want to make sure that the room is just right for our afternoon fun."

After a few minutes, Harry came back out.

"Well, everything's ready for you. I hope you like it as much as I do."

Harry picked up the cage and went inside. If Peter had been in his human form, he would have fainted, but even in his rat form it was possible to see the terror in his eyes.

In Harry's modest opinion, he had done a rather good job with the new decorations.

The walls, floor, and ceiling were crudely cut dark stone, though the floor was a bit smoother. On the wall directly in front of the door, was a shelf that went from one end of the wall to the other, filled with all manner of objects, from knives, daggers, hammers and nails, to whips. On the other wall were chains for Peter's hands and feet. A few torches gave the room a bit of light. Aside from that, the room had nothing else. Not that it needed anything else, for what Harry intended it was perfect.

Putting the cage on the floor, Harry took out his wand and stunned the rat. There was no need for him to take unnecessary risks. He took Peter out of the cage and put him near the chains. He doubted that he would have been able to drag Peter in his human form. He wasn't particularly small, but he wasn't the tallest of the boys around. Not that he cared, he liked being a bit smaller than average, it
made his life easier when people underestimated him, but he knew he wouldn't be able to drag a grown man. He pointed his wand at the rat again and cast the spell that forced an animagus back to his human form. Then he chained his arms and legs, the chains weren't too tight, if he got up he could walk a little in every direction. No more than a few steps, but it at least allowed him movement. Besides, if the chains were too tight, then it was more likely that he would break a bone or two if he twisted and turned while Harry was playing with him. As a precaution, he summoned everything in his possession; it just wouldn't do if Peter had any weapons on him, or a means of escape. Fortunately, the only thing in his possession was a wand, it was a dark color and was smaller than his, maybe around ten inches. Satisfied, he put the wand away and woke Peter.

Peter seemed a bit disoriented and took a few seconds to understand what was going on.

As soon as he understood, he tried to go back to his animal form. The following moment, a scream broke the silence and Harry laughed, gaining Peter's attention.

"Hello, Peter. I'm Harry Potter. I do hope you enjoy the time spent under my care."

Peter tried to change again, and a new scream was heard.

"Come on, Peter. Do you really think I would allow you to escape that easily? Those chains stop the change, just like your little cage. Now Peter I want to have a little chat, alright?"

Peter whimpered, his wide opened eyes fixed on Harry.

"Why did you join Voldemort?" Harry had a few ideas, but it was one thing to think he knew and another to know he knew.

The rat didn't answer, he continued his whimpering. Harry sighed and looked at Peter, disappointed.

"You know Peter, I didn't want to do this, but you are giving me no other choice," Harry said, as if he was talking to a small child that had misbehaved, "Crucio." Harry almost whispered, his tone one of reverence. He had only used the curse twice, both times on spiders, but using it on a human was completely different.

As soon as Peter's screams filled the room, he couldn't contain his laugh. The euphoria that raged through his body was incredible and he had to use all of his self-control to stop the curse.

"Peter, it would be best if you answered. It will make your life so much easier."

Peter had curled in to a ball and was moaning in pain.

"Peter!" Harry snapped, making the rat look at him with terrified eyes, "Answer me."

"Y-you don't k-k-know how things were. He was winning! What could I do? He would have killed me." Peter was begging with his eyes for Harry to understand. And Harry did understand. Peter was a coward, just like he had suspected.

"I see," muttered Harry, "You were just afraid to die."

Peter nodded frantically, and Harry contained a sneer. What a sorry excuse for a wizard.

"Well Peter, you will be happy to know that I have no intention of killing you."

The hope that appeared in those eyes entertained him immensely. He would destroy that hope. He would make the rat wish for death. He would make him despair when he finally realized that there
wouldn't be the sweet freedom of death. Yes, he would break the rat completely.

"You know Peter, I have a huge list of curses that I want to try out. But as this is our first time together, I think I would prefer a more hands on approach, you know?"

Peter looked at him curiously and Harry smiled, soon the rat would understand. Pointing his wand at the chains, he shortened them, if he was going to stand closer to the rat he needed to make sure that he couldn't attack him. Seeing that Peter couldn't move either is arms or legs, he turned his back to him and moved towards the shelf.

"Hmm, I don't even know where to start. So many options."

The rat began whimpering again, apparently he had finally realized what Harry intended to do.

Harry picked up several things that were on the shelf, examining them carefully and putting them back. Finally, he ended up picking a dagger that he had seen at the beginning and went to Peter's side.

"We are going to have so much fun." Harry commented, taking out his wand and making Peter's shirt disappear. With a small chuckle, he went towards Peter and started to carve into his chest.

As soon as the tip of the dagger breached his skin Peter started screaming. Harry was sure that there were also several prayers amidst the screaming, but Harry ignored them. He had just started, he was sure that the begging would become much more interesting in a bit.

The blood ran down Peter's front, it was starting to drip onto the floor and Harry was sure that when he was done, Peter would be kneeling on the floor in a pool of his own blood.

"Done. Now everyone will know what you are." remarked Harry, stepping back slightly to appreciate his work. Carved in the rat's chest was the word **Traitor**.

"Harry... Harry please. Your father would never have done this. He would never have approved. He would understand why I did it. He would have shown me mercy. Please."

Tears were running down Peter's face, for a second he made Harry think of a baby. A horribly ugly baby, considering that Peter appeared to have absorbed several characteristics from his rat form, but a baby nonetheless.

"Mercy?" Harry asked and Peter nodded frantically, "I do not know what that is, Peter. I know the definition of the word, naturally, but it isn't something that I have ever felt. I don't see why I should feel it with you."

"Your father..." Peter tried to argue, but Harry interrupted him.

"Thanks to you, I never knew him. Truthfully, I don't feel much about my parents, either way. However, they gave their lives for me, if they loved me that much I doubt they would stop loving me just because I was having fun with the person who killed them."

"It was the Dark Lord that killed them! It wasn't me!" Peter protested, gaining a bit of fire in his eyes.

"No. Voldemort was leading a war. They were enemies. You were the one who killed people that were your friends and I doubt that my parents were the only ones. How many died because you betrayed them? No Peter, the only person I blame for their deaths is you. It may not make much sense to other people, but Harry would never blame Voldemort for the death of his parents. Logically, he knew that Voldemort had been the one to shoot the Killing Curse, but he didn't blame
him in the slightest. He didn't know what had led to the happenings of that night, but he was sure that if he had been the one leading a war he would have done the same. From what he had heard, his parents had been a thorn in Voldemort's side. More powerful than the rest of the opposition, they had supposedly faced Voldemort himself and lived, so yes, even not knowing what happened that night, he knew that he would have dealt with it too.

"What should I do with you now..." muttered Harry, "Ah, I know. What about a cut for every year that I was in that Hell?"

Peter started begging again, but Harry ignored him and focused on what he was doing. He had to be careful, he didn't want to accidentally kill the rat. Humming under his breath, he chose the first place, he started in the middle of his forehead and dragged the dagger down slowly till the left corner of Peter's lips.

"Now you'll have a lightning bolt scar as well." Harry whispered, continuing the torture.

He started making cuts on Peter's chest. Not too deep, only enough to cause pain. When he was done, there was no part of Peter's torso that wasn't covered in blood.

"Didn't you say you didn't want to kill me?" sobbed Peter, between moans of pain.

"And I don't Peter. Don't worry, Peter, you are going to live for a very long time."

The look of realization that appeared on Peter's face pleased him greatly.

"You know Peter, I despise muggles," said Harry nonchalantly, ignoring Peter's moans, "But, I have to admit that they are rather creative when it comes to torture. Not that we wizards aren't, quite the contrary actually, but it's all done with a simple flick of the wand, you know?" Harry continued, as if he was discussing the weather over afternoon tea, "But the muggles, they have to get their hands dirty. They have to feel the blood on their skin. It makes it more personal, don't you think?" he asked, looking at the rat curiously, "They truly are creative, especially when it comes to using everyday things. Dobby." Harry called.

Moments later the little elf appeared, he looked briefly at the rat, then ignored it completely.

"Master Harry."

"Dobby, I want you to bring me salt. Lots and lots of salt."

"Yes, Master."

Not knowing how long Dobby would take, Harry started to transfigure a gift for Peter, just because he wouldn't be able to stay much longer, didn't mean that Peter couldn't enjoy his hospitality.

"Master Harry, I brought salt." Dobby announced, about a minute later.

"Thank you, Dobby. Keep this between us, alright?"

"Of course, Master Harry." his eyes full of adoration and with a deep bow he disappeared.

"Well, we will soon see how effective those muggle techniques are."

Taking a handful of salt and with his free hand opening one of the cuts up a bit, he poured the salt into the wound, rubbing it in. Peter's high pitch scream was just as wonderful as when he was under the Cruciatrus.
"It seems to be rather effective." he commented casually. His eyes, however, showed his sadistic glee.

Harry waited a bit until he started on the next cut. He wanted to prolong his fun for as long as he could. Aside from that, he wanted Peter to get used to the level of pain he was in before he upped it. If he did it all at the same time, it wouldn't gradually get worse.

Harry lost count of the time he was there pouring salt into Peter's wounds, but when he was done, Peter was little more than a whimpering lump of bloodied flesh. His supplications had grown, just as he had suspected. Promises of information and loyalty and when none of it worked, he would cry for mercy, for death. Harry couldn't help but laugh every time he did. By the end of it, Peter did nothing more than cry, he didn't seem to have the strength to do much more and Harry was starting to get bored. It lost it's fun if his toy broke so soon.

He waited several minutes, until Peter had gained back some coherency and when Peter looked at him, he smiled warmly.

"I must be going Peter," Harry informed him, the hope in his eyes pleased Harry, "But don't think that I will leave you here all alone with nothing to do. I have something that I prepared just for you."

Harry levitated what he had been working on to stand in front of Peter. It was a wooden chair but on the seat were nails. They weren't all that big or long, he didn't want for Peter to bleed to death. But it would hurt a lot and what he wanted was Peter's suffering.

"Please," Peter begged, voice rough from screaming, "Please don't make me..."

"Oh. No, no, no. Don't worry Peter, I'm not going to force you to sit on the chair. What kind of person would I be if I did that?" Harry asked, looking half offended and half incredulously at Peter, "No Peter, sitting or not in that chair will be completely up to you. No one will force you to do anything."

Harry took his wand out again and petrified Peter, then he levitated him towards the chair, where chains held his legs to the chair's legs and his arms to the chair's arms. After positioning the body so that he was half way sitting on the chair, he nodded to himself and stood in front of Peter.

"Before I go, I'll cancel the charm that has you petrified. You won't be able to move your arms or legs, and the chair can't be moved from where it is. As you can see, you are not seated on the chair. So, as I told you, the choice is yours. You can't stand, so you either stay in the position you are in, or you sit. See? Your choice. Do you understand?"

Peter's panicked eyes clearly showed that he did understand

"Very well. Get ready, I'm going to cancel the petrification."

As soon as he canceled the spell, Peter's body sagged and he almost lost all of his strength. However, he held on and he stayed in the position Harry had put him.

"I will be coming by later to play some more with you." Harry told him, vanishing all the weapons in the room, "Have fun." he said, leaving the temporary torture chamber.

As a precaution, he cast all the spells that he knew of for locked doors, he doubted that Peter would be able to do anything, especially when he had no wand, but there was no need to take chances.

Looking at himself when he was done, he contained a sigh. Maybe he should have used magic on Peter, his clothes were drenched in blood. Looking at the clock that he had in the living room, he
cursed, he had little over half an hour before Sirius and Remus returned. Not as much time as he had wanted to have a shower and take care of everything that there was to take care of, but it would have to do.

Almost half an hour later, he had taken his shower and dealt with his bloodied clothing. He just had a couple of things to take care of now, with a bit of luck he would be able to be done with it before they came back.

"Dobby."

"Master Harry." the elf appeared almost instantaneously.

"Dobby, I have a job for you."

"Anything you want, Master Harry."

"The man with whom you saw me earlier, I want you to give him food and water. It doesn't have to be anything special, it can be our scraps or the Malfoy's. Maybe every two or three days, just enough so that he doesn't starve to death. Alright?"

"Of course, Master Harry. Dobby make sure that rat-man doesn't starve."

"Thank you Dobby, that's all."

Dobby gave him another bow and left.

Harry sighed in relief, that was taken care of and he still had time to go to the library and search for books on healing. It just wouldn't do for his new toy to die unexpectedly.

Chapter End Notes

A.N.: Hello all. Sorry it took so long to post. My grandma passed away and I wasn't really up for updating. However I will never abandon the story, even if I take a bit longer to update I will update.

So, I hope you like the chapter. It's a bit shorter than the previous one but I had fun with it. I so like Harry's new toy. And Tom is back again :D And he will meet Harry officially next chapter :D I have that part already written down and I enjoy their meeting immensely, specially since Tom is a possessive bastard but can't really do much at the moment but grumbled about his Harry being HIS and the others having no business in being that comfortable with his Harry. Well, it was really fun writing it.

Hope you all enjoy the chapter and thank you all so much for sticking with the story and reviewing, following and adding to your favorites. You are all awesome :D
Chapter 13 – Quidditch World Cup

Remus was trying not to laugh, he really was, but it was impossible. He did not feel an ounce of pity for Sirius, it was his own fault. Harry had warned him. He had told him not to wake him up at some ungodly hour of the morning, even if it was his birthday. But did Sirius listen? Of course he didn't, and now he had to suffer the consequences.

"It isn't funny." grumbled Sirius, making Remus laugh even harder.

He looked at Sirius again and started to find it difficult to breath. But he challenged anyone to look at Sirius and not laugh.

It was pink.

It was frilly.

It was a dress.

And Sirius was wearing it.

And no matter what he did he couldn't change to any other clothing.

"He warned you." Remus told him, when he had his laughing under control.

"But this... This is far too cruel!" whined Sirius, looking at his friend, begging with his eyes for him to help him, to find some way to get him out of the pink monstrosity.

Before Remus could say anything, the door to the kitchen opened and Harry walked in.

"Remus." he greeted with a small smile, "Mutt." he greeted Sirius, glancing at him with a blank expression.

"Haarryyy..." said mutt whined, "Don't you think you are being far too cruel? What did I, your innocent godfather, ever do to you to deserve this?" he asked, pointing at the pink, flourescent pink no less, thing he was wearing.

Harry gave him a deadpan look, picked up his morning coffee, and left the kitchen. It was far too early to deal with the insanity that was Sirius.

"You really shouldn't have woken him at six in the morning." Remus told him, trying, and failing, to
keep a straight face. He followed Harry out of the kitchen, leaving a grumbling Sirius behind. Really Sirius had only himself to blame. They knew how much Harry liked to sleep in, aside from that, a Harry without his morning coffee was a scary thing. Sirius really should have known better.

The rest of the day went by relatively normally. Even though it was his birthday, Harry hadn’t wanted a party. He liked to have a bit of time for himself and he would have enough excitement when he went to the Quidditch World Cup. At Draco’s request, they would be going a few days before the match. Draco and the rest of the Court would all be there, even the twins, Neville, and Luna. They were used to being together for the holidays and the Slytherins had wanted to include the rest of the Court in their little tradition, it was only right, they were a part of the Court. The World Cup would be the perfect time to do so. The Weasleys would never allow the twins to go to Malfoy Manor, or anywhere else that was even a bit related to Death Eaters. The same could be said for Neville’s grandmother. The World Cup gave them the perfect excuse. Neville told his grandmother that he would be with Luna, Luna told her friend that there would be with friends and the twins told their parents they would be with their friend Lee, who also happened to be going to the camping site earlier. Usually, a plan like that would fail spectacularly, because it would only take one of the parents to talk to the other for the entire thing to come crumbling down like a house of cards. However, Luna’s father was so out of it most of the time that he had no idea what Luna was up to most days. The elder Weasleys didn’t really pay that much attention to the twins, if they talked to Lee and Lee told them that the twins weren’t there they would think that they had confused the name of the friend and would probably forget about it soon after, because they would be dealing with something one of their other children had done. Neville’s grandmother on the other hand couldn’t care less what her grandson did, as long as he didn’t ‘disgrace’ the family name. Hanging out with Death Eater’s spawn disgraced the family name, hanging out with a girl who came from a Light family such as the Lovegoods and working on her gardens didn’t.

According to Draco, they would be practically alone in their tent. Draco’s mother was in France and would only come for the game, and Lucius would be at their Manor most of the day, taking care of business meetings and other things related to the Malfoy estate.

Harry had accepted the invitation immediately, he could hardly wait to have a few days of true freedom. No matter how comfortable he felt with Sirius and Remus, he still wore masks with them. With his Court he would be able to be himself, without worrying about what to say or do.

Sirius agreed easily enough, he knew how close Harry was to his Court, and promised to meet him there on the day of the game. Both Remus and Sirius had tickets, they would be in the top box with the rest of them. They tried to tone it down, but Harry could see that both men were excited about the game. It would be the first time in a long time that they would be doing something fun, something that they enjoyed, something they would be doing together.

The morning that he was supposed to go to the camping site, he flooed to Malfoy Manor, where they would take a portkey directly to their tent.

Draco and the other Slytherins, aside from Marcus, were waiting for him.

"Where are the others?"

"They’ll meet us there. I sent them a portkey. Marcus will come after lunch, he has to work in the morning."

"And your father?"

"He’s in a meeting with a business partner. He said he would only come after dinner. He told me that if we need him to call an elf and let him know, but that we are old enough to not need constant
"Are we ready to go then?"

They all nodded and Draco held out the portkey for them. Moments later, they were in what looked like a smaller but identical entry hall. The tent was a smaller, much smaller, version of Malfoy Manor. Harry shook his head. Magic was truly a wonderful thing.

Usually, Lucius was the perfect aristocrat. Very few had a better mask than he. However, he was having difficulty maintaining said mask at the moment.

"I'm sorry my Lord, but could you repeat that?"

"I am going to be staying in your tent for the duration of the World Cup. We will be going today, since it's the first day that they are there. You have already seen him interact with his Court. I confess that I am curious."

"When will we be going, my Lord?" Lucius asked, not able to say anything else.

His son would spend about a week in the same place as the Dark Lord. Lucius had to admit that a part of him was panicking. Logically, he knew that his Lord wouldn't do anything, he would be introduced as a business partner, but, honestly, it didn't serve as much consolation. He hoped that his Lord would be so focused on Harry that he mostly ignored his son.

"When are they expecting you?"

"After dinner, my Lord, in about four or five hours."

"Then we will go now." Tom decided. The best way to see a person acting like themselves was when they weren't expecting you.

He waited impatiently for Lucius to get the portkey ready. He couldn't recall ever feeling so impatient to speak to someone. But Harry wasn't just anyone, was he? Harry had so much potential. He wasn't his equal, but he had the potential to be, and that made all the difference. A part of him couldn't help but wonder if he wasn't making a mistake in allowing this... this fascination with the boy to evolve. However, he had always been a greedy and selfish man, everything he wanted, he got. And now he wanted his little King. He wanted to talk with him. He wanted to see if Harry Potter was everything he appeared to be. Who knew, maybe after talking to him this fascination he had would fade. Maybe he would find out that Harry was like every other wizard out there. Though he doubted that would be the case. If Harry had been able to captivate him when he was only eleven years old, he knew that a fourteen year old Harry would do it too.

"My Lord?" Lucius voice brought him out of his thoughts, "The portkey is ready."

Nodding, Tom held the quill that Lucius had in his hand and the next moment he felt the uncomfortable pull of the portkey. They landed in a hall just like the one in Malfoy Manor. Tom liked his comfort, but even he thought that the Malfoy family exaggerated when it came to luxuries.

"Cloaking spells. I would like to observe them together for a minute or two," Tom instructed, "Where are they?"

"In Draco's sitting room, my Lord." Lucius informed him, showing him the way. Fortunately, they hadn't cast the spells yet, otherwise he had the feeling he would have gotten lost. It would be humiliating if anyone ever found out. He could already see the headlines in Magic Today, 'Dark
Lord lost inside a tent!". He suppressed a shudder, he would rather not think about it.

Lucius pointed to a hallway to his right, from where he could hear voices coming and Tom cast the spells immediately, feeling Lucius doing the same. As a precaution, he cast a spell that allowed him to talk with Lucius without anyone else hearing, since it was anchored to the Dark Mark.

They followed the voices and ended up in Draco's sitting room, which had more people than they had been expecting.

"Weren't there only six Court members?" Tom asked, looking to where he could feel Lucius, even though he couldn't see him.

"I was only aware of Marcus Jugson, Theodore Nott, Blaise Zabini, Graham Montague, Adrian Pucey, and my son."

"Do you know who the others are?"

"Neville Longbottom, Weasleys, and I think that the girl is Lovegood's daughter my Lord."

"Slytherins?"

"As far as I know, no my Lord."

"Hmm, I see." Tom murmured, paying close attention to what he was seeing.

Nott and Zabini where sitting in armchairs reading, occasionally looking at Harry with fond smiles. Montague and Pucey were playing chess, talking animatedly with one another. Longbottom and Lucius' son were sprawled on a couch, reading a newspaper, and talking about something in low voices. The girl was sitting on the floor, tarot cards around her. Jugson was sitting at the table writing something. The twins, that he vaguely recalled being named Fred and George, were sitting on a couch, both reading a book, and lying between them, with his head on one of the twins' lap and his feet on the other twins' lap, was his little King.

Now the more pressing matter was, why was his little King practically on their laps? That hand should be nowhere near those black silky locks. Nobody's hands should be on his Harry, it was as simple as that. Why were they touching something that was so obviously his? Harry was far too good for them. Harry deserved better, Harry deserved the best and the best was obviously him. So the red-heads should take their hands off Harry, otherwise they would lose said hands. Simple and effective, in his humble opinion. Anonymity? Who cared about that when those hands were still on his Harry! The best thing would be to deal with the situation right away. Yes, it would be best if there were no doubts that there would be consequences for those who dared to touch the perfection that was his little King.

"I'm bored." Harry said, bringing him out of his slightly homicidal thoughts. Taking a deep breath, he focused on what was happening.

As if they were one, all eyes focused on Harry, who was sitting himself upright on the couch. Nott and Zabini shared a look, and got up from their seats, Lucius' son followed them a moment later, and the three left the sitting room.

Tom and Lucius got out of their way, curious about where they were going.

"Where are they going?" Pucey asked, looking at Harry curiously.

Harry just looked at the girl, lifting an eyebrow.
"Hmm, they are getting entertainment for our King," she replied, sounding a bit dreamy, "I know that we will have fun. Things are going to change."

"How will they change?" Jugson asked, getting up from his seat and standing behind Harry.

"We will find out how far we are willing to go. We will see how far we have fallen. After today our paths will be unchangeable."

"And what is your path?" Harry asked, curiously.

"Wherever you lead us."

"Then there is no problem," Longbottom remarked, "Following him was always our intention."

The others nodded, going back to what they were doing, waiting for the three Slytherins to return.

"The girl's a Seer?" no matter how he tried to stop it, the incredulity slipped into is tone, "Harry has the loyalty of a Seer?"

"That appears to be the case, my Lord." Lucius replied, not able to hide his shock any better than his Lord.

Tom was starting to think that Harry had been born just so he could surprise him, really there could be no other explanation for it.

A few more minutes went by until they heard steps coming their way, indicating that the three Slytherins were back. Tom and Lucius were eternally grateful that no one could see their slack jawed expressions.

The three Slytherins went inside the sitting room, depositing what was floating behind them in the middle of the room. For a few seconds no one said anything, then Harry started laughing.

"Very well," he said, his eyes shining with sadistic glee, "Entertain me."

One by one the Court members got up from their seats and formed a semi-circle around the two unconscious bodies on the floor. Their King wanted entertainment and they would provide.

Pucey and Montague pulled out their wands and woke the two people up, keeping them bound. They seemed to be disoriented, but were getting over it rather quickly. However, before they could say anything a sinister chuckle was heard.

"My Demons," Harry almost whispered, and the twins' eyes locked on him, "Don't you want to welcome your brother? I have to admit that I am curious to see if you are as creative as I always thought you could be."

Their reaction was instantaneous. Identical sadistic smiles appeared on the twins' faces.

"As you wish." they replied in unison.

"What do you think you are doing?" the pompous voice of Percy Weasley filled the room, "Potter! I knew you were no good. You are a disgrace to the name Potter! Let me go this instant! Don't you know who I am? I am a Ministry employee!"

"I know who you are," Harry replied calmly, "Marcus has been complaining about you since you started working there. He says that you have an ego bigger than the Minister's and that you did even less to deserve it."
Weasley's face became as red as his hair.

"Shut up! At least I don't spread my legs for everyone like you must do. It must be the only reason they follow you around like dogs. Do you like being their little whore? At least you are kinda pretty; you must be a good fuck."

The silence that followed seemed to last an eternity, though in reality only two seconds had passed. Moving faster than they thought possible, Longbottom grabbed Weasley's hair and smashed his face against the floor. They heard Weasley's nose break, followed by a muffled scream. Longbottom pulled Weasley's head back up.

"Watch your tongue, or you'll lose it!" he snarled, looking far more vicious than Tom thought possible for someone who appeared to be rather harmless.

Seeing the expressions on everyone's faces, Tom thought that they would gladly rip said tongue out, even if Weasley did shut up. Truthfully, Tom wasn't averse to the idea himself.

"Demons, Neville wants to play too. You don't mind sharing, do you?" Harry asked, looking at them.

Both twins nodded and Neville smiled. The smile was so bloodthirsty that Tom was slightly taken aback. He never thought that he would see such an expression on a Longbottom's face. The Longbottoms had always been Light and were one of the most pacifistic families out there. Even during war times. Frank Longbottom had been the first Longbottom in centuries to join an organization like the Order of the Phoenix; that actively fought against their opponents. But even so, as far as he knew, Frank Longbottom had never killed a Death Eater.

A small whimper caught his attention and he looked at the girl that was trying, and failing, to go unnoticed.

The Seer laughed and practically skipped to stand in front of the girl.

"Hello, Cho." she greeted the girl jovially, "We will have so much fun." then in a voice so low that Tom almost didn't hear, she continued, "I know your biggest fear."

Not waiting any longer, the Seer transfigured a table, he was surprised. Transfiguration like that was fifth year material. Though, he guessed he shouldn't be. The girl was a part of Harry's Court; he doubted that Harry would allow anyone into his Court if they were incompetent.

The Seer levitated the girl on to the table and made sure she couldn't move with a few spells.

"What are you doing?" the girl screamed, panic and fear lacing her voice, "Let me go! Please let me go! I promise not to say anything. Please!"

Nott chuckled darkly. He looked amused at seeing her struggle.

"Do you really think begging will work?" Nott asked maliciously, "Our King wants to be entertained, and it is our pleasure to provide."

"Luna is going to play with you. But I'm sure she won't mind sharing. Sharing is caring, isn't that what they say?" Zabini added mockingly.

The Seer, Luna, transfigured one of the pillows into a small towel. She folded it in half and put it over the bound girl's face, making it hold in place with a spell.
They were all looking at her curiously, with the exception of Harry. He was lounging on the couch, his eyes full of malice and a small smirk on his lips. Tom knew that Harry was excited; he could see it in those eyes. He enjoyed seeing his Court torturing someone for him. Tom could understand that feeling. The rush he felt every time his Death Eaters tortured, killed, for him was still as potent as it'd been the first time they'd done it.

"Aguamenti." a jet of water came out of the wand. The water fell on the towel covering the girl's face and she started to struggle harder to get free. She tried screaming, but every time she did the scream would be drowned by the constant jet of water hitting the towel, worsening her torture.

"Stop it!" yelled Weasley, "What are you doing? What do you think you are doing?"

The twins apparently grew tired of their brother's yelling, because in the next moment, Weasley screamed. One of the twins had broken his leg. The other transfigured a chair and sat him down.

"Don't worry, dear brother." one of them said.

"We haven't forgotten about you." concluded the other.

In that moment, the name that Harry gave them seemed to fit them perfectly.

"Accio." both twins chanted and a new scream filled the room. Both twins had summoned a nail, one from both of his hands.

In the meanwhile Luna had stopped and was talking to the girl.

"I know how much the simple idea of drowning terrifies you. Tell me, is it as bad as you thought?" her voice still had that dreamy tone, it was as if she hadn't been torturing the girl only moments before.

"Please, please, please, please." the girl didn't seem to be able to say anything more and even that was more of a whimper.

"Hmm, alright. Apparently, you need a bit more time to be able to answer." that said, Luna put the towel back on her face and continued.

Weasley, on the other hand, was talking more than ever.

"When I get out of here you will all be sent to Azkaban! Mother never should have had you! You're a disgrace! I always knew that you weren't worth anything!"

"Accio!" the twins drawled lazily, this time summoning all his nails.

Longbottom joined them and pointed his wand at Weasley's right hand.

"Senfeligi." he whispered, and an agonized scream filled the room.

"Oh Merlin," Tom heard Lucius whisper, and couldn't help but agree with the sentiment. Weasley's hand was being flayed. Unfortunately for Weasley, it hadn't been something quickly done. The spell was still working, it was as if Weasley's skin was a glove and it was being pulled off extremely slowly.

"What does drowning feel like?" Luna asked again.

"Please! Please, don't hurt me! I'll do anything. Anything!" the girl sobbed.
"Anything?" Pucey asked.

"Yes, yes, yes. Please!" the hope in her voice was rather amusing. Tom was certain that nothing she did would stop them. He knew people like them. He _was_ like them. They didn't stop. They enjoyed her begging. They would destroy her, even if they didn't kill her.

Pucey looked at Luna and she moved away a bit, letting him stand in front of the girl.

"Alright," Pucey said with a charming smile and the girl looked at him with eyes full of wonder and hope, "I want you to scream for my King." her eyes widened with fear and ,still smiling, he pointed his wand at her, "Crucio," and she screamed.

Her screams joined Weasley's, creating a macabre symphony.

"This is what the Seer meant," murmured Lucius, "How far they've fallen..."

"Maybe. But from what I understand they were already set on this path, far before these events occurred. They are set on following Harry."

"They are so young."

"Yes, they are. Imagine them in a few years," he was hardly able to contain his excitement. If he wasn't wrong, and he didn't think he was, then this was Harry's Inner Circle. A part of him would love to see his Inner Circle go against Harry's. At the moment, they may not be at the same level, but in a few years...

The screams stopped, leaving both of their victims whimpering and sobbing.

The towel went back to the girl's face.

"Aguamenti."

"Monsters." Weasley whispered, in a rough voice, "You're monsters."

"Are we?" Montague wondered, "Maybe we are," he said, looking at those around him, a small smile on his lips, "But in the end it doesn't matter. What matters is that we are members of the Court, and our King accepts us, just as we are. Even if we are monsters." the conviction in his voice was astonishing, just like Lucius' son had been all those days ago when he was talking about Harry. He couldn't help but wonder how Harry was able to get their loyalty to such a point. He was sure that if Harry told them, they would gladly die, just because it was something that Harry wanted. That kind of loyalty was something he hadn't seen since the first members of his own Inner Circle. Sure, the newer generations were loyal as well, but it was different. Their loyalty was more out of fear than anything. The true devotion to him that the first members of his Inner Circle had, was something that he rarely saw in the newer generations, but even those were different.

"Then he's the biggest monster of all."

That declaration ended with renewed screams.

Zabini, Nott, and Lucius's son had broken his other leg, his left arm, and a few ribs, from the looks of it.

"I don't think you understand," Jugson told him, walking into his line of sight and stopping right in front of Weasley, "We are all loyal to Harry, our King. We are all more than willing to do everything and anything for him. Talking badly about him will only anger us and cause you more pain."
"You work for the Ministry." Weasley whispered incredulously.

"No," Jugson corrected him, "I work at the Ministry for Harry. I work at the Ministry because it's useful to Harry."

"Why?" Weasley's voice was much weaker. The loss of blood was affecting him, though Tom was sure that his injuries weren't helping either.

"All Dark Lords have a beginning. We are his."

Weasley's eyes filled with realization, followed by horror. Tom saw the precise moment that Weasley realized the situation he was in, the precise moment he lost all hope.

"I'm your brother." he almost pleaded, "You're going to choose that freak over your own brother?"

"Neville told you to watch your tongue." one twin said.

"I hope this will answer your question." the other added.

"Accio." they said in unison.

Weasley's tongue was ripped out of his mouth. The strength of the spell was such that Weasley fell backwards of the chair. His mouth filled with blood in a matter of seconds, and breathing became impossible. In a matter of minutes Weasley had drowned in his own blood.

Any of them could have stopped it, any of them could have saved him. But none of them did. They stood there, watching with curious eyes, as Weasley struggled to breathe. And Harry, sprawled on the couch as if it were a throne, had a satisfied smile on his face. If Tom were anyone else, he would say that he was looking at the face of pure evil.

"He's dead. You killed him." whispered the girl, "Dead." she seemed to be far too shocked to say anything else.

Harry got up from his seat and stood in front of the girl.

"Do you want to die?" he asked the girl curiously.

"No, no, no, no, no. Please." she begged, tears running down her cheeks.

"Shh, don't cry," Harry told her, caressing her face tenderly, "I don't want you to die," he said with a warm, tender smile, "But after what happened, we can't let you leave. You might tell someone. We can't take that risk."

He sounded so honest that, for a fraction of a second, Tom forgot just who Harry was, what he was. No matter how honest he sounded, Tom knew it was fake. However, he didn't see what Harry intended to do, it was obvious that Harry had no problem with killing and he didn't think that Harry had some special feelings for the girl. So he couldn't figure out what he was after.

"No! Please! I'll do anything! Please!"

"Anything?"

"Yes! Please!"

"Would you swear it?"
"Yes!"

A sinister smile appeared on his lips and Jugson approached them both, taking his wand out.

Harry held out his hand, waiting for the girl to take it. She looked at it as if it were a poisonous snake, ready to strike at a moment's notice. Harry lifted a brow expectantly, and she took his hand cautiously.

"Will you, Cho Chang, vow never to reveal anything that happened from the moment that you were brought to this tent, till the moment you leave, no matter by which means?"

"I will."

"Will you do anything to help, and never do anything to harm, my Court and I and those I consider my allies?"

"I w-will."

"Will you obey me unconditionally?"

"I... I wi-will." her voice was no more than a whisper, but it was enough for the magic to bind it.

"Good girl." Harry whispered, patting her on the head as if she were no more than a pet.

Harry sat back down and looked at Jugson.

"Take care of this."

Jugson nodded, and started cleaning the blood and water that was all over the place, the others helping where they could.

Tom was still processing what he had seen. Not that he was slow on the uptake, but still, he was quite surprised. Harry had a slave. An actual slave. Either the girl obeyed him or she would die. It was as simple as that. Not even his Death Eaters had a leash that short. True, if they betrayed him and he found out he would hunt them down and kill them. But the girl, she didn't even have that option. Even thinking about going against Harry would cause her pain, actually going through with it would kill her. The Unbreakable Vow didn't give her any other option but to obey. There were ways around Unbreakable Vows of course, but he doubted the girl had the mental will, or even knew how, to work around it. He wondered how long she would last.

He looked back at the Court and was surprised to see that the girl was dry, clean, and didn't look as if she had been tortured.

"You are free to go, Miss Chang." Harry informed her.

Chang practically ran out of the room, though she had stumbled a few times; she was still shaking a bit due to the Crucio, making several of them laugh.

"Weasley?" Pucey asked, looking at the body at his feet.

"Do you have the letters and the blood?" Jugson asked looking at the twins.

"Two letters ready to send. One for the Ministry, another for the family. Apparently, our dear brother couldn't handle the stress. So, to try and see if this is really the career that he wants to follow, he decided to travel for a while. He asked for them not to contact him, because he really needs a bit of time for himself." one of the twins replied.
Jugson shook his head and let one drop of blood fall on both letters. One spell later, and both letters looked as if they had been written by Percy Weasley.

"Tomorrow I'll go to the Post Office in Diagon Alley, I'll use two owls from there and I'll send the letters from different parts of the country." Jugson informed Harry.

Pointing his wand at the body, he transfigured it into a matchstick, set it on fire, then vanished the ashes.

The Court members looked at each other, even Tom could tell that something had changed. Not for the worse either. They seemed closer, somehow. Theoretically, they all knew what they could do, they all knew that they were sadistic. Monsters, as Weasley had said. But, somehow, having it out in the open like that made a difference. For a moment, they looked at each other and there was this connection between them that hadn't been there before. Even though they had been incredibly close, now there was more to it. Then Montague chuckled and the intensity was broken.

"Well, it really was an interesting afternoon." he remarked, the others shared a look and laughed. Shaking their heads, they went back to what they were doing before. Talking and reading and enjoying themselves, looking like normal teenagers.

Whoever saw them would never suspect that only moments before they had tortured two innocent people and killed one of them, while robbing the other of their free will.

"Let's go, Lucius." Tom said, he had seen more than enough. Now he wanted to talk with him.

Knowing that Lucius would follow him, he went back to the entry hall, taking the charms off as soon as he was far enough away that he knew they wouldn't be able to hear or feel them. He felt Lucius doing the same a few seconds later.

"What do you intend to do now, my Lord?"

"What I had previously planned, of course. You saw the same as I did Lucius, are you going to tell me that you aren't curious?" Tom asked, he looked at Lucius shrewdly when he saw that familiar glow in the blonde's eyes, "Tell me Lucius, would you have followed him if I had truly died? Would you bow and call him your Lord?"

"I... I don't know my Lord," Lucius replied, and Tom could see the truth in his eyes, "He has so much potential." Lucius continued, and Tom knew that Lucius had wanted to talk about it, Lucius knew a lot about Harry, had lived in the same house as Harry for a while even, his curiosity and fascination was only natural, "And it isn't only his potential, many people have potential. It's what he's already done. Sometimes, he just makes me want to bow, to submit, to give in. It's almost like a natural instinct. I don't blame Draco for having sided with Harry, even if that would mean standing against me. I felt his magic, my Lord, it's..." Lucius didn't really know how to describe it, the closest he could come with a suitable description would be, 'it's like yours', but he didn't know how his Lord would react to that. Recalling the few times he had felt Harry's magic, he suppressed a shudder and he saw his Lords' eyes shine with interest, "It's addictive." he said instead, he wasn't lying. It was addictive; however, it wasn't only that, it was so much more. "But I know nothing about his beliefs. I do not know what he fights for, what he wants to achieve. What is he planning for our world? Without knowing those answers, it would be impossible for me to know if I would have followed him."

That was it. Harry's beliefs. It was another reason for him to talk with Harry. He needed to know what his beliefs were. It would make all the difference. It was the difference between being an ally, or an enemy.
"It is another reason for me to talk with him. Let's go, I've waited long enough."

"Yes, my Lord."

They went back to Draco's sitting room, this time not hiding their presence.

This time, when they neared the sitting room Harry had his eyes on the door, showing that he had either heard them or sensed them before he saw them.

"Father," Lucius' son said, getting up from the couch, "You're here earlier than what you told me. Is something wrong?"

Tom felt eyes on him and looked at Harry. His eyes locked with Avada Kedavra green and he couldn't look away, even if he'd wanted to. It was the first time that he felt frustrated for being in his current disguise. Harry was looking at him, dissecting every bit of him, and he wanted to impress him, he wanted Harry to look at him and find him just as fascinating as he found Harry. He knew he was good looking in this disguise. He was vain and wouldn't use just any disguise, but he wanted for those eyes to look at him and find that same interest in them. Harry wasn't eleven anymore and now was the first time that he truly realized it.

"There is nothing wrong. The meeting ended earlier than anticipated and I had nothing more to do for the day. This is Tomas Nacht. He is a business partner of mine and he will be staying here to watch the game with us."

Harry smiled, Tom knew that a smile like that couldn't mean anything good, well at least nothing good for his continued sanity. He hadn't much left of it, he couldn't afford to lose the little bit he had. Though he was sure that Harry would make it a far harder job than he had anticipated to keep said bit of sanity. Well, at the very least it promised to be an interesting few days.

"Welcome, Mr. Nacht." Harry said, clearly showing that even though he was a guest, in this particular setting, he was the one in charge, "These are my friends, Marcus Jugson, Adrian Pucey, Graham Montague, Theodore Nott, Blaise Zabini, Neville Longbottom, Fred and George Weasley, Luna Lovegood, and of course, Draco Malfoy." he introduced them, pointing at each one respectively.

"Charmed," replied Tom, not taking his eyes of Harry, "And I am having the pleasure of speaking with?" he asked, taking a few steps in Harry's direction. It didn't escape his notice that all Court members tensed and a few even inched their hands closer to their wands. They were rather protective, not that it would stop him. He would kill every one of them if they tried to stop him from reaching his goal, and his goal at the moment was Harry.

"Harry Potter, at your service. However, you knew that already, didn't you, Mr. Nacht?" Harry's smile was mischievous and his eyes shone with amusement.

"Of course," Tom replied, wishing that Harry truly was at his service, even if he knew that Harry was something that was completely out of his control. It excited him, knowing that someone like Harry wasn't his to command. The chase to get him would be thrilling, "However, it's considered good manners to let a person introduce themselves and I wouldn't want to be rude to royalty, now would I?"

Harry laughed, and Tom knew that the following days would be far more interesting than he had thought.

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Tom was frustrated. Two days, he had been there for two days already, and he still hadn't talked with
Harry. They had traded the usual good mornings and good nights, but aside from that, nothing.

He just wanted to be alone with Harry for a while, but it was proving to be more difficult than getting the Philosopher’s Stone. Those damn Court members were always there. Every time he was in the same room as Harry he could feel their eyes on him. Apparently, they didn't trust him.

Tom snorted, if they didn't trust him now, he could only imagine how they would react if they knew who he really was. Maybe he should tell them. Who knew, they may die of shock and he would finally be able to talk with Harry.

Speaking of Harry, he was the most frustrating out of all of them. It was obvious that Harry knew what was going on and would be able to stop it with just a word to his Court, but he did nothing. Every time their eyes locked he would see the amusement in them. On occasion, Harry would even lift his eyebrow, as if he was saying: 'So? Are you going to give up?'. It was infuriating.

Harry was challenging him. He was making him chase him, and having fun every second of it.

Containing a sigh, Tom went towards the kitchen. He needed a cup of tea, or maybe some Firewhiskey. Talking with someone, or in this case not talking with someone, was far more tiring than he remembered it being. Though it could be the fact that he was used to people chasing him around, wanting his company even when he clearly had no desire to be near them, even when he was deliberately cruel towards them. That just proved to him that Harry was different, and he knew that Harry was worth it. No matter how much he had to resist the urge to Crucio Harry's Court.

Seeing light coming from the doorway that led to the kitchen, he frowned. Who would be up at this ungodly hour? For a moment, he almost felt like turning around and going back to his room. He really didn't feel like having company. Shaking his head, he continued towards the kitchen; maybe if he talked with someone from Harry’s Court, they would back off a bit. Besides, he didn't have to stay for all that long and he really wanted that cup of tea.

However, luck seemed to finally be on his side. Instead of a Court member, Harry was sitting at the table with a hot cup of tea in front of him.

As soon as he was at the door, Harry looked up.

"Mr. Nacht," Harry greeted him, inclining his head slightly.

"Harry," he replied, "I already told you to call me Tom. What are you doing up at this hour?" he asked, sitting in front of Harry.

"I couldn't sleep. You?"

"The same. Not that I am complaining, if it weren't for that I wouldn't have been able to catch you here. It is extremely difficult to get you alone."

Harry lifted his eyebrow and looked at him with innocent curiosity. He had never been able to pull off that look.

"Why would you want to catch me alone?"

"So we could talk, naturally. I am rather curious, you know, how did the Boy-Who-Lived end up as the Slytherin King."

"Hmm, I had wondered how you knew about the Court."
"I was a Slytherin in my school days," Tom told him, with a faint smile. No matter how many years passed, Hogwarts would always be special to him, it would always be home. "Any true Slytherin would recognize a Court when he sees one."

"I suppose you're right. Is that the only reason why you wanted to talk with me?"

"No, though it is one of them," he confessed, slipping into that familiar feeling he'd had that first time he'd spoken with Harry. Even now, knowing that Harry could pose a threat to him, he still felt incredibly comfortable. He didn't understand it and he had looked it up. Though he didn't really know where to look for it, or what exactly to look for. He needed more information, about Harry, about his magic, about his strangely familiar wand, about everything really, "You must know that most people are curious about you, for one reason or another."

"Yes, I know. To be honest, it is rather tiresome." Harry replied sighing, his masks falling away. There was something about Tomas Nacht that reminded him of Quirrell, though far more intense. "I grew up in the muggle world, not knowing anything about my heritage. I know how they want me to live up to their expectations. The Boy-Who-Lived," he sneered, "Is nothing more than a fairytale. If it is he who you wish to talk with, I'm sorry but you came to the wrong place."

"No, it isn't the Boy-Who-Lived that interests me." Tom answered. He hadn't expected the bitterness that slipped through the nonchalant tone, but he guessed he should have expected it. Harry was a fascinating person but what most people wanted wasn't Harry, they wanted the Boy-Who-Lived, or their version of who Harry Potter was. He could understand, he could relate. They hadn't wanted Tom Riddle either, they had wanted Slytherin's Heir. He used to wonder how much of that led to the path he had ended up choosing. Not that he regretted the choices he'd made, he was a true Dark Lord, he enjoyed the suffering he caused, he was not a good person and the simple thought of battle and bloodshed made his magic sing and awoke his blood-lust, it was who he was, and he had no intention of changing it. But he did wonder, if his life had been different if maybe he would have gone about things a different way. Not that it mattered anymore, he was Tom Marvolo Riddle, the Dark Lord Voldemort, future Ruler of the Magical World. "I admit that what awoke my curiosity was the Boy-Who-Lived, but what kept my interest was you."

"And what about me interests you?"

Everything. Everything about you. That was what Tom wanted to say. It was the purest truth. But he couldn't say it. It would give Harry far too much power, power that he would know how to use.

"The usual," he ended up saying, "Do you have the same beliefs as your parents? Don't you mind being friends with suspected Death Eater children? Are you a Dark Wizard? The usual questions."

Harry laughed and his eyes were shinning.

"I see. The usual..." he shook his head and smiled, "I think you will find the answers to those questions quite disappointing."

"There is only one way to know for sure." Tom insisted, though he doubted that he would find anything Harry said disappointing; unless he declared his undying loyalty to Dumbledore, of course.

"Alright, let's start with my parents' beliefs. I have no idea what their beliefs were. I know what people say, but how can I be sure they are telling the truth? As far as I know, they could be lying, or my parents could have lied to them."

"Well, what do you believe then?" it was one of the things that he needed to know. No matter how much he wanted Harry, he wouldn't change his every belief just to have him. They didn't have to
agree on everything, but if they at least had some things in common they could work the rest out. And he wasn't talking about their obvious sadistic and homicidal tendencies. Though it did please him a great deal, knowing how bloodthirsty his little King was, he could hardly wait to see him in battle, hopefully beside him and against Dumbledore's Order of the Flaming Chickens.

"I don't believe in the Light propaganda," Harry admitted, and Tom felt his heart beat faster. True, he hadn't expected for him to actually believe in the Light's agenda, but hearing Harry saying it made all the difference. "But I don't believe in the pureblood propaganda either. I am a half-blood, I would never support something that would make me a second class citizen"

That didn't please him one bit. But he wasn't really expecting a different answer. If he wanted Harry to ever join him, there would have to be some changes. Not that he blamed Harry. He understood where Harry was coming from, but when he was starting he'd needed numbers and he did what he had to. Besides, he did really believe that muggleborns had no place in the Wizarding World. It had nothing to do with their blood though, it was because of the danger they represented. However, he never had anything against half-bloods, it would have been slightly hypocritical of him if he had. As long as they chose their wizarding origins, he had nothing against them.

"So, if you don't believe one or the other, what do you believe in?" he asked again.

"Power. Magic. I don't care where it comes from. Magic is Magic. No magical being should be subjected to living amongst muggles. First generation witches and wizards should be respected for the new magic that they bring to the Wizarding World, for the new lines they are starting. The old lines are dying. All this talk about keeping the lines pure is killing off the magic. Sure, they shouldn't procreate with muggles, that has a greater possibility of creating weak wizards and witches, if the child even ends up magical, but they should bring new blood, new magic into their lines. It is a shame that they are far too stubborn to see it. Their notion that half-bloods are inferior to them is ridiculous."

"And you think that the solution to that is muggleborns?" Tom asked lifting an eyebrow. Theoretically, he could be right, but at the moment it wasn't something that could be proven. Even if it was possible to prove it, he doubted that the purebloods, at least the supremacists, would accept it.

"I'm a half-blood. Pureblood father, muggleborn mother." Harry replied, as if that answered the question.

"Yes, I know. What does that have to do wi..."

The question died in his throat.

Harry's magic had filled the room. He could feel the magic caressing his skin. His own magic was itching to break free of the tight control he always had on it. It was intoxicating, exquisite, addicting. Now he knew what Lucius meant, he had to applaud the man for being able to resist it as well as he did. Now he knew how Harry had captivated his Court so thoroughly. He had never felt anything like it, aside from his own magic. He didn't care what he had to do; Harry and his magic would be his. No one else on Earth was worthy to even be in their presence.

He opened his eyes when he felt a delicate and soft hand touch his cheek, when had he closed his eyes? Harry was standing in front of him. His brilliant green eyes shining with power, a warm smile on his lips, and his hand caressing his cheek the same way his magic was.

"Can you look me in the eyes and tell me that I am inferior to a pureblood?"

He didn't answer, he didn't need to. Both knew the answer.
"Goodnight, Mr. Nacht." Harry murmured, turning around and leaving the kitchen, taking with him all that tantalizing magic.

Tom took a deep breath. Damn, his little King was a tease. There was nothing on Earth that would stop him from possessing him completely. No matter the cost. *Nothing.*

The next morning, Tom noticed immediately that something was different. The Court members weren't watching his every move and they were sitting far enough away from Harry to give the illusion of privacy. He didn't believe, not even for a second, that they trusted him, but at least now he would be able to talk to Harry. After feeling that magic, Harry must have known that it would have been impossible for him to stay away.

"Good morning." he greeted those present, taking a seat beside Harry at the breakfast table.

"Good morning." replied Harry, the others only bowing their heads a little in reply.

"Where are the others?" Tom asked, when he noticed that most of the usual crowd was missing.

"Lucius had a meeting. Marcus went to work. The twins are still sleeping. Luna and Neville went exploring, something about certain types of plants that grow around here. And Adrian went to see some cousins of his that arrived a little while ago to see the game tomorrow."

Tom nodded and continued his breakfast. Depending on the duration of the game, he only had one more day to really talk with Harry. It wasn't as much time as he would have liked, but it was better than nothing. He had to be realistic, Harry didn't know him, he had no reason to want to spend more time with him. So, all in all, he had a little over a day to make sure that Harry would be interested in talking with him again. Usually, it would be rather easy for him; he was used to charming people. But Harry wasn't one of the usual sycophants that would be charmed with a few pretty words. Harry wouldn't be impressed with meaningless words and charming smiles. Well, he never said that he didn't like challenges.

"Yesterday, you didn't answer the rest of my questions." he commented nonchalantly, breaking the comfortable silence. Malfoy, Nott, Zabini, and Montague looked at him curiously but didn't comment. He wondered if Harry had told them what had happened in the kitchen.

"Hmm, what were the questions again?" Tom asked, when he noticed that most of the usual crowd was missing.

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"Hmm, what were the questions again?" Harry asked distractedly, as if the conversation the previous night hadn't been all that important. As if he wasn't that important. It truly was infuriating.

"Oh, nothing all that important." he replied casually, seeing the amusement in Harry's eyes increasing. Apparently, Harry knew what he was doing, "The usual questions, you know. I suppose the one that is asked the most would be: are you a Dark wizard?"

He didn't even need to look at Harry's Court to know that they were glaring at him. It was one of those situations where one should be glad that looks can't kill.

"No." Harry replied calmly, "At least I don't think I am. But the definition of Dark Wizard varies from person to person. Taking that in to consideration then I suppose that I could fit someone's definition of a Dark wizard, who knows?"

"In that case, the correct question would be: what do you consider a Dark wizard?"

"I don't really know."

"You don't know?"
"No."

"How do you not know?" Tom asked slightly exasperated. Sometimes he wondered if his life would have been easier if Harry was what everyone had expected the Boy-Who-Lived to be, if he was the typical Gryffindor.

"What is a Dark wizard?" Harry asked looking at him expectantly. He felt the other boys sitting closer to them. However, before he could answer, Harry continued, "To most people, Dark wizards are Death Eaters or those loyal to Dark Lords. Others think that Dark wizards are those that hurt others. And many think that all Slytherins are Dark wizards. So, what is a Dark wizard?"

"None of those." replied Tom, understanding what Harry meant, "The first and one of the more correct definitions of a Dark wizard, is a wizard that has a predisposition for Dark magic. Nothing stops those wizards from using other kinds of magics of course, but Dark magic comes more easily."

Harry looked pleased by the answer, making him think that it was something that Harry already knew. Suddenly, he remembered having a similar conversation with Harry the first time they had talked, and he felt kind of proud that Harry remembered and had taken to heart what he'd said.

"Technically, according to that definition, you would be considered a Dark wizard Harry." remarked Montague.

"I don't know," Nott argued, "He is a magical prodigy. If we base the definition on what comes naturally to a wizard, then I don't think it applies to Harry. Every magic comes naturally to him."

"It isn't only the predisposition and talent that counts," Tom interfered, he couldn't believe it, but he was actually enjoying the conversation. They weren't as knowledgeable as him, but they had intelligent arguments and they didn't take everything at face value. "The way that the magic influences the wizard is also important. A Dark wizard will always feel more comfortable with Dark magic, even if he is just as talented with other magics. Look at it this way; there are two spells, they do the same thing. One is Dark magic, the other isn't. A Dark wizard will subconsciously cast the one that is Dark, even if it is something as simple as a drying charm. The Dark magic would call to them."

"It makes sense," muttered Malfoy, "But in that case, I don't understand why the Ministry made using Dark magic illegal, and sends those who use it to Azkaban."

"Dark magic is wilder," Tom explained, "If the wizard doesn't have control over himself, he can lose himself to the magic. As you know, all magic depends on the emotions and will of the wizard, but Dark magic is more primitive, almost feral, it reacts to our baser emotions. If a wizard loses himself to those feelings, he can become addicted, and most aren't strong enough to fight it."

Tom saw Harry's eyes fill with interest and felt rather smug. He couldn't really help it, he was a vain man, he liked having Harry's attention on him and knowing that Harry was interested in him made him quite smug. Besides, he liked the fact that he would be able to hold intelligent conversations with Harry, when they weren't busy with other things.

"Besides, the Ministry doesn't want to lose the control that it has." Harry added, "Dark magic was only really outlawed after the Middle ages. Before that, only things like the Avada Kedavra were regulated. After that time, the Ministry started to truly gain power, they were needed to help keep the Wizarding World hidden from the muggles. Everything they didn't like was outlawed, even family magics. The Longbottoms, for example, were always elemental mages, but the Ministry labeled elemental magics as Dark Arts in 1791, because the Minister at the time had a feud against the Longbottoms and wanted to weaken them. Nowadays, most Longbottoms don't even remember that
elemental magics were part of their line's gifts. It's the reason why Neville is such a gifted Herbologist; he is using elemental magics, even if it's subconsciously."

"How do you know that?" Tom asked, impressed.

"I have access to the Black libraries." answered Harry with a smile and the Court members laughed.

"If I didn't know you as well as I do, I would accuse you of being a Ravenclaw." Zabini remarked, shaking his head.

"Knowledge is Power." Harry replied casually.

"And you love power." commented Nott, with a small smile.

"Who doesn't?" Harry asked, rhetorically.

"Getting back to the previous subject," Malfoy interrupted, when he saw Nott opening his mouth to continue their banter, "So, not everything the Ministry classifies as Dark magic is Dark magic?"

"Technically, everything they classify as Dark magic is Dark Arts." Tom clarified, "There used to be a distinction, but it was lost in their zeal to outlaw everything they didn't approve of. The Dark Arts have several subcategories, such as Necromancy, Blood Magic, Rituals, Elemental Magic, and several others. Nowadays, they mashed everything together and consider it Dark magic and outlawed everything to do with it. It wasn't like that before. Take Necromancy for instance, you can do a number of things with that branch of magic, though the most known would be the creation of Inferi. Nowadays, raising even one Inferius is enough to get you fifty years in Azkaban. Before, raising Inferi was permitted as protections for tombs and other such things. It was highly regulated of course, and if you did raise Inferi for other purposes, then you would be subjected to the laws of that time, but the legality of raising Inferi depended on the use that you were going to give it and not on the magic itself. Do you understand?"

"They used to judge the acts, now they judge the magic." Harry almost whispered, a small sigh escaping his lips.

"Yes." murmured Tom.

It was something that he hated, something that he wanted to change above everything else. Magic wasn't supposed to be restricted. Magic was supposed to be free, free of human restrictions. Magic wasn't supposed to have rules, limits.

"It isn't right." Harry said viciously, "Magic... Magic is supposed to be free. It shouldn't be restricted by human fears and limitations."

Tom contained a smile. Harry was one of the few that saw magic the same way that he did. He couldn't help but wonder if they would think the same thing if they had grown up in a magical household. Spending all their childhoods hearing about the limits that magic supposedly has would be enough to make them believe it. But he couldn't really believe that it would have changed that about them. They were magical prodigies, he didn't think that they would have been satisfied with the same knowledge that the others had. He was sure that they would have experimented with the known limits to magic and he was sure that they would have been able to break them. He had done it after all, he didn't see why Harry wouldn't be able to. The fascination they had with magic was the same, he didn't think that it would disappear or change, even if they had been brought up by wizards. It wasn't something that they got because they were raised by muggles. It was just how they were. Magic fascinated them, every branch of it, and he didn't think that was likely to change.
His eyes locked with Harry's and he knew that they were thinking the same thing. He could see the fire in Harry's eyes, the same one that had been in his own eyes when he had learned what the Ministry was doing. But he had hope that things would change. Harry was changing the way his Court saw magic, just as he had done with his own. And when he finally ruled the Wizarding World, Magic would be free once again, as it always should have been.

"Harry!"

That was the only warning he got before he was crushed in a hug.

"Sirius, I know you missed him, however, if you don't let go you will suffocate him." Remus remarked calmly, a few feet away from them.

Sirius let him go, a sheepish smile on his lips.

"Hello, Harry." Remus gave him a warm hug. He had become quite used to being hugged. His Court was rather affectionate and used every opportunity they had to hug him. He found it rather strange that they were so sadistic and violent, but had such tender sides to them. Though he hadn't seen them doing it to anyone besides those in the Court, so he supposed that it was something that they displayed only to those they were quite close to. Both Sirius and Remus were rather tactile people too, something they said came from their canine sides, taking in the fact that they considered him their pup or cub, and it only added to their need to touch him. If someone had told him a few years ago that he would be hugged practically every day, he would have cursed them and then asked Madam Pomfry to check for mental damage. Now, however, he had gotten used to it. Besides, he rather liked it, even if he would never admit to such a thing.

"Hello Remus, Sirius. You already know my friends." he said, indicating the Court members sitting in the various chairs in the Top Box, "And this is Tomas Nacht, a business partner of Lucius'." he introduced, signaling the man standing a little behind him. "Lucius is waiting at the Manor for Narcissa. Aside from us, there will be a few Ministry officials here, so do try to behave Sirius."

Sirius threw him a mock indignant look and the Court members laughed. They had spent enough time with Sirius to know how he was. Harry was hoping that the game would entertain him enough that he didn't try to do anything. The last thing he needed was the headache he knew he would get if his godfather tried to pull some prank on a foreign Ministry official.

"Don't worry Harry, I'll keep an eye on him." Remus assured him, pulling Sirius towards their seats and muttering under his breath about Sirius sleeping in the dog house if he didn't behave. Harry thought it was best if he didn't know what that was about, there were some things better left unknown.

Shaking his head, he found a rather secluded seat in the back and went to sit down. He knew that Fudge would be there any moment now and he had no wish to play with the man. Looking around, and seeing that they were still alone in the Top Box, he pulled his wand out and cast a few spells around his little corner. Hopefully, it would be enough to keep people away and the noise out. Only someone really determined to speak with him would be able to pass the charms, and he was hoping that they would all be focused on the game.

Pulling a book from his pocket, he settled in to read. He had two more books in his pockets, just in case the game would go on for longer than an hour. Sighing, he leaned back on his comfortable chair, a little bit of peace and quiet was just what he needed.

"Are you sure you're not a Ravenclaw?" a somewhat familiar voice asked.
Tomas Nacht was sitting beside him, looking at him with curious eyes. Looking around, he noticed that the game had already started. He had been so distracted by the book, that he hadn't even noticed Nacht pass through the charms.

"I like reading. In any case, I never really liked Quidditch. Shouldn't you be watching the game? From their reactions it seems to be quite exciting."

"I guess I should, though I found something more interesting to do."

"Oh? And what would that be?"

"Talking to you."

"You flatter me." Harry replied, just a small touch of sarcasm in his voice.

"I'm being honest. It's rare for me to find someone to have an intelligent conversation with, aside from that it seems like we have a lot in common."

That was true. Harry had to admit that he rather liked talking with him. Nacht was extremely intelligent and he didn't treat him like a child. He heard what he had to say, and contributed with his own thoughts and ideas. He didn't outright dismiss any new theory Harry may come up with, and discussed them with him. Nacht was interesting, and he doubted that he would tire of his company.

"Hmm. I was wondering, considering that I already answered your questions, will you answer mine?"

Tom chuckled, "If that is your wish."

"You are one of Lucius' business partners, I wonder if that business involves white masks, black robes, and a pretty little mark on your left forearm."

Tom actually laughed. He looked at Harry with amusement shining in his eyes, seeing a small smile on Harry's lips. He had to admit that he hadn't been expecting that question. Technically, Harry was right, that was the kind of business he had with Lucius, just not the way that Harry was thinking about.

"And if it was?" a challenging spark in his eyes.

"Honestly, I couldn't care less. I was only curious. As long as you don't plan on killing me, I have no problem with it." Harry replied, leaning back on his chair and going back to his book.

Tom studied his expression and could detect nothing but truth there. Harry really didn't care.

"And if I was?" he asked, wanting to know what Harry would do. Seeing Harry looking at him curiously, he elaborated, "Planning to kill you."

Harry closed his book and put it back in his pocket. He looked at him for a few moments, then a smile appeared on his lips.

He stood up and took a few steps to stand in front of Tom. Then, before Tom could react, Harry straddled his lap. Tom froze. His eyes opened a little wider and he momentarily lost the ability to think. Harry shifted a bit closer to him, and Tom's hands automatically went to his hips. Harry leaned in closer and Tom felt his breath on his ear, only his ironclad control stopped him from shuddering, but even so he couldn't prevent the tightening of his hand on Harry's hips.
"Do you plan on seducing me to stop me from killing you, if I were planning it?" Tom asked, quite proud of himself for being able to talk without sounding as excited as he was, "You are exceedingly beautiful, if a little young..." he added. Honestly, he didn't care how fucking young Harry was, Harry was on his lap. His beautiful little King was on his lap. Really, it was quite clear to him that Harry's place was right where he was; now he just needed to convince Harry to stay there.

Harry chuckled darkly, making it rather difficult for him to concentrate. Then he felt something cold and sharp against his throat. Where had that come from?

"Tell me, Tom," Harry whispered against his ear, and this time Tom wasn't able to stop the shudder that went down his spine. The way his name sounded on those lips was quite sinful, "Would you be able to pull out your wand before I slit your throat?"

Tom couldn't help it, he really couldn't. He laughed. Harry was looking at him with a smile on his lips, his eyes shining, and he knew. He knew with absolute certainty that Harry was perfect for him.

Harry left his lap and he saw a small dagger in his right hand. It vanished as if it were no more than smoke, but Tom recognized the Black crest engraved on the blade. Harry sat back down beside him and pulled his book out, but before he went back to reading, he threw him a devilish smirk and Tom chuckled again.

He hadn't laughed so much in years. He hadn't felt this excited in decades. Harry was making him feel alive. He didn't understand how the boy did it. He didn't know what all of it meant. The only thing he knew was that it didn't matter. Harry made him feel like himself again. And he would do everything in his power to have Harry at his side.

Really, nobody would blame him for wanting it. First, he had gotten a glimpse of his brilliant mind, then of his tantalizing magic, and now of that voice saying his name like it was a sin and that body practically glued to his. How could anyone expect him to resist that? To fight against having that?

He glanced at Harry and a dark chuckle left his lips, his eyes burning with promises when Harry looked at him. Harry had no idea just what kind of monster he had awoken.
Chapter 14 – Charon

Harry was lazing about in his bed. He was back home, and he wanted to take advantage of the last days of his vacation to laze about. No matter how much he liked to study, he loved these moments where he could just do nothing at all. Moments like these were rare at the orphanage when he was younger, so he treasured them.

Unfortunately, his little moment of peace couldn't last forever. An insistent tapping at the window made him get up. Grumbling about needy and overprotective Court members, he opened the window. However, instead of an owl from a member of his Court, a crow flew in, landing on his desk.

Harry looked at the animal for several seconds, until the bird cawed, waking him from his contemplative state.

"Hey there, beautiful," Harry murmured, walking towards the bird, not taking his eyes off it. It was truly a beautiful bird, its feathers were midnight black, though Harry could make out a few deep blue, almost black, feathers intermixed with the rest. Its eyes were blood red and Harry knew that the crow couldn't be an ordinary bird. It had to be magical, "What do you got there?" he asked, and the bird lifted its leg, showing him a letter tied to it.

Harry removed it, stroking the bird's breast feathers. When the animal was freed from the missive, it took flight and landed on Harry's shoulder. Looking at the bird curiously, Harry opened the letter.

'My dear little King,

I confess that these last few days I have been thinking about you more than I thought possible. My curiosity and interest have been awakened and I don't think that they will be sated anytime soon.

Your theories, your ideas, your beliefs intrigue me. I find all of it fascinating. More than once, when I am surrounded by these sycophants, I find myself wishing to still be in that tent talking with you.

It is an incredibly frustrating situation for someone like me.

However, one way or another, I always get what I want. Since your physical presence is not something that I can have, at least at the moment, then I will have to content myself with this form of communication.

Tell me Harry, how did you convince pureblood supremacists to accept muggleborns? What do you
think about muggles? What plans do you have for the future? These are only a few of the questions that I wish to ask you.

I believe it best to warn you that I will not be satisfied until I have an answer to all of my questions, no matter how long it takes to get them.

On a completely unrelated note, the crow that delivered this letter is for you. I thought about getting you an owl, however, I think that for someone as unique as yourself, something as mundane as an owl would just not do. Consider it a belated birthday gift.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,

Tomas Nacht

Distractedly, Harry petted the crow again.

Tomas Nacht. Harry would be lying if he said that his heart hadn't started beating faster when he saw whom the letter was from. He found the man fascinating. He was intelligent, charming, and his magic! Even when it was under the man's complete control, it was possible to feel how tantalizing it was. He was sure that if the man was a Death Eater, he was an Inner Circle Death Eater. He doubted that Voldemort would let a man like Tomas Nacht be anything other than an Inner Circle member. Such magic and intellect would be wasted anywhere else.

That was another thing that fascinated him. He would be the first to admit that he had a slight obsession with Voldemort. Maybe Tomas Nacht would be the easiest way to get more information about the Dark Lord. He didn't know why he had this fascination with Voldemort, but he wouldn't lie to himself. He wanted to know everything about Voldemort. Everything.

The crow cawed again and Harry looked at it.

"It looks like you will be staying with me," Harry remarked, stroking his feathers, "You need a name. What do you think about Charon?" the bird nibbled on his ear gently and Harry took that as a positive reply, "Charon it is. I'll get you something to eat, and after you rest a bit, I'll have a delivery for you, alright?"

Charon cawed and flapped his wings. Smiling Harry went towards the kitchen. Since he had left his bed, he might as well get himself something to eat too.

"Harry, there's a crow on your shoulder." Sirius told him as soon as he entered the kitchen.

"I am aware of that." Harry answered in a monotone.

"I think what Sirius meant was: why is there a crow on your shoulder and where did it come from?" Harry contained a smile. Remus was the only one that always knew what Sirius meant.

At first he'd thought that Sirius and Remus were together, but after two weeks of seeing them behaving as nothing more than brothers, Harry assumed that he'd been wrong. However, occasionally, they treated each other with such tenderness and intimacy that Harry would swear that the two were lovers. Though, since neither Sirius nor Remus confirmed or denied it, Harry decided to ignore the issue. Truthfully, whatever the relationship between the two was, wasn't something that affected him, nor was it his concern. Sooner or later he would find out, but it wasn't something that was in the forefront of his mind.
"Do you remember Tomas Nacht?" he asked, taking a few strips of beacon from the cooling cupboard and giving them to Charon. When he saw both men nodding, he continued, "It’s a belated birthday gift from him. His name is Charon. He's beautiful, isn't he?" Harry asked, stroking the bird's feathers again.

He didn't notice Sirius and Remus trading a look, and when he was done with eating he went back to his room. He had a letter to write.

Tom contained a sigh. The last thing he wanted to do was to hear another meaningless report from another meaningless follower. Being a Dark Lord involved far more paperwork than he’d thought, and he couldn’t even torture some poor soul to release his stress. It... it was torture, that's what it was. He couldn't even raid some muggle town. Why had he decided to lay low? He could be out there spreading fear and panic but no, he had decided that it would be best if no one knew he was back. He stopped himself from grumbling, it wouldn't do to do such a thing in front of his followers.

The cawing of a crow caught his attention, and everyone present fell silent when they saw their Lord's eyes fill with interest.

The crow landed on the arm of his throne and held up it's leg, where a letter was tied. Ignoring the curious looks from his followers, he removed the letter and opened it.

'Dear Mr. Nacht,

First of all, I would like to thank you for the generous gift. Charon, the crow's name, is beautiful and I admit that I am rather fond of him, even though he hasn't been with me long.

To be completely honest, I do not understand the interest you seem to have in me. After all, no matter how intelligent I am, I am still just a fourteen year old teenager. I doubt that someone like you couldn't find someone more interesting to talk to.

That does not mean, however, that I don't appreciate the company, quite the contrary, actually. I enjoy speaking freely with someone who isn't a part of my Court. It becomes quite tiresome to always wear a mask, moments where I do not need to have one have become a blessing.

About your questions, I fear the answers are nothing out of the ordinary. I believe they will be a tad disappointing.

I didn't do anything to convince anyone of anything. I know that my Court has members that come from families that value blood above everything else. I suppose that after they observed certain things and after talking with me they changed their opinions. Aside from talking with them, I did nothing. I behaved the same way I always do.

Besides, the problem that most of them had with first generation witches and wizards was not their blood, it was their ignorance concerning our traditions. After I explained to them why they were ignorant of the traditions, their opinions changed. Honestly, I am rather proud of my Court. Not everyone is able to put aside the ideologies they grew up with. Now, the only thing that matters to them is magic. Nothing more. Well... and me of course.

Muggles... Muggles. I hate muggles. I would love nothing more than to see each and every one of them dead. Preferably by my hand. But, realistically, I know that it would be practically impossible to kill every muggle in the world. So I would be happy if we could just stop all interaction with them.

About my future... There isn't much to tell. The truth is that there are no grand plans. However, if you ask my Court, they will tell you, with every bit of conviction that they have, that I am the next
Dark Lord. I am tired of telling them that I have no intention of becoming a Dark Lord. Honestly, I don't even know what it means, being a Dark Lord. There are hundreds, thousands of Dark wizards out there, why are there only a handful of Dark Lords? Why do they only pop up occasionally?

How does a person even decide to become a Dark Lord? Do they wake up one day and think: 'Well, I'm a Dark Lord.' and wham, we have a Dark Lord ready to terrorize the masses?

I am sorry, I went a bit on a tangent there. As I was saying, I do not have any plans. There are a lot of things that do not please me in the Ministry, just as there are many things that do not please me at Hogwarts and in the Wizarding World in general. However, at the moment I don't have the means to do anything about it. So there really isn't much that I can do. When I have more means at my disposal, I'll see what can be done about it.

What about you? Who is Tomas Nacht? What do you believe in? Where do you work? What are your ambitions, dreams?

Yours,

Harry Potter

Tom looked at the letter in his hand for several moments. A small part of him was surprised that Harry had answered his questions. He had expected Harry to be rather vague. Not that the answers were all that direct, but they at least gave him an idea of what Harry was thinking.

The crow cawed and a small dark chuckle passed his lips. Charon. The name was quite appropriate. He couldn't help but wonder how many souls Harry would make Charon ferry over the river.

Harry's view about muggles didn't really surprise him, but the little bit about Dark Lords was unexpected. He knew that Harry had the potential to become a Dark Lord, but there was a reason why not every Dark wizard was able to become a Dark Lord. He wondered if Harry would be able to figure out what that reason was. He found out after his fifth year. However, he didn't have Harry's resources. One year. He would give Harry one year, if in one year he still hadn't found the answer, then he would point him in the right direction.

The questions about Tomas Nacht were also unexpected. He realized they shouldn't be, Harry had such a thirst for knowledge. He couldn't help but feel a certain smugness, knowing that Harry was curious about him. He couldn't tell Harry the whole truth, but he wouldn't lie. He just had to omit things that would give him away as the Dark Lord.

However, it was one little word in the whole letter that tormented him, teased him. 'Yours', it was a tease. He knew that Harry wasn't his, at least not yet. And that little word, written without a care, it drove him to the edge of his sanity. 'Mine! Mine, mine, mine, mine, MINE!', it kept running through his mind. Harry was his, the sooner Harry accepted it, the sooner the world knew it, the better. If he didn't know any better, he would say that the little minx was doing it on purpose. Then he remembered that lithe body against his own, the warm breath washing over his ear, his name whispered as if it were a sin. He repressed a shudder, maybe the minx was doing it on purpose.

"My Lord?"

Looking up, he saw Lucius in front of him and he contained a sigh.

"Dismissed." he said. He got up from his throne and left the hall. He had more important things to do than listen to meaningless reports, writing a letter to his little King was one of them.
Lucius and Teodred were the only ones still in the throne room. Teodred had a small smile on his lips.

"Is something wrong?" Lucius asked, not able to contain his curiosity.

"It's good to see our Lord so full of life again." Teodred replied, "For a while, I had thought that this side of our Lord had ceased to exist."

Lucius just nodded. He remembered a time when his Lord was charming and full of life and passion, but in the last couple of years before his fall, Lucius had noticed the difference. It was as if everything he did was mechanical, he had lost that spark in his eyes. It was natural that Teodred would notice the difference even more.

Teodred Nott had been the first member of the Dark Lord's Court. It was strange how history tended to repeat itself. Theodore Nott had also been the first member of what appeared to be the new Dark Lord's Court.

"Theodore came to speak to me the other day." remarked Teodred, breaking him out of his thoughts.

"Is that so? What did he want?"

"Information." Lucius looked at him, lifting an eyebrow, urging him to continue, "He was asking questions about Tomas Nacht."

Lucius felt his heart race. There were only two people who knew who Tomas Nacht was; Teodred and himself.

"What kind of questions?" he asked, trying to slow down his heart rate.

"Every kind of question. From who he is, to who he's loyal to. Naturally, I gave him the information that our Lord told us to tell anyone who asked. However, do you know what I found truly interesting? When I asked him why he wanted to know, he replied: It's just to know in case we need to kill him."

Lucius paled slightly. Teodred stopped right in front of him and looked him in the eyes.

"Something changed since the World Cup," Teodred stated, "Theodore is different. A while back, I doubt Theodore would have been able to hurt anyone, much less kill them. Now, however... I have seen eyes like those Lucius, I have seen expressions like the one he had. What happened in that tent Lucius?"

"I... Are you sure you want to know? I haven't been able to look at Draco the same way since that day."

Teodred looked at Lucius and could see the truth in his eyes. For the first time in years, Lucius wasn't using any masks in front of him. It made him think of the times when Lucius would come to him for advice, when he couldn't talk with Abraxas. He doubted that anyone aside from him knew that Lucius had had a crush on James Potter. He used to think that it was a shame that James' parents never forced their son to have an arranged marriage, like most pureblood families. They believed that everyone had the right to fall in love and marry out of love, just as they had. Abraxas would have been over the moon to have his son tied to a family as old as the Potters were rumored to be. Alas, it was not meant to be. James Potter only ever knew Lucius as a Death Eater and Lucius had barely escaped with his life the one time they had meet each other in battle. He doubted that Lucius ever truly got over it, not only did James not even consider him as a possible spouse, but he also had no problem in killing him. It was not only a blow to his pride but also to his heart. After that, he finally
agreed to marry Narcissa, a good friend of his, a little less than a month after the marriage she was pregnant with Draco and Lucius was more than happy to be a parent. James went on and married Lily Evans, a prodigy in her own right. The both of them together on the battlefield were terrifying. It was really no wonder that their Lord had tried to get them over to his side more than once. They were beautiful, powerful, intelligent, cunning, everything a witch and a wizard should be. However, the greatest achievement they had was the child they'd made. He loved Lucius as much as he loved his own son, but he was glad he never did get James Potter. If they had gotten together, Harry Potter would never have been born. No matter how much grief Harry Potter had brought them with the defeat of their Lord, it would have been a travesty if a wizard like Harry Potter hadn't ever existed.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because now I am sure that Draco would kill me if Harry asked it of him."

Teodred wasn't able to hide his shock.

"Why do you say that. You're his father."

The chuckle that escaped Lucius lips was undeniably bitter.

"Look." Lucius told him, meeting his eyes again.

Knowing what Lucius wanted, Teodred slipped into his mind. The memory was in his surface thoughts, so there was no need for him to search for it. It didn't take long for him to see the whole memory. After he'd seen it, he slipped back out. He didn't want to believe what he had seen. But he couldn't help but think that Lucius was right. All of them seemed more than willing to kill for Potter. Honestly, he didn't know what to think. He was extremely proud of Theodore, however, a part of him wanted to rip Theodore from Potter's side. Wanted to protect him from the path he had chosen. He knew how much heartbreak that path could give him. He knew that Potter would never have the same dedication to them, as they had for him, no matter how fond of them he may be. Such was the relationship between a Lord and his followers.

It was the same with his Lord. They had loved him with everything they were, even though they knew that Tom couldn't love them in return. For a long time, they had thought that their Lord couldn't feel more than a passing interest for another human being.

"I have never seen our Lord show so much interest in anyone." he remarked, crushing the stab of jealousy that appeared. He had no right to be jealous. He could see why Potter fascinated his Lord. Potter was something else, there was no doubt about it. If he wasn't as loyal as he was, he would have felt tempted too.

"Yes. Unfortunately, I can't seem to decide if that's good or bad." Lucius whispered, and Teodred nodded.

He knew that whether Potter joined his Lord or not, things were going to change, and Potter was going to be in the middle of it.

"Either way, it isn't our decision. The best thing we can do is not get involved in the confrontation between both Lords."

"Harry isn't a Lord."

Teodred couldn't contain the laugh that escaped his lips.
"You were there Lucius. You know the necessary requirements for the rise of a Dark Lord. From what you saw, you know he has most of them already. Do you really think he won't achieve the others?"

Lucius wanted to argue, he wanted to tell Teodred that Harry was far too young, but that memory of them all together in the tent kept jumping to the forefront of his mind. If Harry wanted it, he would be able to do it. Now the question was, did Harry want it?

Teodred looked at him, his eyes full of understanding and with a small smile he used the floo to get back home, leaving Lucius alone with his thoughts.

Taking a deep breath, Lucius left the Dark Lord's manor. Teodred was right, no matter what happened, none of them could do anything about it. Only the future would tell if another Dark Lord would rise.

Harry was in the library, one of his favorite places in Grimmauld Place, when Charon flew through the open window. A small smile appeared on his lips when he saw that Charon had a letter with him. In the last week, he had corresponded with Tom almost every day. He hadn't expected to like it so much. Tom was able to keep him interested and challenged him.

Petting Charon, he opened the letter.

'My little King,

I hope that you have solved the situation with your godfather. The wards that I told you about should stop him from waking you at ungodly hours.

And no, I'm not a pureblood. My mother was, but my father was a muggle. My mother was madly in love with him but my father hardly noticed she existed.

Unfortunately, it isn't a romantic story where he suddenly realizes that she was the one that he had always wanted. No matter how weak my mother was, she was still a witch. A simple potion was enough to get my father to 'fall in love' with her.

They were together for a while, but after my mother got pregnant she stopped giving him the potion. I don't know why she did it. Maybe she thought that he would stay because she was pregnant, maybe she believed that he had fallen in love with her, or maybe she didn't want to live that lie anymore. Whatever the reason was, she stopped giving him the potion, and he left her.

He didn't care that she was pregnant, nor did he care that she had nowhere else to go, he just left.

My mother came from a pureblood family, as you can imagine, after she ran away with my father, she couldn't go back. She was pregnant, alone, with nowhere to live, and had no money to support herself. She ended up getting sick and she didn't have the means to get treated. She gave birth to me in an orphanage. She lived long enough to name me.

I grew up in the orphanage, alone and hated for being different. When I went to Hogwarts I thought that things would be different, it didn't take long for me to realize I was wrong.

I was a half-blood in Slytherin, worse even than that was that everyone thought I was a muggleborn. My first and second year weren't easy.

However, things changed, and in my third year no one could deny that I was powerful. And you know that if there is one thing that Slytherins respect, it's power.
But, even so, I wasn't satisfied. I wanted to know who I was, I wanted to know where I came from, my origins.

In my fourth year, I brewed a potion that creates your family tree. It only showed three generations, but it was more than enough for what I wanted.

Honestly, when I found out the truth about my family, I don't know who I hated more, my mother or my father.

I stopped hating my mother in the summer before my seventh year. It was after I had spoken to my uncle, my mother's brother. She went back to them. She asked for their help. They agreed to take her back, to help her, but only if she aborted me.

She refused. She said that she would rather die than see something happen to me. If she had done it, maybe she would still be alive. It was the first time that I ever felt loved.

Occasionally, I wonder if she would be proud of me if she knew the path I have chosen.

My father, on the other hand, is a completely different story. He was still alive. He lived with my grandparents. He abandoned me. His parents told him that he would be disinherited if he took me in. He wanted the money more than he wanted his own son, more than he wanted me. He has been dead for years, but I hate him as much now as I did the day that I learned the truth.

I suppose that my father, and the fact that I grew up in that orphanage, led to my hate for muggles in general. Though, I admit that there was a time that I hated purebloods just as much. Their pureblood beliefs had contributed to my mother's death, to me growing up in that orphanage, hated for not being like them. For a while, I was not able to see past that.

You may find it hypocritical that I got over my hate for the purebloods, but not for the muggles, however I am human. Humans have a tendency to hate what they do not understand or what is different from them. Above all they hate what they fear.

Don't get me wrong, I do not fear muggles. I fear what they would do if they ever found out about us. You know how cruel they can be. You know how racist and prejudiced they are. I have nightmares just thinking about what they would do to us if they ever found out that we exist.

Sometimes, I think that a confrontation between us is inevitable.

I fear that if it did happen, it would end in our extinction.

That is something that I will do everything in my power to prevent.

It's strange but I feel like you are one of the few people that understands this fear I have. You grew up with them, you know what they can do. The purebloods don't see them as any kind of threat. I don't know how to convince them without starting a war with the muggles, a war that we have no chance of winning.

Any idea how I can make the purebloods see the truth? At this point in time I am open to any suggestion.

Why so much interest in the Dark Lord? You always have at least one question about him in every letter.

Am I not interesting enough for you, my little King?
Yours,

Tom'

Harry re-read the letter twice. When he had asked if he was a pureblood he hadn't expected Nacht to give him such a complex answer. For some reason, the fact that he had done so made him rather happy. He never thought that he would enjoy talking with Nacht as much as he did. A part of him lamented the fact that they couldn't speak face to face.

It was also good to know that he wasn't the only one who saw the problem the muggles represented. They had to cut all ties with the muggles. They couldn't risk being discovered by them, they would never survive if something like that happened. It was impossible to kill them all, but they had to find a way to break ties with them.

He had wondered when Nacht would question his interest in Voldemort. He hadn't been all that subtle in his inquiries. At least Nacht didn't seem angry about the questions. Quite the contrary in fact, he seemed rather amused. Harry could almost see the smirk on his face when he was reading the letters. He was dying to ask him what he found so amusing, but he never did. He had the strange feeling that it would be better if he didn't ask, and that he would know sooner or later.

"Harry." Sirius' voice brought him out of his thoughts and he looked up, seeing Remus and Sirius walking in to the library.

They both looked at Charon, at the letter in his hands and sat down in the free arm-chairs in front of him.

"New letter from Nacht?" Sirius asked, trying to sound nonchalant and Harry lifted an eyebrow.

"Yes." he replied in a monotone, and both men traded a look.

"Harry," Remus started saying, before stopping and sighing. He seemed to be choosing his words carefully, a new sigh followed and he continued, "We are a little worried. We know that you get along well with the Malfoys. But that doesn't change the fact that Lucius was a Death Eater. And Voldemort had Death Eaters that the Light side knew nothing about. This Tomas Nacht could be one of them. Many of them want revenge."

"I know. But him being a Death Eater or not doesn't concern me."

"Harry, we know you are powerful. But Death Eaters are dangerous."

"I know Sirius. That's the point. Imagine everything I can learn from him."

"Harry..." Sirius tried to sound calm, but Harry could hear a dark edge in his voice. He rather liked it. Sirius was a Black he should behave like it, "It is very likely that everything that he may teach you is Dark."

Harry contained a sigh. No matter how much he wanted to, he couldn't avoid the conversation any longer. He knew that Sirius and Remus suspected it, but they had never talked about it. It would change things, one way or another.

"Neither you nor Remus are idiots," he remarked, "I know that you know, or at least suspect, that I do not care if it's Light or Dark."

Remus and Sirius seemed to age in front of his eyes.
“You're going to be hunted by both sides; by one, because you're the Boy-Who-Lived, and by the other, because you're Dark.” Remus whispered, and Harry could see the worry in his eyes.

"Remus, I am anything but stupid. I know how the Light is going to react, why do you think I use all those masks? They will not know the truth until I want them to, they may suspect but they will not know, and I will only want it when I have a stronger power base. That will still take a few years. The Dark... well when Voldemort comes back we will see. It depends on if Voldemort tries to kill me again or not, doesn't it? At this moment in time, there is nothing to do. As long as not all the players are out in the open, I have time. In the meanwhile, I'll expand my base and continue training." he looked at them shrewdly and a little smirk danced at the corner of his lips, "However, what I need to know is if I can count on you. Are you with me?"

Sirius wasn't able to look away from Harry. The answer was obvious. But even so, he didn't answer immediately. He knew the consequences of his answer. At the moment, they could still turn to Dumbledore, they could still change their minds, but once they answered there would be no turning back. A person didn't leave the service of a Dark Lord and survive, no matter if said Dark Lord hadn't taken on his role yet. Not that he intended to betray Harry, but it was something that would define the rest of his life, one way or another.

"I... You know I'm with you." he replied, not taking his eyes of Harry. He didn't miss the satisfaction that briefly shined in those killing curse green eyes, nor the little smirk on his lips.

He begged James and Lily for forgiveness for helping their pride and joy, their light, their child, in becoming a Dark Lord.

"I'm with you too, Harry. You're my cub." Remus answered, and Sirius saw his eyes turn amber for a few seconds, showing that his wolf agreed with Remus.

Harry's smile told them that he had seen it too.

Sirius didn't know what Harry planned on doing now, but he was certain that behind those innocent looking eyes, thousands of plans were forming. After all, he now had a Lord of an Ancient and Noble House and an Alpha Werewolf as his followers.

Harry was the first to arrive at their compartment. He hadn't seen the others out on the platform, but he assumed that they wouldn't take much longer. Aside from the twins, they usually arrived rather early.

Thought he had liked his summer, he was rather happy to be going back to Hogwarts. He missed the castle, he supposed that, no matter what, the castle would always be his first home.

After a few minutes, just like he'd thought, his Court started to appear. The twins entering the compartment just as the whistle went off, announcing that the train would be leaving.

The compartment was almost full and Harry contained a smile. He could hardly believe how things had changed, the first time he had taken the train to Hogwarts he had been seated in the same compartment, alone and wondering what his life in the Wizarding World would be like. And now... Now, he was surrounded by people that were loyal to him, people that were doing everything they could so that he could achieve his dreams. Though, he guessed that they were now their dreams too. He could hardly believe everything they had accomplished.

"Demons, did everything turn out alright?" he asked the twins when they had all seated themselves.

"Yes." they replied in unison.
"Our mother didn't look at the clock so she didn't see Percy's hand move to mortal danger then to
dead. We let a chicken in the house that accidentally ran in to the clock. It fell and broke." Fred
explained.

"It can be fixed," George added, "But it needs to have a hair from each person that they want a hand
for. It has to be given by the person in question and must be from their head, she can't just use a hair
that's in a comb or a brush."

"She already asked for all of ours, but not from Percy. Our mother insists on not contacting him, poor
Percy needs his space, she says." Fred concluded with a sneer.

Harry nodded, it had gone rather well. For a little while, he had been a bit worried when the twins
had told him about the clock. Not that anyone would have ever suspected them, but it was better if
no one suspected anything at all. They couldn't risk it. Not yet, at least.

"What would you have done if she had seen it?" Theo asked, looking at the twins curiously. He had
found the clock fascinating. From what Harry had found out, he, Graham, and Marcus were trying to
replicate it as a pocket watch so they could use it with the members of the Court. Harry left them to
it. It was a rather good idea and it kept them busy. Really, he had learned that the worst thing that he
could do is let his Court members get bored. The unfortunate Slytherins that were in the common
room at the time were never the same again. One of them still twitched when Blaise greeted him, and
another one lost all the blood in his face every time he went into the greenhouses; Neville could be
rather creative with his plants when he wanted to. Though, he admitted, even if only to himself, that
it had been a rather fun afternoon, at least for him and his Court.

"We would have started to think about ways to kill our whole family; from what we understand of
the clock, it would show the family in mortal danger. Though it couldn't be just thinking about it, we
would have to really mean it. Which isn't that difficult. Then we would convince our parents that the
clock was broken, it would be rather believable. They were home, what kind of mortal danger could
there be?" Fred explained calmly and Theo nodded.

"That would have worked too." muttered Theo.

"Of course it would have worked," exclaimed George, faking offense, "Fred and I are evil
masterminds. You should already know that."

The others laughed and Harry leaned back on his seat, observing his Court interacting. He was really
pleased with them. They were loyal to each other, not only to him. They wouldn't sell each other out.
From what he had gathered the Death Eaters and the Reapers, Grindelwald's followers, were far
more ruthless. There were accounts of them killing each other off just to further their own place
between the ranks. That sort of in-fighting was something that Harry wanted to avoid at all costs. He
wanted them to depend on each other. He wanted them to feel connected to each other. In the end he
was sure that it would make a difference. They would either stand united or fall divided.

Harry blinked. Where had those thoughts come from? Since when had he started to compare his
Court to followers of Dark Lords? Since when had he subconsciously started to prepare them for the
wars that were coming?

Their talks about him being a Dark Lord were getting to him. However, something in him rebelled at
that thought. His magic thrummed underneath his skin, displeased. It had been happening lately. It
was as if his whole being, his magic, was waiting for something. It was frustrating, a final piece of a
puzzle that he couldn't seem to find. But his magic knew what it was and was just waiting for him to
grasp it. He took a deep breath and his magic settled back down, taking with it any thoughts about
Dark Lords and followers and Harry went back to observing his Court, enjoying the moment of
peace.

However, the moment of levity between them was broken by the door of their compartment bursting open and someone stepping inside then quickly slamming the door shut.

All movement in the compartment stopped, and the Court looked at the intruder curiously. The intruder, that Harry vaguely recognized, had his eyes wide open and was gaping. Something that looked like terror started to appear in his eyes when he saw just who was in the compartment.

"I... I... Sorry! I didn't know that it was your compartment." the boy stuttered.

He seemed to be on the brink of a panic attack and Harry sighed. Were they really that scary? As far as he knew, the rest of the school had never seen them without their perfect student masks on. They had no idea just how they controlled the Slytherins. They had never even been seen cursing someone. So where did that fear come from?

"You seem like you are running from something." Blaise remarked, looking at the boy curiously.

Blaise was rather blunt for a Slytherin when he wanted to be. At least that was what anyone not in the Court would think. They knew better. Blaise was a master strategist. He never did anything without having thought at least five steps ahead. It had taken a while for him to improve that side of himself. Preferring to be in the shadows, not noticed until he wanted to be noticed, he hadn't tried to improve his strategic abilities. However, Harry, with Theo's help, had convinced him that even if he liked the shadows, it didn't mean that he couldn't train his other talents. The thing that made him do it in the end was when Theo mentioned that it could be rather useful for Harry to have more than one master strategist. Theo, having a rather strategic mind as well, helped him along the way. The both of them were a rather fearsome duo when they partnered up in their training.

The boy started shaking, and Harry sighed again. It seemed like he would be taking in another stray.

"Sit." he ordered, pleased when he saw the boy obey immediately, "Now, answer the question."

The boy didn't stop shaking and Luna patted his knee.

"You don't have to be afraid." she reassured him, "You've found your place, now you just need to take that first step."

"Luna?" Harry inquired, and Luna nodded.

"I know that he is going to be part of the solution."

"Solution to what?"

"I don't know. But I do know that he is going to be a part of it."

Harry sighed. Sometimes, very rarely, he hated Luna's gift. She laughed and looked at him with knowing eyes, and he shook his head. They both knew he wouldn't have it any other way.

He looked at the boy again, who seemed to be calming down a bit, and lifted his eyebrow. Indicating that he was still expecting an answer.

"I... I'm a muggleborn." he whispered, looking at them cautiously, he looked ready to bolt at the first sign of trouble.

It was clear that he was expecting them to react negatively to the information, when he saw that they didn't, he relaxed a bit more.
"People say that all the blood purist are in Slytherin. They say Slytherins are evil. They completely ignore the fact that the other houses also have them. They're willfully blind to it."

Harry nodded. He knew that his Slytherins hadn't done anything in years. They behaved rather well, considering what it used to be like. They didn't really have a choice in the matter to be truthful, but that was beside the point. However, he didn't pay all that much attention to what the other houses did. As long as it didn't involve his Slytherins, he didn't really care, to be honest. He controlled his house, the professors should control the others.

"Who?" he asked.

"Smith mostly, Zacharias Smith."

Harry looked at Draco and lifted an eyebrow. Among them Draco was the one who knew the most about other purebloods. It had been drilled into him since he could talk. Stories about other families accomplishments, disguised as bed time stories. Family histories recited until he knew it by heart. It was as much a weapon as it was a safety measure. The Malfoys wanted to make sure that their children didn't anger the wrong house. Nowadays, at least amongst most of the population, it wasn't that much of a problem, however, only a few centuries back it was known for families to start blood feuds because of something a child had done. The Weasley and Malfoy feud for instance, though most people didn't know it, had been because two young children, one from each family, no more than six years old, and one had dared the other to 'steal' the head of house ring. What neither knew, was that the ring was protected and would harm someone who wasn't of the same blood as the family it belonged to, unless the person was added to the wards and charms around the ring. Unfortunately, the child had been far too young and weak to survive the level of damaged he had suffered. In their grief, the Weasleys accused the Malfoys of murdering their heir and declared a blood feud. The Malfoys accused the Weasleys of wanting to steal their title and declared blood feud as well. It was centuries ago and they still held onto the feud, though most didn't even remember why.

Fortunately, Draco knew about it and he told the twins. They may have been part of the Court, but because of the feud, things may have turned out differently if Draco hadn't known the truth about it. As the Heir to the Malfoy House, Draco could declare the feud null and void in some circumstances, such as belonging to the same house at Hogwarts, or the same club. It was allowed so that the children could be at Hogwarts without having to worry about being stabbed in their sleep. All because the head of their family could order them to do almost anything to another person they had a blood feud with and they couldn't refuse. The twins were the fourth and fifth sons, so they could do nothing. But Draco, as the Heir, had declared the feud annulled between them as long as all of them were Court members.

The feud between the two families still existed, just not between them.

To be completely honest, Harry found it all rather troublesome. It would have been much easier and caused a lot less trouble if they had simply killed each other off. Sure, he could see the usefulness of a blood feud, but he doubted that he would ever call one. Far too much trouble for something that could be easily solved.

"Zacharias Smith, pureblood. They say they are the last descendants of the Hufflepuff line, though they have no proof of it. Around fifty years ago the Head of the family, Hepzibah Smith, was murdered, supposedly by her personal house-elf. That was when the new Head started making waves, saying that they were the last descendants of Hufflepuff. Supposedly, only the Head was informed of that fact and was urged to keep it secret. The new Head was greedy and spread the news to anyone who would listen, getting an enormous ego boost. They started to believe they were more
important than they actually were. However, that quickly stopped when people started to demand to see proof. He searched for the supposed relics the family had to prove it, but didn't find them and it was assumed that whatever relics there might have been had been stolen. When he tried to show them the diary left behind by every head of House with the information, no one else was able to read it. They could read everything else in the diaries, just not that. So no one really knows if he was telling the truth or not. Some believe it's possible. Most don't really care. But the Smiths were never the same again. They had in their grasp a chance to be considered almost royalty amongst wizards, but it slipped through their fingers. Now, they're nothing more than a middle class family, old but with nothing to show for it. And if that wasn't enough, they're weak. The magic they have is only a little above average and they have no special talents to speak of.

They grew bitter, jealous, and hateful. They resent those that have lives they think they deserve. Above all, they hate first generations wizards and witches that are better than them.

Smith's best subject is Charms, he's in seventh place in our year in Charms. We have the first places, followed by Hopkins here in sixth place, then Smith in seventh and Granger in eighth. It must be the main reason why he bullies you so much. He does nothing against us because he knows there will be consequences if he tried."

Now he knew who the boy was. Wayne Hopkins, Hufflepuff, first generation wizard, Charms prodigy. The only reason why he wasn't in second place was because of all the extra training his Court members had. Otherwise, he would have the spot with no trouble. He had so much skill with Charms that he could rival Harry. Not in terms of magical power, no. But power wasn't everything. Power without skill was worthless and Hopkins had skill. That didn't mean he lacked in the power department either. He was somewhere between Draco and Neville on the power scale, Harry would guess. At least from what he had seen. He was fairly above average in every other subject aside from potions, but Harry was sure that was more the professor's fault than Hopkins'.

"If that's his problem then next year he won't have any more reasons to complain." Hopkins stated, more to himself than the others.

"What do you mean?" Adrian asked.

Hopkins gave a little startled jump. It looked like he had forgotten that the others were present.

"I... I won't be coming back next year." he whispered in a heartbroken voice, and Harry narrowed his eyes.

"Why?"

"My parents are muggles, very religious." Hopkins said, his eyes not meeting theirs. He didn't need to say anything else. Harry understood, he remembered the couple that had wanted to adopt him. They had even spoken about preforming an exorcism, before they just decided to give him back to the orphanage. However, Hopkins continued, his voice low and pained, "They hardly accepted the fact that I'm a wizard. They only let me come because they believe that I am here converting people to God's teachings." he sounded so bitter that even the twins winced. "They hardly speak with me, but as long as they believed that I was doing God's work they left me be, they didn't stop me from coming, even if they didn't like it."

"If that's the case then why do you say that you won't be coming back next year?" Neville asked, after several moments when Hopkins didn't continue.

Hopkins looked at Neville, he seemed quite surprised by his presence. It was quite clear that he wanted to ask the other boy why he was there. Harry couldn't believe that Hopkins hadn't noticed
him before, but he kinda understood. Hopkins seemed rather stressed and Harry was sure that it wasn't because he was in their compartment, though that may have added to it.

"I... I'm gay." replied Hopkins as if that explained everything, blushing slightly.

Harry nodded. He understood perfectly. Being gay was still somewhat taboo in the Muggle World, especially by the religious types. If Hopkins' parents had found out that their son, aside from being a wizard, was also gay... Harry really preferred not to think about the reaction they had. He supposed he should be thankful that at least they didn't appear to have had a violent reaction.

"So?" Graham asked, it was clear that he didn't understand what that may have to do with anything. Sometimes, Harry forgot that all his friends were purebloods.

"For many muggles, being gay is sort of taboo," Harry explained, surprising Hopkins, "Especially if they're religious. For them it's a sin. Sex for them is a means of procreation. Since two men and two women can't have a child..."

"But they can." Neville interrupted, "They can have children and if they aren't able, for whatever reason, there is always blood adoption."

"Muggles can't, Neville."

"But he's a wizard. That doesn't apply to him." argued Adrian, looking slightly perplexed, "If you explain it to them, they'll understand."

"I did explain." whispered Hopkins, "They told me it was the Devil's work. That it wasn't natural. That it went against nature and against God's laws. The only reason I'm here now is because they only found out this morning. They said they had to get things ready and contact some people, but that next year I would be a proper servant of the Lord again."

Harry narrowed his eyes. He thought he knew what Hopkins' parents would do. He had grown up in the muggle world and after hearing what the religious couple had thought about doing to him, he had tried to learn everything he could about exorcisms. He found far more than he'd expected, not only about exorcisms either. Those camps he had read about, to cure people that were gay, as if it was some sort of disease, disgusted him. He didn't even want to imagine what some people would do to cure them. He wasn't naive enough to believe that they were all sunshine and rainbows.

"Don't go back to them." Harry practically ordered. Luna had said that Hopkins would be part of some solution, he didn't know what solution, he didn't know for what the supposed solution was, but he knew that Luna wouldn't have mentioned anything if it wasn't important. Hopkins would be part of his Court, he wouldn't let him go back to those disgusting muggles, "You know what awaits you! No one should be subjected to that, much less a wizard!"

Fear and despair appeared in Hopkins' eyes. He seemed hopeless, lost. Harry hated that look in his eyes. No member of his Court should ever look like that, much less because of some muggles.

"I have nowhere else to go."

Harry wanted to curse. Hopkins was right, he was too young to be able to live alone and running away wouldn't solve anything, because he had no means to go back to Hogwarts, his parents were the ones paying for it after all.

"Are you certain you are a first generation wizard?" Theo asked, looking at Hopkins shrewdly. Harry lifted an eyebrow and Theo elaborated, "There is a family of purebloods named Hopkins. They don't have a title or anything and they aren't that old, just a little over a century and a half, but..."
they are purebloods. As far as I know, the only one alive now is the old Head of House, his wife and son died during the war. They weren't targeted or anything. They were out in muggle London actually, when a raid was taking place and got caught in the cross-fire. The old man is in St. Mungos in the permanent damage ward."

All of them looked expectantly at Hopkins.

"I... I think so. I'm sure than my mother's family are all muggles. They are fanatically religious. My father's family, I think they are too. The strangest amongst them was my great-grandfather. He died six years ago though."

"Strange, how?" Theo asked and Harry was sure they were both thinking the same thing.

"Well he... He was always telling us stories about ma..." Hopkins' eyes opened wide and the members of the Court smiled.

"He was a wizard?" he whispered.

"No." Draco answered, "A squib. The Hopkins never said what had happened to their younger son. When he didn't appear at Hogwarts everyone knew that he had to have been a squib and thought that the Hopkins had disowned him. Apparently, they didn't, otherwise you wouldn't be able to use their name. They must have just sent him to the Muggle World. If he talked about magic, it's possible that they still had contact with each other, before the family practically died out during the war."

"You have to go to Gringotts," Theo told him, and Harry could see plans forming in his mind, "You have to see if you have any right to any vault or vaults they may have. If you do then all our problems are solved."

"What? How?" Hopkins asked, still slightly stunned. It wasn't every day you learned that you weren't a muggleborn after all, at least technically.

"Even though you are still a first generation wizard, you are of wizard descent. If you have access to any vault, you just need a sponsor, it has to be a Lord from an Ancient and Noble House, and you can live alone in the Wizarding World." Graham explained, without going in to much detail.

Harry saw Hopkins' eyes widen and the hope and happiness in them was overwhelming, however in the blink of an eye it was gone.

"I still have nowhere to live and the money that I may or may not have, maybe it won't be enough to pay for Hogwarts. Besides I don't know any Lords and most are blood purists, they wouldn't want anything to do with me." Hopkins looked devastated and Harry contained a sigh. He really didn't like that look on a member of his Court.

"Don't worry, if you have a vault then there won't be any problems." Harry assured him, "My godfather, Sirius Black, is a Lord from an Ancient and Noble House, he will be your sponsor. Everything else is rather easily solved. You may have a right to the whole estate, or part of it, they aren't rich, but they do have more than one home in the whole estate, maybe you have the right to one. Even if you don't, you can spend the holidays with all of us, aside from Neville and the twins, and the reason why you can't spend it with them will be explained to you later. Aside from that, the sponsor's responsibility is to make sure that you are taken care of and are living well. If you don't have enough to pay for Hogwarts or somewhere to live, the sponsor will take care of it."

Hopkins was speechless and Harry could see the gratitude in his eyes, however, it was shadowed by confusion.
"I... I... Thank you, you have no idea how much that means to me. But... Why? Why would you help me?"

A small chuckle left Neville's lips, his eyes full of understanding.

"I asked myself that once, too. Why would they help me? I was nothing more than a pathetic Gryffindor and they were, well they were them, you know? Even amongst the Gryffindors, everyone knew they were untouchable. We didn't really know why, just that they were. The answer they gave me surprised me and to be honest at the time I didn't really understand what they meant. They told me I was one of them, that I was part of the Court. It's an honor to be a part of it.

In the Court, you are free to be who you are, no masks are needed amongst the Court. As long as you are part of the Court, they accept you unconditionally. They are your family. They'll always be by your side, the rest of your life you will never be alone again. No matter what you do, they accept you, they never make you feel worthless, or anything like it. It's an incredible feeling."

Harry could see the longing in Hopkins' eyes. For someone who was shunned by their own parents for being who he was, the kind of thing that Neville was talking about sounded like paradise. Neville knew how he felt, he'd felt the same once and he was playing on it. Making sure that Hopkins would become tangled in the web that was the Court. Nobody would have guessed, but Neville was a rather good manipulator, he knew just what buttons to push to get what he wanted.

"We are Harry's Court," Blaise explained, his voice smooth, "He accepted you into the Court the moment you barged in, looking as if you were running from a demon, and didn't throw you out. We're not a charity group, if Harry accepted you in the Court, it's because he saw something in you that he found worthy. You're a part of us now, a part of the Court. We will always support you."

"Tomorrow, we'll explain everything to you, do not worry." Luna's dreamy voice filled the compartment when Hopkins looked a little overwhelmed, "For the moment, enjoy what you have always dreamed of and thought you would never have. I know that soon the Court will be to you what it already is to all of us."

Hearing Luna's conviction, relaxed Harry completely. He leaned back in his seat, took a book out of his pocket and started reading. He had already thought about adding Hopkins to his Court, talent like the one he has wasn't something that appeared every day. However, he hadn't decided how to approach him, or when. Hopkins barging into their compartment was a stroke of good luck. Still, he was rather pleased with Luna's proclamation, it was only a matter of time until Hopkins was his just as much as the others were.
Chapter 15 – The Triwizard Tournament

"Where were you?" Cedric asked as soon as he sat down at the Hufflepuff table.

"On the train." he replied, discretely looking at the Slytherin table. He didn't know how he hadn't noticed it before, however now it was impossible to miss the looks the other Slytherins had when they looked at the group that was sitting in the center of the table, slightly separated from the rest.

"I searched the whole train and couldn't find you."

"Apparently you didn't, since I was on the train and you didn't find me." Wayne replied, finally taking his eyes of the Slytherin table and looking at him. Cedric was one of the few friends he had. An older brother that always did his best to protect him. The only reason why Smith even tried anything on the train was because Cedric had been busy with his duties as prefect. He had been the one who helped him when he realized he was gay, he had told him how the wizarding world viewed same sex couples and he had been the one who made sure he knew that he wasn't a freak. For a while he had thought that he had been confused, he had been only thirteen, he had just had his very first wet dream, he had freaked out when that wet dream had another boy as the star in it. Cedric had found him in a corner of their common room almost having a panic attack. He had never seen the older boy so flustered, thinking back it was rather amusing. Still at the time he had been sure that there must have been something wrong with him. He was incredible grateful for what Cedric had done.

"The only place I didn't search was the Sly-... You were in a Slytherin compartment?" Cedric asked, keeping his voice low so that no one else heard, "What were you doing there? They didn't hurt you did they?"

"They didn't do anything. They helped me with Smith." with Smith and much more. He could hardly believe how much his life changed in a matter of hours. The court had bettered his life without even trying to. He didn't think he would ever be able to repay them, but that didn't mean that he wouldn't try.

And Harry! It was no wonder that the others respected him so much. He knew, just as everyone else knew, that Harry was a prodigy. However knowing and seeing were two completely different things.

"The Slytherins helped you?" Cedric asked incredulously and Wayne sighed.

"Not all Slytherins are bad Cedric. I've been here for four years and they never did anything. I've been having more trouble from my own house than from Slytherin. Don't you think you are being a little unfair and prejudiced?" he couldn't help but defend the court. Most of the members were
Slytherins and they hadn't even remarked upon the fact that he was muggle-born. He didn't know the dynamic of the group but it was obvious that Harry was the leader and he was a half-blood.

"You're right. They haven't done anything these last few years." Cedric agreed, "Since Potter formed that little group and started sitting in that place. The Slytherins have been behaving." Wayne looked at him surprised and Cedric shook his head, "I'm not stupid. I may not be a Slytherin but I can see when someone is making a stand. I don't know how but it is obvious that he controls the Slytherins. I would just like to know why."

"What do you mean?"

"Potter is establishing his base. People only do that when they intend to do something. His friends, they are all amongst the best of their years and I've seen the way they look at Potter. They practically worship him and I doubt that it's because he is the Boy-Who-Lived."

"And that's bad?"

"I never said it was bad. I just think that Potter has goals and is preparing himself and those he trusts for it."

Wayne nodded and looked at Harry surreptitiously. He was certain that Cedric was right and he was a part of it now. He didn't know what it was but he knew that he couldn't back down. Not that he wanted to. The moment he walked into that compartment and meet the court his fate had been sealed. Harry's eyes caught his for a moment and a small smile appeared on Harry's lips. Harry motioned for him to look down and he couldn't help the small gasp that left him when he saw a bit of parchment appearing in front of him.

'The twins, or one of them, will be waiting for you in the entrance Hall after the feast. Get rid of your friends and follow them. Don't take too long, the court has the habit of being there before the first years so that we can be properly introduced. I'll tell the prefects responsible for leading them to the common room to take a longer way but that won't give us all that much time.'

It wasn't signed. It didn't need to be, he didn't have to be a genius to know from whom it was.

He had no idea what would happen, but he knew it was important. He would be lying if he said that he wasn't nervous. Luna had only vaguely explained what the court was and Neville had told him that there was nothing to worry about. That he would learn as time went by. Neville, that had been a big surprise, as were the Weasley twins. He had never seen them together, but seeing them interacting was enough to know that they were used to each other, that they were close friends. Adrian said they were spies and he was inclined to believe that he wasn't quite joking when he said it.

"Is everything alright?" Cedric asked, looking slightly worried.

"Yeah. Why?"

"You seemed distracted."

"Oh, yeah. Sorry." he smiled sheepishly, "I remembered that I forgot to do part of my charms work. I was trying to remember exactly how much was left to do to see if I would be able to do it today before I went to bed."

"Do you need help?"
"Nah. From what I remember it's rather easy, that's why I left it for last, though I ended up forgetting about it." he was a bit surprised at how easy it was to lie about it.

"Alright. But if you need help you just have to ask."

Wayne smiled and nodded. He pretended to pay attention to the rest of the sorting and waited anxiously for the end of the feast. He distractedly took part in the conversations around him but his mind was on what would happen after the feast. He had no idea how the Slytherins would react to having a muggle-born in their common room but he was sure that being with the court would keep him safe. Blaise told him how the court came to be, how Harry had established it, so he knew that the Slytherins wouldn't act against Harry. That conversation also made him realize that the court was a lifelong compromise. They hadn't said it, but he could read between the lines. He vaguely remembered Marcus Jugson, he had left Hogwarts a couple years ago, but he was still part of the court. He had heard Harry telling Theo to send a letter to Marcus for him to gather information about something. He hadn't heard about what it was, but that wasn't the important thing. What mattered was that even though Marcus had left Hogwarts, Harry ordered and Marcus obeyed. He knew what that meant. So he wasn't really going into it blind, even if he didn't really know everything about it. He was a part of it. He felt like laughing, one thing he was sure though, his life would never be the same again.

Finally the feast came to an end and he was thinking of ways that he could get away without anyone noticing, though Dumbledore stood up and put a stop to his plans.

Almost immediately the whole Great Hall fell silent and looked at Dumbledore curiously. The Headmaster didn't usually give big speeches at the end of the feast, not unless there was something important to announce or there was a new professor. Seeing that there was no new professor at the table they were slightly curious.

"So!" said Dumbledore, smiling around at them all. "Now that we are all fed and watered, I must once more ask for your attention. It is my painful duty to inform you that the Inter-House Quidditch Cup will not take place this year."

"What?" muttered Cedric looking at Dumbledore with wide eyes. From what Wayne could see Cedric wasn't the only one that was in a state of incredulity.

"This is due to an event that will be starting in October, and continuing throughout the school year, taking up much of the teachers' time and energy – but I am sure you will all enjoy it immensely. I have great pleasure in announcing that this year at Hogwarts-"

But at that moment, there was a deafening rumble of thunder and the doors of the Great Hall banged open.

A man stood in the doorway, leaning upon a long staff, shrouded in a black traveling cloak. Every head in the Great Hall turned toward the stranger, suddenly brightly illuminated by a fork of lightning that flashed across the ceiling. He lowered his hood, shook out a long mane of grizzled, dark gray hair, then began to walk up toward the teachers' table.

A dull clunk echoed through the Hall on his every other step. He reached the end of the top table, turned right, and limped heavily toward Dumbledore. Another flash of lightning crossed the ceiling. He heard several people gasp, it didn't surprise him, he had almost done it too.

The lightning had thrown the man's face into sharp relief, and it was a face unlike any he had ever seen. It looked as though it had been carved out of weathered wood by someone who had only the vaguest idea of what human faces are supposed to look like, and was none too skilled with a chisel.
Every inch of skin seemed to be scarred. The mouth looked like a diagonal gash, and a large chunk of the nose was missing. But it was the man's eyes that made him frightening.

One of them was small, dark, and beady. The other was large, round as a coin, and a vivid, electric blue. The blue eye was moving ceaselessly, without blinking, and was rolling up, down, and from side to side, quite independently of the normal eye, and then it rolled right over, pointing into the back of the man's head, so that all they could see was whiteness.

The stranger reached Dumbledore. He stretched out a hand that was as badly scarred as his face, and Dumbledore shook it, muttering words that they couldn't hear. He seemed to be making some inquiry of the stranger, who shook his head unsmilingly and replied in an undertone. Dumbledore nodded and gestured the man to the empty seat on his right-hand side.

The stranger sat down, shook his mane of dark gray hair out of his face, pulled a plate of sausages toward him, raised it to what was left of his nose, and sniffed it. He then took a small knife out of his pocket, speared a sausage on the end of it, and began to eat. His normal eye was fixed upon the sausages, but the blue eye was still darting restlessly around in its socket, taking in the Hall and the students.

"May I introduce our new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher?" said Dumbledore brightly into the silence. "Professor Moody."

It was usual for new staff members to be greeted with applause, but none of the staff or students chapped except Dumbledore and Hagrid, who both put their hands together and applauded, but the sound echoed dismally into the silence, and they stopped fairly quickly. Everyone else seemed too transfixed by Moody's bizarre appearance to do more than stare at him.

"Moody?" whispered Cedric, looking at the new professor.

"Do you know him?" Wayne asked, glancing at Cedric.

"Not really. I heard my father talk about him a time or two and there was some incident with him this morning, but I have no idea about what it was."

"Hm, do you know why he looks like that?"

"He was an auror during the war. I guess it could be from that." Cedric replied not taking his eyes of Moody.

Moody seemed completely indifferent to his less-than-warm welcome. Ignoring the jug of pumpkin juice in front of him, he reached again into his traveling cloak, pulled out a hip flask, and took a long draught from it.

Dumbledore cleared his throat.

"As I was saying," he said, smiling at the sea of students before him, all of whom were still gazing transfixed at Moody, "We are to have the honor of hosting a very exciting event over the coming months, an event that has not been held for over a century. It is my very great pleasure to inform you that the Triwizard Tournament will be taking place at Hogwarts this year."

The tension that had filled the Hall ever since Moody's arrival suddenly broke. He could see the excitement the students were feeling, several of them whispering to their neighbors. However his eyes were fixed on Harry and the court. None of them looked the least bit surprised about the information so he had to assume that they already knew. He recalled Neville telling him that Marcus was the Junior Undersecretary for the Minister, it was more than likely that he had given them the
information. Even so none of them looked particularly interested in the tournament. Some even looked slightly bored.

"Well, some of you will not know what this tournament involves, so I hope those who do know will forgive me for giving a short explanation, and allow their attention to wander freely: The Triwizard Tournament was first established some seven hundred years ago as a friendly competition between the three largest European schools of wizardry: Hogwarts, Beauxbatons, and Durmstrang. A champion was selected to represent each school, and the three champions competed in three magical tasks. The schools took it in turns to host the tournament once every five years, and it was generally agreed to be a most excellent way of establishing ties between young witches and wizards of different nationalities. Until, that is, the death toll mounted so high that the tournament was discontinued."

"Death toll?" didn't that sound encouraging? Though he seemed to be one of the few who was thinking about that. Most looked quite excited. Cedric had a rather resigned look and Wayne knew that Cedric would participate. He contained a sigh and shook his head. His parents were far from perfect but he was rather thankful that they weren't like Amos Diggory. He didn't doubt that Diggory loved his son, the problem was that Diggory loved the idea he had of his son much more. He knew that Cedric hated that his own father never actually saw him. He only saw his perfect little heir, with perfect grades, that would marry a perfect girl and have a perfect son. It was obvious to anyone who looked that Cedric was starting to resent his father, however above all that Cedric was tired. He was tired of not being himself. He was tired of his father only seeing what he wanted to see.

"There have been several attempts to reinstate the tournament," Dumbledore continued, "none of which has been very successful. However, our own departments of International Magical Cooperation and Magical Games and Sports have decided the time is ripe for another attempt. We have worked hard over the summer to ensure that this time, no champion will find himself or herself in mortal danger. The heads of Beauxbatons and Durmstrang will be arriving with their short-listed contenders in one week, and the selection of the three champions will take place at Halloween. An impartial judge will decide which students are most worthy to compete for the Triwizard Cup, the glory of their school, and a thousand galleons personal prize money."

It was easy to see that several students were already imagining themselves as the champions, receiving said glory. If he was completely honest with himself he was far more interested in the prize money. That money would be rather useful if they went through with their plan. A thousand galleons wasn't a fortune but it was far more than the half a dozen galleons he currently had.

"Eager though I know all of you will be to bring the Triwizard Cup to Hogwarts," Dumbledore said, silencing the Hall once again, "The heads of the participating schools, along with the Ministry of Magic, have agreed to impose an age restriction on contenders this year. Only students who are of age, that is to say seventeen years or older, will be allowed to put forward their names for consideration."

Well, there went his thousand galleons.

"This," Dumbledore raised his voice slightly, for several people had made noises of outrage at these words, "Is a measure we feel is necessary, given that the tournament tasks will still be difficult and dangerous, whatever precautions we take, and it is highly unlikely that students below sixth and seventh year will be able to cope with them. I will personally be ensuring that no underage student hoodwinks our impartial judge into making them Hogwarts champion. I therefore beg you not to waste your time submitting yourself if you are under seventeen."

Immediately his eyes focused on Harry. He doubted that Harry would have any difficulty in going
through the tasks. It was clear to anyone who looked at Harry during lessons that he was bored out of his mind. McGonagall and Flitwick didn't even bat an eyelash anymore when Harry started doing different things during class. Never all that different from what their appointed work was, but different nonetheless. If they had to transfigure a beetle into a button by the end of class Harry would have a beautiful cufflink on his desk, while everyone else had ordinary buttons, or something resembling a button. Everyone knew that he was far above them in skill and talent and some, like Granger, just couldn't deal with it. He had lost count of the number of times he had heard her complaining about him to McGonagall, telling her that Harry wasn't actually doing the work that the professors told them to do. It never went anywhere, it seemed as if McGonagall had a soft spot for Harry, but it didn't stop Granger from complaining. Others like Weasley were just plain jealous.

Even so Harry didn't seem the least bit interested in the tournament. He had a completely bored expression, though he tried to look politely interested in what was going on.

In a way it didn't really surprise him. Harry was above such a thing as a mere tournament.

"As I said before, the delegations from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang will be arriving in a weeks' time. While they are here they will be Hogwarts students, attending classes with you and sleeping in your dorms. Through random sorting it was decided that the Beauxbatons students would be staying in the Ravenclaw dorms, while the Durmstrang students would be staying in Slytherin. I know that you will all extend every courtesy to our foreign guests while they are with us, and will give your whole-hearted support to the Hogwarts champion when he or she is selected. And now, it is late, and I know how important it is to you all to be alert and rested as you enter your lessons tomorrow morning. Bedtime! Chop chop!"

Wayne looked around and saw that Cedric was calling the younger students, helping the new prefects organizing them. Taking advantage of everyone's distraction he slipped away from the Great Hall. He looked around as soon as he was in the entrance hall, trying to find the twins when he saw a shadow move. It gained a human form, then started to drip away revealing one of the twins.

"You were quick," remarked the twin, ignoring his dumbfounded expression, "Let's go, Harry doesn't like to be kept waiting."

He nodded and followed the Gryffindor. He felt his heart beating faster with every step he took. He was afraid, he would not deny that, but he couldn't deny that he was feeling even more excited than afraid. He had no idea what his future held, but he was certain that his life would never be the same again.

"That was fast." remarked Harry when he saw Fred arriving with Wayne.

"Dumbledore's announcement served as a distraction." Fred told him, leaning against his brother.

"Memorize this place and the password. It changes every month on the first. One of us Slytherins will give you the new one when it does. Alright?" he asked Wayne, who nodded. Smiling he turned around and said the password, "Aconite."

The entrance opened and they walked inside. He let Wayne look around and went to sit, all of the others, expect for Luna following him. Luna stayed with Wayne, explaining where they usually sat in the common room and where the boy's rooms were.

Harry observed Wayne's every reaction and expression. He was one of them now and he had to get to know him better. He was quite pleased with what he was seeing. Wayne seemed to be adjusting well and he could see that he was already adopting several mannerisms from them without even
noticing.

He looked slightly surprised when Theo explained the rules to the new batch of first years, but in a good way. Harry thought that the rule about first generations wizards and witches was what made Wayne truly believe that they didn't care that he was one.

Containing a smile Harry got up and walked to the front.

"Prefects," he called and the six prefects appeared so fast that it almost seemed as if they had materialized in front of him, "In a week's time the Durmstrang students will arrive. While they are here they will be Slytherin as such I expect them to behave as such. You will be responsible for telling them the rules and what is expected of Slytherin students. Do not disappoint me."

"Yes sir." the six replied in unison.

"Dismissed." Harry waved them away and sat back in his usual seat. "You'll send the letter to Marcus tomorrow right?" he asked Theo, who was lounging on the couch.

"Yes. We should have the information that you want in a week or two, depends on how much research it requires."

"Good. Send one to Skeeter as well, I want her to cover the tournament but with our special touch."

Theo nodded and started drafting a letter to Skeeter, they had a little while till anything officially started but it never hurt to be prepared.

"Skeeter?" Wayne asked, slightly curious.

"Do you know Magic Today?" Luna questioned.

"Yeah, much better than the Daily Prophet. I particularly like he section 'The people's voice' and the learning section." exclaimed Wayne enthusiastically.

"Harry owns it." Luna told him dreamily, "We all write for it. It's the court's newspaper."

"You own it?" Wayne asked incredulously.

"Hm, we will have to come up with an alias for you too." muttered Blaise, Adrian nodding along.

"We'll think of something." he told them, shaking his head when he saw that Blaise and Adrian were already whispering together, thinking up names. "Ready for tomorrow's training?" he asked Wayne, leaving both boys to their scheming.

"Yes." replied Wayne, not able to mask his enthusiasm. Momentarily forgetting what he had learned, "I can hardly wait. I hope I'm able to sneak away without Cedric noticing."

"Cedric?"

"Cedric Diggory," explained Wayne, "I... I don't have that many friends, most of them prefer to avoid conflicts with Smith. But Cedric always helped me. He might notice that I'm gone, since I usually spend my time with him."

"Why don't you take him with you?" he asked, ignoring the looks the others were sending him.

They had talked about Diggory. He was a rather good student, friendly and everyone liked him, even the more prickly Slytherins. If they could arrange it he would have been a good addition to the court.
But they didn't know him or any of his friends and they didn't want to just walk up to him without having a backup plan. He had kinda done it with Neville and Luna, but they had both been outsiders in their houses. Diggory on the other hand was the epitome of popular student. They hadn't wanted to approach him and then having rumors flying around if it didn't work out, especially because his family was a known Dumbledore and Light supporter. Now they had Wayne.

"Take him?"

"Yes, just because you are part of the court doesn't mean you can't have other friends." Harry told him. It was true, he had never prohibited the others from having friends. They did have other friends. However the bond between them was nowhere near as deep or as intense as the bond between the court members, "Though I would prefer if you helped persuade him to join us."

Wayne's eyes went wide for a second or two, then a calculating glint entered them. Slowly a smile spread across his lips and his eyes filled with determination. The smile that Wayne aimed at him was brighter than the sun, full of gratefulness.

Harry smiled. Things with Wayne couldn't have turned out better.

"Where are you dragging me?" Cedric asked for what seemed like the hundredth time.

"I'm just taking you to meet my friends." Wayne replied sounding slightly exasperated.

"Then why are we wandering around the dungeons?"

"Because that's where they are," Wayne replied, his patience hanging by a thread, "Now let me concentrate. I've only used this path once, I don't want to get lost."

Neville had shown him the way right after classes, but even so it was easy to get lost in the dungeons. This section didn't even have any paintings to help them out if they did get lost.

However he came across a familiar section of wall, it had a burn mark on it, and the wall was a little dented. He smiled when he took another step and felt the wards around them. Counting the fourth door to his right he put his hand on the door and said the password.

"Trust."

He shook his head. He could hardly believe that the court had created something like this. It was almost like a muggle security system. It had wards and spells interwoven and it created something that a wizard would never have thought about. They usually either use wards or spells, they normally never interweave the two. The wards kept the door locked and identified the magical signature of the person. The spells registered the passwords and collected a sample of the person's magical signature. It was impossible to duplicate a magical signature and everyone of them had their own password that the other members didn't know. Only Harry knew all of their passwords. If the password didn't match the magical signature then the door wouldn't open.

Harry had been the one who thought about the concept, having been raised in the muggle world. He simply adopted the idea to the magical world. However the other court members had all contributed in some way.

He grabbed Cedric's hand and pulled him through, Harry was waiting.

Harry stopped what he was doing and looked towards the door when he heard it open. Diggory's expression when he saw what used to be an abandoned classroom was quite amusing.
The room was divided into distinctive spaces. The first one was a small potion laboratory, which was at the moment occupied by the twins. Harry had no idea what they were doing and something told him that he was better of not knowing.

The second one was a dueling platform that was being used by Neville and Adrian.

The third one was a warded section of the room, that had some transfigured stones and trees and was a makeshift battle field. It was where they fought, there could be as little as two of them there, or all of them. The last one standing won. At the time it was being used by Luna, Draco, Theo, Blaise and Graham.

The last part, the one he was in, had several black and blue training dummies for them to test their spells on.

Harry wasn't the least bit surprised to see that Diggory was stunned. Though when Diggory truly looked at the people who where there Harry was sure that he would go into shock.

"Wayne." Harry greeted him, making Diggory focus on him, "If you don't mind you'll be spending your first training with me." Harry told him, momentarily ignoring Diggory.

"Of course not." exclaimed Wayne, dragging Diggory with him.

"Great. You see those black dummies?" seeing Wayne nod he continued, "I want you to cast every spell you know at it. Even a *lumos*, since you can't exactly throw a *lumos* at the dummy you have to touch it with your wand. When you're done there are a set of runes on the back of the dummy, you have to touch them with your wand. Then a parchment will appear. You'll bring it to me and then I'll tell you what to do after that."

Wayne nodded and left Diggory with Harry. While Harry had been talking with Wayne, Diggory had been looking around, his eyes jumping from one group to the next, occasionally sending Harry questioning looks.

"Diggory, welcome."

"Potter." replied Diggory, finally focusing on him, inclining his head a little.

"Let me introduce you, even though I think you already know everyone if only by name. In that corner over there," Harry said pointing towards the twins, "Are Fred and George Weasley, they are... well, honestly, I have no idea what they are doing. I think I'm better of not knowing." he aimed a small smile at Diggory, quite pleased when he saw him relaxing and smiling back, "On the dueling platform is Neville Longbottom and Adrian Pucey. In the warded of section on the other corner we have Luna Lovegood, Blaise Zabini, Theodore Nott, Draco Malfoy and Graham Montague."

Diggory nodded, though a curious light lit his eyes.

"What is this place?"

"It used to be an abandoned classroom," he replied, sitting down on one of the sofas that was spread through the room, Diggory taking the armchair in front of him, "We made it into a place where we could train."

"Train? Why do you need to train?" Diggory asked, taking the seat in front of him and relaxing slightly.

"To get better. We love magic. Why should we limit ourselves to what we learn in the classroom?"
For a few moments Diggory stayed silent, then he nodded.

"I can understand that." he said and Harry was able to see the same passion that they had about magic in his eyes. The thing that had made Harry notice Diggory in the first place, "But that isn't everything, is it?"

"No." Harry replied after a moment of deliberation, "No, it isn't. However I don't know if you truly want to hear the rest."

"I'm not stupid," Diggory told, looking him straight in the eyes, "I know that there is something going on with the Slytherins. I just don't know what, nor how, nor why."

"What do you know about the Slytherin court?" Harry asked him bluntly, surprising Diggory.

"I heard about it. I think every pureblood family has heard about it. But I don't know what it is, or what it does."

"Well, simply put, the court rules Slytherin. There isn't always a court. But sometimes there is a student that is intelligent, powerful, charismatic and cunning enough to surpass all the other students and establish a court. The other Slytherin students aren't part of the court, only those that the King chooses are members of the court. However all of the other Slytherins respect and fear the court, so they obey."

"You're the King." it was more a statement than a question and Harry just smiled. Diggory closed his eyes and stayed silent. Harry let him be, he knew that the older boy needed it. He needed to process everything he had heard, but most of all he needed to come to terms with what wasn't said. After a while he opened his eyes again. He looked around, this time he really looked. His eyes landed on the twins, still wearing their Gryffindor uniforms. Then on Neville, who was holding his own in a duel against Adrian. Then he looked at Luna who was leaning against Blaise, both sitting on the floor cheering for Draco and trying to distract Graham. Finally his eyes landed on Wayne, who was still throwing spells at the dummy. Theo was beside him, helping and telling him spells that he might have forgotten.

"What do you want?"

"Change." Harry replied, knowing what Diggory was asking, "Our world is stagnant. Magic is dying. It gets more and more restricted every day. We are losing our history, our birthright. Aren't you tired of seeing muggle-borns be shunned because they don't know and don't follow our traditions? Traditions that they have no way of learning because the books from which they could learn are restricted. Doesn't it break your heart to see family magics disappearing because the lines are far too weak to support them? Doesn't it anger you wanting to study magic and not being able to because it's forbidden? Do you not wish for it to be different? We want change. We are that change."

Diggory's eyes filled with determination, dedication and so much want that Harry wasn't able to contain his smile.

"Welcome to the court."

"He... he's something else." Cedric remarked, while he and Wayne were walking back to Hufflepuff.

"Yeah." replied Wayne, in a low, almost reverential tone.
"When we were talking I felt his magic. It was so different from anything I have ever felt. There was so much of it, and it was so warm, so reassuring. I truly believe that if there is anyone who can change things, than he can. And I want to help."

"Do you see why they look at him like that?" Wayne asked him, looking at him with a small knowing smile.

Cedric nodded. He understood. They had been with Harry for years, if he and Wayne had become fascinated with Harry in mere hours, was it any wonder that people that had been with him for years would worship him?

He couldn't help but wonder if they had started out like him and Wayne. He knew for a fact that Adrian and Graham didn't have that much contact with Harry at first. He also knew that Marcus had been a pureblood supremacist, but if the twins were to be believed, and there was no reason for them to lie, Marcos was completely dedicated to Harry. That thought should terrify him. Logically he knew that level of devotion and loyalty wasn't normal. However the only thing he felt was longing. Seeing the connection between them, the camaraderie they shared, it was something he had always desired. Not one of them pretended to be something they were not. He wanted that too. He wanted to be a part of it. He wanted that level of acceptance. He wanted to be himself without having to fear being shunned.

"We are a part of it." he whispered. A small smile appearing on his lips. He and Wayne were part of the court. Now, with a little bit of time, they would have what all the other members had as well. It was only a matter of time, and they could wait.

Ignore me. I'm a line.

"He's staring at you again." Theo informed him.

Harry looked up and confirmed that, indeed, Moody was staring again.

"So I see." he replied, nonchalantly, "Though I have to point out that he is also staring at you, Draco, Blaise and, for some reason, Neville."

It was the second lesson he had with Moody and he was already fed up. He was a competent instructor but being constantly under observation was tiring. Harry did his best to ignore him, however the man never lost an opportunity to ask him questions. Usually he would have no trouble answering them, especially because it angered the Granger girl to no end that his answers were always correct but, unlike her, he didn't sound as if he had eaten the textbook. However Moody seemed to get a kick out of increasing the difficulty of the question every time. He didn't know if Moody was doing it because he wanted to know what the supposed Savior knew, or if he wanted to screw with the Slytherin King. And he had no doubt that Moody knew about the Slytherin court. He had heard him talking with Snape, asking 'if he still had control of his Snakes now that there was a court ruled by the boy who destroyed the Dark Lord'. So there was no doubt that he knew, though that still didn't explain his behavior.

"He must think that we corrupted you." Theo remarked just as nonchalant as Harry. Harry had to contain a chuckle.

"I think it was the other way around." replied Harry with a devilish smirk on his lips. Theo shot him an exasperated look and shook his head, going back to his work.

Harry chuckled lowly and started working as well, though he wasn't paying all that much attention to it. He was slightly restless. The foreign students would be arriving that afternoon and even if he
didn't show it he was quite excited about it. Not with the tournament itself, but with the possibility of expanding his intelligence network. Having contacts, loyal contacts, in foreign countries would make life easier for him and he could always tell Cedric to join the International Magical Cooperation Department at the Ministry. Cedric had mentioned that he would start working at Ministry after his seventh year and that his father had expected him to join his Department, but with the right encouragement the senior Diggory would come to realize that the International Magical Cooperation Department was far more prestigious. It would be easy enough. Now he just had to scout the foreign students. The Durmstrang students would be quite simple. They would be staying in the Slytherin dungeons, he would have every pair of eyes on them. Beauxbatons on the other hand... they only had Luna in Ravenclaw and she was most of the time with them.

Oh... that wasn't true. Luna was the only court member in Ravenclaw, but not the only person he had in Ravenclaw.

He wanted to cackle. Little Cho. How could he have forgotten about his little slave? He needed to have a little talk with her. She was just what he needed.

"We have to talk to Chang." he told his court when they sat down to have lunch.

"Why?" Adrian asked, he had seen the girl a few times and she paled at the simple sight of him. He smiled, it was rather amusing. The girl had been great entertainment.

"Information about the Beauxbatons students. Luna is with us most of the time. And Chang is a social butterfly. No one would find it strange if she were to spend more time with them."

"That's strange though, isn't it?" Draco asked, "After what happened I was expecting her to be... well, I don't really know, but different. She acts as if nothing happened."

"It's the Vow." explained Harry, knowing that the spells around them would make it impossible for anyone to hear the topic of their conversation, "She can't do anything that would endanger, or give us away. If she started to act like some torture victim it would raise questions. So she really doesn't have much of a choice but to behave as she always did. It's the only way she can continue to live."

"There are ways around Unbreakable vows." remarked Graham.

"Yes, I know. But do you really think that Chang would know how to? Besides, she is terrified of dying, of us." Harry chuckled darkly, "Sometimes it's much more effective to break the mind instead of the body." the Slytherins in his court were looking at him, their eyes alight and Harry smiled at them, "Take everything from them. Make them lose all hope. The moment they lose that, it's over. They will be puppets in your hands."

They nodded, their eyes full of malice and Harry had to smile. They were always so eager. He loved seeing this side of them. They were always so caring and protective of him that most people would never suspect just what monsters they were, but this side of them was so much fun.

"Do you want one of us to talk to her?" Draco asked.

"Yes, discreetly though." they nodded and Harry smiled at them, bringing the spells around them down, he raised his voice slightly, "Slytherins." Every Slytherin student looked at them and Graham cast the spells again, around the whole table this time, "In a few hours the Beauxbatons and Durmstrang students will arrive. According to information that I have they will prepare a small show, after they are done they will sit at their new house table. As soon as they step into Hogwarts they will be Slytherins, I expect them to behave as such. You will make sure of it, starting right after their little show. Am I understood?"
"Yes, sir." the Slytherins replied in unison and Graham brought down the spells, knowing that if they were up any longer the professors would start to suspect something.

Harry smiled, he had trained them well.

The arrival of the new students was far more stressful than what Harry thought possible. The professors were going around snapping at them for the littlest thing. Frankly Harry was surprised that he hadn't snapped and cursed them. Still, he had enjoyed watching the new students arrive. He particularly liked the Durmstrang ship. Now they were again in the Great Hall waiting for the feast to start.

However Harry wasn't paying any attention, he was looking at the Head table, his eyes locked on Karkaroff.

"Harry, your magic." Theo warned him in a low voice and he took a deep breath.

"Sorry." he said, finally ripping his eyes away from Karkaroff, "I can't stand traitors."

"We know." Theo assured him, briefly glancing at Karkaroff with disdain and hate, "I would like nothing better than to rip his traitorous tongue out. My father was one of those he betrayed."

"His days are numbered." Harry told Theo, a small vindictive smile appearing on his lips and Theo smiled back. He could hardly wait to get his hands on the traitor.

Meanwhile Beauxbatons had finished their little show and the Durmstrang students started theirs. All in all Harry wasn't impressed, though he did admit that the Durmstrang students had to have good control of their magic to be able to shape the fire to their will.

When they turned around and prepared to take their seats, the sixth year Slytherins stood up.

"Sixth years." they chanted in unison, making place for the Durmstrang students.

The foreign students looked at each other, looking a little confused. Then one of them shrugged and was followed by a few more when he moved towards the Slytherin students. As soon as all the sixth years were seated the seventh years got up.

"Seventh years." this time the new students joined them faster. Though there were still some looks traded between them.

Harry was rather pleased with the outcome. The other houses wouldn't comment on it, they were used to seeing the Slytherins sitting by year. They would assume that they just wanted to include the Durmstrang students. At the same time it showed the foreign students that there was something different with Slytherin House. He had seen some of them looking around and noticing that the Slytherins were the only ones sitting in that particular arrangement. He let them wonder, soon enough everything would be explained to them.

He glanced at the teacher's table again and caught Karkaroff looking at him. He smirked. He couldn't help but wonder how many Durmstrang students would still be loyal to Karkaroff by the end of the year.

The six prefects stayed behind to lead the Durmstrang students to their new common room and dorms. Harry knew that they would take them the long way to their common room and that they would be telling them how the sleeping arrangements were and the usual first years speech on the
Meanwhile his court was lounging on the couches around him. He had to smile when he saw how they got along. Wayne and Cedric were integrating in the court far faster than even Luna and Neville had and he couldn't be happier. It was as if they had always been a part of it.

After a few more minutes the entrance to the common room opened and the prefects walked through, the new Slytherins trailing behind them. They were looking around curiously, some of them glancing at their little corner but not paying all that much attention to it.

"Welcome to Slytherin," began Jason Finch, the seventh year prefect, "From the moment you stepped into Hogwarts you ceased being Durmstrang students and became Slytherins."

"As Slytherins there are certain things that are expected of you." continued Flora Carrow, the other seventh year prefect, "Certain rules you have to follow."

"Slytherin House is different from the other Houses," informed them Derek Blake, sixth year prefect. "Slytherin House has a court. The King's rules are law. There is no one in the Slytherin hierarchy that is above him, not even our Head of House." explained Valeria Hills, Derek's counterpart, and Harry was a little surprised to hear the reverence in her voice. He didn't miss the looks that were exchanged between some of the students.

"Not all the members of the court are Slytherins," Juliana Vazy told them, "But they are all treated with the same respect. Who is part of the court and who it's King is, is never mentioned outside of the common room. We realize that other students may know, but even so it is never discussed in public."

"Now you are going to meet the court. They will inform you of the laws you will live by while you are Slytherins." fifth year prefect Terrance Higgs announced, indicating that they should follow him.

The prefects aligned the students in two rows in front of the court and stood behind them. They looked more like guards than anything else, especially because three of them kept twitching towards their wands and glaring at a small group of the foreign students. It were the same ones that Harry had seen earlier. Sixth years if he wasn't mistaken.

While the others continued to lounge on the couches, Theo got to his feet. Harry was rather thankful that the Tournament hadn't been held sooner. No matter how powerful they were in previous years, it was rather difficult to look intimidating when you were no taller than five feet. This past summer though they had all grown, and Theo was one of the tallest in their group, almost matching the sixth years. First impressions were important after all.

"Good evening. As you are all new I will start with introducing the court. I am Theodore Nott, as you can see I am a Slytherin. Then we have Draco Malfoy, Blaise Zabini, Adrian Pucey and Graham Montague, who are all Slytherins as well. George Weasley, Fred Weasley and Neville Longbottom are Gryffindors. Luna Lovegood is a Ravenclaw. Wayne Hopkins and Cedric Diggory are Hufflepuffs. Last but not least we have Harry Potter, our King, who is also a Slytherin." several students seemed surprised with that. Though he did catch the look of disdain that the small group of sixth years had, the same ones that the prefects were glaring at. Theo didn't give them an opportunity to say anything, he continued his little speech, "Though the court has been established, the Slytherins still enjoy much freedom. There are only three rules that have to be obeyed.

"First: No bullying. If you do feel like you can not control yourself than at least don't get caught and don't leave any evidence. If you are caught you'll have to deal with the court."
"Second: Do not use the word mudblood. Do not even think that word outside of the common room. Trust me, you will not like the consequences if you do." several Slytherin students shivered, remembering Yaxley. The court chuckled darkly and more than one student paled. They remembered how Yaxley wasn't able to sleep alone in his room, that his friends had moved in so that he could get at least a few hours sleep. They would never forget the state Yaxley was left after he disobeyed a law from the court.

"Third: Do not talk to the court. Select one person out of your numbers. That person will be the only one that can approach us and talk with us. Naturally if a member of the court talks with you it would be better to reply. Any questions?"

"Yeah, I have a question." said one of the boys that they had been keeping an eye one, "Why should we obey a filthy half-blood?" both boys on either side of him snickered maliciously. None of them payed attention to the Slytherins in the room, they didn't see them looking at them incredulously, nor did they see the wands that all the prefects and several other students had pointed at them, a deadly expression on their faces. Their reactions pleased Harry immensely. Year after year the students were becoming more loyal to him, without them even noticing.

"Where is the so called King anyway?" the same boy sneered, "The filthy half-blood shouldn't even be here. They should send him back to his whore of a mudblood mother. Oh, that's right. The bitch is dead." he smirked cruelly, seeming quite pleased with himself.

Harry chuckled darkly and got up. His court rising with him, though they kept one step behind him. Theo bowed his head in his direction and joined his fellow court members.

He almost smiled when he saw the expression on the new Slytherins' faces. They knew who he was after that display, but it was the first time they had actually seen him. Pictures of him in the paper were more than rare, the one time they had managed it was after Sirius' trial, and he had kept his back to the photographers. The pictures they did have of him barely showed his face. And just now at dinner the Durmstrang students were far too occupied to truly pay attention to the other students.

He knew he was beautiful. He had noticed the looks people sent him. His court had even said that his beauty rivaled that of the Veela. He knew how to use it. Though it had been Nacht that had made him truly want to see if he was capable of seducing someone. Nacht had intrigued him and he had wanted to try. He was rather shocked that it had worked as well as it had. He had seen the desire in his blue-gray eyes. The want he had seen in them was almost overwhelming. He had enjoyed it, but something told him that Nacht would be a dangerous man to play with. Somehow, knowing that, just made him want it even more.

Considering that he had been able to do it to Nacht, these students would have been as easy as breathing. Even so, he wasn't going to do it. Nacht was special, he was interesting, challenging. He was worthy of having Harry play with him. These students weren't. They should be grateful to even be in his presence. They deserved no special consideration from him.

"Do you have suicidal tendencies?" he asked, feigning concern. "From what I've just seen, everything indicates that you do."

The boy blushed a deep red, his eyes blazing with rage. He looked as if he was going for his wand. He should have had it already out if he had been thinking about confronting them. Though the outcome would have been the same.

The boy's eyes widened when he realized that he couldn't move his body. Only his head moved and even that was difficult, almost as if he was fighting against some oppressive force. He fell on his knees and the Durmstrang students took several steps back, some of them colliding with the prefects.
Others tried to help their fellow student but stopped when they saw all of the court members with their wands drawn and pointing at them.

Harry didn't fault them for it. He didn't need to look at his court to know that they presented an intimidating image. They were beautiful, powerful, deadly. They knew it, every student in Slytherin knew it, and the Durmstrang students would know it too.

"Don't worry.‖ Harry told him, smiling at him warmly, "I'm going to take care of you till those nasty tendencies leave you.‖ it was a promise, more a threat than anything else really, and his court chuckled maliciously. It surprised him a little to hear Cedric and Wayne chuckling as well, he had thought that they would need a little more time to come to terms with the darker aspects of the court. Though he suspected that the slur against him had been enough of a trigger for them. They were just as devoted to him as the others after all.

"What are you doing?‖ growled the older boy, trying to be intimidating.

Harry sighed and shook his head. He conjured a collar and put it around the neck of his new pet. It was a deep green, with a little silver tag that had 'The King's pet' engraved in it.

"Take this off me!‖ the boy ordered, a helpless rage shining in his eyes.

Harry smiled, his eyes showing his glee. His magic jumped out of his body, it seemed almost eager to play and he knew that everyone around him could feel it. His court was becoming almost as giddy as he was, his magic influencing them. Almost everyone else though shuddered. Feeling overwhelmed with the sudden increase in magical pressure. He made his magic surround his new pet and then the boy screamed, falling on all fours. When Harry stopped he was panting.

"Bad boy!‖ Harry scolded him, "Dogs don't talk."

"What?‖ shrieked the boy.

Harry frowned and another electrical current raced through his pet's body.

"Pet, you will have to learn to obey or you will be punished. I do not want to punish you, but you have to learn."

"What are you doing?‖ his pet gasped, his left hand twitching a little and his eyes filling with fear.

Harry shook his head and the boy screamed again. Far louder and longer than the previous times. His court laughed, delighting in his suffering. Harry knew that they would have done far worse to him for what he had said about him. The Durmstrang students looked at them horrified and Harry smiled warmly at them. They paled and most averted their eyes.

"Dogs don't talk, pet.‖ Harry told him again. The boy whimpered but didn't talk. Satisfied Harry addressed him again, "You'll be my pet till I am certain that you are trained enough. Do not attempt to take off that collar. You will not enjoy the consequences if you do.‖ Harry warned him and his pet nodded, "Good. Go to your room.‖

The boy nodded and shakily got back on his feet. Harry waited till he was upright again then hit him with another electrical charge.

"Dogs do not walk on two legs.‖ he remarked.

His pet got on his hand and knees and started to crawl. When he crawled passed Harry, he petted his head, stroking his pet's dark blond hair gently.
"Good boy." he praised and was quite pleased when he felt his pet's body relax. It was going rather well. The boy was all talk, probably regurgitating what he was taught at home without a second thought. He was probably spoiled and believed that he was entitled to everything he wanted. He was an older version of Draco at the beginning of their first year. It wouldn't take all that long to break him completely.

"Outside the common room you may walk, in the common room you'll crawl till I tell you otherwise."

His pet nodded again, crawling towards where their rooms were.

"Terrance, help him open the door to his room." Harry instructed.

"Yes, sir."

Harry smiled and looked at the students in front of him. Most were looking at him with fear filled eyes. Though he was pleased to see that there were a few that showed intrigue and a few even had respect mixed in there. One of those was an older student that he thought looked familiar, though he couldn't really tell from where. It didn't really matter, he would know all their names soon enough.

"Welcome to Slytherin."

The whole court was in the common room. They would have preferred to be training or in Harry's room but they needed to make an appearance. Especially after the previous night. Harry knew that the Slytherins would behave, however the Durmstrang students could go either way.

So they had decided to be out in public all day long.

Aside from that Harry wanted to see how Wayne and Cedric would act. He knew they were loyal. It was easy to see their dedication to him and the others. However the previous night had been intense, at least for the two of them that hadn't yet experienced their darker sides.

Yet, as far as he could see, they were the same as always. They seemed to be even more relaxed in their company and seemed to be opening up to the others even more.

It pleased him greatly.

"Don't worry." Luna told him, leaning against him on the couch, "We will be complete soon."

"Oh?"

"Yes. The court will be complete before the year is over."

"I see. That's good. Do you know who?"

Luna shook her head. A small smile played around her lips and a giggle left her.

"This year is a little different. I know a lot of things, though I can't seem to make any sense of it. I do know that there are a few things that I can't tell you."

"Why not?"

"You knowing wouldn't change anything about the fact that it will happen, but it would change a lot of things that are better left unchanged."
"Will it be harmful?"

"Of course not!" she told him, looking slightly offended at the suggestion that she would let anything happen to him. "I would never let anything harm you if I could stop it," she said softly and he smiled at her, kissing her forehead. She smiled and snuggled a little closer, "It is one of those moments that you have to make a choice. And only you will know what path to take. That moment in time will define our world. Our future and the future of everyone else."

"Everyone else?"

"It will make ripples."

"Hmm."

Well, that was interesting. What kind of choice could he make at fourteen that would influence everything? Truthfully he couldn't think of anything. No matter how powerful he was, no matter how well connected he was becoming, he was still only fourteen. A Hogwarts student, who hadn't even take his O.W.L.'s yet.

He didn't doubt Luna. If she said that something was coming, then it was. He just couldn't see what it could be.

On another hand knowing that his court would be complete soon was quite good news. After that he would have to start recruiting. He would need as many people on his side as possible. Remus and Sirius were already part of his second circle, now he needed to expand that. He would start with the most loyal Slytherins, then expand to the Ravenclaws, followed by the Hufflepuffs and ending with the Gryffindors. The question was, should he show his hand or not?

Should he keep the new recruits a secret or let the world see just how many followed him?

He knew that it would be a lot safer for all involved if they remained hidden. Sleepers. Yes, they would be his Sleepers. They would infiltrated everything and anything, before the world realized what was happening he would have a Sleeper in every branch of the Ministry, in every business, in every home. By the time they realize it, it would be too late to fight back.

He nodded. It seemed the path was set.

Someone clearing their throat caught his attention and he looked up.

It was the same Durmstrang student from the previous night that Harry thought was familiar. He was standing in front of the court, his back straight, his head high. However his eyes were down, looking at the floor, showing his respect for the position they had.

"Yes?" Harry inquired, making the boy look at him.

"I was the one selected to speak with the court." the boy said, his accent almost nonexistent.

Harry nodded, having guessed that was the reason. From what he remembered he had been the least afraid the previous night.

"Do you have any question?"

The boy seemed to hesitate for a fraction of a second, then nodded.

"Alright. Take a seat."
His court smiled at him, and he could see that Draco was looking rather excited.

"You know us already, so I'm not going to introduce them all again, though I would appreciate it if you introduced yourself and told us in which year you are."

"My name is Viktor Krum, I'm in my last year at Durmstrang."

Oh, that's why he was familiar. No wonder he wasn't associating the boy with anything. He didn't care all that much for Quidditch and had hardly seen the World Cup.

"Well Viktor, ask away." Harry told him, after Viktor had taken a seat beside Graham, who looked ready to pounce on the Quidditch star and bombard him with questions.

"Is it true that you don't care if a wizard is muggle-born?" he was expressionless, however is eyes gave him away. There was hope there, much more than what Harry though possible.

"Don't call them that." Harry told him, "They are first generations wizards. Answering your question, no, we do not care. Magic is all that matters. As long as a person is magical and embraces their magical blood we have nothing against it. Wayne is a first generation wizard." Harry answered him, pointing at Wayne. "Why do you ask?"

"My mother is a mug- a first generation witch." he told them after a few moments, "Durmstrang does not accept those who are not pure-blood. I only got in because my father is from a very old line." he sounded bitter, and the smile he had was rather depreciating, "She is refereed to as nothing but a broad mare. Only good for birthing children. But I have seen her magic, she is more powerful than many of those pure-bloods." he sneered, "I wish it was different."

They were silent for a while. Knowing that it hadn't been easy for Viktor to breach the subject. He hadn't known that Viktor was a half-blood. It must have been a well kept secret.

"It could be different." Harry said. "We want things to change too. You saw how my pet reacted."

"Dmitri Volkov."

"He's my pet," chuckled Harry, "He doesn't need a name."

"He's lucky he's still alive." remarked Adrian, putting his book down, a dark look in his eyes.

"If Harry hadn't gotten to him first, we would have killed him." Theo added.

"No killing at Hogwarts." Harry scolded them, "At least not yet." he added with a smirk.

Viktor looked at them with wide eyes, not really knowing if they were being serious or not. Something in their eyes told him they were. It should have scared him, it should have made him run for the hills, but it didn't. Instead he found himself smiling, enjoying their bantering.

Harry smiled at him, his eyes twinkling.

"Any other questions?"

"Some." replied Viktor, feeling more at ease. "They didn't really tell us how you established the court, so I don't really understand it. Nor what people must do for them to establish it. Also... well, your magic... it's... it's different."

The court laughed and smiled at him, a small knowing smile that made their eyes sparkle.
"Why don't you spend the day with us?" Harry asked, it seemed his court was going to be international sooner than he thought.

Viktor smiled and nodded. He knew that he was agreeing to more than what Harry had asked, even if he didn't know what exactly it was. However he didn't really care, deep down he knew that he wouldn't regret it.

All the other Slytherins knew what had happened as soon as they saw Viktor spending more time with the court. They told the Durmstrang students to find a new person to speak with the court, since Viktor was now a member of that same court.

"Why?" Viktor asked once he had heard that he was considered part of the court.

"Well, I had been thinking about expanding the court. You are one of the best students at Durmstrang, an international Quidditch player and you are foreign. You already have contacts, you can expand our intelligence network. But above all, you didn't fear my magic." Harry told him.

And that had been the end of it.

Viktor fit right in. He was an excellent duelist and knew spells that they had never heard of. It didn't really surprise Harry that different countries had different spells. Not everyday spells like the Stupefy, those were common. But old magic, spells nearly forgotten by the world, those were different. Viktor had been assigned the section of the newspaper that focused on learning spells and he was constantly searching for new things. He had even mailed his father for old books from their library.

Viktor was happy to be considered more than a dumb Quidditch player.

Harry realized that Viktor didn't like all the fame and attention that he got. Especially because people assumed that he was only good for Quidditch. It was one of the reasons why he exaggerated the accent that he had. When he was with the court the accent was almost nonexistent, when he was out in public it become almost to heavy to understand what he was saying. None of the court minded, if there was one thing they understood it was the need to have masks.

Harry was also getting daily reports about the Beauxbatons students. Little Cho was a stuttering mess when she made the reports in person but at least it got the job done.

From all the students the one that stood out the most was the part Veela, Fleur Delacour. From what he understood she had no real friends. The girls were to jealous of her looks to truly bond with her and the boys could hardly control themselves around her. The only people she seemed to trust were her family and she had a particularly soft spot for her little sister, understanding what the young girl suffered at the hands of her peers. She was the best in her year, having a particular affinity with charms and fire spells.

Harry was almost giddy with the thought of adding her to his court. She could be their entrance to France, just like Viktor was for Bulgaria. She was powerful and not completely human. It would help in securing the trust of other part humans. But most of all, she was a Veela. The uses she could have... a little bit of her Veela charm here and there and all those pesky politicians would be putty in her hands, ready to do anything to please her. Yes, he wanted her in his court.

"Hello." he greeted her when he reached the secluded corner of the library he knew she would be in. Chang had told him that she went everyday, to the same place, approximately at the same time.

She looked at him, a brief flash of surprise appearing in her eyes before it was hidden behind an expressionless mask. He almost smiled. Her mask was almost as good as his.
"Oui?" her voice would have frozen lava.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you." he smiled a little, "I was wondering if you would mind if I hide out a little in this corner?"

"Hide?" she lifted a perfectly sculpted eyebrow.

"Just some Gryffindors that don't like me and I don't want a headache from dealing with them."

She studied him a for a few moments. Her eyes locking with his. Slowly she nodded her head, indicating the chair in front of her for him to sit.

He smiled slightly, pulled his book for his backpack and sat down.

"Thank you. I'm Harry, by the way. Harry Potter."

"Oui, je sais. I am Fleur Delacour."

"Enchanté mademoiselle."

"You know french?" a little bit of curiosity leaked through her voice.

"Not really," he chuckled, "My french language skills don't go beyond what I learned in school before I came to Hogwarts. Hardly enough to hold a conversation I'm afraid. So, how are you liking Hogwarts so far?"

"It iz different from what I expected." she replied, far warmer than before.

"Good different or bad different?"

"Good different. Some things are the same as Beauxbatons," she told him, her eyes darkening, "But others are better."

"Oh? What's better?"

"Ma mère et mon père, they told me that most magical families would look down on me."

"Because of your Veela blood?"

She looked startled for a second. Then her eyes narrowed slightly, looking for any prejudice in his voice and expression. Seeing none she nodded.

"I was expecting to be shunned." she confessed, "Especially by the Slytherins. But they have been nothing but kind. They don't even sneer. It is a nice change."

Harry nodded. He had warned his Slytherins to be at the very least civil, it was good to see that they were following his orders.

"Slytherin has changed over the years." Harry commented, "Most don't care about blood, only about the magic. And those that do care have enough self-preservation to keep quiet about it."

"What about you? Do you care?"

"Me?" he chuckled, "It would be slightly hypocritical of me to care about blood, don't you think?"

She laughed. A bell like sound and Harry could see why boys all around the school drooled after
"I'm glad you are enjoying your time at Hogwarts." Harry told her, "You should drop by the Slytherin common room. Just because you were assigned to the Ravenclaw dorms doesn't mean you have to stay with them all the time. If you feel like joining us you should talk to Luna. She's a Ravenclaw, but she knows where our common room is and has the password."

"Thank you for the offer." she replied after a minute or two and Harry smiled. He went back to his book and they sat in silence for the rest of their time together.

He was quite pleased with how things had turned out. Now he just had to wait and see if the enchanting miss Delacour took the bait.

She could hear their whispers, even though she pretended she couldn't. She hadn't lied when she told Harry that some things were better while others stayed the same. The jealous looks followed her even at Hogwarts. The malicious whispers started as soon as she turned her back. Her mother said that it was the burden of being Veela, even to those that had only part of that blood.

She used to curse her blood. Her beauty. Her heritage. It had only brought her sadness, loneliness. As the years passed she learned to live with it. She accepted her fate and created a mask of indifference.

Still, sometimes the loneliness hit her particularly hard.

This was one of those days. Even so, she held her head high. She would not let them see her hurt.

Long silvery blond hair caught her attention by the entrance of the Ravenclaw common room. Luna. The girl that Harry had told her could take her to the Slytherin common room.

After that day in the library she had been keeping an eye on him. It was easy to see how he charmed the professors and the students. Even those that didn't like him would be mesmerized by him. She saw the way his friends looked at him. Even Krum had joined their little group, looking as if he had always been a part of them. It was strange how everyone seemed to gravitated towards Harry Potter.

She couldn't help but be intrigued by him.

She knew that their little meeting hadn't been a coincidence, she was far from stupid. However she couldn't see what he wanted. She knew that he wouldn't push, he had taken the first step, but he would do no more. It would be her choice to seek them. The next step would have to be hers. The question was, did she want to take that step?

Her immediate response would have been no. but the more days passed the more she wanted to take his offer. She couldn't help but think that he would give her what she had always searched for but never truly gotten. Acceptance.

She was sure that he would give her that and more, she just needed to have the courage to take that next step.

Even so she was afraid. She had been hurt so many times, how much more could she take before she shattered? Could she take the risk? Was it worth it?

She thought back to their interactions. The bond that was there for all to see. She wanted that. And he had given her an opening. She just needed to be strong enough to take that step.
Was she strong enough?

"Luna!" she called before the little blond could leave the common room.

Luna looked around and when her eyes landed on her she smiled. It was all Fleur needed to get up and join her. She followed the younger blond out of the common room, ignoring the looks that followed her every step.

"You made the right choice." Luna told her, when they had left the common room, "Harry... he won't lead you wrong."

"How do you know?" she asked.

"Harry found me in my second year. I was naked in a cleaning cupboard. I was bullied a lot." Luna confessed, not looking at Fleur. "Harry took me in, he took care of me. Just as he will take care of you." Luna smiled at her, a big dreamy smile and she couldn't help but believe her. "You just have to trust him."

Trust. Could she trust him?

"Don't worry so much." Luna had stopped and was looking her in the eyes, "You just have to let yourself go."

"What if I can't?"

"You can. Otherwise you wouldn't be here. But above all, it's what you want, isn't it?" a knowing smile graced Luna's lips.

Fleur felt her heart race. Yes, she wanted it. She wanted what she had seen between Harry and his friends. She just never thought that she could have it. And now, now Harry was offering it to her.

Luna laughed and took her hand.

"Come, he's waiting."

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Time passed by in a heart beat and before Harry noticed it was the 31st of October. The castle was filled with a slightly nervous energy. Everyone was excited about the feast, since it would be when the champions for the Tournament would be selected.

Harry was also excited about it, not about the Tournament itself but because three members of his court had submitted their names.

Cedric, Viktor and Fleur. He had known that they would submit their names. However he was quite pleased when they had asked for his permission to do so.

At first Fleur had been a little unsure about the court. However when she saw that the boys treated her as any other member of the court, and Luna treated her as an older sister she started to feel more comfortable.

Just like Viktor she loved being appreciated for more than her looks.

When she learned that he owned Magic Today she had been more than impressed. Apparently her father had a subscription. When he had been in London for business he had read the paper and had signed up for a subscription. He had introduced the paper to several of his Ministry friends in France and they too had signed up. That had pleased him greatly. He had no idea that Magic Today was
making international waves as well.

Fleur had been rather proud to be part of something like that and had started working on it as soon as Harry assigned something to her. She had blossomed with them and she seemed to glow with happiness. She had confessed to them that Veela were social creatures and even though she wasn't a full Veela, she had enough Veela blood in her for it to influence her. Now that she had true friends, people who didn't lust after her or were jealous of her, she felt her Veela blood settle and felt truly happy for the first time since she started school.

Viktor had helped Fleur a lot with her creature side. Though many people weren't aware of it, Veela were originally from Bulgaria, so he had lots of books about them. He had asked his father to send them to him and had let Fleur read them.

Those books had helped her in understanding that side of her better.

Harry had suggested that she should try and control the change, like a full blooded Veela. It was a work in progress, but now she was able to control the Veela fire while in human form, not for very long, nor could she do all that much with it but it was a big step. Something that many people said was impossible. Harry had praised her for her progress and Fleur had been going around glowing with pride for two whole days.

All in all Harry was rather happy with all of his court. The new members fit in as if they had been there from the beginning and the older ones helped them feel welcome.

Having more older court members also helped in their training. They had become used to their fighting styles, so adding Wayne, Cedric, Fleur and Viktor to the fights and duels made it more interesting and allowed them to learn new things. Wayne was fast becoming one of the best students of their year, being neck and neck with the rest of the court members, and Cedric was evolving just as much, having finally caught up with Adrian, Graham and the twins. Viktor and Fleur had been a little better than Cedric in the dueling department, both having had tutoring in that field. However Cedric was more creative with the spells he did have so it evened out the field.

Harry had no idea if the three of them would be selected as champions, but if they were he would be hard pressed to say which one of them would have done better. As it was now, they were fairly evenly matched.

The Halloween feast seemed to take much longer than usual. Everyone in the Hall, judging by the constantly craning necks, the impatient expressions on every face, the fidgeting, and the standing up to see whether Dumbledore had finished eating yet, was anxiously awaiting the selection of the champions. Harry silently shook his head. He understood that they were all excited but they should at least have some decorum. He was glad that at least the Slytherins and his court were behaving as they should.

Finally, the golden plates returned to their original spotless state; there was a sharp upswing in the level of noise within the Hall, which died away almost instantly as Dumbledore got to his feet. On either side of him, Karkaroff and Maxime looked as tense and expectant as anyone. Ludo Bagman was beaming and winking at various students. Crouch, however, looked quite uninterested, almost bored. Why he was even there Harry had no idea. The last he heard he was viewed with very little trust in the Ministry. Though he supposed since he had been involved with the planning of the tournament they had to let him see it through. Still, considering his position one would think that he at least would make an effort to be likable, but he seemed to be perfectly content to stare off into space with an utterly bored look.

"Well, the goblet is almost ready to make its decision," said Dumbledore. "I estimate that it requires
He took out his wand and gave a great sweeping wave with it; at once, all the candles except those inside the carved pumpkins were extinguished, plunging them into a state of semidarkness. The Goblet of Fire now shone more brightly than anything in the whole Hall, the sparkling bright, blue-whiteness of the flames almost painful on the eyes. Everyone watched, waiting. A few people kept checking their watches.

The flames inside the Goblet suddenly turned red. Sparks began to fly from it. Next moment, a tongue of flame shot into the air, a charred piece of parchment fluttered out of it. The whole room gasped.

Dumbledore caught the piece of parchment and held it at arm's length, so that he could read it by the light of the flames, which had turned back to blue-white.

"The champion for Durmstrang," he read, in a strong, clear voice, "Will be Viktor Krum."

A storm of applause and cheering swept the Hall. Viktor Krum rose from the Slytherin table where he sat amongst the court. They smiled at him, their eyes filled with pride and when Harry gave him a warm, proud smile Viktor stood just a little bit straighter. He marched up toward Dumbledore with sure and confident steps, he turned right, walked along the staff table, and disappeared through the door into the next chamber.

"Bravo, Viktor!" boomed Karkaroff, so loudly that everyone could hear him, even over all the applause. "Knew you had it in you!"

Harry sneered in disgust. He wondered how long it would take for Karkaroff to realize that Viktor belonged to him now. Even the other professors had noticed that Viktor spent most of his time with the court.

The clapping and chatting died down. Now everyone's attention was focused again on the Goblet, which, seconds later, turned red once more. A second piece of parchment shot out of it, propelled by the flames.

"The champion for Beauxbatons," said Dumbledore, "Is Fleur Delacour!"

The Slytherins surprised everyone when they clapped as well. Harry chuckled when he saw their looks. Fleur was part of the court, of course the Slytherins would clap for her.

When Fleur too had vanished into the side chamber, silence fell again, but this time it was a silence so stiff with excitement you could almost taste it. The Hogwarts was next champion next.

And the Goblet of Fire turned red once more; sparks showered out of it; the tongue of flame shot high into the air, and from its tip Dumbledore pulled the third piece of parchment.

"The Hogwarts champion," he called, "Is Cedric Diggory!"

Every single Hufflepuff jumped to his or her feet, screaming and stamping, as Cedric made his way past them, grinning broadly, and headed off toward the chamber behind the teachers' table. The Slytherins joined them, making far more noise than they usually would. However, unlike the other students they weren't only celebrating the Hogwarts champion. They were celebrating the selection of all the champions. They were celebrating the fact that every champion was a court member. Harry's laughter went unnoticed in the midst of all the commotion, no matter who won, the court
would come out as the winner.

Indeed, the applause for Cedric went on so long that it was some time before Dumbledore could make himself heard again.

"Excellent!" Dumbledore called happily as at last the tumult died down. "Well, we now have our three champions. I am sure I can count upon all of you, including the remaining students from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, to give your champions every ounce of support you can muster. By cheering your champion on, you will contribute in a very real-" but Dumbledore suddenly stopped speaking, and it was apparent to everybody what had distracted him.

The fire in the goblet had just turned red again. Sparks were flying out of it. A long flame shot suddenly into the air, and borne upon it was another piece of parchment.

Automatically, it seemed, Dumbledore reached out a long hand and seized the parchment. He held it out and stared at the name written upon it. There was a long pause, during which Dumbledore stared at the slip in his hands, and everyone in the room stared at Dumbledore. And then Dumbledore cleared his throat and read out, "Harry Potter."

Well... fuck.

Almost as one every head in the Hall turned to stare at him. He ignored them, noticing that his court had their masks up and were glaring at everyone, daring them to say anything.

Slowly he stood up and looked at Dumbledore, waiting for instructions.

"Harry! Up here, if you please!" Harry nodded and walked up to the head table. Dumbledore indicated the door which the other champions had taken and he contained a sigh. Well, it didn't look like he had much of a choice.

As soon as he entered the room all three of his court members looked up. They were all sitting around the fireplace, chatting and laughing. They stopped when they saw it was him.

"Is something the matter Harry?" Cedric asked, getting up from his place.

"My name came out of the goblet." he told them, not able to mask the anger in his voice completely.

"What?" exclaimed Viktor. "Who would dare to put your name in?"

"I don't know." Harry sighed, slumping down on the armchair nearest him, he felt all three of them leave their places and stand beside him, "Dumbledore put the protection up. He was the one who cast the age line. I doubt that just anyone could have crossed it."

"Well, aside from who, we also have to wonder why." Fleur muttered, "Why would they put your name in?"

"It could be to test him." Cedric ventured, "To see how strong the Boy-Who-Lived truly is."

"Or to see how powerful the Slytherin King is." added Harry.

"No." Viktor refuted immediately, "The Slytherins would not betray you like that. Most worship you and the others would be far to afraid."

Before they could continue their conversation the door burst open and Dumbledore, followed by McGonagall, Snape, Karkaroff, Maxime, Crouch and Bagman, walked through.
Albus almost stopped in his tracks when he saw Harry. He was sitting in an armchair by the fire, looking as if he didn't have a care in the world. Around him were the other three champions, expressionless. He stomped down on the shiver that wanted to race down his spine. With every day that passed Harry resembled Tom more and more.

"Harry," he started before any of the others could say anything, "Did you put, or did you ask anyone to put, your name in the Goblet?"

"No," the boy replied. He looked at all of them coldly, daring them to contradict him.

"It is obvious the boy is lying." sneered Karkaroff.

Harry merely raised an eyebrow while Viktor took one step forward, as if shielding Harry.

"Harry is not lying." he stated, while the other two nodded.

"Viktor..." Karkaroff looked between his student and Harry, trying to understand what was right in front of him. A small smirk appeared briefly on Harry's lips when Karkaroff's eyes widened slightly.

"Then how do you explain his name coming from the Goblet?" Maxime asked then, glaring at Harry.

"It is obvious, non?" Fleur couldn't have sounded more condescending if she tried, "Someone put his name in."

"Why would anyone do that?" Snape sneered and the champion's eyes focused on him, glaring murderously. Harry almost chuckled, the dislike he had for the man had rubbed off on all of the court members.

"Well, that is the question, isn't it?" Cedric bit out.

"The most important question though, is whether or not I have to participate." Harry stated looking at them all.

"I... well, you see... Barty?" Bagman stuttered a little and Harry had to fight the urge to roll his eyes.

"We must follow the rules, and the rules state clearly that those people whose names come out of the Goblet of Fire are bound to compete in the tournament." he told him curtly, though he looked just as bored as he had in the Hall.

"Well, Barty knows the rule book back to front," said Bagman, beaming and turning back to Karkaroff and Madame Maxime, as though the matter was now closed.

"That can not be!" exclaimed Karkaroff, "Hogwarts can not have two champions!"

"And it won't." Harry cut in before the argument could escalate, "Hogwarts has one champion, Cedric."

"What about you boy? You are a Hogwarts student too." Karkaroff sneered and Harry had to fight of the urge to curse him.

"I could represent the Nobel and Ancient House of Potter," Harry stated, though when he saw the hateful look on Snape's face he continued before the man said something that would make him lose his mask, "However since it is a school tournament I could simply represent a group of students."

"What do you have in mind Mr. Potter?" McGonagall asked with a small smile, he was by far one of
her favorite students. There wasn't a day that went by that she didn't regret that he wasn't in her House.

"Well, Sirius and Remus have been telling me stories about my parents. And of course their years at Hogwarts were a big part of it. They mentioned the Marauders..." Dumbledore's eyes began to twinkle and Harry could swear that McGonagall was about to groan, "So, my friends and I have been thinking about a name for ourselves, just like they had..."

Dumbledore chuckled lightly.

"And what name did you come up with?"

"We thought about Ouroboros, since we are Slytherins and all."

"Ah. A good, strong name."

"Yes, we liked it. So, Cedric represents Hogwarts, the school as a whole. I represent Ouroboros, just a select few students. If by some miracle I happen to win, it would go down as a win for Ouroboros an independent group."

"Can we all agree to this?" Dumbledore asked around.

Maxime seemed satisfied and nodded. Karkaroff, huffed and puffed, though he ended up nodding anyway. Dumbledore clapped his hands, smiling at them.

"Wonderful. Since that is settled, shall we proceed with giving our champions the instructions?" Dumbledore asked Barty.

"The first task is designed to test your daring," Crouch told Harry, Cedric, Fleur, and Viktor, "so we are not going to be telling you what it is. Courage in the face of the unknown is an important quality in a wizard. The first task will take place on November the twenty-fourth, in front of the other students and the panel of judges.

"The champions are not permitted to ask for or accept help of any kind from their teachers to complete the tasks in the tournament. The champions will face the first challenge armed only with their wands. They will receive information about the second task when the first is over. Owing to the demanding and time-consuming nature of the tournament, the champions are exempted from end-of-year tests. I believe that is all, isn't it, Albus?"

"Yes, I believe it is." Dumbledore told him, looking him over slightly worried, "Sine that is everything you may go." he turned around to address the students, "I am sure all of your friends are anxiously awaiting to celebrate with you." he smiled at them.

Harry nodded and got up, he smiled and walked towards the door. The other three followed him.

"Meet us tomorrow morning before breakfast in the common room. I have to deal with the Slytherins tonight." Harry instructed them as soon as the door closed.

Cedric and Fleur nodded, going to their respective common rooms while Viktor followed him.

"I have a feeling it is going to be an interesting year." Harry muttered.

Viktor actually snorted and shook his head. Interesting wouldn't quite be the word he would use. As if knowing what he was thinking, Harry threw him a knowing smile and entered the common room. He had work to do.
Much later that night Albus was sitting in his office with Severus. As it had happen more and more lately their minds were on Harry Potter.

"It seems like staying with Sirius did him some good." Albus ended up muttering, gaining a snort from Severus.

"Good?"

"He seems to want to be closer to his parents."

"Albus, his little friends are nothing like the Marauders." Severus stated with a sneer of disgust, "They remind me more of the Death Eaters each passing day."

"Why do you insist on only seeing Harry in a bad light?"

"Why do you blind yourself to it?"

Albus sighed, he wasn't blind to it. He just wanted to believe that he hadn't lost Harry to the dark. Did that make him a bad person? Was he ignoring a potential danger just so he could have a little peace of mind?

"His court is growing," Severus said, his voice somewhat hollow, "Jugson is the Junior Undersecretary. Diggory is on his way to work at the Ministry as well. Krum is an international Quidditch star. Delacour has ties to the Veela. They are growing more powerful, they are spreading their influence. Every year they grow more loyal to him."

"I know Severus. I have seen it. However we have no indication that he intends to do anything nefarious with it. I have a support base as well, and I serve and lead the light."

"He is nothing like you, Albus. You know that. You've seen it. Why can't you just accept it? He is a raising Dark Lord. He even named his followers. It isn't some bid to feel closer to his parents. Reapers, Death Eaters, Ouroboros. They are the same thing. They represent followers of Dark Lords. You know it's the truth."

"I'm an old man, Severus. The only thing I have left his hope."

Severus shook his head and took a long gulp of his tea, wishing it was something stronger. Hope... he had lost hope a long time ago.
Chapter 16 – Snake

The following morning Harry woke up earlier than usual. He hadn't forgotten the events from the previous night. He cursed softly. He may not have shown it but he was angry. Not so much at the situation itself, because at the very least the tournament would be interesting and a good way to test his skills, but because someone had dared to make him compete against his will. When he found the person, or people, responsible for it, and he would find them, he would curse them to hell and back.

Still, there was no need to worry about it at the moment. He had more important things to do. And one of them was stopping his court from going on a rampage till they found the one responsible.

It didn't really surprise him to see all of his court in the common room when he entered. He doubted that most of them had even slept more than a few hours.

"Good morning." he greeted them, taking his usual seat.

"Ouroboros?" Cedric was the first to ask, a slight smile pulling at his lips.

Harry laughed. He hadn't explained the name to anyone the previous night. Hell he had only thought about it the minute they were arguing about Hogwarts having two champions. But the name had just appeared in his head and it felt right. Even his magic agreed. He could feel it under his skin, it seemed almost joyful when he even thought about the name.

"It's what we are." he told them, not bothering to hide the passion in his voice. He captured all of their attention. Their eyes intent on him. He let his magic flow, let them feel his joy at having that name, the rightness of it. "Ouroboros often symbolize something constantly re-creating itself, the eternal return, cycles that begin anew as soon as they end. It can also represent the idea of primordial unity related to something existing or persisting from the beginning with such force or qualities it cannot be extinguished, cannot be killed." he explained to them, "We are Ouroboros! No matter what they do, no matter how hard they try we will never be extinguished! Our ideas, our hopes and dreams will live on long after we are dead. We are eternal, we will always come back, stronger, better than we were before. We are Ouroboros!"

The fire in their eyes made him laugh, his magic dancing around him. He jumped to his feet and stood tall and proud in front of them. His eyes shinning with magic, a joyous smile on his lips.

"Ouroboros!" he exclaimed.

As one the court members knelt in front of him, their heads bowed. It was an almost involuntary reaction. Their own magics practically compelling them. They were taken with Harry's magic, with
his passion, his vision that they could only see glimpses of but knew was something breathtaking. They wanted it, their magics wanted it, so without a second thought to the consequences, to what it meant, they knelt.

"Ouroboros!" they chanted in unison, driven by magics far out of their control. Their magic surged around them, for a moment it was visible to everyone. Every color that they could possibly imagine danced around them. It interwove around each of them, for a moment they didn't know who's magic was who's. It made them feel connected in ways they hadn't thought possible, binding them in ways that were unbreakable. Then Harry laughed and his magic joined theirs. So much stronger than theirs and they all felt their own magic willingly submit. Then it settled and they looked up.

Harry was still standing there, his magic still dancing and flowing freely around him. He smiled at them, a proud look in his eyes and they smiled back. Not really understanding what had happened but knowing, the way only Luna usually did, that it was something important, meaningful, and that it was only the beginning.

Everyone else in the common room could do nothing but watch wide eyed as history was made right in front of them. The older students that were present, three seventh year Slytherins and four seventh year Durmstrang students were frozen in shocked disbelief. Their families were old, truly old and they knew the meaning of what had happened. They knew what it was and couldn't believe that they had witnessed it. They felt faint. They could only hope that the world was ready for what was to come.

"It went better than expected." remarked Theo, lounging in one of the couches spread around their training room.

"Yes, it seems that only the most obstinate believe that I entered myself in the tournament. Did you say anything to the Hufflepuffs?" he asked, looking at Cedric who was leaning against Adrian reading a book.

"Yeah. I told them that you didn't enter your name. Told them that you found the whole tournament rather bothersome and that you didn't want whatever fame the tournament could give you. They grumbled a bit, then I asked them to think back on the years that you have been at Hogwarts and asked them if you ever did anything at all to make them think that you would actually cheat. After that... well, they stopped grumbling pretty quickly."

"Chang ran interference in Ravenclaw." Fleur supplied, "When I arrived in the common room she was yelling at a boy that had called you a cheat. After her long lecture no one really believed that you had cheated."

"We interfered in Gryffindor. We told them that not even aging potions would have allowed you to pass the age line, so it had to be someone who was old enough to put your name in. We also said that we didn't believe you asked anyone to do it because you didn't seem like the type." Fred added.

"We couldn't give a better argument because we don't know you, right?" George chuckled a bit and the others smirked.

"Our dear brother was green with envy." muttered Fred. "He's one of the obstinate ones."

"That doesn't really surprise me." remarked Graham with a small smirk.

"Speaking about aging potions. Are they ready?" Harry inquired, looking curiously at the twins.

"Yes." they replied in unison.
"Why do you want the potions?" Wayne asked, putting the book down.

"Do you remember at the beginning of the year, I send Marcus a letter telling him I needed some information?" the others nodded and Harry continued, "I was asking for information about the trace and how it breaks." he had all of their attention now, "Apparently the trace breaks as soon as your body hits seventeen. Not on the day you turn seventeen, but when your body does."

"Does that mean..." Theo started with wide eyes.

"If we take an aging potion, enough to age us past seventeen, then the trace breaks. It doesn't know the difference between magical aging and natural aging. It just recognizes that the body is over seventeen."

"And when we revert back?" Draco asked, delight radiating from his very being.

"It doesn't matter. Once the trace is broken, they have to manually reapply it and there is no way for them to know if the trace was broken." Harry concluded a wide grin on his lips.

His court members were silent for no more than a second, then they started laughing.

Harry looked at the twins and they nodded, getting up to get the potion. The others calmed down, though there was a slightly nervous energy around them. Most of them did magic during the summer, their parents didn't really care, as long as it was nothing dangerous. However they could only do it in their manors, or in a place like the World Cup the previous summer. However with the trace gone they would be free to practice magic wherever they wanted.

The twins handed everyone, bar Cedric, Fleur and Viktor, a vial with a blueish potion.

"How much will it age us and for how long?" Harry asked curiously.

"Since you didn't tell us for what it was we made one of the potions that age you the most. It will add ten years to our current age." Fred explained.

"It will last one hour." added George, "Again, since we didn't know for what exactly you wanted it we picked one of those that lasted the longest."

Harry nodded and took out his wand. He cast a few *engorio* spells on his clothes, the others doing the same when they saw him.

"Cheers." he said cheerfully and downed the potion.

It was the strangest feeling he could imagine. His body stretched and filled out in a matter of seconds, and when it was over he was left doubled over and panting. He could hear that his friends were in the same condition.

Slowly he stood straighter, feeling his muscles stretch and his bones pop. He looked around and smiled when he saw his friends. Fleur, Cedric and Viktor were almost gaping.

Luna was a true beauty. She had grown in all the right ways and if he didn't know any better he would say that she had some Veela blood in her. She could pass as a relative of Fleur's, though Luna had a more ethereal quality to her beauty. It probably came from her dreamy look.

Draco looked exactly like Lucius, though with short, slightly mused up hair.

The twins were more muscled and even taller than before, though aside from that they remained the
Theo looked more aristocratic. He had grown into his looks and had become quite handsome. From the pictures he had seen he would say that he looked more like his father.

Graham was taller as well, his body more defined and muscled. His features sharpened a little more and became more refined.

Adrian grew a little, however he maintained that boyish look he had. It was rather adorable and Harry knew how much it angered him when anyone even thought that. Though it was something that he seemed to be cursed with, since all the males in his family had that boyish look, even his grandfather that was well into his sixties.

Neville changed a lot. His body was very well developed, with lean muscles that would make any girl or boy droll. He didn't look like a masculine version of his mother anymore. His features sharpened and he had a five o'clock shadow that gave him a bad boy look.

Wayne grew to be almost as tall as the twins. His golden blond hair gained a slight wave and almost reached his shoulders. He had what the muggles would call a surfer look, though Harry was sure that if he wanted to, he could look just as refined as Draco.

Blaise was rather handsome as well. He grew into his exotic looks, with his violet eyes and mocha skin. He looked a lot like his mother, though a far more masculine version. It was no wonder that his mother managed to have so many husbands even after all those mysterious deaths.

"Oh... wow." Theo's slightly breathless exclamation brought him out of his observations.

He looked around and noticed they were all staring at him.

"Is something wrong?"

"Nothing." replied Fred.

"It's just... well, we always knew you were beautiful... Now, though..."

"What? Did I grow ugly?" that thought didn't please him at all. He was used to being beautiful, he knew how to use it, he enjoyed it. The thought that he had somehow gotten ugly was difficult to accept.

"You're..."

"I think the word Blaise is looking for is sinful." Fleur added helpfully.

Harry picked up his wand and conjured a mirror. Well... no wonder they had been staring.

He had grown a little. He was the smallest of the boys, though not by much, just an inch or two, smaller than Adrian. If he had to guess he would say that he was around 5'8, not the tallest around but not small either. Though it didn't surprise him that he wasn't as tall as the others, Sirius had told him that his mother was rather on the petite side and he guessed that was one of the reasons why he hadn't grown as much as the others. His hair brushed a little passed his shoulders, it was just as silky as always, with a slight wave. His skin was a beautiful peach color which made his blood red lips pop. His eyes were the same Avada Kedavra green they had always been. All in all he thought he looked the same, the biggest difference was that he had lost any childish trace he previously had.

"I look basically the same." he told them and the twins snorted.
"Harry currently more than half the school wants to jump you, if they saw you now..." George muttered.

"As if I would want anything to do with them." a little bit of his disdain leaked into his tone and Theo shook his head.

"I don't think we will ever find anyone who you would tolerate."

"I'm not that bad," he didn't pout, no matter how much the looks he was getting stated otherwise, "I like all of you, don't I?"

He was rewarded with smiles from all of them.

"We love you too." replied Blaise, laughing when Harry glared at him.

"Yeah, yeah. Start training." Harry told them. Not able to completely mask the smile that appeared on his lips.

They chuckled and spread around the room, most of them having a little bit of difficulty with their balance. Though they quickly got a hang of their new, temporary, height and started their training. Harry picked up a book and started to read, the smile still on his face.

Who would have thought that he would become so connected with people? He used to despise human interactions. He had seen them as a waste of time, and most of them weren't even worth the effort. But these people... Somehow they had gotten through to him. Even though he knew he was better than them, he still enjoyed their presence and he knew that if anyone harmed them it would make him rather angry. They were his, his Ouroboros. He always took care of what was his.

"Harry." Fleur called and he looked over to see her with a piece of parchment in her hand. "Can you tell me what to do with this now?"

"It's the parchment from the black dummy?" he asked, getting up.

She nodded and gave him the parchment.

"Why are some of the spells written in red, others in yellow and a few in green?"

"It's what the black dummies do. They register every spell you throw at it, the color represents how the spell was. Green, the spell was cast perfectly. Yellow means the spell was underpowered, and red means it was overpowered." Harry explained, "The blue dummies will help you to master the spell. They will glow either green, red or yellow, depending on how your spell was."

"What's the difference?" Fleur asked, following him to the blue dummies.

"Well, if you under power a spell it won't be as effective. If you over power it it may blow up in your face or cause more damage than what you thought it would. However if you master a spell you will be able to regulate how much power you want the spell to have. Take Incendio for example, if you master it you will be able to only give it enough power to light a candle or make it hot enough to melt stone. It will be only a matter of control and will. However you must master it before. Understand?" Fleur nodded and Harry continued, "I would advice to start with the first on the list and work your way down, even the ones that are green. You should cast the spell till the dummy only turns green. When it turns green ten times in a row, you should cast the spell but underpowered, till you manage it ten times in a row as well. Then overpower it. Then try to interchange the intensity of it. After you can regulate it, you should start with another spell."
"Did all of you do that?" she asked curious.

"We still do it." he replied.

She nodded and took back her list. She had a determined light in her eyes and Harry smiled, she had a lot of work ahead of her, only determination would help her achieve it.

Harry was talking from experience. Even the older members of the court were still mastering their spells. It was hard work and seemingly endless, since they constantly learned new spells. Though in the end it was worth it. It gave the twins the skills they needed to accio their brother's nails and his tongue. They had needed to know exactly how strong the spell had to be to be able to do it. He was rather proud of all of them, they were improving so quickly. He knew that there was no student in the school that would beat them.

The next morning things had calmed down a bit. The students realized that Harry wasn't behaving any differently than he always had and went back to their usual staring and whispering. Granger and Weasley glared at him every chance they got, but he had become quite good at ignoring them. Beside Fleur had found a new hobby, every time the red head even came near them and opened his mouth she flared her allure. The poor boy would become a stuttering mess. She had even managed to make him drool in more than one occasion. It was great entertainment for all of them and he knew that Graham was trying to convince Fleur to make Weasley do something while under her allure. She always told him no, though Harry could see that she was close to giving in. He would wait and see, it would be rather fun to see the mindless idiot become even more mindless. Though he hadn't thought that was possible.

Granger on the other hand would glare and mutter under her breath about cheats and arrogant brats who thought they were better than her. It was amusing. Even if his court thought otherwise. He had to stop Theo from cursing her more than a handful of times. Neville on the other hand seemed quite pleased with himself, and when asked why he revealed that he had hit Granger with a nightmare curse. It was mild but strong enough to prevent her from having a peaceful sleep.

He sighed when he sat down for breakfast. He couldn't believe that all of that happened only in two days. He hoped that it calmed down, otherwise he was sure that the year would be a lot more stressful than what he had anticipated.

A loud cawing caught his attention when the morning post flew in and he look up, spotting Charon amongst the morning post owls.

He smiled when he saw Snape scowling. He knew that Snape hated that he had the crow with him but he had asked McGonagall if he could and she had allowed it. Since she was Deputy Headmistress Snape could do nothing about it.

Charon gathered a lot of attention, he hadn't been in the Great Hall yet, so only the court had actually seen him. A few first years seemed rather afraid of the larger than normal crow, however the looks that caught his attention were Moody's. Moody seemed to be paying far more attention to Charon than anyone else. Though he couldn't really identify what the look was. It became rather difficult to read the man when most of his face was a mess of scars, and that magical eye didn't make it any easier.

"Hey Charon." he stroked Charon's feathers when he landed beside him, putting Moody out of his mind. "You took a bit longer than I was expecting. Everything alright?" Charon cawed again and nibbled on his finger. He stuck his leg out, showing him the letter and package attached to it.
"Alright, I'll take it off." he was rather curious about the package. "Will you go out hunting or do you want to have something here and then rest?"

Charon cawed, spread his wings and took flight. Harry chuckled and opened his letter, ignoring the looks he was getting.

'My dear Harry,

It seems it won't be quite the calm school year you had been expecting. Though I have to say the threats you made to those that entered you in the tournament were rather interesting. I do not think I will ever look at a spoon quite the same way again.

I would never presume to think that the tournament would frighten you. From what I know of you it is obvious that you fear very little.

Though I understand your uneasiness about the whole matter. Not about participating, but about the thought that someone entered you in the tournament. As you said it could be a prank gone wrong, however both of us know that Dumbledore is a powerful wizard, to have been able to break or circumvent his age line required skill. I doubt that someone would do that as a mere prank. That doesn't mean, however, that who ever did it means you harm. Not knowing who did it it makes it so that there are endless of possibilities and you can do no more than speculate about it.

My advice would be to just do your best in the tournament and ignore, at least for the moment, how you were entered.

Regarding Karkaroff, yes I know him. I doubt anyone would miss him. From what I remember he had no family and any friends he may have had disappeared after he betrayed the Death Eaters. He has been living on borrowed time since that day. I'm surprised no one killed him yet. Though I suppose that people have been lying low since the Dark Lord went missing. Why do you ask?

I'm still in England, though I have finished my business with Lucius. I believe I will be staying for a while. Would you like for me to go see the tasks? I would rather enjoy it, though more because it would give me the opportunity to see you again.

I can understand your boredom, I felt the same in classes. That's why I always had little projects going on. I invented a lot of spells while I was a student. Unfortunately after I was done with school I didn't have as much time as I used to have to dedicate myself to spell-crafting. It still is one of the branches of magic that fascinates me the most. I could hardly believe it when the Ministry outlawed it. It's as if they want our society to become stagnant. I may despise muggles but at least they try to evolve.

Though I do agree that their evolution will be their own destruction. They evolve technological but their beliefs stay the same. They never outgrew their prejudices or their fears of the unknown, so most of their creations are war oriented. I still find it difficult to believe that they created something as devastating as the Atomic bomb. That they actually used it... well, it says a lot about them, doesn't it? They create so much, always bettering what they have that they don't give the planet time to recover. They remind me of a swarm of grasshoppers. They devour everything in their path, with no regard to how it will affect the rest of the world.

We are stagnate and they are not, but either way both of us are heading to our own destruction.

I could not care less about the muggles but I will do anything that I can to save our own kind.

I don't really know how, but we always end up speaking about something profound and meaningful.
It's no wonder that I sometimes forget just how young you are. Your age has been one of the things that has been causing me a lot of headaches, you know? I am not a good man, I never was, I never will be. I have done horrible things and I regret none of it. However I have never touched a child, nor have I ever felt so inclined. But you... you make me want to do things that would have send me straight to hell if I did already have a place there.

How did we end up here anyway?... Oh, yes, we were talking about spell-crafting. I have send you a book about the subject. I found it quite interesting. Maybe it will help you with your boredom, it certainly helped with mine. Though I do have to ask you to be careful. Spell-crafting is quite dangerous and I don't want for anything to happen to you.

Hope you enjoy it my little serpent.

Yours,

T.N.'

When he finished the letter he put the book that Tom had send him in his pocket without opening it. He knew that spell-crafting books were outlawed. Though he had no doubt that Tom would have made it impossible for others to see what the book was about, there was no reason to be careless.

"He's important." Luna remarked nonchalantly.

"Is he?" he asked, folding his letter back and putting it in his pocket as well.

"Yes, his choices will affect us just as much as yours will." now that caught the attention of every Ouroboros nearby.

"Why?" Draco inquired, his eyes narrowing.

"I don't know. But I do know that he is powerful and dangerous. He doesn't let anything get in his way. He always gets what he wants and he wants our King."

There was a loud crack throughout the Great Hall, some students let out frightened screams, while others looked around trying to figure out what had happened. Fred, George, and Neville looked at the court sitting at the Slytherin table. They had recognized the magic that had lashed out through the Great Hall.

"Control yourselves." Harry snapped, when he saw Snape glaring at them. The professors had no idea what had happened but Harry knew that Snape would use any and all opportunity to do anything to them, well, more to him. Still, they didn't need to draw more attention to themselves.

"Sorry." they replied, trying to reign in their magic that was still violently flowing around them.

"What is the matter with you?" Harry muttered, a little bewildered.

"Didn't you hear what Luna said?" Theo asked through gritted teeth.

"Yes, I did. So?"

"He wants you!" Theo snapped.

"I know Theo." Harry said, trying to control his temper, "What is the problem with that? I quite enjoyed myself with him. I like to play with him."

"I... I just worry." replied Theo, his eyes down, a little blush staining his cheeks.
Harry's expression softened slightly, they worried so much about him.

"I know Theo. But I can take care of myself. Beside I enjoy it, talking with Tom makes me quite happy. And playing with him is exhilarating." he smiled softly at them, "I'll go pack what he sent me, better safe than sorry."

"It's not meant to be." stated Luna as soon as Harry was gone.

"What?" Theo asked, when he saw that she was looking at him.

"You and him."

The others looked at him and he almost winced. He was expecting to see anger in their eyes and was rather surprised when he only found understanding.

"I..." he didn't really know what to say, what could he say?

"I am sorry. But I know you won't stay with him." Luna told him, and she did sound sorry, "None of us will." she whispered, "He could seduce any of us and all of us would willing be his lover but he wouldn't keep any of us. It just isn't meant to be."

"Does he know that?" Adrian asked and there was a little bit of longing in his voice. Theo looked at him surprised and Adrian gave him a somewhat sad smile, "It is rather easy to fall in love with him." Adrian told him, "We do our best to ignore it. I think I knew that I would never be with him, and I know that I will fall in love with someone else and move on. Though I think there will always be a small part of me that will always be in love with him."

"That's normal." Luna informed them, "We are his completely. We belong to him, our bodies, minds and souls. It's because we are the first ones. The connection to the Lord is always strongest in the first followers. Those that come after us will never share this bond. And no, he doesn't know."

"Does it make a difference? Him not knowing?" Graham asked.

"In a way, it will. Though now none of you will be heartbroken when he realizes it."

"Heartbroken?" Fleur looked at her curiously.

"We all know the truth now. Even if Harry comes to us, we will know that it won't last. It won't be as hard to let him go."

"How do you know that we will let him go?" Wayne asked her.

"Because his wants are more important than our own."

They were silent for a few moments, then Blaise started to laugh.

"It's ridiculous, you know?" he said after he had his laughter under control, "If he ended up with one of you, even if it were just to have a good time, I don't think I would mind. But simply thinking of him with Nacht makes me want to kill Nacht." none of them doubted that he was serious.

"I don't think Harry would like that." Viktor said, though he did sound a little downcast about that fact.

"That is the only reason why we didn't do anything at the World Cup." muttered Draco.

"As I said, his wants are more important than ours."
"Is it always like this?" Cedric asked them, "With all Lords?"

"It depends." Luna answered him, while the others looked at her curiously, they wanted to know too. Even though they accepted what they felt and somehow knew that they were making their own choices, they wanted to know if it was all something out of their control, if it was some higher magic dictating their path. "For example, Grindelwald rose to power when he was older, he met his first followers when he was older. It is true that he set out to become a Dark Lord when he was still in school, but he only achieved it after he had left school, and he only meet those that became his first followers, around that same time. Their connection was strong, but different. They weren't as protective of him, not as comfortable with him, not as close emotionally. Mostly because they meet in different stages of their lives. And they were even less close to each other. Voldemort started younger than Grindelwald, though that is all I know about how he began. But I know that he wasn't as close to his first followers. From what little information I have, I've concluded that he was much colder to them than Harry is to us. We are the way we are, because Harry is how he is. He treats us with kindness, he laughs, smiles. He makes us happy, worries about us, protects us. Our bond is as strong as it is, because he allowed himself to get close to us."

"I think I understand." muttered Fleur, "The bond is the way it is because we want it and because he allows it."

"Yes."

"It's funny," remarked Theo, "I think the only reason why he let us become as close as we have is because he never thought about becoming a Dark Lord."

"It's true." agreed Adrian, "Even now, that he is only a breath away from becoming one, he still doesn't think he will be one."

"He achieved it without even trying. It is a rather terrifying thought, isn't it?" Graham asked.

"How close is he?" Cedric asked and he couldn't quite conceal the excitement he felt.

"Two little steps." replied Blaise a smirk appearing on his lips, "I can hardly wait."

"Do you think he knows?" Viktor asked them.

"No. He hasn't found the information yet." Luna replied, "And we agreed not to tell him."

"Why?" Wayne asked, he hadn't known either. It was information that was passed down in several dark families, others had books where it was written. He being a first generation wizard didn't have access to any of that until recently and he hadn't found anything about it either. The information he did have had been given to him by his fellow Ouroboros.

"If it is the right path for us he will achieve it either way. It isn't our place to steer him in that direction. It is his choice and his alone." Luna told him and he nodded. It made sense, they followed him, not the other way around.

"We can do nothing but wait." Cedric muttered and the others nodded.

They could do nothing but wait and hope that they would have their Lord soon.

Harry was counting the minutes till the end of potions class. He didn't think it was possible but Snape had become even more insufferable since his name came out of the goblet a few days ago. Really could he make it anymore clear that he didn't like Harry? If the glares weren't enough, getting
deducted twenty points for breathing would have clued everyone else in.

A knock on the door interrupted his glaring at Snape.

"Come in." snarled Snape, taking his eyes of Harry.

Harry glanced at the door and saw a small Gryffindor standing there. He looked a little pale, Harry suspected it was because he had interrupted Snape's class. It was well known throughout Hogwarts that the only thing that Snape hated just as much as Harry was Gryffindors.

"So-sorry, professor Snape, sir." stuttered the little Gryffindor looking at the floor.

"What Creevey?" barked Snape, looking ready to murder the little lion.

"Mister Bagman told me to get Harry Potter for the Weighting of the Wands ceremony."

Harry almost groaned, he had forgotten that as a champion he had to participate in those things. Though if it allowed him to leave Snape's presence than he wouldn't complain.

"I see." Snape said flatly, "Unfortunately Potter has classes. He'll go when the class ends."

"B-bu-but, Mister Bagman said to bring him, the other champions are already there." Creevey told Snape, proving why he was a lion.

Snape glared and Harry smirked, he picked up his things and started packing.

"Where do you think you are going?" snarled Snape, looking like he would like nothing better than to curse him.

"Well, I think it's rather obvious isn't it?" Harry asked, a small smirk appearing on his lips.

Snape opened his mouth, then his eyes settled on either side of him and he closed it again. Harry knew why. He could feel Theo, Draco and Blaise's magic surging to the surface. He didn't need to look at them to know that they were glaring. He saw the pain that briefly flashed in Snape's eyes when he locked eyes with Draco.

"Get out." he snarled and Harry almost chuckled. Really, Snape made tormenting him rather easy. Maybe he'll have Draco kill him, it would be so amusing to see the despair and betrayal in those dark eyes.

As soon as the door closed Harry chuckled, and he saw the little lion look at him as if he was insane.

"So, where are we going?" he did his best to sound as friendly as possible.

Apparently he succeeded because the younger boy relaxed and smiled.

"They are all meeting in a classroom upstairs. The others are already there, apparently they were informed by their Head of House, in Cedric's case, and by their Headmasters in the case of the foreign students."

"Ah, no wonder I didn't know." Harry muttered.

They made the rest of the walk in silence, which was fine by Harry, he didn't really feel all that inclined to have meaningless conversations.

"It's that one," Creevey said pointing at the door, "I... I believe you. That you didn't enter the
Harry smiled and saw a small blush appear on the boy's cheeks.

"Thank you." Harry told him warmly, his smile warming just a little. The boy blushed even more and almost ran away from him. Harry chuckled darkly. The boy was adorably innocent. He really wanted to destroy that.

He opened the door and saw that it was a rather small classroom. Most of the desks had been pushed against the walls. Though there were a few in the middle of the classroom, where most of the people were gathered.

He spotted Cedric, Viktor and Fleur immediately. They were sitting a little separated from everyone else, though it was obvious that Karkaroff and Maxime were trying to get closer to their champions. Dumbledore wasn't even trying to get closer to Cedric, he had seen the look that the three champions were sending the professors, and it was more than obvious that they didn't want them present. It seemed that Dumbledore accepted it, while the others were stubbornly persisting.

Bagman suddenly spotted Harry, got up quickly, and bounded forward.

"Ah, here he is! Champion number four! In you come, Harry, in you come... nothing to worry about, it's just the Wand Weighing ceremony. We have to check that your wands are fully functional, no problems, you know, as they're your most important tools in the tasks ahead," said Bagman. "The expert will arrive in a moment. And then there's going to be a little photo shoot. This is Rita Skeeter," he added, gesturing toward the witch in magenta robes. "She's doing a small piece on the tournament for Magic Today and beside her is Juliette Summers," this time he gestured towards a witch in yellow robes, "She is the reporter for the Daily Prophet."

"Actually," Rita interrupted, "If Mr. Potter allows it I would like to do a piece about the youngest champion."

"Alright. Though I'll have Cedric, Viktor and Fleur do the piece with me. We are all close friends. It wouldn't feel right to leave them out of it."

"After the ceremony?"

"What about the Daily Prophet?" Summers interjected

"What about it?" asked Harry, his voice getting a little colder.

"I would like to interview you as well. Tell the people how you entered the tournament, why you did it. Tell your story."

"I see." his voice was flat, cold.

Suddenly there were three other people behind him and he saw Summers taking a step back.

"Harry didn't enter the tournament." Cedric stated, his voice as cold as ice. "If the Prophet says otherwise I'll sue it for slandering an underage wizard. Do I make myself clear?"

"I have a right to write about the tournament." Summers stated, though she didn't sound all that confident.

"Yes, about the tournament." this time Harry was the one who spoke, "Not about me, or my life. You may mention that I am the fourth champion. You may say that we do not know how my name
came from the goblet. You may even say that I am a Slytherin and the youngest champion. When the
tasks come, you may report about how I did in them. However everything else, or any speculation
about me, or my personal life, will stay out of that paper. Do I make myself clear?” his voice would
have frozen lava, though it was the look in his eyes that made Summers nod. There was something
there that made a shiver run down her spine. "Good. Rita, we will do the interview after the
ceremony."

Rita nodded. She was a little paler. She remembered their first meeting as if it was yesterday. He had
been scary then, now he was downright terrifying. Something told her that accepting his offer had
been the best decision in her life. Anything to have those eyes aimed at someone else was bound to
be a good choice.

Harry joined the other champions, sitting on an armchair with the others around him.

Dumbledore couldn't help but sigh when he saw them. He knew that no matter who won the
tournament, Ouroboros would win. Harry had played it rather well. Young Cedric, Mr. Krum and
the delightful Miss Delacour were all part of Harry's court. They were all Ouroboros. No matter what
the rest of the world may think, the win would be Harry's either way.

He had to admit he hadn't seen it coming. Even when Harry had suggested it, he hadn't thought
about the consequences of agreeing. Now though, now he could see it. He understood the meaning
of having allowed it. But even though he saw the danger he couldn't bring himself to think that Harry
had chosen the same path as Tom. They were similar, there was no denying that, however by the
time Tom was Harry's age he had been cold and closed off. Even to his court. He had found little
interest in human interactions. He tolerated his court but that was it. Harry on the other hand had true
friendships with his court members. Even his court members were different. True, Nott, Malfoy,
Montague and Pucey had been names that were in Tom's court as well. However Diggory was a
known light family, Hopkins was a muggle-born, Lovegood was an eccentric girl and Delacour was
a quarter Veela. None of them were people that he would have added to his court. And even though
courts were rare, not all of them had ended up being Dark Lords. Most just went on to being
influential politicians, or business men.

A knock on the door brought him out of his thoughts. The door opened and Minerva appeared with
Ollivander.

"Thank you Minerva." he said, getting up from his seat. Minerva nodded and left, she still had a class
to teach. Though he saw the minuscule smile that appeared on her lips when she saw Harry. He was
by far one of her favorite students. It didn't really surprise him, it was hard not to be charmed by
Harry.

"Ah, old friend, I'm glad you could make it." he smiled and gestured towards the seat they had
arranged for him, "May I introduce Mr. Ollivander?" he said, taking his place at the judges' table,
addressing the champions, "He will be checking your wands to ensure that they are in good
condition before the tournament."

Harry almost groaned, he didn't want for everyone to know about the similarities between his and
Voldemort's wand. Not that he was ashamed of it, far from it actually. However he knew that it
would draw far to much attention.

"Mademoiselle Delacour, could we have you first, please?" said Ollivander, taking the seat that had
been arranged for him in the middle of the room.

Fleur swept over to Ollivander and handed him her wand.
"Hmm..." he said. He twirled the wand between his long fingers like a baton and it emitted a number of pink and gold sparks. Then he held it close to his eyes and examined it carefully.

"Yes," he said quietly, "Nine and a half inches... inflexible... rosewood... and containing... dear me..."

"A hair from the head of a Veela," said Fleur. "One from my grand-mère."

"Yes," said Ollivander, "Yes, I've never used Veela hair myself, of course. I find it makes for rather temperamental wands... however, to each his own, and if this suits you..."

Harry had to contain a chuckle. Temperamental was a word that described Fleur rather well. She masked it with her good manners and icy mask, but when she was amongst those she trusted, she was just as fiery as the creature she could turn into.

Ollivander ran his fingers along the wand, apparently checking for scratches or bumps; then he muttered, "Orchideous!" and a bunch of flowers burst from the wand tip.

"Very well, very well, it's in fine working order," said Ollivander, scooping up the flowers and handing them to Fleur with her wand.

"Mr. Diggory, you next."

Fleur glided back to her seat, smiling at Cedric as he passed her.

"Ah, now, this is one of mine, isn't it?" said Ollivander, with much more enthusiasm, as Cedric handed over his wand. "Yes, I remember it well. Containing a single hair from the tail of a particularly fine male unicorn... must have been seventeen hands; nearly gored me with his horn after I plucked his tail. Twelve and a quarter inches... ash... pleasantly springy. It's in fine condition... You treat it regularly?"

"Yes," replied Cedric with a small smile, "Wands are as important to a wizard as our own arms, aren't they?"

Ollivander nodded, pleased with Cedric's answer.

Harry looked down at his own wand. Though he could still use magic without his wand, and he enjoyed playing with his magic without his wand just as much as with his wand. He would never deny that his wand was very important to him. Just thinking about losing it, about breaking the constant connection he felt with it was almost physically painful.

Ollivander sent a stream of silver smoke rings across the room from the tip of Cedric's wand, pronounced himself satisfied, and then said, "Mr. Krum, if you please."

Viktor got up and marched towards Ollivander. He had an almost military walk and Harry smiled. He like this side of Viktor. The Soldier. He thrust out his wand and stood scowling, with his hands behind his back. Even his stance was somewhat militaristic.

Harry couldn't help but imagine all of his Ouroboros standing in front of him in the same stance. If he closed his eyes he could see them. Standing tall and proud in a black and silver uniform, the Ouroboros proudly displayed on their backs. He could feel his magic rush in his veins just thinking about it.

"Hmm," said Ollivander, breaking him out of his thoughts, calming his magic instantly. "This is a Gregorovitch creation, unless I'm much mistaken? A fine wand-maker, though the styling is never
He lifted the wand and examined it minutely, turning it over and over before his eyes.

"Yes... hornbeam and dragon heartstring?" he shot at Viktor, who nodded. "Rather thicker than one usually sees... quite rigid... ten and a quarter inches... *Avis!*"

The hornbeam wand let off a blast hike a gun, and a number of small, twittering birds flew out of the end and through the open window into the watery sunlight.

"Good," said Ollivander, handing Viktor back his wand. "Which leaves... Mr. Potter."

Harry got to his feet and walked past Viktor to Ollivander. He handed over his wand.

"Aah, yes," said Ollivander, his pale eyes suddenly gleaming. "Yes, yes, yes. How well I remember."

Harry could remember too. He could remember it as though it had happened yesterday.

How could he forget? He had always known that he was special, but that day confirmed it. Not only had he learned that he was a wizard but his wand was proof that he had some connection to Voldemort. That almost meant more to him than finding out he was a wizard. Almost.

"It has served you well." Ollivander stated more than asked.

"It has." Harry replied nonetheless.

"I see... I was hoping... well, an old man's wish means nothing." he muttered and Harry narrowed his eyes. He didn't like what Ollivander was implying, he didn't like it at all.

Ollivander spent much longer examining Harry's wand than anyone else's. Eventually, however, he made a fountain of wine shoot out of it, and handed it back to Harry, announcing that it was still in perfect condition.

"Thank you all," said Dumbledore, standing up at the judges' table. "You may go back to your lessons now or perhaps it would be quicker just to go down to dinner, as they are about to end."

"Just a moment Headmaster Dumbledore." Rita interfered, "I asked for a little interview and it was agreed that the champions would answer my questions after the ceremony. If they don't mind I would like to start now."

"If they all agree, I see no inconvenience." replied Dumbledore, looking at them all. Seeing them nod, Dumbledore ushered the others out, including a slightly protesting Summers, though one look at Harry and she shut up rather quickly.

As soon as they were alone Harry sprawled himself on an armchair, the other three taking seats on either side of him.

"Now Rita, ask your questions." Harry told her, a smirk playing on his lips.

Harry couldn't contain his chuckle when the owls arrived with the newspapers. Some students still received the Daily Prophet and Theo handed it to him. It was easy to see that he wasn't all that happy with the story in the Prophet. Harry could see why. Summers had gone and did the one thing he had told her not to. She didn't mention him by name. But it went on and on about how the sanctity of the tournament had been compromised because some people thought they were above the rules. She had
played her hand, and Harry had to admire her guts, but he wasn't happy about it.

However when the students started reading Magic Today and discarded the Prophet immediately Harry smiled. Really, no matter what Summers said it couldn't beat the story in Magic Today, he had made sure of that.

He accepted the paper that Draco gave him and started reading.

'Quadwizard Tournament'

My dear readers, as it had been reported in previous editions of our paper, the Triwizard Tournament would take place this year at Hogwarts. Many had been anticipating the start of the tournament with great enthusiasm. Mostly the students from the schools, not only because they would be able to see one of the most famous tournaments of our world, but also because it would allow them to interact with a number of students from different backgrounds.

However on the night of Samhain a fourth name came out of the Goblet of Fire. No one was more surprised by this than the person it happened too.

I was given the privilege of interviewing the four champions and ask them what they think of this unusual event.

Rita Skeeter: Now, for our readers, I would like if all of you could introduce yourselves. Nothing much, just so our readers get to know you a little.

Fleur Delacour: Well, my name is Fleur Delacour. I'm seventeen, I go to Beauxbatons and my favorite subject is Charms. I have a little sister named Gabrielle. And I enjoy reading and learning new magics.

Viktor Krum: I am Viktor Krum. I'm seventeen and go to Durmstrang. I play on the Bulgarian national Quidditch team. Though I enjoy learning magic just as much as I love flying.

Cedric Diggory: My name is Cedric Diggory. I'm seventeen, I go to Hogwarts and was sorted into Hufflepuff. I don't really have a favorite subject, I just love learning magic.

Harry Potter: I'm Harry Potter. I'm fourteen, I go to Hogwarts and was sorted into Slytherin. Charms and Transfiguration are among my favorite subjects, though I enjoy all the others as well.

Yes, as you must already have guessed, Harry Potter is the fourth champion.

RS: Now, how is it that the Triwizard Tournament has four champions?

CD: We don't really know.

VK: We know that Harry didn't enter the Tournament, nor did he ask anyone to enter him into the Tournament.

FD: We suspect a prank gone wrong. It is normal for pranks to occur. We think that in this case someone took it to far and didn't know that Harry would have to compete if his name came out of the Goblet.

RS: Is there any proof to sustain your claim of a prank gone wrong?

HP: No, at least we don't have any. If the professors investigated the matter and found something
out then we don't know about it.

RS: Then how can you be sure?

HP: Well, what other reason could there be?

RS: Some people could argue that you entered it to gain fame.

FD: Oh, please... Fame? You do know who he is, don't you?

CD: Besides, anyone who knows Harry, knows that he doesn't really like his fame. All these years have you ever seen him do anything that indicates that he his some sort of fame seeking brat?

As you probably know, there truly had been nothing over the years that would indicate that young Harry was such a person. The first and only interview he ever gave, was years ago. The interview itself was a small little piece on how he was adjusting to his life in our world that revealed how our young Savior suffered in the beginning of his life. As I see it, that same interview served to show us just how down to earth the young man is.

RS: You are right, of course. That however does not change the fact that Harry will have to compete. How do all of you feel about that?

CD: I'm a little angry. Not with Harry, it isn't his fault. I'm angry that he has to compete. He is the youngest, we have three more years of school than him.

VK: We know that Harry is a prodigy, but he is our friend and we do not want to see him hurt. Nor do we want him to be in danger.

FD: We volunteered for this, he did not.

RS: What about you, Harry?

HP: I'm a little excited. The tournament is bound to be interesting, right? But, realistically, I know that there is almost no chance for me to win. Fleur, Cedric and Viktor are amongst the best in their year and they are three years ahead of me. Still, it could be fun, right? I know that the tasks are dangerous, but I won't put myself at risk. I'll do the best I can and hope that it's enough.

RS: And what do you think about Hogwarts having two champions?

VK: Hogwarts doesn't have two champions.

RS: What do you mean?

CD: Well, the rules are rather clear, each school can only have one champion.

RS: Yes, but both Cedric and Harry are Hogwarts students.

FD: True, however, when the names came out of the Goblet they also said which school they represent. Mine said Beauxbatons, Viktor's said Durmstrang and Cedric's said Hogwarts. Harry's didn't say anything.

HP: Which means that I do not represent any school.

RS: How did you resolve the situation then?
HP: It was agreed that I would represent a group of students. When my father went to Hogwarts he formed a little group with his friends, they called themselves the Marauders. So we went with a similar idea. Instead of representing Hogwarts I would represent a specific group. If I happened to win, the win would go down as an independent group having won.

RS: And the name of said group?

HP: Ouroboros.

RS: I see. And everyone agreed to those terms?

VK: Yes. We believe it is the best that could have been done considering the situation.

RS: Very well. What about the four of you? How do you get along?

CD: We are all close friends. We were already friends, but since we were selected as champions we became even closer.

VK: We will still do our best to win. But it will be a friendly competition.

FD: And none of us will be angry if the other wins.

RS: Do you help each other?

HP: We study together. Though as we do not know what the tasks will be we don't help each other with the tasks. But we do help each other in other ways. For example, the other day Fleur lent me a book about several charms that could be useful in a number of situations and helped me to master them.

RS: Since Harry is the youngest do you get any help from him?

CD: (Young Cedric actually snorted) Harry is a prodigy. He knows things that even we don't know. We may be three years ahead of him but the things he can do with magic...

FD: It's amazing. I saw him mastering a spell that I learned last year in a matter of hours. And it took me over a week.

VK: Harry is very skilled and he has a passion for learning magic that we don't see everyday. He learns as much from us as we learn from him.

My dear readers by this time young Harry was blushing quite a bit. He tried to downplay his talent however I have learned that he is the first of his year in all his subjects. In conversation with Professor Flitwick I discovered that Harry was able to do things with his wand that he had never seen before. Professor McGonagall claims that he is the most talented student that she has ever taught. Other students supported those claims, saying that Harry was a true prodigy and that he was far above the students in his year.

After thanking the four champions for their time I was allowed to ask several students what they thought about the situation. The answers I obtained were rather similar. Most stating that they didn't believe that Harry would have entered the tournament. Some believe, just like the champions, that it must have been a prank that someone took to far.

When asked which champion they would support they stated that they would support both Cedric and Harry, and wished both of them good luck.
My fellow witches and wizards, we may not be sure how young Harry's name came out of that Goblet, however the belief that he is innocent in all of it is rather unanimous.

I have to tell all of you that it is a belief that I share. The time spent with young Harry allowed me to see that he is a charming young man, who truly has no wish for fame. On the day of the first tasks I will be on those stands cheering for all of the champions. For it is clear to me that they all deserve it.

We, just like our young champions, should see this as a friendly competition between friends and celebrate their victories with the same enthusiasm. No matter if that victor is Beauxbatons, Durmstrang, Hogwarts or Ouroboros.

Rita Skeeter'

Several pictures were added to the article, showing their interactions. It was easy to see the camaraderie between them. Though in most pictures, for those who knew what to look for, it was obvious that Harry was the leader.

Harry was quite pleased with the piece. No one was even paying attention to the Prophet. He could hear several students muttering about how the Prophet hadn't even bothered to ask about his side of the story. Things couldn't have turned out better. If it continued the way it was only the most die hard Daily Prophet fans would buy that rag. Though even if it didn't turn out how they were hoping they were already making plans to deal with the Prophet.

He looked at the head table and saw Snape glaring at him. He couldn't help himself. He winked. He wanted to laugh when he saw an angry blush appear on his cheeks. When he took over Britain he would make tormenting Snape a national sport. It was so much fun, he shouldn't be the only one having such enjoyment.

Wait a moment... where had that thought come from? He had never thought about ruling Britain. He had thought about changing Wizarding Britain, but never about taking it over. It was just like with Ouroboros. It had just popped into his mind. And just like with Ouroboros he could feel his magic reacting to the thought.

He had felt it a few times now. It was happening more and more. It wasn't causing any harm, but he wanted to know what it was. It seemed as if his magic knew something that he didn't. Or that it was just waiting for something. It made no sense. He had tried finding what it was, but as of yet he had no luck. He didn't doubt that the Black library had something about it in there. But it was so big. Unless he knew what he was looking for it would largely depend on luck.

"Harry?"

He looked to his right and saw Theo looking at him.

"Yes?"

"Time for class. Are you alright? I called you twice..."

"Oh, yeah. Sorry. I was a little distracted. What do we have?"

"Defense."

"Joy." he muttered far to low for the others to hear.

Theo chuckled.
"Come now, it isn't so bad. He's a good teacher."

"Sure if you can ignore the creepy staring."

Theo laughed and got up. Reluctantly Harry followed him. He knew that he had to go, but that didn’t mean he had to be happy about it.

He took a seat a little closer to the end of the room. Granger always sat in the front row and he wanted to be as far from her as possible. Her constant twitching always got on his nerves.

"We'll be talking about the Unforgivables today." stated Moody as soon as he entered the classroom. "What can you tell me about them?"

Granger as usual gave a textbook answer that was right. However it was wrong on so many levels that Harry couldn't contain a snort.

"Find this funny boy?" Moody barked.

"Well, not really. The subject is rather interesting. What I find funny is her answer."

"And why is that?" unlike all the other times there was a touch of curiosity in the man's voice.

"Well, because I don't agree with it."

"Of course, you wouldn't..." Weasley sneered and Harry rolled his eyes.

"What don't you agree with?" Moody asked, after a brief glare at Weasley.

"Well, for one that the curses are evil."

"So you think that a curse that kills, one that controls another person's will and one that causes unimaginable pain aren't evil?" unlike what Harry had expected there was no trace of mockery in Moody's voice, he seemed truly interested.

"Yes."

"Why do you think that?"

"Well, correct me if I'm wrong, but the Avada Kedavra, it's instant death, right?" Moody nodded so Harry continued, "Imagine you have a person that is dying. He is suffering horribly. Every breath he takes causes him pain. Wouldn't it be more merciful to just kill him, quick and painlessly? The muggles call it, euthanasia."

"The Imperius?"

"Hostage situation. You could end it quickly without anyone suffering any harm."

"The Cruciatus?"

"You could jump start someone's heart with it."

No one said a word. Moody had both eyes fixed on him.

"Theoretically you are right. However it doesn't work like that. For those curses to work you have to mean it, to want it with everything you are. You must enjoy it and feed it your hate. The more you enjoy it and the more hate you have the more powerful they become." Moody told him, turning
around to continue his lecture.

"You're wrong."

Moody stopped mid-step and looked at him, with both eyes.

"I'm wrong?"

"Yes."

Theo was shaking his head and he could see Granger looking at him with a scandalized expression. Apparently he had committed the gravest of sins. He had contradicted a professor. He wanted to sneer. Idiots. All of them. He knew that most of them didn't have access to all the books that he had, but they didn't have to rely only on books. Some things were a matter of logic.

"Why do you think that boy?"

"What you are describing only happens when you haven't master the spells. It's the same for every spell you cast. Not only the Unforgivables. You must want it for it to happen. It's one of the most fundamental rules to magic. Without want, without will, you are just waiving around a stick." Harry could see that all the Slytherins were looking at him awestruck, even his court and he almost chuckled. He had already talked about it with his court, but they always enjoyed it when he talked about magic. The other Slytherins were just excited, it was rare that he talked about it in the common room, but when he did there was always a large group listening to every word he said. However what surprised him was that a Gryffindor was showing almost as much interest as the Slytherins. A dark skinned boy. Dean Thomas if he wasn't mistaken. Neville had talked about the boy a few times. One of the more tolerant Gryffindors.

"However when you master a spell you will be able to do it almost without a second thought, you could do anything with the spell. Make it weaker, stronger. Cast it for a longer period of time. Think about it logically. Voldemort for example. He used those spells on a daily basis. It would be rather improbable if he only were able to cast the Killing curse if he were filled with hate, especially since he was leading a war. A leader has to be rational and calm in battle. It wouldn't do if he had to be overruled by hatred and sadistic pleasure to be able to cast those spells. Don't you agree?" he had ignored the flinches that saying Voldemort had caused and was now looking Moody in the eyes.

"And are you saying that every witch or wizard has the skills of a Dark Lord?" there was a dangerous undertone in his voice and Harry lifted an eyebrow

"Anyone can master a spell as long as they put in the effort."

"Is that so boy?" growled Moody, "Care to prove that?" his tone was almost daring him to refuse.

"Very well." he did his best to look as pout out as he could.

He transfigured a quill into a candle.

"Incendio." a tiny lick of fire rushed from his wand and lit the candle. Then he pointed his wand at a wall. "Incendio." a huge white and blue flame sprang from his wand and hit the wall. The wall became black almost as soon as the flame hit. Though Harry didn't stop there. He continued to fuel the spell, and the stone started to glow a deep, fiery red. When he saw that the stone was almost reaching a melting point he stopped. He looked at Moody and raised an eyebrow, "Is that proof enough, or do you want more?" when Moody didn't reply Harry continued, "The same principal applies to the Unforgivables. They may be harder to master, but it is doable. It is only a matter of will."
"I see." said Moody, both eyes fixed on him. Then he turned around and continued with his lesson. Barking at them to pay attention when he noticed that most were still staring at Harry.

"You just had to do it, didn't you?" muttered Theo beside him, a somewhat resigned expression on his face, "You do know that he will watch you now more than ever, right?"

"Sorry," Harry said, not sounding sorry at all, "Couldn't help myself."

Theo snorted and shook his head.

"I have gotten permission from the Headmaster to cast the Imperius on all of you," Moody was saying, capturing Harry's attention, "Just so you know what it feels like and to see if you are able to throw it off."

Well, wasn't that interesting?

Granger grumbled a bit about the legality of it all, but aside from her no one seemed to have anything against it. They weren't pleased about it, far from it, but most seemed to be far to intimidated by Moody to say anything.

As Harry expected no one seemed to be able to throw of the curse and ended up doing something ridiculous like some pirouettes around the classroom. However things started to get interesting when Neville was put under it.

He seemed to be struggling against it. His body leaning slightly forward as if he was readying himself for a jump, but he was frowning, his fists clenching and his head was shacking a little. He ended up doing a little jump, almost knocking into the desk in front of him, but that was all.

There was a slightly shocked silence in the room, then Moody exclaimed, "Did you see that?" waiving his wand, "The lad was fighting it!"

The class perked up after that, believing that they would be able to do the same. However, to their unending disappointment, things continued the same, until they reached Draco.

Draco had almost the same reaction as Neville, though he wasn't able to last as long. Theo followed him and he lasted just a second or two longer than Neville. Blaise surprised everyone when he was able to mutter "No." before he broke and did a small twirl.

Moody was looking at them, his normal eye wide and his magical one jumping from one to the others.

Finally his eyes landed on Harry, the only one that hadn't been put under the Imperius yet and his eyes narrowed.

Harry wanted to curse. He was almost sure that the man would make the curse was far stronger for him. He was just that kind of a bastard.

"Potter, your turn." he growled and Harry contained a sigh.

He got up, but before he could take a step and without any warning whatsoever he was hit with the curse.

It was the most wonderful feeling. Harry felt a floating sensation as every thought and worry in his head was wiped gently away, leaving nothing but a vague, untraceable happiness. He stood there feeling immensely relaxed, only dimly aware of everyone watching him.
And then he heard Moody's voice, echoing in some distant chamber of his empty mind: Jump onto the desk... jump onto the desk...

Then it was almost like he crashed back to reality. His head cleared, his eyes focused and he could pinpoint exactly where in his mind Moody was. It was easy to shut the voice up. It was his mind. There was nothing more powerful than he inside his own mind.

He locked eyes with Moody, a small smug smirk playing on his lips.

"No."

The silence was deafening.

Moody was almost gaping. Though he could almost see a sliver of respect in his one good eye.

"That's how it's done." Moody told the class, his voice far less enthusiastic than it had been with Neville. There was almost a solemn note to it. "Sit back down Potter."

Harry did as he was told, his smile disappearing when he turned back to look at the class. There was no need provoke the little lions after all. However, even though he was trying not to look to much at the dumbfounded expressions the lions had, he didn't miss the look of respect that Thomas had, nor the small nod he gave him.

"What has you two looking so pale?" Harry asked Fleur and Viktor one morning when they entered their training room looking a little out of it.

Fleur and Viktor froze, their eyes wide.

"You don't know?" Viktor asked, completely shocked, looking from Harry to Cedric.

"Know what?" Harry's voice was flat. If there was one thing he didn't like it was unexpected surprises.

"About the first task." replied Fleur, sitting down beside him and cuddling close. He could feel her shaking and knew that whatever it was had frightened the usually fiery girl.

"What is it?" Cedric asked, taking a seat on the couch in front of them, Viktor slumping gracefully beside him.

The other court members stopped what they were doing and approached them, knowing that it must have been something serious.

"The first task is dragons." Viktor stated in a monotone.

"Dragons?" Cedric almost squeaked, "What do you mean dragons?"

"Our task is to take a golden egg from a nesting mother." Viktor elaborated.

"What?" exclaimed Fred, looking a little panicked.

"A nesting mother? Are they out of their minds?" George didn't sound any better and Harry remembered that their older brother, Charlie if he wasn't mistaken, was a dragon tamer.

"How do you know?" Harry asked them, trying to keep a cool head.
"Maxime pulled me aside this morning and told me. Apparently she found out last night."

"Karkaroff did the same thing."

"I see." he muttered, leaning back on the couch, holding Fleur a little closer to him when he noticed that she was still shaking a little. When he saw just how pale they all looked he smiled at them, "Don't worry," he told them, his eyes warm, "We'll deal with it. I'll ask for a few books from Sirius, I noticed that the Black library had a large section on dragons. We'll make it through this."

He sounded so confident that the others relaxed. He could have told them that they would be walking through fire and they would have believed it to be possible. Harry just had that air around him that made them feel more confident about themselves. If Harry said they could do it, they believed him, after all he had never lied to them.

That however didn't mean that he wasn't angry. He was downright furious. What had they been thinking? Nesting mothers? As if dragons weren't bad enough it had to be nesting mothers. At least the other Headmasters seemed to be worried about their students. Or they just wanted to give them an edge, either way he couldn't believe that none of their professors had bothered to warn him or Cedric. What had they expected? For them to know how to deal with dragons on the spot?

He contained a sigh and smiled at his court. At least they were calmer now. That was important, he knew that they would be able to deal with it, but for them to do it they had to be calm and confident. Now it was only a matter of finding everything they could about dragons and deal with it.

Before he knew it November the twenty-fourth was upon them. Harry wasn't all that worried. He went about his day just like every other day. Though he seemed the be the only one. His court was tens. Tenser then he had ever seen them.

By the time lunch rolled around he had enough of it.

"Will you stop it." he almost growled when he saw Draco twitch for what seemed like the hundredth time. They were making Cedric, Fleur and Viktor far more nervous than they needed to be.

"I'm sorry." Draco whispered, looking down. Now he felt like he had kicked a puppy and no matter how much of a sadistic monster he was there were things that even he wouldn't do. Kicking a puppy was one of them. He sighed.

"It's alright." his voice warmer than it had previously been. "I know that all of you are worried about us. But everything will be alright. We know what to do. All of us trained as much as possible for it. Have a little faith in us."

"We have faith in you." replied Theo.

"We just worry." Graham said.

"If anything happened to you..." Adrian shuddered, as if simply thinking about it was to much to handle.

"Everything is going to be alright." Harry assured them and the other three champions nodded, smiles on their faces.

Harry heard the whispers around them grow and looked around. He saw McGonagall coming towards them.
"Potter, Diggory, Krum and Delacour the champions have to come down onto the grounds now. You have to get ready for the first task."

"Alright, thank you professor." Harry stood up, the others following him.

As soon as they stood the Slytherins started to cheer. All of them got up from their seats and were clapping as if they had won the Quidditch World Cup.

He chuckled and walked out of the Great Hall with the other champions.

As soon as they were out in the grounds McGonagall almost dropped her mask.

"Now, all of you have to keep a cool head. Don't panic," she said, "We've got wizards standing by to control the situation if it gets out of hand. The main thing is to just do your best, and nobody will think the worse of any of you. Are all of you alright?"

"Don't worry professor." Harry told her with a reassuring smile. She was one of his favorite professors. She may be firmly on Dumbledore's side, but he liked her. She cared about all her students, even those that weren't in her House. "We trained hard. We are as ready as we could be. Everything is going to be fine."

She was leading them toward the place where the dragons were, around the edge of the forest, but when they approached the clump of trees behind which the enclosure would be clearly visible, Harry saw that a tent had been erected, its entrance facing them, screening the dragons from view.

"You are going to stay in there," said McGonagall, in a rather shaky sort of voice, "Mr. Bagman is in there. He'll be telling you the... the procedure. Good luck."

"Thank you." Harry did his best to sound as reassuring as he could. She left them at the entrance of the tent. Looking at each other, they nodded and went inside.

Bagman was the only one inside. He lit up when he saw them.

"Ah. Good, good. There you are." he said happily, "Come in, come in, make yourselves at home." Harry wanted to curse him. He was one of the idiots that thought that facing a nesting dragon was a good idea. That combined with his chirpy attitude made it quite difficult for Harry to stop himself.

"Well, now that we're all here time to fill you in!" said Bagman brightly. "When the audience has assembled, I'm going to be offering each of you this bag" he held up a small sack of purple silk and shook it at them "From which you will each select a small model of the thing you are about to face! There are different... er... varieties, you see. And I have to tell you something else too... ah... your task is to collect the golden egg!"

He saw the other three frown and their eyes darken. He knew that they weren't happy with it at all. Sure they had volunteered, however dragons hadn't been something they had thought they would be facing.

In no time at all, hundreds upon hundreds of pairs of feet could be heard passing the tent, their owners talking excitedly, laughing, joking.

What seemed like seconds later Bagman was opening the neck of the purple silk sack.

"Ladies first," he said, offering it to Fleur.

She put a shaking hand inside the bag and drew out a tiny, perfect model of a dragon, a Welsh Green. It had the number two around its neck. She took a deep breath and Harry could see
determination settling in her eyes.

Viktor went next. He pulled out the scarlet Chinese Fireball. It had a number three around its neck. He didn't even blink, he just sat down and stared at the ground. Harry knew that it was his way of concentrating, of making sure that he knew what he was supposed to do.

Cedric put his hand into the bag, and out came the blueish-gray Swedish Short-Snout, the number one tied around its neck.

As soon as Cedric took out his dragon all of them narrowed their eyes. They knew what was left.

Harry put his hand into the silk bag and pulled out the Hungarian Horntail, and the number four. It stretched its wings as he looked down at it, and bared its minuscule fangs.

"Well, there you are!" said Bagman. "You have each pulled out the dragon you will face, and the numbers refer to the order in which you are to take on the dragons, do you see? Now, I'm going to have to leave you in a moment, because I'm commentating. Mr. Diggory, you're first, just go out into the enclosure when you hear a whistle, all right? Now... Harry... could I have a quick word? Outside?"

"Alright." said Harry blankly, and he got up and went out of the tent with Bagman, who walked him a short distance away, into the trees, and then turned to him with a fatherly expression on his face. It made Harry want to gag.

"Feeling all right, Harry? Anything I can get you?"

"I don't need anything." said Harry, his eyes narrowing.

"Got a plan?" said Bagman, lowering his voice conspiratorially. "Because I don't mind sharing a few pointers, if you'd like them, you know. I mean," Bagman continued, lowering his voice still further, "You're the underdog here, Harry." Harry felt rather insulted at that. He was the underdog? As if, "Anything I can do to help..."

"No," said Harry flatly. His voice cold and his eyes glowing a little.

"Nobody would know, Harry," said Bagman, winking at him.

"I already told you no." said Harry, losing the little patient he had left.

A whistle blew somewhere.

"Good lord, I've got to run!" said Bagman in alarm, and he hurried off.

Harry walked back to the tent and saw Cedric emerging from it. He looked paler than before.

"Hey, it's going to be alright." he told him. Cedric smiled and he saw him relaxing a little.

"Yeah, I know. See you soon." he replied and continued on his way.

Harry went back inside and saw Fleur and Viktor sitting together. He joined them and waited for Cedric to start his task. Seconds later, they heard the roar of the crowd, which meant Cedric had entered the enclosure and was now face to face with the living counterpart of his model.

It was worse than what Harry thought it would be, sitting there and listening. The crowd screamed, yelled and gasped like a single many-headed entity, as Cedric faced the Swedish Short-Snout. Viktor was still staring at the ground. Fleur had now taken to retracing Cedric's steps, around and around the
tent. And Bagman's commentary made everything much, much worse.

Harry knew what Cedric was supposed to do. They had discussed it.

First, before he did anything else, he would use accio to try and summon the egg. Sometimes the most basic thing was the one that worked best. If it worked for him, they would all do the same. However if it didn't then they would all use plan B.

Cedric's was the use of runes, intermixed with spells. He would carve the runes around the stadium. However it was dangerous. Cedric would have to move around a lot and he couldn't do it to fast or the disillusionment charm that he had wouldn't hold. However it should create a cage around the dragon that would hold it for a few minutes, no more than five. It was often used on acromantulas, however a grown acromantula was nowhere near as strong as a nesting mother dragon. So even though it would hold an acromantula indefinitely a dragon was another matter entirely. Hopefully those five minutes would be enough. Then the spells that Cedric had cast would create a barrier for the flames. All in all Harry hoped that it would be enough.

And then, after about fifteen minutes, Harry heard the deafening roar that could mean only one thing: Cedric had gotten past his dragon and captured the golden egg.

"Very good indeed!" Bagman was shouting. "And now the marks from the judges!"

He saw the other two breath in relief. Cedric had made it, that was all that mattered.

They were waiting for his scores, but Bagman didn't shout out the marks; Harry supposed the judges were holding them up and showing them to the crowd.

"One down, three to go!" Bagman yelled as the whistle blew again. "Miss Delacour, if you please!"

Fleur took a deep breath, smiled at them, and left the tent.

Then it started all over again. He knew what she was supposed to do. Since the accio hadn't worked she would jump straight to plan B. Hers consisted of charms. Her strongest point. She had trained it till she mastered it. Now they could only hope that she had the power to pull it off. The power to put a dragon to sleep.

Ten minutes later, Harry heard the crowd erupt into applause once more. He laughed, she must have done it too. He couldn't be more proud. Not everyone could boast that they were powerful enough to put a dragon to sleep. A pause, while Fleur's marks were being shown, more clapping. Then, for the third time, the whistle sounded.

"And here comes Mr. Krum!" cried Bagman, and Viktor marched out, leaving Harry quite alone.

Only Viktor now. His was the most daring. Facing his dragon head on. Harry hoped it would go well. They had debated about Viktor using his broom. But Viktor had refused, he didn't want to do something that would be associated with Quidditch. Harry hadn't liked it but he hadn't said anything. It was Viktor's task, they would help anyway they could but otherwise they wouldn't interfere. Besides he knew how important it was for Viktor to be associated with something other than Quidditch.

"Very daring!" Bagman was yelling, and Harry heard the Chinese Fireball emit a horrible, roaring shriek, while the crowd drew its collective breath. "That's some nerve he's showing... and... yes, he's got the egg!"

Applause shattered the wintery air like breaking glass; Viktor had finished. It would be Harry's turn
any moment.

He stood up, took a deep breath and felt his body calming down. He waited. And then he heard the whistle blow. He walked out through the entrance of the tent, the panic he thought he would feel never appearing. Instead he felt excitement rising into a crescendo inside him. And now he was walking past the trees, through a gap in the enclosure fence.

He saw everything in front of him with startling clarity. There were hundreds and hundreds of faces staring down at him from stands that had been magicked there since he'd last stood on this spot. And there was the Horntail, at the other end of the enclosure, crouched low over her clutch of eggs, her wings half-furled, her yellow eyes upon him, a monstrous, scaly, black lizard, thrashing her spiked tail, heaving yard-long gouge marks in the hard ground.

The crowd was making a great deal of noise, but whether friendly or not, Harry didn't know or care. It was time to do what he had to do. To focus his mind, entirely and absolutely.

It was time to show them just what he could do and he would do it with a spell that they learned in their second year.

He raised his wand.

$ Serpensortia basilisk. $

The stands were deadly silent for what felt like an eternity. In that time a gigantic basilisk started to form. It was as tall as the dragon, it's fangs as long as Harry's arms. Even though it lacked the killer gaze and deadly venom because it was a conjuration, it made it by no means a harmless snake. Taking advantage from the motionless dragon Harry cast the spell again. Three times.

In no time at all, four gigantic basilisks were in the enclosure and Harry could see the horrified expressions on some of the people in the stands.

"Sonorus." he muttered pointing the wand at himself.

$ I want you to distract the dragon. $ he ordered the basilisks, $ And you, I want you to give me the golden egg. $ 

$ As you wish Master. $ the basilisks replied in unison.

"Quietus."

"Oh dear Merlin," he heard Bagman whisper in the background, though since he still had the charm on it was heard through the silent stands.

People didn't know that the serpensortia spell had been a parseltongue spell, that Salazar had modified so that the other founders could use it. However if you did the spell in parseltongue it was possible to choose what kind of serpent you wanted. Hence, the basilisks.

Meanwhile three of the basilisks attacked the dragon. None of them were aiming to really hurt the dragon but it was still three against one, the Horntail was having trouble keeping up with them.

The fourth one slithered up to the nest. As soon as the mother dragon saw it, she tried to attack it, however the other three basilisks were there stopping her in her tracks. There was a deafening roar that shook the stands and Harry saw that it was readying itself to throw some fire. However before it could one of the basilisks bit onto it's back. One of the others lunged for it's right hind leg, making the dragon stumble backwards shrieking in pain.
The forth basilisk was able to grab the golden egg with it's mouth, while the others kept the dragon busy. It slithered back to Harry depositing the egg in Harry's arms.

$ Good boy. $ muttered Harry, caressing the beast's snout.

Harry turned around and walked out of the enclosure, that was still completely silent. As soon as he was out, he canceled the conjurations and in a flash the dragon was on her nest. Crouching in front of it, growling and locking for threats.

He had taken the least amount of time to get his egg. Everything was over in less than five minutes. It took almost five seconds after the basilisks disappeared for the crowd to finally react. He heard a deafening cheer coming from the stands where most of the Slytherins and Durmstrang students were.

"My dear Merlin! Did you see that! Harry Potter managed to get the egg in the least amount of time, without a scratch on him!" Bagman finally shouted. "And how did he do it? He ordered a basilisk to get it for him! Harry Potter is a parselmouth, can you believe it?!"

McGonagall and Moody were waiting just outside of the enclosure.

"Potter... that was... that was impressive." McGonagall said, though he knew it to be an honest compliment he could see the slight trace of fear in her eyes. He had to wonder if it was fear of him, about him or of the four gigantic snakes that had seconds before been in the enclosure.

Moody... Well he looked a little strange. He looked pleased but horrified at the same time. He had no idea what to make of it. Moody was one of those people that he just didn't seem to be able to read. And when he was able to read him, the things he saw made no sense.

"Right then, Potter, the first aid tent, please." said McGonagall, though it was clear that he didn't have a scratch on him.

Harry turned around and saw Pomfrey standing at the mouth of a second tent, looking worried.

"Dragons!" she said, in a disgusted tone, pulling Harry inside. The tent was divided into cubicles; he could make out Cedric's shadow through the canvas, but Cedric didn't seem to be badly injured; he was sitting up, at least. "Last year dementors, this year dragons, what are they going to bring into this school next?"

He didn't really care about it at all. He wanted to see if Cedric and the others were alright. But Pomfrey didn't seem to be the kind of women who would get distracted once she was on a mission, so he said nothing while she pushed him down on a bed.

"Stay." she ordered and went to Cedric's little cubicle.

He really didn't want to sit still, so he got up and was ready to leave when he heard a commotion at the entrance. A moment later his court, without the twins and Neville, walked in.

"Harry!" Theo exclaimed and then he was in the taller teens arms.

"I'm alright." he reassured them, knowing that they had been rather worried. "How are the others?"

"Cedric burned his cheek a little. The spells faltered a little when he was running with the egg. Though it's nothing dangerous and Pomfrey said in wouldn't even scar." Draco said, "Fleur got her leg a little burned. The charm worked well, but the dragon snorted while sleeping and a little flame came out. Though it's nothing dangerous, just a really small burn on her thigh. Viktor scraped his arm while dodging. Aside from that, they are all fine."
Harry breathed a sigh in relief. He knew that nothing serious had happened to them, but it was such a relief to know it.

"You were great!" exclaimed Graham, apparently not able to hold it in anymore.

"You're a parslemouth!" Adrian shouted, his eyes wide with awe. "Why didn't you tell us?"

"Well, can't reveal all of my secrets, can I?" Harry said with a mischievous smile. "No, that wasn't it." he told them chuckling, "I kinda forgot. It never came up in conversation and I never thought it was all that important."

"Not important?" Draco sounded incredulous, "You could be related to Salazar Slytherin! That's important!"

"That's one of the things I wanted to avoid actually." he told them, "I want to be respected because of who I am, not because of who I could be related to."

"Harry..." Adrian whispered, "It's impossible to know you and not respect you. Even Granger, though she hates everything about you, respects your abilities."

"We respect you. Everything about you. You must know that, right?" Graham asked him, looking rather solemn.

"I know." he told them, smiling.

"Good." Wayne grinned, "Now let's go see your scores."

Graham picked up his golden egg and they left the tent.

"How did the others score?"

"Cedric got forty-seven. The judges were impressed with the cage, however the spells faltered a little and he got burned." Theo told him.

"Fleur got forty-six. They weren't as impressed with her spell." Draco stated.

"Not as impressed?" Harry asked incredulously, "She put a dragon to sleep, how is that not impressive?"

Draco shrugged. It was impressive, but Cedric's had been more so.

"Viktor has forty-five." Wayne said and Harry frowned.

"Why so low?" he asked, making the others chuckle. Forty-five was not low, no matter how you looked at it. Only Harry would complain about that score.

"Though he was the least injured and faster than the other two, one of the real eggs was broken. So they deducted points."

Ah, well that did make sense.

"Your scores are coming up." Graham grinned excitedly.

Maxime had just raised her wand. What looked like long silver ribbons shot out and formed a number ten.
The crowd clapped enthusiastically and Harry saw his friends grinning.

Crouch came next and another ten came out of his wand.

Next came Dumbledore. This time when the ten came out the crowd went wild. His friends were just as loud, clapping and grinning like lunatics.

Bagman shot out a ten too and the noise in the stands rose so much that Harry felt them vibrate.

Karkaroff was next. He seemed to hesitate for a second then the figure nine formed.

"What?" shrieked Adrian looking murderously at Karkaroff, "He gave Viktor a ten!"

"It's alright." Harry told them, trying to calm them down. None of them look all to pleased with the outcome.

"You're in first place!" exclaimed Draco excited. He looked like he wanted nothing more than to jump up and down.

"Yes, you are. Congratulations." a smooth, dark voice spoke from behind them and Harry turned around.

He almost laugh when he saw Tomas Nacht standing there. Well, the man had said he would come see the first task. However since he hadn't mentioned it anymore he assumed that the man didn't have the time or simply didn't want to come.

He felt his court tense but he ignored them and smiled at him.

"Hello, Mr. Nacht." a mischievous glint sparkling in his eyes.

A long sigh escaped Tom.

"How many times do I have to tell you to call me Tom?" he asked, a small smile playing on his lips.

Harry didn't reply, he just laughed. He walked towards him, he felt this need to be closer to the man. He hadn't realized that he actually missed the feeling of their magic touching, playing. He felt his court move further away from them, towards the tent. Giving him privacy but staying close by.

"Did you enjoy the show?" Harry asked him a small smirk on his lips.

"Immensely." was the whispered reply, Tom's eyes looking him over, studying everything about him, "You're a parslemouth." there was so much want in the man's voice that Harry felt a shiver run down his spin.

"I am."

Tom stepped closer. Their bodies almost touching. He raised his hand and gently ran his fingers down Harry's cheek. Touching that perfect skin, it was heavenly. He could only imagine what it would feel like to kiss it. Did it taste like the sweetest of peaches? It must for that was how it looked. Those emerald eyes locked with his, daring him to do something, anything more than what he was doing. He sighed and dropped his hand. He wanted to, he really did. But he couldn't. If he did something now he knew that he wouldn't be able to stop, he would want to possess Harry completely and maybe Harry would allow it, however when he found out the truth, Tom knew that Harry would never forgive him. Harry was not the forgiving type.

"Such a tease," he whispered, when he saw the smug smirk on Harry's lips, "It was rather bold of
you, to reveal that you are a parselmouth in such a public display. The press may make you out to be a raising Dark Lord, or something along those lines," he didn't need to say that the press would have it right. He could feel it now. The same way he had felt around Grindelwald when he met the man. But it was different, it felt incomplete. But the potential was there, far more noticeable than it had been in the summer. It almost danced around him.

The reason he could feel it and others didn't was because he himself was a Dark Lord. It was a warning of sorts. Usually there wasn't more than one Dark Lord, however that didn't mean there weren't others with the potential out there. The Dark Lords could feel it, most just killed those of. But in the rare case where there is more than one Dark Lord it serves as a warning. Though other theories state that it was just a way their magics had to show them their matches.

"There won't be anything bad about it in the press." Harry replied.

"You sound rather sure about that. How can you know?"

"Well, it is rather easy to know what they will publish when you are the one who owns it." Harry told him. He couldn't help but chuckle when he saw Tom's eyes widen slightly.

Then Tom moved. Before he knew what was happening Tom had pushed him against the wall of the enclosure, his body pressing against his. Tom's head dropped to his neck and he could feel Tom taking a shuddering breath.

"You have no idea what you do to me." Tom whispered against his neck making him shudder when he felt that warm breath against his skin, "When you say things like that. When you show me just how different you are from these sheep. You make me want to own you completely."

Harry narrowed his eyes. He ran his hands through Tom's hair, gripped it and pulled. He heard a slight hiss coming from Tom, his head lifting from his neck, their eyes locking.

"What makes you think I can be owned?" his voice was teasing, but the warning was clear in those fiery emerald eyes.

"Nothing." replied Tom honestly, then his eyes filled with desire, "That just makes me want it more." Tom's eyes locked on his lips, his eyes burning with want.

Tom leaned down, Harry could feel Tom's breath on his lips.

"Harry." his head snapped to the side, where Theo was looking at them. His mask firmly in place.

"Fuck." he heard Tom whisper. Tom took a deep breath and took a step back. His eyes were still burning but Harry could see an ironclad control snap into place.

"Yes?" he looked at Theo, as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. He felt Tom's eyes on him, narrowing slightly at his nonchalant attitude. He knew that Tom would hate the fact that he was acting as if what had happened meant nothing at all.

"Bagman wants to have a word with the champions. It's about the second task."

"Alright. I'll be there in a minute." Theo nodded and turned around, walking back to the tent. "It seems like I have to go." Harry said, turning to look at Tom. He was still in the same position he had been. Almost as if he was afraid to take a step. "Something the matter Mr. Nacht?"

Tom chuckled. It was a dark, seductive sound. Far to enticing to be allowed if Harry was being honest.
"You are playing with fire." Tom stated and Harry laughed. He threw him a mischievous smile.

He raised his hand in front of him, palm up.

"Fiendfyre." he whispered.

A snake started to form on the palm of his hand, curling around his arm and torso. Tom was looking at him. His eyes shining with want.

"I like fire." he stated before canceling the spell.

Harry smirked at him one last time and turned around walking towards the tent. Before entering he heard the sound of laughter coming from Tom and smiled.
"Crucio,"
he let the screams of the muggles invade his senses, drowning everything else. His Death Eaters taking several steps back when they felt the overwhelming anger in his magic.

At the moment though he didn't care. He was far too enraged to think clearly, far too infuriated to control his magic. His hand tightened around the letter he had received moments before and his magic swirled around him violently.

"Leave." his voice was no more than a whisper but all the Death Eaters present heard him. They dispersed so fast that it looked as if they had apparated. He ignored the whimpering and drooling muggles on the floor and sank down on his throne.

Logically he knew he was overreacting. But even so he couldn't help it.

Again his thoughts drifted to the contents of the letter. The words were branded in his mind.

'Dear Mr. Nacht,'

About my parseltongue ability; yes, I have known for a very long time that I was able to speak to snakes. My very first friend was a small garden snake. Of course the other boys at the orphanage couldn't stand the fact that something made me happy so they killed her. Needless to say that it was one of the last things the person responsible ever did. I can still hear the screams...

Knowing that Voldemort was able to do it just makes me more fond of the gift. Though you were right, many students look at me with fear. It is nothing new to me, however it may hinder some of my plans. I have my court smoothing things out. I will have to do something to reward them. I know they wish for nothing, but loyalty should always be rewarded, do you not think so?

The Slytherins on the other hand... They were loyal before, now they worship me. Of course there had been quite a few that had already been far more loyal than all the others, but now it's all of them. The younger ones especially. They are like little puppies trailing behind the Court, so innocent. It makes me want to taint them. Break them. Make them kneel and beg...

Luckily I have my little dog to entertain me, otherwise I think my court would have suffered the burn of my twisted desires. Though something tells me that even if that had happened they wouldn't have complained. It is invigorating knowing that I own them completely. They have given themselves to
me, not holding anything back. They know I own them and they love it.

I wonder; is this what Voldemort felt when he had his Death Eaters on their knees in front of him?

I'm quite happy to know that you enjoyed the show, especially the part after the first task. Tell me Mr. Nacht; did you want to kiss me? Have you been thinking about it? Do the thoughts about kissing me, having me, consume your every waking moment?

Until you can truthfully say that it does, I do not think that you can have me. Even then... for you to have me I would have to find you just as consuming.

Do not be mistaken however... you will never own me.

No one will ever own me.

We will have a Yule Ball, apparently it is tradition. A way for the students of all schools to mingle outside of classes.

As a champion I am obliged to participate. I wonder who will have to pleasure of my company. Either way I'm sure we will have... fun. My very first date, it is bound to be exciting, don't you think?

Yours,

Harry

That... that little tease. First he makes his blood boil and then, almost as if it were an afterthought, he told him about the ball. How could he have forgotten about the ball?

Just thinking about someone else being with Harry made his blood-lust rise. And he knew, with absolute certainty, that that was precisely what Harry wanted. Some could say that Harry was mentioning the ball because he was excited, that there were no other reasons for it, but he knew better. Harry didn't do anything without a reason behind it. Harry didn't leave anything to chance. His little serpent had mentioned the ball, had called it a date, because he wanted a reaction out of him.

The grip on his wand tightened. He took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

How was it that Harry always got a reaction out of him? How did Harry affect him so when no one else ever had? And he was so young!

At first his fascination with Harry hadn't been anything sexual. He had been eleven and no matter how much of a monster he was there were some lines that even he didn't cross. Still he had found the little King fascinating and only a blind person wouldn't be able to see just how beautiful the child was.

Then he saw Harry again, after two long years. It had been just for a few minutes but it had been enough to captivate him. It still wasn't anything sexual. He had only been thirteen. But his beauty had enthralled him and he could see just how devastating Harry's looks would get as he aged.

Then he had had the brilliant idea of meeting Harry at the World Cup.

That had been all it took. Harry had still been far too young, but he hadn't cared. The moment he had seen those twins with their hands on him, no matter how innocent their intentions had been, he had known that he wouldn't let anyone else have Harry. Harry had grown to be so beautiful, his mind was extraordinary and his magic... there was no other like it.
How could anyone have expected for him to be indifferent to that? He had always been selfish, was it any wonder that he wanted Harry for himself?

Then came the first task. It had been his downfall. It started with the parseltongue. His little King was a parselmouth. He wasn't ashamed to admit that hearing his little serpent talking in the ancient language of the serpents had been highly arousing. It may have been why he had lost control so quickly.

He had suspected that Harry knew that he wanted him, but their little meeting after the task had made it abundantly clear. It had changed their relationship. It had given Harry power. Power that Harry already had. However he hadn't been sure that he had it, now he knew. All because he hadn't been able to control his desires.

His little King had pushed all the right buttons.

Still he didn't regret what he had done. He had been so close to tasting those lips. He had wanted to crucio Nott for interrupting them.

Harry had been quite right in his letter. His thoughts were consumed with his little King. How could they not be when every day there was something about the champions in the papers?

That's how he found out that the Court had expanded again.

That had surprised him. Harry was expanding his Court. Truly expanding. Viktor Krum and Fleur Delacour were the perfect way to branch out of Britain. He just didn't know what Harry was planning. No matter how good Harry was, he didn't have the means to do anything out of Britain. Many would say that he didn't have the means to do anything in Britain either.

Truthfully he wasn't so sure about that. Diggory was already on his way to the Ministry. Jugson was already there. Montague and Pucey would be finished in a year. The Weasley twins as well. They could go into any area that Harry wanted them to.

So he didn't really believe that Harry wouldn't be able to do anything in Britain. He had started doing something with his newspaper. He didn't know what he had planned for the future, but he was sure that Harry wouldn't just sit back and do nothing.

But it was a fact that he didn't have the resources to expand out of Britain. He didn't have enough people. The Veela girl and Krum were a good start, but they weren't enough.

A pained moan brought him out of his thoughts and he sneered when he saw that one of the muggles seemed to be waking.

"Delly."

"What can Delly do for Lord Master sir?"

"Could you please take all these muggles to the dungeons?"

"Of course Lord Master sir, Delly be getting rid of nasty muggles."

He chuckled when the elf popped away with the muggles. He didn't understand why some people mistreated the little things. They were loyal, obedient and rather entertaining.

He sighed and leaned back on his throne. He would have to call his Death Eaters again. His little King really made him lose his mind. But before that he had a letter to write. His Harry wanted a
He moaned when he felt those big hands on his body. They were followed by a tongue. His tormentor seemed to want to taste every little bit of skin that he could reach.

A needy little whimper came from his parted lips and he felt those sinful lips stretch into a lazy smirk.

He bit his bottom lip in an effort to keep those noises in, but he knew that it was no use. A dark chuckle showed that his partner thought the same. That skillful tongue was back to mapping out his body, though this time there were teeth present as well.

He gasped, arching off the black silk sheets, when his lover nibbled on his collarbone. He continued on his path upward, kissing, licking and nibbling on every little bit of skin.

Another dark chuckle left his torturer when he arched off the bed, rubbing their erections together.

"Patience my little serpent. I'll make you come soon enough."

Harry abruptly sat up on his bed. He could still feel the hands on him. Those lips tasting every bit of his body they could reach. It took him a second or two to really realize that it had been a dream.

Another one.

He had been having them for a little over a week. Since he received that damn letter. If he didn't know any better he would say that the letter had been cursed. But it wasn't.

Honestly, a part of him, a really small part of him, would have preferred if the letter had been cursed. Then at least he would have a good excuse for the dreams. Now he had none.

It didn't really surprise him that he had the dreams. He was a fourteen year old boy, it was normal for his hormones to come out to play. He just wasn't very pleased with who was in his dreams. Though it wasn't exactly unexpected. The man was gorgeous, powerful and had a brilliant mind. He had admitted that he found him fascinating and playing with him was exhilarating.

Still, he was sure that if it hadn't been for that damned letter he wouldn't have had those dreams.

Tom's reaction had surprised him a little. He knew he had pushed him, he had wanted to see just how far Tom would go. But the reaction had, by far, exceeded his expectations.

He still couldn't get most of the letter out of his mind.

'... I already told you my little King, if you play with fire you will get burned. Do you wish to know what I did after I read your letter? Do you want to know how many died?...'

It wouldn't really surprise him if Tom had truly killed someone. Tom... he felt like him. Different from other people. Dark, twisted. That was what had attracted him to Tom in the beginning.

'... I thought about giving you time, about waiting until you were older; but I confess that I wanted to push you against the wall and ravish those blood red lips of yours. You would look so beautiful bathed in the blood of your enemies, your creamy skin painted with streaks of red. I can see it now... I don't think I would have been able to control myself. I would take you against the wall. I would make you come screaming my name...'

He wasn't ashamed to admit that the letter had affected him. He could imagine Tom telling him that in his deep, velvety smooth voice. He groaned when a shiver raced down his spine and another
passage from the letter jumped into his mind.

’... Imagine, my little serpent, my lips on your skin; worshiping your body. Sweet little moans escaping your sinful mouth. They would be music to my ears. I can see it in my mind. You sprawled out on my bed, black silk sheets contrasting against your peach colored skin. I can almost hear you beg. Beg for me to touch you, to taste you. And I would, my little King...’

He groaned and slumped back down on his bed. Damn Tom and damn that bloody letter.

After a few moments a chuckle escaped him, he hoped Tom liked his letter. He may have been far more affected by it than he had expected but there was no reason to let Tom know that little fact. They were playing a dangerous game and there was no way he would give up the advantage he had. No matter how much he may like Tom, he couldn't afford to give up the upper hand.

"Have you decided who you are going to take to the Yule Ball?" Draco asked him while they were all lounging in the common room.

"I have been thinking about that." Harry replied, capturing the attention of every Court member. "Do the three of you have a date yet?" he asked, looking at his fellow champions.

The three shook their heads.

"In that case, I have a suggestion." he told them, "Why don't we, the champions, go together?" Their eyes lit up and even the other Court members looked happy with the idea. Harry smiled at them fondly. He knew that they thought that they could hide it from him; however it was quite clear that they were rather possessive of him. He could imagine that they hadn't liked the idea of him going with someone to the ball that wasn't a Court member. Of course they would never say anything against it if he did take someone else, but they wouldn't be pleased.

Though the reason why he had suggested it had nothing to do with it. He just didn't want to be stuck with some ignorant witch, or an incompetent wizard.

No, it would be better to simply go with a member of his Court. At least he was assured that they weren't mindless sheep.

"Who would go with who?" Fleur asked.

"Does it matter?" he answered, "We go together. Though I could have the first dance with Viktor. Afterward we could change partners, so that we have one dance with each. What about all of you?" he asked the other members of his Court.

"We decided to go alone." Theo replied.

"Aside from me." Draco added, "I'll take Luna, otherwise she wouldn't be able to attend."

"We are hoping that since it is a ball no one will find it strange if we interact with all of you." Fred told him.

"Yes, though if we see that people are paying attention to what we are doing we won't stay with all of you." George added.

"Sometimes it really sucks that we can't be members of the Court out in the open." Neville muttered.

"You can be." Harry told them seriously, "I already told you, you don't have to be shadows."
The three shook their heads and sat up straighter.

"We want this." Neville stated.

"We decided years ago that it would be the best way." Fred added.

"I know that you decided that. Though you never told me why. At first I thought it was because there were no other Court members aside from Slytherins and Luna. Now though we have Cedric and Wayne as well, Hufflepuffs. No one would say anything if you were with us. You know that most of the Gryffindors don't hate me, even though I'm a Slytherin."

His Court members shared a look and he narrowed his eyes.

"We want to keep your options open." Theo said, after he got a few pointed looks from the others.

"What do you mean?"

"The three of us come from very light families," George said, "If people start to say things about you being Dark and all that... well maybe you'll need people with the reputation our families have."

"If we were seen with you, if people suspected we were your Court members it's possible that they wouldn't be as open around us." Fred finished.

"And me... well, even though my grades are excellent people still see me as the cowardly lion. They may say things around me that they wouldn't otherwise."

Harry shook his head. At times it seemed that they thought more about his future than he did. They had so many plans for him, so many hopes. Sometimes he was afraid that he wouldn't live up to it. That was the problem with caring about people. He cared for them, for their opinion. He wouldn't change for them, but he knew that his decisions would be influenced by them, even if only a little.

"You don't have to worry about that," he said, "If something like that does happen then I'll think of something."

"We don't worry because we have to!" Theo sounded exasperated. It wasn't the first time they had a similar argument. They couldn't understand how Harry didn't see just how much they cared for him. It wasn't that Harry didn't know they cared, he just didn't seem to realize what that meant. It was exasperating for all of them.

"We worry because we want to." Adrian told him rather subdued and Harry almost winced. There weren't many things that made Adrian lose his jovial air.

"You mean everything to us, don't you see that?" Graham asked him. There was true curiosity in his eyes, however it was overshadowed by concern.

"I know we have a really close bond." Harry said, not looking at them, he still wasn't all that comfortable with talking about his feelings, "Even those of you that joined us this year... it's as if you were a part of us since the beginning. But... You are mine. All of you. Mine. Mine to cherish. Mine to protect. Mine to hurt. Mine to kill. Mine."

"We know." Cedric whispered after a few moments. "We are yours."

"But you are ours too." Wayne told him.

"Ours to follow." Viktor said.

"We are yours." The three stated in unison.
"Ours to protect." Blaise whispered.

"Ours to worship." Fleur added.

"Ours to love." Draco murmured.

"Ours." all the Court members chorused.

Harry leaned back on his seat and looked at his Court members, really looked at them. For the first time he saw what must have been there for a long time, though he had been to blind to see it. Maybe not blind, maybe he had seen it all along. Maybe he just hadn't recognized it for what it was.

They loved him. All of them. One way or another they loved him. They weren't in love with him, at least he didn't think so, but they loved him deeply.

"Yours," he agreed.

Their faces lit up in joy and he closed his eyes.

It was the least he could do, wasn't it? They had given everything to him, hadn't he said that such a thing should be rewarded? Yes, giving them what they most wanted was the least he could do.

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Harry was in his room getting ready for the ball. Though he would be the first to admit that his mind was elsewhere. Tom... Tom hadn't replied to his letter.

There could be several reason for it. Though none of them seemed likely. Well, if he was honest with himself they were all probable, he just didn't want to believe them. He had gotten so attached to the man.

He berated himself in his mind. He wouldn't think about it. He wouldn't think about him. He had his Ouroboros, it was all he needed. What did he care if the man was ignoring him? He didn't need him. He didn't miss him.

He took several deep breaths and composed himself. He needed to have his mind clear for the ball. He had promised his Court that he would do his best to enjoy himself, even if balls weren't really something that he liked.

Looking at the mirror one more time he left his rooms. His court was waiting.

Everyone in the common room stilled when he entered. He felt their eyes on him and glared.

"What?" he snapped.

Every single student in the common room, aside from his Court, knelt in front of him. He hid his surprise well, though he looked at his Court, asking them what was going on. They shrugged discreetly, telling him that they had no idea what was happening. However he could see how pleased they were with the display. He confessed that he liked them on their knees in front of him as well, however he would like it better if he knew why they were doing it.

"My King," Jason Finch said, bowing his head, "You look... beautiful."

A warm chuckle left him making the students lift their heads and look at him. He smiled warmly at them.

"Thank you, Jason."
Finch glowed with pride and he contained the dark chuckle that was threatening to escape. Really, they went down on their knees just to praise him? He hadn’t expected his parseltongue abilities to change things so much. He had seen that they were more respectful, that they were more loyal. But he hadn’t expected them to kneel. He hadn’t asked them too, they did it out of their own free will. It was quite the empowering feeling.

His Court walked towards him, they stood in line in front of him and knelt as well. His magic flowed around them, caressing them.

"Rise Ouroboros."

They rose as one. They stood tall and proud in front of him, and he smiled.

"Finch is right, you look beautiful." Theo told him, kissing his cheek.

"He's beautiful every day. Today he just looks more refined." Luna corrected, hugging him and giving him a kiss as well.

He had gotten used to the way they treated him, though they had never been so demonstrative in front of the others. He let them. He understood what they were doing. He had accepted that he was theirs, if in a different way that they were his, so now they were marking their territory.

They were right, he did look more refined. He had opted to use robes that had some oriental influences, so his robes were a mixture of wizard robes and yukatas. They were made out of the finest silk and of the darkest black. Hundreds of snakes were stitched in emerald green all over the fabric. However it was on the back that was the masterpiece. An Ouroboros occupied his whole back, however instead of the usual snake it was a basilisk biting it's own tail. The design wasn't filled, it was stitched just like the smaller snakes. Though it had a few stitches in silver to give it more depth. All in all he was rather pleased with it.

However the best part about it was that every member of the Court, including the demons and Neville, had the same Ouroboros on their robes, or in some way incorporated in their outfit. It had been a Yule gift from him for all of them. They had been overjoyed when he had gifted it to them.

All the Slytherins had it on their collar. Cedric and Wayne had it on their cufflinks. Luna had it as an anklet and Fleur as a bracelet. The demons and Neville had it on their belt buckles. And Viktor’s was on his breast pocket.

It was officially their crest.

"Ready to go?" he asked them. When he received nods from all of them they walked towards the exit. Before they left Harry turned around and looked at the students still on their knees.

"Rise." he instructed and was immediately obeyed. "Have fun tonight." he said, smiling warmly at them and he could see that they were even more enchanted with him. Every time he smiled at them he made them love him a little more. It was surprising what a few kind words and smiles could do. Though he made sure that they never forgot that he wasn't someone to cross.

As soon as they were out of the common room the twins and Neville cast a few spells and they melted into the shadows. There were to many people roaming the halls for them to go to the Great Hall with the rest of the Court. They would mingle in the Hall, where everyone would be far too busy having fun to care that they were speaking with the Court.

"Mr. Potter! Mr. Diggory! Where have you been? You are both champions, you have to open the ball. Oh, Mr Krum and Miss Delacour are with you as well." McGonagall looked a little flustered
and her usually tidy bun was coming undone, "Well, where are your dates?" she asked sharply looking at them.

"Good evening Professor," Harry said politely, "Our dates are already here. We decided to go with each other."

"The champions go together?" she asked, just to make sure that she had heard right.

"Yes, we made sure that it was allowed by the rules of the Tournament. There was nothing against it. Since we are all close friends we thought we would have more fun if we went together."

"I see." Harry was sure that he saw a small smile on her lips... or at least an upturn of the corners of her lips. Which counted as a smile for McGonagall. "Well then, get ready. The rest of you," she said looking at the other Court members, "Into the Great Hall."

His Court left them following McGonagall into the Great Hall.

"You all ready?" he asked his fellow champions and they nodded. "Who's my date then?" he smirked when he saw that they were a little flustered.

"I am." Viktor toke a step forward after a few looks between him and Cedric, while Fleur just watched them looking highly amused.

He smiled and took Viktor's arm, cursing slightly in his head when he noticed that he was almost a head shorter than the Bulgarian.

"Put on a good show." he told them and all of them stood straighter. They knew they were representing Ouroboros, they wouldn't let Harry down.

When the doors opened they glided into the Great Hall. He could feel everyone's eyes on him. The surprise on some people's face was somewhat expected. However the completely devastated looks some girls and boys had when they saw him on Viktor's arm was rather amusing. He knew many had crushes on him, it was rather obvious, though he had no interest whatsoever in any of them. They were so far beneath him that he didn't even think of them as potential partners. The only people at Hogwarts that he would even come close to considering would be someone on his Court. Everyone else just wasn't worth it.

He looked over the people that were seated at the Champions' table and a small smile appeared on his lips when he saw Marcus sitting amongst those present. He had missed him. Unfortunately he couldn't spend as much time as he wanted with Marcus since he was out of Hogwarts. However Marcus always made sure to stay in contact with the Court. He had even sent letters to the new members so that they could get to know each other. They were all rather close to each other and it looked like none of them wanted to lose that bond, even if they were no longer at Hogwarts.

However when he saw the person sitting next to him he had to fight to not let his composure slip.

Tomas Nacht was sitting there, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Lucius Malfoy was sitting on Marcus' other side and there were a number of other people there, aside from the Headmasters from the three schools. However Harry had eyes for no one else but Tom. What was he doing there?

"Karkaroff told me that Ministry officials were allowed to invite a few guests. Malfoy must have invited him." Viktor told him when he saw at whom he was looking.

"It doesn't matter." Harry replied, looking at Viktor smiling, "He doesn't matter."
Viktor smiled back, though it was obvious that he didn’t believe him. Sometimes he truly wished that his Court didn’t know him as well as they did.

They walked towards the table and even though he didn’t want to he took the seat beside Tom. Viktor sat beside him and Cedric and Fleur took the two seats that were left a little down the table.

Dumbledore stood up as soon as they sat and smiled at everyone in the Great Hall.

"Welcome students and guest. I thank you all for coming and for celebrating such a joyous occasion here at Hogwarts." he smiled at all of them, "Dig in." he said jovially.

Harry chuckled softly. Really, no matter what people said about the man, he knew how to be a host.

Dumbledore sat back down, took the menu that was in front of his plate and said out loud. "Pork chops." And pork chops appeared on his plate. He saw understanding appear in several faces and people picked up the menus in front of their plates and started ordering.

After everyone had ordered small talk started amongst them. Though most people were looking at him discreetly. No doubt wanting for him to join the conversations.

"Mr. Malfoy, Draco didn’t tell me you were coming," he finally said, completely ignoring the man sitting next to him. Was he being petty? Yes. Did he care? Not particularly.

It had been almost a month since he had sent his letter and Nacht hadn’t replied. It clearly showed that he didn’t want anything to do with him anymore. He wouldn’t beg for his attention. If Nacht had gotten over whatever it was that had been between them then that was that.

"He didn’t know." Malfoy replied, "I wanted for it to be a surprise."

"He’ll be happy to see you." Harry told him.

Malfoy smiled and then a witch that was sitting a little down the table turned towards him.

"Do you have friends aside from Slytherins Mr. Potter?"

"Yes, I do... Mrs.?” she looked familiar but he couldn't place her.

"Bones, Amelia Bones. My niece Susan, she's in Hufflepuff, is in the same year as you."

Ah, now he knew why she looked familiar, she had been at Sirius’ trial. Besides Susan Bones was one of the people that his network watched.

"Ah, yes. She's particularly gifted in Arithmancy, isn't she? She's one of the few that can keep up with my friends and I."

She looked rather pleased with the compliment to her niece however before he could take advantage from it another person butted into the conversation.

"Yes... Your little group, Ouroboros isn't it?" the wizard asked, "Tell us Mr. Potter is there a reason why you surround yourself with the best and brightest?"

"Reason? What do you mean?" he asked appearing slightly confused. He had no idea who the man was but he had to admit that he seemed to be far more perceptive than all the other sheep. Something that could be dangerous.

"Well I don't mean to offend but the last person who did something like that became the Dark Lord."
Harry raised an eyebrow. Voldemort had a Court? The last Court had been a little over fifty years ago, did that mean that Voldemort had gone to Hogwarts? So he could find out Voldemort's true identity if he found out who the King was at that time. Though the man hadn't come out and said that there was a Court, he could guess that it was the case.

"Ignore Mr. McMillan, Harry." Nacht said and Harry glanced at him, paying him no more attention than he did to an insect.

"You didn't offend me at all Mr. McMillan." Harry smiled charmingly at the man, ignoring the scorching look that Nacht was now throwing him, "I admit that they are my friends mainly because they are so bright. Though there is no hidden meaning behind it. I just like to be challenged, you know? They challenge me and I them." it wasn't the truth, they didn't challenge him, but at the beginning they kept him entertained and that had been all there was to it. Now... now there was more.

"Oh. Yes, yes I see." McMillan said, getting over his offended air, "Yes, yes. You are supposed to be a prodigy correct?" he wasn't quite able to hide the incredulity in his tone.

"There is no suppose about it." Viktor told him, "Harry is brilliant in everything he does. It's incredible what he's able to do with his wand."

"It's true." Cedric added, "Harry is truly brilliant. It's fascinating watching him do magic. It looks as if it's as easy as breathing to him."

Harry smiled at them, blushing slightly. He could see that almost everyone at the table was falling for it.

"You seem to have quite a few fans." Nacht remarked lowly.

"I know." he replied, "Most of the students at Hogwarts are in love with me... well maybe in lust would be the better term."

"Is that so?" he looked at Nacht when he heard the sharp edge in his tone.

"Something the matter?" he whispered.

"Something the matter?" Nacht muttered back, "You show up on the arm of that Quidditch Player and you ask if something is the matter?" there was a deadly glow in Nacht's eyes.

"And why would that matter to you?"

"You are my serpent, you should be on my arm."

"Is that so?" Harry couldn't help but have a slightly sarcastic note to his voice. "Is it your costume to completely ignore the person who you want on your arm?"

"I wasn't ignoring you." Nacht almost snarled, gaining a few looks. Though it was far too low for anyone to really hear what he had said. Aside from Marcus who was glaring at Nacht.

"Apparently we have a different definition of the word ignoring." Harry argued and turned towards Marcus. "How is your work going?" he asked him, though he already knew everything there was to know about Marcus' life.

"It's going well." Marcus replied, tearing his eyes away from Nacht, "The Minister was talking about promoting me to Undersecretary."
"Already?" he was truly surprised, Marcus hadn't told him that yet.

"Yes, apparently he's been really pleased with my work and several Heads of Department spoke positively about me."

"Yes, we are rather pleased with your work." Bones remarked, "After Weasley left we kept a much closer eye on the junior employees at the Ministry."

"Oh? Weasley left?" Harry asked, feigning curiosity.

"Yes." another wizard that was sitting beside Cedric said, "He didn't even have the decency to tell his Department Head in person. He left and then sent a letter, if you can believe that."

"Really? Such irresponsibility." Harry did his best to sound as disapproving as he could. He caught the malicious smirk that briefly appeared on Marcus' lips.

"Yes, it truly was." Bones shook her head, "We had high hopes for him."

"Well at least Marcus isn't like that." he remarked smiling warmly at Marcus.

"You shouldn't smile like that at other people, your date might get jealous." Nacht muttered snidely beside him, capturing the attention of Marcus, Lucius and Viktor, the only ones close enough to hear.

"Are you jealous Viktor?" he asked, his eyes shining mischievously.

Viktor looked at him and he could see the questions in his eyes. He gave a minuscule nod knowing that Viktor would understand. Every Court member would understand. Viktor smiled at him, leaned in closer and caressed his cheek. Harry could feel the glare that was aimed at him but he ignored it.

"No, I'm not. You made it quite clear that you are mine." Viktor answered, kissing his cheek.

He smiled when he felt the magical pressure around him increase. He could feel the need to hurt, to maim and kill that the magic was projecting.

"Tomas." Lucius hissed and the magic disappeared as if it had never been there to begin with.

He turned around and saw the murderous light in Nacht's eyes and smiled. He didn't think it possible but the glare became even more deadly and he couldn't contain a chuckle.

"Really, what were you expecting?" he whispered, "I told you you would never own me."

"You said that no one would ever own you." was the snarled reply. Fortunately it was low enough not to attract attention.

"That's still true. No one owns me."

"Then how can you be his?" if he didn't know that Nacht couldn't be a parseltongue he would have said that the hiss was borderline parseltongue.

"It's an exchange. I am his, but he is mine." then he turned towards the other people at the table and ignored Nacht for the rest of the meal. He felt his eyes on him, but he payed it no mind. He was done playing with Nacht.

"Well," Dumbledore said after all the plates had disappeared from the tables, "Now let us start the ball. Champions, if you please."
Viktor took his hand and lead him to the dance-floor. Viktor pulled him closer and Harry relaxed for the first time since he saw Nacht at their table.

"Thank you." he whispered into Viktor's ear.

"You're welcome, my King."

Harry smiled. The music started and they glided across the dance-floor. He lost himself to the music and the feel of Viktor's arms around him. Before the dance ended he felt another pair of arms around him and turned to see Cedric holding him. Viktor let go of him and took Fleur. He laughed when he saw the looks they got.

"You did say we would all go together." Cedric whispered against his ear.

Really his Court was so sneaky. This wasn't exactly what he had planned when he said they would go together. Changing partner before the music was over made a clear statement. Truthfully he didn't care, he had said that they would go together, he just wasn't expecting it.

"Will the others be joining as well?" he asked Cedric.

"Of course." Cedric replied, twirling them around the floor, "I think they would spend hours torturing me if I even thought of keeping you all to myself."

Harry laughed again, ignoring the other pairs that had finally joined the dance-floor and all the looks he was getting.

"That's true. You are all so possessive."

Cedric's smirk was far to feral and Harry shook his head. After everything it didn't surprise him to see that his Court was just as twisted as he was. But he couldn't help but wonder if they had been like that from the beginning or if it was he that had turned them into what they were.

Again he felt a new pair of arms around him and he turned around chuckling.

"Marcus."

"My King." Marcus gave a slight bow and Cedric left them.

"I didn't know you would be coming."

"Fudge told me this afternoon. Though I'm glad I came, I wouldn't want to miss dancing with you for anything in the world."

"How is it that you are as affected as they are?" Harry asked curiously, "You haven't been here."

"But I was at the beginning my King," Marcus replied seriously, "Our bond didn't weaken when I left. Your magic... I can always feel it. It's... It's almost bonding us, just like it almost bonds all the other Ouroboros."

"But why does it do that?"

"I'm sorry my King, I can't tell you that."

Harry sighed when he saw the stubborn set of Marcus' jaw. He knew it would do no good to press for answers. Marcus wouldn't lie to him, but he knew that he wouldn't answer.
"Alright, let's enjoy the dance." he relented.

He went from one Ouroboros to another, all of them making it almost impossible for him to be alone. He was rather thankful. He didn't want to be around other people, especially all those Ministry members that were eying him as if he were some juicy steak. Thankfully it didn't seem to be anything sexual.

Usually he wouldn't mind. However, no matter how much he hated to admit it, seeing Nacht had unsettled him a little. He wasn't used to being ignored. Even those that feared him never ignored him. Besides, Nacht had been one of the first people to actual challenge him. An equal almost. Something he had never had. Something he hadn't realized he craved until he had it. And Nacht had just taken it away from him. So it was no wonder that seeing him had affected him. He knew he should use the night to talk with Ministry members, to charm them. However he had seen his Court members working on the Ministry officials so he was content to be in the background, enjoying the night with his Ouroboros.

"Stop avoiding me." a very familiar voice hissed near his ear and he sighed. He knew he shouldn't have sat down, especially since none of his Ouroboros were nearby. "I am not avoiding you Mr. Nacht." he replied calmly, he contained another sigh when he saw Nacht taking the seat beside him. Not wanting to be rude he turned around to look at the man.

"Oh? Then what would you call it?" Harry felt the silencing and some variation of the notice-me-not charm go up around them and he glared. "You made it quite clear that you were no longer interested in maintaining correspondence. I am simply complying with your desires."

"Complying with my desires?" there was a touch of incredulity in his tone, "If you were complying with my desires as you claim, you would be sprawled naked on my bed, begging for me to take you." Harry couldn't believe the amount of lust and passion that were in Nacht's eyes.

"Yes, complying with your desires." Harry stated, completely ignoring the rest of what Nacht had said. "You were the one that didn't reply to my letter Mr. Nacht. If that doesn't say that you don't wish to correspond anymore then I don't know what does."

For a moment or two Nacht looked completely stupefied. Then his eyes widened slightly and he leaned closer. His eyes were burning with a new light and the anger that had been in his eyes all night faded completely.

"I did reply to your letter my little serpent." he whispered, even though no one in the Great Hall could hear them. "That letter you sent me... you have no idea what it did to me." his voice was low, and Harry could hear a slight growl in his tone. "I wanted to storm Hogwarts and take you. I didn't even care that you are only fourteen. The thought of having you override everything else."

"You replied?" he asked, putting aside the rest of what Tom had said.

"Yes." Tom answered, and Harry could see no lie in his eyes, "I wanted to come to Hogwarts when I didn't receive a letter from you, but Lucius told me about the invitations to the Yule Ball and I decided to wait. But seeing you on that Quidditch player's arm almost drove me over the edge."

"So what did the letter say?" he asked slyly, "I do deserve to know what was in the letter, since it seems that it was lost before it reached me. Tell me Tom," he whispered against his ear, feeling the shiver that raced through Tom's body, "What did it say? Will you whispered it into my ear?
Promising sweet nothings and sinful pleasure."

"Are you trying to break my control?" Tom growled.

"Am I succeeding?"

"You have no idea what you are doing Harry." Tom whispered, his hands coming to rest on his waist, trying to pull him closer even though they were seated. It was the use of his name that sobered him up. It had a desperate note in it that made him look into Tom's eyes.

"You're afraid." Harry stated, his eyes widening slightly at the realization. "What are you afraid of?" he asked curiously.

He felt Tom's hand tighten on his waist and he almost winced, the grip was borderline painful and he saw Tom's expression close off.

"People like us... we can't afford to get close to other people. We can't have weaknesses. You are becoming mine and I don't know if I can allow that." Tom replied, his eyes oddly blank. It was strange for Harry to see the usually expressive orbs completely devoid of any kind of emotion. "I am afraid of the amount of control you have over me. Allowing you to have this amount of power is bordering on suicidal."

And Harry understood. He knew what the price was to allow people to get close. If one of his Court ever decided to turn on him... Well the damage that he or she would be able to cause them would be astronomical. He had taken a chance with them and he knew that he wouldn't regret it. However the biggest difference between him and Tom was that he trusted his Ouroboros.

"Well, you have to ask yourself if you trust me with that kind of power."

Harry smiled at him, brought down the charms around them and left. He wasn't angry at Tom anymore but he wouldn't play with him when it was clear that the man was having such doubts about whatever there was between them.

Besides, Tom was right. He had become attached to the man far too quickly. It was something they couldn't afford. When Voldemort made an appearance again and if he tried to kill him again with whom would Tom side? He wasn't strong enough yet to have such a dangerous connection so close to him. It was the same reason why he kept Lucius at arm's length even though Draco was completely devoted to him. He couldn't risk it. With Tom he had thrown caution to the wind. He hadn't thought about the consequences, he had just followed his desires. Tom was becoming his weakness as well, a weakness he couldn't afford.

No matter how much he wanted it.

"Everything alright Harry?" Theo asked.

Theo. Theo had been the first hadn't he? The first person he had ever opened up to. The first person he had allowed close. His very first weakness.

He raised his hand and caressed Theo's cheek. Marveling at the way he leaned in closer to his touch, at the way he closed his eyes and a soft sight escaped his lips.

He pulled Theo's head closer to his, he felt Theo's sharp intake of breath against his lips. He looked into Theo's wide eyes. There were so many emotions in them, but above all hope and longing. He smiled and sealed their lips in a kiss.
"Are you ready Harry?" Theo asked him, leaning against the door that lead to his bathroom.

Harry turned around and nodded, accepting the hug that Theo gave him.

"Theo..." he hated what he was about to do. The last thing he wanted was to hurt Theo. Theo had been with him from the beginning but he couldn't continue what they had been doing. The fact that it was the morning of the second task and Theo was now beside him, was a clear indication that they shouldn't be together.

"You don't have to say it." Theo whispered, "When I woke up this morning I knew."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't." Theo said fiercely, "Don't say you're sorry. I knew what I was getting into. I wouldn't trade the last two months for anything Harry." Theo looked into his eyes and he could see the truth in them. Theo lowered his head and kissed him. It was tender, sweet; a good-bye. "I love you, my King." Theo whispered against his lips and Harry could do nothing but kiss him again. Trying to say everything with that one kiss. When he pulled away they were both panting.

He pulled Theo against him.

"You were my first weakness Theo." he whispered against his ear, "Thank you for showing me just how good those weaknesses can be." then he pulled away and left Theo in his bathroom, he had a task to complete.

Theo took a deep breath and tried to get his emotions back under control. Just because he knew it wasn't meant to last didn't mean it didn't hurt to let him go.

"Are you alright?"

He looked up and saw Draco by the door.

"Yeah, I'm fine." he replied, smiling at the blond.

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah." he whispered, "I already knew it wouldn't last, Luna did warn us. I'm thankful that he was mine for two months."

"You... you looked really happy." Draco muttered.

"I was, no... I am. I'm in love with him Draco. Having him in my arms, being able to kiss him whenever I wanted... it was better than what I imagined. But I am happy that I can still be by his side. Even if it hurts now..." Theo trailed off with a small sad smile.

"I'm kinda happy that I don't love him." Draco said, "Well, I love him, but I'm not in love with him. I see him more as an older brother. Even though he's younger." he ended with a small chuckle.

Theo smiled and shook his head. He understood what Draco meant but he wouldn't change the fact that he was in love with Harry.

"Who's missing?" he asked trying to change the subject.

"Wayne, Luna and Gabrielle."

The names weren't really a surprise. Cedric loved Wayne as a brother, Luna was like a little sister for
Viktor and Gabrielle was everything to Fleur. The only other person they would miss more would be
Harry and he was a fellow champion.

"Only three?"

"There is no one else at Hogwarts missing. Sirius and the Alpha are also accounted for." Draco replied.

"I see." well, he couldn't truthfully say he was surprised. Not after what he had felt at the Yule Ball
after that kiss. He knew that the only reason he was still alive was because Harry had been there. He
cought Draco's look and shook his head, "I'm fine, or I'll be fine."

"If you're sure..."

"I am. Let's go, they must be waiting for us."

Draco nodded and they left Harry's room. They had to cheer for their fellow Ouroboros and their
King.

He woke abruptly. Maybe waking was the wrong word since he wasn't truly asleep. Still he couldn't
help the slight flare of panic that surged through him when he felt the water around him. Though it
was only for a second. Then he remembered why he was surrounded by water, he remembered
where he was and why he was there.

He looked around and saw killing curse green eyes glaring at him and he couldn't stop the smug
smirk that appeared on his lips even if he wanted to.

"Don't say a word." Harry growled, pulling him towards the platform.

He almost chuckled. However he refrained, it wouldn't surprise him if Harry tried to drown him.

He still couldn't believe that he was where he was. The night of the Yule Ball was still fresh on his
mind.

He had been honest with Harry when he said that he was afraid of the power Harry had over him.
He knew Harry understood. During that month that he thought that Harry was ignoring him, he had
been consumed with thoughts of him. He could hardly function. He hadn't been focused. He knew
that his Death Eaters had noticed, but only Lucius and Teodred seemed to suspect the reason for it.

All the others were especially careful around him, knowing that even breathing wrong would have
made him curse them. Truthfully he had wanted to storm Hogwarts and find out why Harry had been
so silent. The only reason he hadn't done it was because Lucius had told him he had convinced
Fudge to allow Ministry officials to bring guests.

He had been quite proud of himself when he didn't go to the Slytherin common room to look for his
little King. However when he saw Harry with Krum it had taken all of his control not to kill the
Bulgarian.

Though nothing tested his control more than that kiss.

Nott was alive only because Harry had been there.

He had lost control of his magic. He knew that every Death Eater had felt it. He knew he had almost
brought them to their knees from the pain. He had been about to strike Nott when Harry's own magic
surged forward. He had felt it circling around Nott protectively. Harry had glared at him. Daring him to harm his Court member.

It hadn't escaped his notice that all of the Court members had formed a loose circle around them, all of them with their wands in hand.

He had to admit that he was impressed with how fast they had been able to cast notice-me-not charms around them. Aside from that they had been rather strong since they had stopped Dumbledore from noticing that something was wrong.

After that Lucius had practically dragged him from Hogwarts. Of course he had suffered for it, even if he understood why he had done it. He was the Dark Lord Voldemort, no one dragged him away from anywhere.

The following months had been far harder than he thought possible. Just thinking about Nott with Harry... At least he knew they hadn't gone further than kissing. He thought that he would lose the last bit of sanity he had if Harry and Nott had slept together. The little Malfoy had been useful in that at least, sure he hadn't said it out right but the letter to his mother had been clear enough without it having to be said. Not that he had any doubt that he had only shared that knowledge because Harry allowed him to. Though he did wonder why his serpent allowed it.

He doubted that Harry had started going out with Nott to make him jealous or something like it. Harry didn't seem to be that type. Still, there must have been a reason why he had decided to do that right after they had talked. After they had gotten over the misunderstanding. Had it been his admittance that he was afraid? He didn't know and he had been far too worked up over the whole thing to think about it. He knew it shouldn't have been like that but that was the problem when one didn't have their complete sanity. Logic sometimes flew out the window. Unfortunately that had been one of those occasions. He was beginning to realize that everything pertaining to Harry became one of those occasions.

However the previous night he had received a summons from Dumbledore. Not he, Voldemort, but Tomas Nacht.

The first thing he had done was call Lucius and ask him if he had any idea what was going on. Lucius hadn't known, so he decided to take Lucius with him, just in case. Casting the necessary glamor charms in parseltongue they left for Hogwarts.

When Dumbledore had told him he had been summoned because the Goblet had chosen him as the person that Harry would miss the most he had been shocked. However that shock had been completely overshadowed by smugness. Out of everyone he knew Harry missed him most. Not his godfather and his Wolf. Not his Ouroboros. Not his little boyfriend. Him. Harry would miss him the most he were to disappear.

In that moment in time it was as if the last two months hadn't happened. What did it matter if Harry had a boyfriend when it was him that he missed? It didn't matter. He had always gotten whatever he wanted, even if he had to take it from someone else, his little King was no different.

"Stop looking so smug." Harry snarled, breaking him out of his thoughts.

"If I didn't know any better I wouldn't say that you aren't happy to see me." he remarked, starting to swim as well so that they could reach the platform faster.

"I'm not." Harry replied, glaring at him.
"The fact that I'm here disproves that." he couldn't help but sound smug. Everyone would sound smug if they were in his situation.

Harry snarled looking away from him and pulled him the last few inches that separated them from the platform. As soon as they were on it, the medi-witch was on them. Giving them towels and pepper-ups, muttering about crazy tasks. They were ushered towards a secluded area and told to sit put and wait for the other champions.

Harry was clearly unhappy about the situation but he complied.

As soon as the medi-witch was gone he had Harry against the wall.

"What are you doing?" Harry's voice was calm, deadly and he felt Harry's magic surging forward. It wasn't doing anything yet, but it was ready should Harry call on it.

"I'm sorry." he whispered, the first time he had used that word and actually meant it. It was enough to make Harry's magic retreat slightly so he continued, "When I said that I was afraid of the power you had over me, I didn't mean to imply that I didn't trust you. I do trust you, which is foolish and bordering on suicidal, but even so... even knowing what I know... I do trust you." he truly did. He shouldn't. He shouldn't even consider it, but he did. Even knowing part of that damned prophecy. "I would rather have you be my weakness, than lose you and have no weaknesses at all."

Harry was looking at him now, an almost heartbroken look in his eyes, and Tom couldn't for the life of him figure out what he had said to make it appear.

"I can't." Harry whispered, "I'm not strong enough to allow you to be my weakness. Even if I want it."

And Tom almost staggered back. Harry was so much like him, how could he not have thought about the possibility that Harry would see the situation the same way as he did. How could he not have thought that Harry saw him the same way? Having someone so close was always a danger, one way or another. They could betray them, or they could be used against them. It was only logical to not have someone in that position. He understood that, he believed that, he had lived like that. But when it came to Harry he couldn't accept it.

"What about Nott?" he hissed.

"Theo belongs to me. He would kill for me. Die for me. He's mine." Harry told him, "You... you aren't."

There was an explosion of cheers and Harry broke the hold he had on him and walked towards the exit, where he was greeted by some of his Ouroboros, Diggory and Hopkins if he wasn't mistaken. He saw the smile that lit Harry's face when he saw them and felt jealousy course through him.

"I could be..." he sighed, sitting on the makeshift bed and closing his eyes.

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Chapter End Notes

I know it's shorter than the previous chapters. But I think this is good place to stop. Next
chapter is the third task. Fourth year is almost done :D

I hope you enjoy this one, even though it is shorter. I liked it. It shows a bit more about Tom and how he feels about Harry and what's happening to them.

I had a reviewer that remarked about the lack of opposition Harry has and that Dumbledore isn't really doing anything against him. Well, to be honest, the war hasn't started yet. Even Voldemort hasn't made any move aside from meeting with a few Death Eaters. Dumbledore knows Voldemort is back, but there has been nothing going on that actually proves it. When the war starts and when he sees that Harry sides with Tom Dumbledore will act. He did defeat a Dark Lord before and Voldemort respects the power he has even though he hates the man. Dumbledore won't be a push-over and the Order will be just as skilled as the Death Eaters. But we aren't in that part of the story yet and at the moment Dumbledore truly sees Harry as someone who is really similar to Tom but that hasn't walked down that path yet. The main reason why he thinks that is because of how Harry treats his Court.

Hope that clears it up for those who where wondering the same thing.
Different paths

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: This story is based on characters and situations created and owned by J. K. Rowling. No money is being made.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 18 – Different paths

Harry took a deep breath and fell on his bed. The year was almost over and the third task was only a few days away. Truthfully he was happy to be done with the year. It was true that he had accomplished a lot over the school year but he was tired.

All that had happened with Nacht was still on his mind. Not that he could forget it even if he wanted to, seeing as he received a letter from the man every week. Even though he didn't reply to any of them, they kept coming. And he just couldn't bring himself not to read them. And no matter how much he hated it the letters never failed to make him smile. Sometimes the letters were only small rants about the people Nacht had to deal with, venting about someone's incompetence, or just talking about how the week had gone. He kept every one of those letters.

And if the whole situation with Nacht wasn't enough, his magic was acting up.

He had no idea what was wrong with it, but it felt restless. The feeling got stronger every day and he was starting to go crazy. It was as if something was about to happen and his magic was eagerly waiting for it. Though he had no idea what it could be.

However he had the feeling that his Court members knew. Sometimes he would catch them watching him and they could barely hide the eagerness they were feeling.

He sighed again and closed his eyes.

Maybe a good night's sleep would help him clear his mind. At least he hoped it would, he didn't know how much longer he could stand it before he snapped.

He got out of bed and stretched. It was the day of the last task and Harry was rather relieved that the whole Tournament was coming to an end. He needed to be alone. He needed to think. Above all he needed to find out what was going on with his magic.

The Court was waiting for him in the common room and he smiled at them. He may be a little angry with them, he knew they were hiding something from him, but Luna had told him that everything would become clear soon. So he didn't remark on their behavior. He knew that they believed they were doing what was best for him, and they would always do what was best for him, even if that meant angering him. Their loyalty and dedication to him never ceased to marvel him, though it no longer surprised him. Now he almost expected it of them, part of him practically demanded their
loyalty, their dedication. It was only natural after all. Shaking his head, putting those thoughts in the back of his mind, he smiled slightly at them.

"Let's go." he said, leading them out of the common room.

They spotted the twins and Neville sitting at the Gryffindor table, Neville sitting a little away from everyone else and the twins goofing around with their friend, Lee. He didn't like seeing how Neville was almost shunned inside his own House just because he didn't behave like the stereotypical Gryffindor. But the Lion was stubborn and refused to change his behavior to please them. He was proud of who he had become and even if he couldn't be with the Court out in the open, no matter what Harry said and how many times he told him that he didn't mind if everyone knew that he was part of the Court Neville wouldn't change his mind and Harry didn't want to order him to do it, he didn't want to join the group of fourth years Gryffindors if it meant bad talking Harry and the other Court members.

They sat in their usual places and started their breakfast.

It was obvious that everyone was anxiously waiting for the final task. Though it would only start in the afternoon, everyone was glancing at the Champions, whispering excitedly with their neighbors.

Harry ignored them all and went to his morning classes as usual. He had no doubt that he was going to win. Not even Moody's creepy staring was bothering him. Though he had noticed that the staring had increased as the year come to an end. Sometimes he even caught Moody muttering to himself and he was sure that he heard his name several times. In any other circumstances he would have been all over Moody's strange behavior, but he was honestly too tired to bother.

When it was lunch time he completely ignored the looks he was getting from everyone, even the other Champions were starting to look slightly frustrated with the way everyone was eying them. Aside from Harry, Viktor was the one that was dealing with the looks the best. Cedric was itching to curse a few girls that were practically throwing themselves at him and the only reason Fleur hadn't burned someone to a crisp yet was because the rest of the Court had intervened.

All in all he thought that most of them were quite happy to see the end of the school year.

All the students around them suddenly went silent and Harry glanced up, only to come face to face with Snape. Snape was glaring down at them, looking as if the last thing he wanted to do was to be near them. Though Harry did catch how his eyes glanced towards Draco every so often. He almost smiled when he saw the brief flicker of pain that appeared in Snape's eyes when Draco only looked at him coldly.

"Champions," he sneered at them, "Your families are waiting for you." he pointed towards a door at the back of the Hall and stalked away.

Cedric grimaced and the others threw him sympathetic looks.

"Stay calm," Harry told him, smiling a little, "We'll be there. Besides after you have used him, you'll never need to interact with them again."

Cedric shook his head.

"Till all of your objectives are accomplished it's best to keep them as happy as possible. My family is the only truly well connected Light family that you have on your side, since Neville's grandmother retired herself, and by extension the Longbottom family, from politics after Neville's parents were incapacitated. Their name still has weight but their connections are almost none-existing and their
allies are shaky at best. My father on the other hand still has connections and allies, many of them from families that would never interact with Notts, or Malfoys, or anyone that has even the smallest leanings towards the Dark. You never know when that can be useful."

"Sometimes," Harry muttered shaking his head, "All of you seem to be thinking about my future plans much more than I am."

The Court chuckled.

"Well we can't wait for the future," Theo stated, smiling at him warmly and Harry smiled back.

He was happier than he had thought he would be that his relationship with Theo hadn't suffered even though he knew he had hurt him quite a bit. Theo meant a lot to him and he didn't know what he would have done if he had lost the closeness they shared. Though now that he knew what he was looking for it became almost impossible not to see the love in Theo's eyes when Theo so much as looked at him.

A part of him felt that he didn't deserve that love, but he knew that no matter what he said Theo wouldn't change his mind.

"Let's go. They're waiting." he said, standing up and following the other Champions to the room where the families were waiting. He wasn't looking forward to it. He didn't have family to wait for him. But he knew that if he didn't go then Snape would find a way to get him into trouble. Not that he cared all that much about it, but if he could avoid it then he would.

He looked around the room as soon as he entered.

Fleur's family was easy to identify. She looked exactly like her mother, only a few years younger. Her father was rather ordinary, it didn't surprise Harry all that much. From what he had found out Veela always mated for love. They didn't care about looks when looking for the perfect mate. All they cared about was if the mate was able to provide and protect the family. That was where so many rumors about Veela being gold-diggers came from. More often than not, their mates ended up being someone well connected, powerful, rich, or a mix of all three. Fleur's little sister, Gabrielle, looked like a younger version of her sister, though her hair was slightly darker, she was hugging Fleur as if her life depended on it and Harry almost chuckled.

Even so he noticed the way that Fleur's mother was looking at him. As if she was trying to solve a puzzle. He didn't particularly like it, especially because he had no idea what he had done to earn such a look from the Veela.

Next he saw Viktor's parents. Both of them were looking at Viktor with pride in their eyes. Though his father was glancing at Harry ever so often, something like fascination in his eyes.

He almost couldn't contain his sneer when he saw Cedric's parents. They looked so full of themselves that it almost made him sick. It really was no wonder Cedric couldn't stand them. They didn't love Cedric at all, it was clear as day. They loved the image they had of their son. Harry couldn't understand how they couldn't see just how much they were hurting their own son. Well, how does the saying go? Their loss, my gain.

His observations were cut short when he was engulfed in a hug.

The only thing that stopped him from gathering his magic and cursing whoever dared to touch him so was the softly spoken words near his ear.

"Missed you pup."
There was only one person he knew that would ever call him that.

"Sirius." there was only a small trace of the surprise he felt at seeing the man there.

"Hello cub."

"Remus."

This time the surprise must have been more pronounced because Sirius let him go and both men shared a somewhat pained smile.

"We couldn't pass up the opportunity to see you." Remus remarked.

"Yeah," Sirius said enthusiastically, "That's what family does."

Family... He had family now. It was such a strange thought. He hadn't gotten used to the idea of it yet.

"And we brought a gift." Sirius exclaimed. He turned around and almost dragged someone after him.

Harry couldn't help but chuckle when he saw Marcus' disgruntled expression, though it turned into a blinding smile when he saw Harry. He knew what was coming before it happened and in the blink of an eye he had Marcus' arms around him.

"I really missed you." Marcus whispered and Harry could do nothing but hug him back.

He knew it was hard for Marcus to be the only one that was away from the Court, from him. Marcus was the only one that was always alone. It showed just how loyal he was to Harry, to Ouroboros, that even being away from them didn't make him waver in his loyalty and belief in Harry.

"I wasn't expecting you."

"Sirius and Remus smuggled me in." there was a soft smile on his lips and Harry chuckled. He doubted there was much if any smuggling involved. It wouldn't surprise him, if McGonagall had allowed Marcus to join them. She did have a soft spot for him.

"Harry!" exclaimed Fleur excitedly, "Let me introduce you to ma famille." then she spotted Marcus and her smile brightened, "Marcus! It's got to see you! Letters just aren't the same than talking face to face." she gave him a quick hug, which Marcus returned.

All the while her family was watching them. Her mother's eyes shining brightly, relief noticeable in their depths.

"Bonjour Madame, Monsieur. Enchanté, je suis Harry Potter." he gave them a small bow.

"Oh, Fleur nos na pas dis que vous parlez français." Fleur's mother said, a delighted smile on her flawless face.

"I'm afraid that my French skills don't go further than that. Though Fleur did say that she would be teaching us French as soon as all this excitement with the Tournament was over." he gave a charming smile.

"Maman, papa, let me introduce you to my friends." Fleur said, her smile brighter than Harry had ever seen it, "This is, as you know, Harry Potter. And this is Marcus Jugson. I'll introduce you to the others in a little bit. They seemed to be a little occupied." she glanced at the other two champions and saw that Viktor was having, what seemed like, a rather serious conversation with his father while
Cedric seemed to be doing his best to prevent his parents from sneering at everyone else in the room. "Harry, Marcus, this are my parents; Apolline and Jean-Pierre."

Marcus gave them a little bow and Harry smiled at them. He knew how much Fleur loved her family, so the least he could do was be polite to them. Even if he did want to know what the looks had been about.

"Harry." he looked to his side and saw Viktor standing there, his parents beside him. "I would like to introduce you to my parents, my mother Nadia Krum," she was a beautiful women, long dark blond hair and deep blue eyes, with an aristocratic face. If Viktor hadn't told him that she was a first generation witch he would have thought that she was from an old pureblood family. "And Sergei Krum, my father." he was an older version of Viktor.

"It's a pleasure meeting both of you." Harry replied with a small bow, noticing both Marcus and Fleur standing a little straighter beside him.

"The pleasure is ours." Viktor's father replied his accent almost nonexistent, he was hardly able to mask the excitement, curiosity and awe in his eyes. Harry wondered what that was all about, though he knew that it wasn't a good idea to ask about it, at least not with so many unknowns around.

"Why don't we take a tour around the castle?" Sirius asked excitedly, extending the invitation to the two other families. They were all ignoring the Diggorys, since it was clear as day that they had no interest in interacting with them. Cedric looked at them longingly before dragging his parents away and out of the room.

Both Viktor and Fleur's parents agreed, they seemed happy to be able to spend time with their children and their friends.

Marcus, Fleur, Viktor and Harry lingered back, letting Sirius and Remus lead the adults around. They seemed to be getting along fine. Sirius and Remus telling them little known facts about Hogwarts, and little stories from when they went to school.

Harry was happy with just being with his Ouroboros. They didn't need to talk, he enjoyed the moments when they could be together. In the last few weeks he had been able to feel their magic almost constantly. It was strangely comforting. If this was how his Ouroboros felt then he could understand why they wanted to be near him. Though he still didn't understand why it was happening.

If he were anyone else he would have felt somewhat frightened about all the changes with his magic, more so because he couldn't understand why it was happening. He had searched the Hogwarts library thoroughly, he had even told Sirius to send him books that had anything about changes in magical cores or anything related to it, and even so he still couldn't find anything.

It was frustrating, especially because he had the feeling that his Court knew what was happening.

He contained a sigh and smiled when he saw Marcus, Fleur and Viktor immersed in a conversation. He had been rather happy when they hadn't excluded Marcus even though they hadn't met him before the Yule Ball. As soon as they learned that Marcus was part of the Court they had decided to write him, since it was the only way they could get to know him.

He was sure that this closeness that they all shared would make all the difference in the future. Though the difference in what he still didn't know.

Sirius led them to the grounds and Gabrielle ran towards the lake where she sat down and started
throwing little pebbles. The adults joined her, conjuring a blanked and sitting near the shore, enjoining the weather.

They joined them and Harry saw how Fleur's mother's eyes filled with happiness every time Fleur laughed. She devoured every interaction they had with Fleur and her joy grew when she noticed the true happiness her daughter showed.

Harry remembered Fleur telling them how she never had true friends, how the boys would fall to her allure, how it tormented her mother knowing that it was her that had passed the Veela genes to her daughters. It was a constant fear for the half-Veela that she had doomed her daughters to a life of prejudice and unhappiness.

Seeing Fleur so happy, with friends that truly cared for her, must have taken a heavy burden of her shoulders.

He leaned against Viktor and relaxed, letting their chatter wash over him.

"Mister Potter," he opened his eyes and saw that Viktor's father was standing near them, "Would you mind if we talked?" he glanced at Viktor and saw his eyes darken, a warning in them. His father was ignoring said warning, his eyes never leaving Harry.

"Of course not," he replied, throwing a small smile at Viktor. He got up and followed Viktor's father a little away from the group, he could feel their eyes on them, though he paid them no mind. He had been curious about the look in the elder Krum's eyes and this was a rather good opportunity to find out.

"I have to ask," Krum started, as soon as they were far enough away from the others so that they wouldn't be able to hear them, looking part exhilarated and part apprehensive, "What are your goals?"

"My goals?" well, he certainly hadn't expected that, "What do you mean?"

"The Krum's have always been a Neutral family. We never cared if our members were Dark or Light. Now though my son, the heir of the Krum family, follows a Dark Lord. He swore himself to a Dark Lord or at least a raising Dark Lord. My son is one of your followers and I know my son, he wouldn't have joined you if you had coerced him. He joined willingly. He wouldn't have done that if you weren't something different. He wouldn't have joined if you offered him power, or if you were a pureblood supremacist. So even though you are a Dark Lord, a raising Dark Lord, you are different from the ones that have risen to power the last few centuries. So again I ask, what are your goals? Why does my son follow you?" when he started he had looked slightly unsure, but as he went on he started sounding surer of himself, the wonder was back, but under all of that there was worry. Worry for his son and the path he was so willingly walking.

Even though he remained perfectly calm on the outside, his mind was racing.

"Why do you say that I am a raising Dark Lord?" his tone was even, though it was hard to keep it that way. He felt as if he was in the brink of finding out something, something important, something that would change everything.

"We are an old family. I can read the signs. I can't be certain, but if I were to guess I would say that you are two or three steps away from becoming a Dark Lord. From what I can feel your magic is more than ready for it."

"Can everyone feel that?" that would be a problem, a rather big problem actually.
"No. I imagine a lot of people would be able to feel your magic, but very few would actually be able to feel the underlying currents that show what you are. The Krum family can feel magic, as Viktor has no doubt told you, in a much deeper level. It's a gift left from our ancestors who mated with magical creatures such as Veela and Nymphs, who are especially sensitive to those things."

Harry hummed and briefly closed his eyes.

Was this why his magic had been acting so strange these last few months? Was he truly a rising Dark Lord? He opened his eyes and glanced at his Ouroboros, still sitting by the lake, now having been joined by a few of the others that had been in class previously. Was that why they deferred to him so? Did they see him as their Lord?

He contained a derisive chuckle and pinched the bridge of his nose. How could he have been so blind?

He had been so set on stating that he wasn't a Dark Lord that he failed to realize just how his actions contradicted his words. 'I am a Dark Lord.' he thought. Not a second later he felt his magic settle. Its constant buzzing stopped and it flowed through his body soothingly. As if it finally was at peace. As if it had finally found its purpose. He had known that his magic had been agitated but he hadn't truly realized just how much a difference it would make. He felt more in control, not only of his magic but of himself too. It was as if he had been hiding and now wasn't. He felt... free.

He glanced at his Court when he heard the sharp intake of breath. Marcus, Fleur, Viktor, Luna, Blaise, Theo and Draco were sitting straight; their eyes slightly glazed an expression of wonder and excitement on their faces.

He had a feeling that they had felt the change in his magic. It still surprised him just how in tune they were with his own magic.

He looked at Krum and saw that he was looking at them too, an almost awed expression on his face.

"My goals..." he started slowly, capturing Krum's attention, "I want Magic to be free. I don't care about blood, about Light or Dark. All I care about is Magic. I want it to be free. What we have been doing to Magic... It's killing her. Magic should never be contained, should never be bound by human rules and regulations. My goal is to change our world. My goal is to set Magic free." he smiled at the dumbstruck wizard and walked back to his Ouroboros, he sat in the middle of them and let their magic surround him. He closed his eyes and smiled. Finally he was starting to feel at peace.

They were getting ready for the third task. Their families had left them a few minutes ago and the four champions were in a tent near the pitch. There was still a little more than an hour till the beginning of the task, but their families had understood when they said that they wanted to be together and prepare for the task.

Truthfully there was nothing to prepare, they were as prepared as they could be, but they did want to spend time together. Their magic was almost demanding it.

The entrance to the tent was opened and the other Ouroboros started to pile in. Even Marcus was able to sneak back in with them.

They smiled and sprawled themselves on the available seats.

"Something changed." Theo stated, his eyes locking with Harry's and breaking the peaceful atmosphere.
The others looked at him too, their eyes far to knowing. He had suspected that they knew what had been happening but this was all the confirmation that he needed.

"I'm a Dark Lord."

He was expecting for a lot of reactions from his Court, however he hadn't expected the overwhelming relief and join in their eyes. Their magic surged forward, warping around him. It was joyous, exhilarated. He felt almost overwhelmed.

Theo stood then, the others following him swiftly, he took a few steps forward and knelt in front of the armchair that Harry was sprawled upon.

"I, Theodore Maximillian Nott, pledge my body, magic and soul to thee, Harry James Potter, my chosen Lord. I pledge to uphold your beliefs, to fight for your goals, to live and die by your word. So I pledge it, so mote it be."

Somehow it didn't surprise him that Theo was the first. Theo had always been the first; he would always be the first. He had always been his and he knew that he would always be.

He stood and took Theo's face between his hands, gently caressing his cheeks. He placed a gentle kiss on Theo's forehead and whispered, "So mote it be."

For a fraction of a second it felt as if the world itself had stopped spinning, then there was a rush of magic and Theo released a pained little whimper, clutching his left shoulder.

Gently Harry moved Theo's hand and with a whisper of magic cut open Theo's shirt.

There for all to see, black on flawless creamy skin, was his mark. The Ouroboros he had defined as their crest, though if one looked closely enough, one would see that the lines that outlined the Ouroboros were the words of Theo's pledge. Forever engraved in his skin, forever binding them.

Marcus, Draco, Blaise, Fred, George, Luna, Neville, Adrian, Graham, Fleur, Cedric, Wayne and Viktor followed suite. They knelt beside Theo and made their pledge.

"I, Marcus Anthony Jugson, pledge..."

"I, Draco Lucius Malfoy, pledge..."

"I, Blaise Mika Zabini, pledge..."

"I, Fred Gideon Weasley, pledge..."

"I, George Fabian Weasley, pledge..."

"I, Luna Artemise Lovegood, pledge..."

"I, Neville Frank Longbottom, pledge..."

"I, Adrian Matthew Pucey, pledge..."

"I, Graham Philipe Montague, pledge..."

"I, Fleur Isabel Delacour, pledge..."

"I, Cedric Benjamin Diggory, pledge..."
"I, Wayne Paul Hopkins, pledge..."

"I, Viktor Andrei Krum, pledge..."

They started in unison and ended in unison and Harry was sure that magic had to have been involved, how else would it have been possible. But at the moment he didn't care. The magic they had put in their pledges was dancing around him, waiting for the final words to be spoken, waiting to be bound. He closed his eyes, took a deep breath and in words no louder than a whisper he sealed their fate, "So mote it be."

The magic surged around them, sealing their pledge.

They grabbed their arms releasing slight whimpers, and then they rushed to uncover their shoulders, eager to see the proof of their pledge. And there it was, just like Theo's.

Neville was the first to break out of his awe. His shoulders shook and the he started laughing. It was full of delight and the others soon joined him. Harry could almost feel their giddiness.

Harry let them be, knowing that they needed this. He sat back on his seat and let them compose himself. He was sure that they had been waiting for this moment far longer than he could think.

Slowly they calmed down; they turned to face Harry again, still on their knees, and bowed their heads.

"We live to serve, my Lord." they chanted.

He had to stop the shiver that run down his spine. That had affected him far more than what he thought it would. He like it, he really like it.

Harry studied them. Part of him couldn't believe that he liked seeing his friends on their knees in front of him. No, they weren't only his friends, they were his followers. He had followers who would do anything to achieve his goals. He had followers who were loyal to him. He was a Dark Lord.

"Ouroboros," he addressed them, standing from his seat. He stood tall and proud in front of them, his magic flowing around him, caressing their bare shoulder where his mark was branded, "Today we set our path. All of us made our choices. We could have walked different paths; we could have made different choices. We could have been what everyone expected of us. But we didn't. We aren't. We chose to be Ouroboros." he could see the pride in their eyes and a small smile appeared on his lips, "In the years to come our choices, our path, will be criticized by those around us. They will call us evil, they will shun us. But we will stay true to our choices because we know that we are right. We know our cause is just. We will free Magic; we won't let human limitations define Magic's boundaries. We will change the world for the better even if we have to fight our own to achieve it. We are Ouroboros and soon every magical being on earth will know our name."

"Ouroboros!" his Court chanted, their heads held high and he smiled.

Yes, their path was set.

The crowd around them was cheering like crazy and Harry wanted nothing more than to go back to their tent or to his room and enjoy the time with his Ouroboros.

He could feel them now better than ever. Their magic was always reaching out to him, almost begging for his attention. It was slightly distracting, but he knew that it was worse for them, especially for Cedric, Viktor, and Fleur. They were still competing against each other but their magic
made it almost uncomfortable for them. They would still do their best, but they felt almost compelled to not go against him. Though he had made it clear that he wanted them to do their best, he didn't want to win just because they hadn't tried hard enough. He wanted to win because he was better.

He was still a little stunned about what had happened just a little over an hour ago. He was officially a Dark Lord, there was no turning back.

Though that didn't mean he regretted it. He didn't. He felt better than he had in a while, since the beginning of the year as a matter of fact.

There was the sound of a canon firing and he walked towards the maze. Since he was in first place he was the first to walk in. He looked back at the other Champions one last time and went in.

As soon as he entered all the sound around him vanished, the night seemed darker and the hedges seemed to emit an almost oppressing feeling. He had suspected that they would have charmed the maze, but even he hadn't expected it to affect him so. It made him uncomfortable, he wanted to be out of the maze as soon as possible. He knew it was the charms influencing him, but he couldn't quite control it.

Taking a deep breath, trying to get over the charms around him, he took the first few steps inside the maze. He would win this, he had to. What kind of Dark Lord would he be if he couldn't overcome such a measly maze.

Right, left, left, left, straight ahead, right. He was ready to scream in frustration! He had no idea how long he had been in the damned maze, but he had expected to have run into something by now. However his path had remained empty. There was nothing but soundless darkness and the feeling of the hedges creeping closer as time passed.

Truthfully he would have preferred some sort of magical beast instead of this suffocating silence.

Almost as if answering his wish he saw a shadow emerging from the hedges.

For a second or two he could do nothing more than stare at the thing in front of him. An acrumantula? And not a young one either. What were they thinking? He knew that the Tournament would have some dangers, but acrumantula? Those weren't dangerous, they were deadly.

More than thankful for all the training he had gone through he dodge when the beast charged, casting a curse mid leap. It hit the animal, but did nothing more than blast it a few feet since it had only grazed it. It was far faster than what he had thought.

"Diffindo." he whispered, aiming at the creature's legs, overpowering the spell. A normal diffindo would never be able to pierce their skin, but magic was a matter of will and no matter how basic a spell was all that mattered was the power and will behind it.

The spell caught three of its legs and Harry couldn't stop the laugh that escaped him when it shrieked in pain. He so very rarely had the opportunity to indulge his more sadistic tendencies, he had missed it. Though he did his best to stifle it, he knew that they were being monitored; the crowd was watching them inside the maze. He didn't want to give them a reason to restart their whispers about him being a Dark Lord, especially now since it was actually true. He hoped Weasley never found out; otherwise he would never hear the end of it. He could picture it now, his ugly little face lit up by smugness and prancing around the castle as if he owned it telling whoever wanted to hear that he had been right. He was sure that he would ask his demons to get rid of the little bug before the day was out if something like that were to happen.
Seeing the creature trying to stand on its remaining legs brought Harry out of his thoughts, this wasn't the most opportune time to start daydreaming. He had a Tournament to win.

A well placed and overpowered _bombarda_ blew part of the things head of and a small smug smile appeared on his lips. Simple and effective, and best of all no one could accuse him of using anything illegal.

He turned around and continued on his way, slightly more enthusiastically. However that quickly died down when the only thing he came across was a Confundos charm that made him believe that the world was upside-down, a Boggart and a Sphinx. Out of all of them the most interesting one was the Sphinx, even if the riddle hadn't been all that challenging.

He turned right again and stopped in his tracks.

That was it? _Really?_  

In front of him was the Tri-Wizard Cup.

He looked around and spread his magic, trying to feel for anything more around him, some curse, or creatures, or even traps. But there was nothing, the only thing he felt was the same feeling of wanting to leave the maze.

He took a step forward.

He cursed.

The hedges rumbled and started collapsing in on him.

He sprinted towards the cup, since the way back was blocked by the hedges. He almost tripped when the hedges snagged his shirt, but a quick _diffindo_ had that taken care of. When the hedges started to crumble faster and faster he almost tackled the Cup from its perch, knowing that it would be the only way to make it out of there, more like hoping that touching it would stop the collapsing of the hedges.

He felt a hook behind his navel and frowned slightly, no one had told him that the Cup would be a portkey. The last thing he saw was the hedges engulfing everything around him and he couldn't help but feel relieved that he was being taken away.

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Chapter End Notes

A.N.: I am really sorry. Sorry. Truly. I know it has been a long time since I updated, but my laptop broke and I haven't bought one yet. At the beginning of last month I've started using a friends iPad, but I can only use it a little every night and it takes me forever to write a chapter. So updates will be a little slower until I have a new laptop. But I will upload, I won't ever abandon the story. Even so, thanks for sticking with the story for so long. It makes me really happy and makes me want to finish it :)

This chapter was a little smaller, I know, but it's more of a bridge for the second part of the story. This is the end of the first part of the story, the part where Harry isn't a Dark
Lord yet. After this chapter starts the rise of the Dark Lord. Things will become more serious, Tom will be back as the Dark Lord that he his. Plans will be made, the Order of the Phoenix will start up again, and the war will start in about two chapters. So... as you can see, things will start to happen.
Harry cursed when he hit the ground. He wouldn't recommend tackling a portkey, that's for sure. Though his eyes snapped open when he noticed that he wasn't hearing the crowd that had been watching the third task.

He jumped to his feet, his wand in hand, and looked around.

His eyes narrowed when he took in the unfamiliar surroundings. He had no idea where he was, nor why he was there.

Movement from behind made him turn around, his wand never wavering.

"Good-evening." a familiar voice reached his ears and he almost lowered his wand.

"Mr. Nacht."

Nacht flicked his wand and the fire in the fireplace roared to life and the candles lit themselves. Now that he had more light he could make out the room a little better. It was a dinning room, as he had thought; old but well cared for. Dark wood flooring and deep blue walls. There were several paintings on the walls, though only one of them was a portray. The man, he appeared to be a little over middle aged with black hair and deep blue eyes and refined features, in it had his eyes fixed on him. It was as if he was analyzing his every movement. There were two windows on the farthest side of the room that went from floor to ceiling and he could see the outline of a rather large garden. Then his eyes landed on a small, round table that was set for a two person dinner.

"Really Mr. Nacht; if you wanted a date, you just had to ask." he teased slightly. He knew that, technically, he had been kidnapped, but at the moment he truly wasn't afraid. And even though he knew he shouldn't he had missed Tom.

There was a slight smile on Tom's lips.

"I don't think my ego could have taken the rejection." he teased right back. He seemed somewhat lighter to Harry. True, there was a slight edge of nervousness around the man, but it was almost completely overshadowed by determination. As if he had come to a decision and would see it
through no matter what.

"So you decided that the best option was to kidnap me?" he didn't even try to hide the sarcasm.

"Something like that," Tom replied, stepping fully into the room, "Please, Harry, take a seat." he said, holding out a chair for him.

Harry complied. He didn't see the pleased smile on Tom's lips but he could almost feel it. Tom took the seat opposite him and a second later a house-elf popped in, leaving beverages.

"The reason why I brought you here isn't because of a... date, for lack of a better term." Tom told him a few moments later.

"Yes, I suspected that. Though the setting is quite misleading."

"I have a few things to confess, and I admit that I opted for this setting because after our talk you may not want to be in my presence any longer. I am a selfish man, if I cannot have another chance to be with you than I will take the opportunity to enjoy it while I can."

"Why would I no longer desire your company?" his eyes narrowed, his magic starting to dance just under his skin.

"I was not completely truthful pertaining my identity." Tom stated, sipping his wine.

In front of Harry's eyes Tom's features started to change. A very complex glamor falling away. Harry took the man in. He had been handsome as Tomas Nacht, but the man sitting in front of him now was sinful. Harry wanted to pat himself on the back for managing not to droll. However as soon as he looked at his eyes he felt his mind shut down.

He had never seen those eyes, but he knew who they belonged to. He had read about their owner almost obsessively and no matter how much the descriptions of his physical appearance changed, there was one thing that remained the same; his eyes.

"Voldemort." not a question, a simple statement.

A pleased smile appeared on the man's lips.

"You truly are exceptional." Voldemort put the glass back on the table. Harry was surprised to see that in the meantime their meal had arrived. Though from the looks of it, it was only the appetizer.

Harry did the most logical thing possible, he picked up his fork and tasted the dish. Alright, maybe it wasn't all that logical. But it was the polite thing to do. If a Dark Lord offers you dinner, you eat it. No matter how shocked you are.

Tom, no, not Tom. Voldemort followed suite, savoring the excellent dish. It truly was excellent, at the very least the Dark Lord had taste.

"As you can see, we have a lot of things to discuss." the Dark Lord continued.

"Yes," Harry was proud of himself for not sounding the least bit affected, "I would appreciate if you would be so kind as to explain what is happening."

"As you suspected I never died. I was wounded and weak, no more than a spirit, but not dead. In my quest to gain my powers back I found my way back to Hogwarts. I had a relatively simple plan, gain my body back and kill you." Voldemort stated, then took another bite, as if telling your dinning
companion that you had planned on killing them was the most natural thing in the world, "Then you came along and everything changed." Voldemort actually sighed, "I must confess that, just like the sheep in the Wizarding World, I had expected you to be the Golden Boy of Gryffindor, the perfect little Savior of the Light. Just with one look at you I knew I had been wrong. Still, it didn't change anything, you had to be eliminated. However when I saw just how gifted you truly are I started to consider the option of making you a Death Eater. That only lasted until I spoke to you. Even as young as you were, I knew you would never follow."

"Quirrell." Harry stated, after both of them had taken a sip of their drinks.

Voldemort seemed pleased with his deduction.

"Yes. I was possessing him. Only partially at first, but after the Sorting I took possession completely. As you can guess I gained my powers back, but you were still a mystery to me. I wanted to know more about you. I wanted to know everything about you. So, Tomas Nacht came to be."

"Tomas Nacht doesn't exist." Harry stated, he ignored the pain he felt at that realization.

"No, he does exist. I am Tomas Nacht." Voldemort stated fiercely, "Almost everything I told you about Tomas Nacht is pertaining to me. I just altered a few things, such as where and when I was born. Everything else is the truth."

"You're a half-blood?" Harry couldn't help but sound incredulous, "The man who champions the purist cause is a half-blood?" he knew he should show the Dark Lord a little more respect, he wasn't suicidal, but he just couldn't help himself. He knew that he was talking with the Dark Lord, but that comfortable feeling he had with Tomas Nacht was still there.

"Very few people know that. My first Inner Circle, my Court, and a few of their children are the only ones that know."

"Why?" Harry asked him, his eyes narrowing, "Are you ashamed of your blood?"

Voldemort sighed, and closed his eyes. Harry always knew just what to ask, didn't he? And he couldn't lie to him. Well, he could, but he didn't want to. That was what all of this was about.

"For a while, yes, I was." he confessed. It tasted bitter confessing such a thing, "I was young and it angered me beyond anything else that I was a half-blood. How could I, someone who was more powerful than any of those stuck up purebloods, be a half-blood. Lower than them in this world where only magical power should matter? Fortunately I grew up. I am not ashamed of my blood any longer, but by the time I felt like that, I needed an army and the purists were a ready made army."

"So what do you fight for?"

"I think, that what I fight for now, isn't the same that I fought for then."

"That still doesn't tell me what you fight for now."

"Tell me, Dark Lord, what do you fight for?"

Harry almost stopped breathing. His eyes fixed on Voldemort. He tried not to react, but he knew that he hadn't been able to hide his shock.

"How?" he almost hissed.

"I have known for a while that you had the potential. As soon as I saw you today I knew what you
"How?" Harry repeated.

"You can feel it too, Harry." Voldemort told him, "Let your magic free, listen to what it tells you."

Harry closed his eyes. It may not be the best move when in the presence of a Dark Lord but it was the easiest way for him to concentrate fully on his magic. Not even a second later he almost gasped. He could feel Voldemort, it was as if all his senses were telling him what Voldemort was. Some ingrained instinct told him to run, to leave. Another part of him though was overjoyed, his magic was overjoyed. It had found a match.

He opened his eyes and stared at the other Dark Lord.

"That's how I knew." the man told him, a small, knowing smile on his lips, "How long?"

"Today." Harry replied, knowing what the man was asking.

"A fledgling Dark Lord than." a smirk curling his lips, "My little King sure is growing quickly." he said teasingly.

Harry narrowed his eyes.

"You knew from the beginning that I wanted to meet you. You, Voldemort, not you Tomas Nacht. Why create Tomas Nacht, knowing that I wanted to know you."

"It was too soon for people to know that I was back, and even though I'm sure you wouldn't have told anyone I couldn't be sure how you would react. I suspected, but I couldn't be sure. So I found a way to get to know you better. Besides I wanted you to feel comfortable with me, being a Dark Lord usually leaves people... shall we say; less than comfortable?"

Harry had to contain a snort. Well that was one way to put it.

"Why the name Tomas Nacht?"

"A couple of reasons; I had already used an alias with the name Nacht, so it was fairly easy to create documents stating that Tomas Nacht was my former alias' son. My true name is actually Tom, I found it funny that I was practically screaming it to Dumbledore's face and he didn't even suspect anything. He believes that I hate my name because I share it with my muggle father. I used to for a while, but as stated before; I grew up. My mother named me Tom Marvolo Riddle."

"TMR." Harry whispered, "You gave me those books."

"I did. Were they useful?"

Harry actually snorted.

"Both collections are my favorite books." he confessed and was a little surprised when Voldemort's eyes lit up with pleasure.

"Will you answer a question I have had for quite some time?" Voldemort asked him, leaning forward just a little bit, betraying his eagerness.

"What question?"

"What did you do to Jugson in your first year?"
Harry chuckled and leaned back on his chair. First year... it seemed lifetimes ago.

"Would you rather see it?" he asked, rather curious to see how the Dark Lord would react to his offer.

"You would trust me with your mind?"

"Do I have a reason not to?"

Both knew what Harry was offering. It was more than seeing his memory about what had happened, it was a show of trust. Trust that if broken would never be given back. Harry was taking a chance. He was showing the Dark Lord that even though he hadn't been completely honest with Harry that everything wasn't lost yet.

Their eyes locked and Voldemort slipped inside his mind. The memory was in the forefront of his mind, making it so that Voldemort didn't need to search for it or dive all that deep into his mind.

The Dark Lord was surprisingly gentle when viewing the memory. Not intruding in all the other things in his mind. A little later he slipped back out, a sadistic smirk on his lips.

"Even when you were that young you were already such a beautiful tease." the Dark Lord told him, eyes lit with pleasure, "I would love nothing more than to see what you would do now."

"Well... I do have a pet now." Harry informed him nonchalantly.

"Oh? Do tell."

"My dog didn't like the Slytherin rules. He barked so much that I came to the conclusion that he had to be trained. He's such a good dog now. I'm rather sad to see him go at the end of the year, but it can't be helped. Though I'm sure he learned his lesson." Harry chuckled remembering the Durmstrang student.

The boy was broken. It didn't really surprise him, after everything the boy had gone through. He had shared his pet with his court, some of his Ouroboros were quite sadistic. Besides none of them had forgotten what the boy had said to him when they had introduced the Court. They had made him suffer. He was truly sad to see him go, he had been rather good for stress relief. Though they made sure never to leave visible harm on him. It just wouldn't do to have the professors looking into why he was hurt.

Voldemort chuckled darkly, his blood red eyes lit with sadistic glee.

"I can't help but wonder how you ended up so different from what everyone was expecting." Voldemort murmured more to himself than to Harry, but Harry heard him anyway.

"I believe that what we experience influences who we become." Harry replied, "Though I also think that some things are just born with us. Maybe if I had grown up with my parents or with a loving family I wouldn't be quite the person I am today. But I would still have my magic, still be able to do the things I do. Maybe I wouldn't be as bloodthirsty as I am now, but I doubt that. I'm not sadistic because the boys at the orphanage bullied me. I enjoy hurting people, I think that has nothing to do with how I was treated. My hate for muggles though... that I have no doubt comes from being raised in the orphanage. If I hadn't been raised there, then I wouldn't have a reason to hate them, so I wouldn't."

Tom nodded. He understood what Harry meant. He felt the same way. He hadn't become a Dark Lord because of how he was treated, he had become a Dark Lord because he wanted to, because he
believed that he could change things for the better. He enjoyed torturing not because he was bullied, he just enjoyed it. Sure, he had been gleeful when he had gotten his revenge on the bullies in the orphanage, but he hadn't become who he was because of them.

The second dish arrived and he watched Harry take a bite. He didn't even blink. He didn't want to miss a second. It made him realize just how enchanted he was with Harry.

"You're a Dark Lord now," he said, "It changes what I had planned slightly. But the main reason why I brought you here is the same." killing curse green eyes focused on him and he couldn't look away, "I brought you here to tell you the truth about myself and to ask you to join me. Not as a follower," he added when he saw the narrow eyed glare aimed at him, "As an equal, a partner. You are young, you have much to learn. But I would be willing to teach you everything you want and give you a place at my side."

"And now?"

"I'm still willing. But you already are a Dark Lord, you have your own followers and I know they will follow no one else but you. We would have to organize things in a slightly different manner, but aside from that you would still be my equal."

Harry took a sip of his drink and sighed.

"I don't know how things ended up like this," he confessed, "I wasn't trying to be a Dark Lord."

Voldemort's expression showed his surprise for only a second. More than what he usually allowed.

"You achieved all the stages by chance?" he asked almost incredulously, "That's impossible, one of the first things a wizard or witch has to do to become a Dark Lord is to acknowledge that they are a Dark Lord."

"I did that today."

"Well..." he was a little speechless, Harry never ceased to surprise him, "That's unexpected. Do you know all the stages necessary to become a Dark Lord?" when he saw Harry shaking his head his eyes widened slightly. He had no idea that it was even possible for someone to become a Dark Lord without consciously trying to become one. It was almost as if Harry was born for that role, "I see."

he whispered.

"Would you tell me?" Harry asked him and he could do nothing but nod.

"One of the first things, usually, is declaring that you are a Dark Lord. It isn't just saying: I'm a Dark Lord. It's analyzing everything you do, how you act, how the people around you act and consciously state to yourself that you are a Dark Lord. You have to truly know, with every fiber of your being that you are a Dark Lord.

"The second part is divided into several pieces, that usually are related to one another. The first is spreading your beliefs, then it's to assemble a support base, and the last is gathering followers. Again this isn't as simple as it sounds. You must be sure of your own beliefs and make others follow those same beliefs. They must truly believe in them, in you. The support base isn't the same as followers. You have to have people who believe in you and your beliefs without them being your followers. People who are ready to help you, to support you, should you need it. Then your followers. They must be loyal to you above all else. Then they must be marked, they have to willingly pledge themselves to you. The pledge must be accepted by Magic, their mark will be a result from that.

"The third, and last, is your magic. This one is quite simple. Either your magic is able to make you a
Dark Lord, or it isn't.

"All of this is judged by Magic. If you meet all the requirements, then you become a Dark Lord. If you don't... You'll just be a powerful and influential wizard."

"It's rather simple." Harry murmured, "Three major points, each with several stages that must be accomplished. It reminds me how a Court is established."

"Salazar based the steps needed to establish a Court on the process of becoming a Dark Lord. He was a Dark Lord so he knew what was needed. Though, naturally, it is a much simpler process."

"Why aren't there more Dark Lords?" seeing as the process was rather simple the world could be swarmed with Dark Lords. But there usually weren't that many Dark Lords. Usually there is one or two every two or three centuries. Having Grindelwald, Voldemort and now him so close together was quite rare.

"Because most don't have the magic for it." he explained, "No matter what you do, if your magic isn't enough then you can't be a Dark Lord."

"Enough? What does that mean?"

"Just that. If your magic isn't right then you can't be a Dark Lord. I'm not talking about your level of power, though that is somewhat important too, I'm talking about how your magic is. How it feels, how it reacts, how you control it, how it responds to you, how others respond to it. All of it. When all is said and done, either it's enough or it isn't. There is nothing you can do to change it. We are born with our magic, we can't change it."

"I see." whispered Harry, taking another sip of his drink.

Tom let him think about everything he had told him. Harry was truly a fledgling Dark Lord. It was fascinating to watch. Especially since Harry had done it without even trying. He had never heard of such a situation.

"What do you want from me?" Harry asked him.

That was the question wasn't it? He wanted everything from Harry.

"Everything." he told him, "I didn't lie to you Harry, when I told you I wanted you. I'm still Tomas Nacht, Harry. Everything I desired from you when you knew me as Tomas Nacht is something I still want form you. But I want you to be my equal too. I want a partner. Someone that can be at my side, someone to rule the world with me. Imagine it Harry. Both of us together, ruling a world where magic reigns supreme."

He didn't even try to hide the passion he felt. He could see it. Harry would be adored by the masses, they would worship his little King. He was sure of it. And they would envy him because he was the only one who could have Harry.

"We don't want the same things." Harry whispered, "I'm not a purist. I don't believe in their policies. I can't fight for something that would consider me inferior just because of my blood."

"We can compromise." he knew that if he played his cards right that Harry would agree. Harry was fiercely independent, he knew that. However he also knew how Harry felt about him, that second task had been quite useful. Now he just had to convince Harry to give in, "I don't believe that purebloods are superior, nor do I believe that half-bloods have no place in our society. I had something against muggle-borns, but it wasn't about their blood. It was because of their beliefs.
About their muggle ideas that they brought to the wizarding world. If we find a solution for that, then I have nothing against them."

"What about your followers?"

A dark chuckle left his lips.

"They are my followers. They'll do as I say, one way or another."

Harry's eyes shone with malicious glee.

"Can I watch?" he asked, a smirk appearing on his lips and Voldemort laughed.

"You can play with them if you want to."

Harry's eyes shone with pleasure and he chuckled again. He could already see his little King tormenting the Death Eaters. He knew Harry would have them on their knees in seconds. And he would look delicious doing so. He truly wanted to see his little one torturing some poor soul. He was sure that he would enjoy it immensely, maybe even more than when he was the one doing the torturing.

They were silent for a few moments, enjoying their meal. He knew that Harry had a lot to think about so he remained silent, letting him ponder over everything. He had to admit that he was slightly surprised by how well it was going. He had expected at the very least for Harry to lose control of his magic. True, he hadn't thought that Harry would be a Dark Lord when he had gone over this plan of his, but even so Harry was being remarkably calm about the whole thing.

"Why were you at Hogwarts in my first year?"

"I needed something that was being kept in the castle." he answered, trying to decide if he should tell him more. Part of him didn't want to, but another part of him, slightly bigger than the other, was actually really excited to finally have someone to share his secrets with. Someone whom he could trust. "The Philosopher's Stone was being kept in the castle. I used it to gain my body back." he enjoyed the way Harry's eyes widened slightly.

"How?"

"I created a ritual that used the Stone's aspects of longevity to restore my body. I merged the ritual with Soul Magic and a sacrifice. I believed that it would bring back the body I had the night I attacked you, however I slightly miscalculated the characteristics of the Stone. The Stone reverts the body back to it's prime, so I gained the body of my twenty-five year old self."

"That was around four years ago, correct?" Harry asked him and there was a slight trace of awe in his voice that stroked his ego quite nicely.

"Yes."

"You still look twenty-five."

"Yes, I do." he replied, quite pleased with Harry. There was nothing that escaped him, "The Stone wasn't destroyed by the ritual."

Harry's eyes widened slightly and then he laughed. He couldn't look away from him. He loved seeing Harry laugh. He looked so alive, so free.
"The most powerful Dark Lord in the last centuries, immortal." Harry murmured, a delighted smile on his lips, "I was right." he stated smugly, "You would never let anything as common as Death stop you. Still, that leaves the question; why would an immortal Dark Lord want me?"

"I'm old Harry." he stated, because he sometimes he truly felt it, "I was always alone. Even when I had my Court I was alone. They tried their best but they were never my equals, they were never enough. Besides, I never allowed them to get close to me. I didn't want to have any weaknesses, and human emotions and attachments were weaknesses to me. By the time that I started to want companionship I was far to jaded to seek it. I was alone for a very long time, Harry." it still pained him somewhat, he had craved companionship but he had felt that they were all beneath him. None of them were worthy. They bored him. Even so, he craved it. But none of them were ever good enough. Then they started to have families of their own, then they died in his service, others died because of illness, or were locked up in Azkaban. So he started to pull away. The more his court dwindle the more away from humanity he pulled himself from, "Then I met you." hadn't that been a glorious day? "Even when you were only eleven, you made me fell alive again. You brought back my joy in living. You make me young. I told you Harry, I would rather you be my weakness than not have a weakness at all." he knew what life was like without weakness, without emotion. He didn't want to go back to that. He didn't want to go back to being a shell.

"I'm never alone." Harry whispered and closed his eyes.

He knew that. He had seen how Harry's Court was with him. They were so similar but so different. Harry's Court was close to him, and Harry truly belonged to them just as much as they belong to him.

"But... they aren't my equals either."

"You can be my equal." he whispered, "Just like I can be yours. You told me that you couldn't be with me because I wasn't yours. But I can be. Just like you can be mine. I can be your mentor, your teacher, your companion, your partner, your equal, your lover, just yours. And you can be mine, my joy, my life, my companion, my partner, my equal, my lover, just mine." Harry looked at him and there was longing in his eyes, so much longing. He was so tempted to just grab his little King and kiss him. But he didn't, he knew that he couldn't push to much. He had to give his serpent time. And he would, he could be patient.

"What about my Ouroboros?" Tom's eyes lip up with triumph. That was as good as an acceptance.

"They are your followers. Just as the Death Eaters are mine. They'll work together. They'll obey us, everyone will obey us, but they will be your followers. Do you have any other besides your Court?" a slow nod was his answer and a smirk appeared on his lips, "Do tell." he purred and an answering smirk appeared on Harry's lips.

"Sirius Black and Remus Lupin. They aren't marked. I have been thinking about a few things... Sleepers I call them."

"Sleepers?" he didn't even bother to hide his curiosity.

"Yes, Sleepers. When my Court kept expanding I thought about keeping some of them hidden. No one knows that Fred, George, and Neville are in the Court, it was what they wanted, they said it could be useful, so the idea came form that. Followers, not marked, not known to anyone beside myself and the Court. They would spread, infiltrated every branch of the government, every business, every home. Waiting. Sleepers." Harry took another bite of his plate, "Of course, it's only an idea at the moment. And Sirius and Remus know about each other, but they are the first Sleepers.
Ouroboros will be the marked followers. Though my Court will be different, of course."

Voldemort leaned back on his seat, his eyes gleaming with pleasure.

"We'll rule the world Harry," he whispered, promises overlaying his every word, "You and I, no one would stop us," he was sure of it. "Join me, Harry. Side with me and I'll give you the world." he meant every word, he would lay the world at Harry's feet. He would do it. They would worship his little King, just like he deserved.

"You don't need to give me the world." Harry replied, his eyes shining with life and power, "We'll take the world for ourselves. You said I would be a partner, an equal, then we will take the world together."

Tom looked at him, his eyes alight with magic and laughed. A true, joyful laugh. He was one step closer to having his little one.

He raised his glass, a wicked smile on his lips.

"To the future. To Magic." he toasted, Harry joining him with a laugh. Both thinking the same thing; the world had no idea what was coming.

The plates vanished and dessert was served.

Both enjoyed the first few bites in silence, marveling on how things changed in just a few hours.

"Do you know what happened to the letter that I never received?" Harry asked a little while later. He had to stop himself from devouring the dessert, he had never tasted such a delicious tiramisu.

"Yes," Tom replied, a sighed escaping him, "It was no one's fault, I'm afraid." he couldn't believe that he had almost lost his serpent because of something as simple as a misplaced letter, "Charon was attacked by a falcon, he was able to defend himself, but the letter fell and he wasn't able to retrieve it. I found it not to far from the manor, under some bushes. I was able to track it because it had my magic all over it."

"How do you know he was attacked?"

"I saw a nest nearby, I assume that he flew near it and the falcons attacked."

Harry nodded, taking another bite. He missed the ravenous expression that briefly appeared on Tom's eyes when he uttered an almost inaudible moan.

"What should I call you?" Harry asked, with an adorable tilt of the head. Though Tom would never speak those words aloud. He liked living, thank you very much.

"Tom." he replied, not even thinking about it, "I'll always be Tom to you."

The warm smile he got in return was far too innocent for the teen sitting in front of him. But he treasured it. Knowing that Harry was still so comfortable around him meant more to him than what he thought possible. He had been afraid that Harry would distance himself from him, even if he accepted the position at his side. Fortunately it seemed that he shouldn't have worried.

"What have you been doing these last years?"

"Mostly organizing the Death Eaters that didn't got to Azkaban. Though I didn't call all of them, only those in the Ministry and those in my Inner Circle. I needed to know how things were in the
Ministry. However, mostly, I've been waiting for you. Many of my plans revolved around you. I needed to know your choice before I did anything else."

"And now?"

"I want to introduce you to the Death Eaters. Then I have to see what to do about my followers that were sent to Azkaban. After that, we'll plan our next step together. Though anything major after that will have to wait until you are seventeen and free of the trace."

A wicked smirk appeared on Harry's lips.

"My Court and I don't have the trace anymore." he said innocently and Tom's eyes widened slightly.

"You broke the trace? How?"

A delightedly laugh escaped Harry.

"I had Marcus poke around the Ministry. When our bodies hit seventeen, the trace brakes. We took aging potions."

"And it doesn't reply itself when you revert back to your actual age." Tom concluded to which Harry nodded. "In that case I think we should have your Ouroboros present as well, don't you?"

"Do you really think they would stay away?" Harry inquired with a somewhat put upon air making Tom chuckle. From what he had seen he didn't think they would leave Harry's side no matter the consequences.

"Then we will arrange something for the summer vacation. I believe it's time for the world to know that I'm back. As well as to introduce the new Dark Lord."

"I believe I need a name."

"Yes, I believe so. Have you thought about one?"

"No. I have no idea. Would you mind picking one?"

"It would be my pleasure." he would have to see what would fit his little King best. He already had a few in mind.

"How will you contact me over the summer? I adore Charon but it takes a bit of time to deliver letters."

"I've already thought about that." he replied, taking out his wand and acciong a small package. He gave it to Harry, telling him to open it.

Inside was a small hand mirror encased in silver with small snakes engraved on the metal.

"We'll use communication mirrors. I have that one's counterpart. If I need anything I'll just say your name. It will warm up when I'm calling. If you can't answer immediately the mirror will turn blue to indicate that you missed a call. You can reach me the same way. You just need to say my name."

Harry nodded and put the mirror in his inner pocket. He would keep it with him at all times.

A clock in a nearby room chimed and Tom sighed.

"You'll have to go. They must be looking for you already and we can't risk them finding you."
"I know." Harry replied, though Tom was pleased to see that he didn't look all that happy either.

"Come." Tom said, getting up from his seat and holding out his hand for Harry to take. He summoned the cup to them and pulled Harry closer as soon as Harry took his hand. He relished in having Harry so close to him. He sneaked his arm around Harry's waist and apparated them away.

Harry's grip on him tightened slightly when they landed and Tom chuckled when he saw the glare aimed at him.

"Hate apparating," muttered Harry, after he got his balance back. "Where are we?"

"Somewhere near Glasgow. You'll be able to take the Knight Bus to Hogwarts. Since the cup was always meant to be a portkey just tell people that the coordinates of the cup must have been wrong. It happens occasionally, all it takes is one wrong number. I've already altered them to match our current location. I trust you won't have any trouble with that?"

"No, I'll have no trouble at all." Harry replied, taking the offered cup.

Tom pulled him close again, marveling how Harry's body fit perfectly against his own.

"See you soon, my little King," he purred against Harry's ear, delighting with the shiver it produced and apparated away.

"Smug bastard." Harry muttered, a smile playing on his lips and lifted his wand.

A second later the purple bus stopped in front of him and he grinned, he had a part to play.

What felt like an eternity later the damn bus stopped in Hogsmead and Harry sighed in relief when he got off. Dear sweet Merlin, he would never, ever, ever, ride on the blasted thing again.

He took a minute to get his bearings and then made his way towards Hogwarts. He was a little giddy but he did his best to get his emotions under control. Though he was sure that if people noticed his excitement he would be able to pass it off as happiness for having won the Tournament. Speaking about winning the Tournament, he'll have to tell Rita to write a nice piece about it. Something tasteful but that would leave no doubt about his power. They had done it right in the previous interview. Cedric and the others casually mentioning how advanced he was magically had given it just the right touch. He wanted people to know he was powerful without it sounding like bragging. A delicate balance was needed to achieve that.

He reached Hogwarts and wasn't surprised to see that the stands were empty. He knew he had been gone for a while and the professors had most likely sent the students back to their common rooms so they could organize a search party for him.

He heard sound coming from the Great Hall and went towards it, guessing that the professors would be there.

He was right. The professors were there, along with a squadron of aurors, the Minister, his Court, minus Fred, George, and Neville. The champions' families were also present, Remus and Sirius looking ready to murder Cedric's father. He could guess why, since the man was looking utterly unconcerned with his disappearance and Harry could hear him talking about disqualifying him for running from the third task. At a second look even his Court looked ready to murder the man.

None of them noticed him standing by the doors.
He cleared his throat and let just a sliver of his magic touch his Ouroboros.

They froze and as one turned towards him.

"Harry." Theo whispered. That one word was filled with relief and Harry almost felt bad for worrying his Court so much.

It was enough to get everyone's attention and the next moment people were surrounding him, shouting questions at him. Demanding to know where he had been.

"Silence!" Dumbledore's voice cut through the noise and Harry almost thanked the old man, "Now, if you would let Mr. Potter speak, I'm sure we will find out what happened."

Harry smiled gratefully at the old man, then looked around, slightly sheepish.

"I'm sorry if I worried you." he told them, "But it really wasn't my intention. I just grabbed the cup and before I knew what was happening I was somewhere else. I... well... I panicked." he admitted, looking embarrassed, "I had no idea where I was, and I had no way to contact anyone. I just... yeah, I panicked." he repeated, ducking his head.

"How did you get back?" an auror asked.

He blushed and looked down. A moment later he looked at the auror and a sheepish smile appeared on his lips.

"After I calmed down I remembered that I could call the Knight Bus. It left me in Hogsmead a little bit ago."

The auror chuckled, a smile on his lips.

"Mr. Potter, would you let me look at the cup, please?" the man asked him.

"Eh... sure." he gave him the cup, looking at him curiously. He noticed that the other aurors were observing the situation but let the man lead. So he assumed that he was higher ranked than the others. Even Dumbledore seemed alright with letting the man take care of things.

The auror cast a few spells at the cup, two of them producing a parchment with numbers and names on them.

"From the information I have it's a simple error in coordinates." he said after a studying both parchments.

After that declaration Dumbledore seemed to slightly slump with relief, though most people there didn't notice. Harry did and couldn't help but wonder about the man's reaction. Maybe he could ask Tom later.

"Are you sure, Kingsley?" Dumbledore asked, interrupting whatever Fudge had been about to say.

"Yes, Albus." the auror, Kingsley, nodded, "As you can see, it only has that one set of coordinates. It is likely that the person responsible for creating the portkey just made a mistake."

"Good. Very good. You aren't hurt, are you, my boy?" Dumbledore turned towards him, his eyes back to twinkling.

"Oh, no. No, I'm fine." Harry smiled, "Just a bit tired."
"Yes, I would imagine. Maybe you should go rest then. I'm sure your friends are anxious to get you alone and fuss over you for a bit before they let you go to bed." Harry was sure that Dumbledore was doing it just to see him suffer. He could see that was exactly what his Court was planning on doing.

"Now wait a minute." Fudge exclaimed, pushing the aurors out of his way, "We have to award the price for the winner of the Tournament."

"Minister," Harry's voice was soft, though his eyes were chips of ice when they locked with Fudge's eyes, "I am truly tired, would you mind terrible much if we did the ceremony in the morning? I'm sure that even the professors are tired and would rather rest. No one would be able to truly enjoy the ceremony in the state we are."  

"I... I... Yes, of course." Fudge mumbled, "We'll have the ceremony tomorrow morning." he stated formally and Harry smiled at him.

"Good. Again, sorry for all this worry." Harry bow his head to the aurors, thanking them. "Good-night."

A second later his Court was around him, leading him out of the Great Hall. Cedric ignored his father calling him and continued with them down to the dungeons.

A whispered charm from Adrian and he knew that the twins and Neville would be joining them shortly. He noticed that they were heading towards their usual room and he chuckled, he should have guessed that they wouldn't have believed his story. He had planned on telling them the truth, he had just thought that he would do it in the morning. Apparently they had no wish to wait that long.

He took his usual seat and the others spread out around him. Marcus looked around curiously for a few moments, he hadn't see the room since he had left Hogwarts and they had changed it a little bit.

A few minutes later the twins and Neville arrived, all three of them looking relieved to see him unharmed. They took their seats and looked at him.

"What happened?" Theo asked when he didn't say anything.

"Voldemort is back." he stated bluntly and was rather pleased with the hard edge that appeared in their eyes, "He has been back for a while now. All of you have met him. He went by the name Tomas Nacht."

Their flabbergast looks were quite amusing. Though Harry admitted that the information he had given them would have left anyone in the same situation.

"What?" there was only a trace of incredulity in Graham's tone.

"The how's and why's don't really matter." Harry told them, "What matters is that I joined him. Don't worry," he added when he saw their looks, "I'm not, nor will I ever be a Death Eater. I am a Dark Lord and he knows that. He offered me a place as his equal. Both of us ruling the world, changing it for the better. None of you will be Death Eaters either. You are Ouroboros, you will always be Ouroboros. My followers. You will always be mine." he assured them and they all relaxed, looking far happier with the situation. "I'm not sure how things will go from now on. We are stepping on stage far earlier than what I had anticipated, but I assure you that we will be ready for it. During this summer we will be introduced to the Death Eaters. You as my Inner Circle, and I as the new Dark Lord." he could see their excitement growing at finally being introduced as his followers. "I will call you before the meeting. I want to leave those Death Eaters with their jaws hanging when they see
"Ouroboros!"

Chapter End Notes

A.N.: Hello all :) Sorry, I still don't have a laptop though as you must know by now, I'll keep updating :)

Hope you enjoyed this chapter. There was a lot of Tom in this one, but it was needed. The boys needed to talk and there is still much to talk about. I don't know if you noticed but neither of them actually told the other what they are fighting for. They still have a lot of things to settle, but that's for another time.

Sneaky Tom, managed to trick a date out of Harry. That's why Harry called him a smug bastard, though considering that it's Tom, are we really that surprised that he would kidnap Harry to have a date with him??

Thanks for all your support. It truly means a lot to me knowing that you all appreciate all the work I put into this fic.

On another note; people, this is fanfiction. I repeat fanfiction! Of course it won't be canon. If you want canon you should read the books. From the moment that I decide to play with J.K.’s work you can expect it to be a non-canon story. That's what fanfiction is all about. Hell, if I wanted to write a Harry with three heads and five eyes it would be my choice to do so. So please respect that. You aren't forced to read the story, but when you read it and it doesn't go according to your wants you can't really expect for an author to change the plot and everything else just because you want it.
Harry glanced out of the window of the Hogwarts Express, his mind on the last few days of school. The ceremony for the Tournament went off without a hitch and he had endured it with dignity, even if he had felt more inclined to curse Fudge to Hell. He couldn’t stand the man. Anyway, he had endured it and took a couple of pictures for the newspapers. Magic Today had an exclusive interview with the champions, of course, and it had been rather well received by the public. He had come across as a rather gifted student but quite humble. He was the nation’s sweetheart and even the foreign dignitaries had been rather enamored with him.

Even so he wasn’t that happy with the end of the school year. Fleur and Viktor would be quite far away and he didn’t like it. Their bond was deeper now that they were his marked followers and he didn’t enjoy the thought of having them so far from him. He didn’t even like that the rest of his Court were away from him, but they at least were in the same country.

Especially with everything that would be happening in the summer. Tom had been quite vague, but he was sure that there would be something happening. He wanted his Court by his side when that something did happen.

Besides they had to see how they would behave and react around the Death Eaters. His Ouroboros were younger, but he wouldn’t let the Death Eaters walk all over them. He knew that they could hold...
their own in a fight, but he also knew that they wouldn't win against the Death Eaters. They had to cause a strong impression without causing a fight. It was far more complicated than he thought to achieve that delicate balance.

And speaking about Tom... Tom hadn't contacted him again after their unconventional meeting. Some part of him was wondering why that was, but another part of him was rather grateful. He needed a little time to himself to assimilate everything. It wasn't everyday that you realized that your... crush, for lack of a better word, was a Dark Lord. A Dark Lord that could, quite literally, crush you if he so wished.

Harry was no fool. He knew he was powerful. Far more powerful than any other wizard his age and most older wizards as well. But Tom had something invaluable; Tom had experience and a well of knowledge to complement that experience. It was a deadly combination.

So, yes. Harry was quite aware that Tom could crush him rather easily.

Even so he couldn't deny his attraction to the man. He was fascinating and Harry was addicted to him. He was a drug that Harry just couldn't quit. He wasn't even sure if he wanted to.

One way or another he was hooked.

He sighed and leaned back on his seat watching his Court interact. He had a feeling that this summer would be rather interesting.

Harry was sprawled on his bed doodling his mark on a parchment. He had spent the three days since the holidays began scouring the Black library for any book that could help him understand it better. He had had no luck so far.

He thought about asking Sirius to help him search said library but then remembered that both he and Remus were away. Dumbledore had contacted them about some urgent business and they had been away since. He had no idea what it was, if he hazard a guess he would say that it was somehow related to Tom, but Tom hadn't done anything. There shouldn't be a reason for Dumbledore to suspect anything.

He glanced at the Mark again and sigh. He had no idea how to make it work. He knew that there was more to it than a simple Mark, he knew that. But he just couldn't seem to discover what it was. He didn't have that much time to study their Marks at Hogwarts, and the little he was able to study just made him realize that they were more than simple Marks.

He transfigured the parchment with his Mark into a bracelet and almost dropped it when his magic touched it.

He stared at it in wonder and couldn't stop the laugh that bubbled up his throat.

So simple. How hadn't he thought about it? How hadn't he seen it?

He let his magic infuse the Ouroboros and it came to life. His magic gained physical form.

$Master, what is it you desire?$ the snake hissed at him. His magic.

$I want my Court here. Bring them to me, though if they aren't alone make sure they are alone before you bring them to me.$
It will be done.

He felt his magic expand, stretching out into various directions, linking with his Ouroboros. He laughed gleefully, mesmerized by the feeling of connecting in such a way with his Court.

One by one they popped into existence in his room.

They didn't look startled. They looked excited, gleeful. The twins were even laughing. Then their eyes landed on him and they knelt.

"My Lord." they intoned.

Harry stood from his bed and smiled at them.

"Rise." they obeyed and smiled back. "I know how to call you now." he told them.

"We felt it." Viktor said. "A whisper in our minds. Our magic pulling us. That's the call." he sounded awed and Harry laughed joyfully.

"It is." he confirmed, "You'll always be within reach now."

"Did you call us for anything specific?" Cedric asked, looking around and finally deciding to sit on the carpet on the floor.

"No, not really." Harry said, sitting back on his bed and shuffling to the middle to make room for others. "Though now that you are here, we may as well talk about a few things. Do all of you have time?"

They nodded and got comfortable in Harry's room.

"Good, but first," he looked at Wayne, "How are your summer arrangements?"

"They're fine." Wayne assured him, "I have a claim to the vault in Gringotts, since my grandfather was never disowned. And since Sirius agreed to be my sponsor it all worked out. I have a little flat in Diagon, Sirius set everything up."

"What about your parents?" Harry asked him.

"I told them, by letter. I didn't want to see them again."

Harry nodded. He was rather pleased with the outcome.

"Alright," Harry nodded, "Let's focus on our plans for the summer."

"Has Voldemort contacted you?" Theo asked him, leaning against him slightly.

He was quite proud to see that none of them even twitched when hearing Voldemort's name. It would have been rather unseemly if his followers feared the other Dark Lord's name. He would have to train any other Ouroboros to not react to it.

"No, he hasn't. And that is why we must speak. We have to decide how we will act in the meeting when we'll be introduced. They may be older but I will not have them walking all over you."

"Have you thought about our uniform?" Luna asked him and he grinned.

He conjured a dummy with their uniform on and his grin turned into a smirk when he saw their
looks.

He had been thinking about how they should look and had quite a bit of fun playing around with several outfits. He wanted them to look completely different from the Death Eaters. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind who were the Death Eaters and who were Ouroboros. He may be working with Tom but they were two different Dark Lord, with different sets of followers, he wanted everyone to know that. He wouldn't be overshadowed by Tom, and neither would his followers.

The dummy had form fitting black dragon hide trousers, a black dragon hide sleeveless top, with a deep green, almost black, jacket on top. The jacket had a somewhat militaristic look with five buckles in silver running down the front. On the shoulders were three silver strips that denoted their position within the Ouroboros. No one aside from the Court would have the three silver strips. Then there were black dragon hide boots, a silver belt, and a black mask. The mask was completely blank. There was no mouth, no eyes, no nose. Just a black blank piece of metal. The Ouroboros would be able to see out of it, but no one would be able to see their faces. It would be held in place by magic.

Harry was quite happy with the look and going by their expressions so was his Court.

"That's for us?" Fred asked him, looking elated.

"Yes. What do you think?"

"It's rather sexy." Fleur remarked a pleased smile on her lips.

"Yes. I thought so too." Harry replied, "I'll be wearing one like that too, though my jacket will be emerald green and it won't have the three strips on the shoulders. It will have a solid ticker strip in silver with our Ouroboros engraved on it. And I'll only wear the mask for as long as we are keeping my identity hidden." Harry told them, "The stripes on the shoulders will denote the rank of the Ouroboros. Three strips; Court member. Two strips; Inner Circle. One strip; Outer Circle. No strip; recruit. The belt has meaning too. Silver; commander. White; healer. Emerald; strategist. Black; soldier. Red; assassin. Blue; intelligence." Harry explained, "There can also be a mix of colors, for instance; silver and emerald. It will depend on the Ouroboros in question. The belt will change according to every raid and depending on what that raid is. The standard color is black."

"That's brilliant." Adrian mumbled, his eyes still locked on their new uniform.

"Yes, it is. We'll know who to seek in any situation, we'll know who is who, without compromising our identity. And our enemies won't have any idea what the stripes or colors mean." Graham agreed.

"They may suspect the more time passes." Marcus interjected.

"True." Blaise stated, "But it will never be anything more than a suspicion."

"Unless we are betrayed." Draco muttered.

"We'll kill anyone who tries." Neville stated fiercely, gaining nods from the others.

"I'm glad that your new uniforms met your approval." he chuckled when he noticed that they were still looking at the uniform, "Want to try it out?" he asked them and laughed when they eagerly nodded, "Alright. Go ahead, they are in that trunk by the door. They have charms on them to fit your bodies, you just have to key them to your magical signature." there was a small race towards the trunk and he shook his head fondly.

"When did you get these?" George asked, slightly stunned.
"Yesterday." he replied, "I conjured it, took a picture, and sent it with Dobby to a seamstress in Germany to get the ones that we are going to wear. Told her what I wanted, which materials and colors and what I needed the belts to do. She sign a contract for confidentiality."

"She works fast." Viktor remarked.

"I paid her double of what she asked if she managed to have all of it done in two days. I wanted to have everything ready in case Tom called."

"Yes, about that, how are we going to act?" Theo asked, escaping the pile by the trunk with a complete set of his uniform.

A smirk spread on Harry's lips and a dark chuckle made the others look at him. They couldn't quite stop the shiver that raced down their spine. Whatever their Lord had planned they were sure that it would leave the Death Eaters stunned.

A week later, while he was lounging on a sofa in the living room reading one of the many fascinating books that were available in the Black library, the communication mirror that Tom had given him warmed up and it took a second for Harry to remember why that was. His eyes widened when he remembered. He took it out of his pocket and as soon as his hand touched it he felt it cool down. When he looked at it he came face to face with Tom.

"Hello, my little serpent." Tom greeted him.

"Hello, Tom." Harry smiled at him warmly. He couldn't quite stop himself. He had missed the man.

"Are you alone?"

"Yes." Harry replied, getting more comfortable, "Sirius and Remus are speaking with Dumbledore. He has been calling them almost everyday. I haven't asked them what he wants yet, but Sirius is always slightly exasperated when he comes back."

"I have to wonder what the old man is up to." Tom muttered.

"Do you think it has something to do with you?"

Tom narrowed his eyes.

"Are you suggesting that one of my Death Eaters betrayed me?"

"Not really, no." Harry denied nonchalantly, "But maybe they were having a conversation and someone overheard something."

"That isn't likely." Tom stated and Harry just nodded. Either way there was no way for him to be implicated so he had nothing to worry about.

"Why are you calling?" he changed the subject, not wanting to linger on something that obviously ruffled Tom's feathers.

"Are you free?"

"Yes..." he replied cautiously.
"Good. Charon is on his way to you, he must be arriving any minute now. He has a portkey for you. It's reusable, it will lead you to me. Then when you go back it takes you to the last place you were, in this case; your home. As soon as you have it, come to me. The activation word his Ouroboros in parseltongue." Tom instructed, "I'll see you soon, little serpent." then he ended the call.

Harry sighed, he better get dressed.

He contained a chuckle when he heard Harry cursing. Apparently he wasn't all that fond of portkeys either.

"Welcome, Harry." he stepped towards the teen, his eyes tracing his face. He had missed him. But it had been necessary. He had needed to organize all of his Death Eaters and he had wanted to do it sooner rather than later. The quicker he introduced Harry to the Death Eaters the quicker they could proceed with his plans. He had waited long enough. Now that he knew that Harry could get involved he could hardly wait to start.

"Tom." Harry nodded his head, "When will the meeting start?"

"In a little while." Tom told him, leading him towards his study, "I wanted you here earlier so that we could go over anything that you deemed important." he lead them to the armchairs near the fireplace and sat, Harry taking one beside him, "Do you need me to send portkeys to your Ouroboros?"

Harry shook his head.

"No, I'll call them."

"You learned how to work the Mark." Tom stated delighted.

"Yes. It took me a while. I can't believe that I didn't see it sooner. They are tied to my magic, I just have to call them to me. I had to bring my bracelet to life to actually get it." he sounded exasperated and Tom chuckled.

"You are rather young, Harry. It's perfectly natural not to know such things." Tom reassured him, "I do believe that you are the youngest Dark Lord in history, now you just need to learn how to be one. It will come with time, and as you know I'll help you, you just have to ask."

"I suppose you're right." Harry sighed, then he smiled, "Thank you."

"You're welcome. Now, have you decided how you will deal with my followers?"

"Yes. We discussed it. Don't worry." he smirked at him.

Tom chuckled and shook his head. He was excited to see just what his little King would do. Besides, he was a little curious about his Ouroboros. He had seen what they were capable of, but when he had seen them before the Quidditch World Cup they hadn't been his followers yet, they hadn't been complete. Now they were and he was curious about them. They were so young... Not that he feared that they wouldn't fit in. From what he had seen they would get on well with the Death Eaters, they certainly had similar tastes, but he was slightly apprehensive about their meeting. He remembered what Lucius' son had told them. If one of his Death Eaters used the word mud-blood, would the Ouroboros be able to control themselves?
Well, there was no use in worrying about it, they had to learn to work together, not only the Ouroboros but the Death Eaters as well.

"Will you be wearing that?" he asked, looking over the forest green robe Harry had. He had thought that Harry would have chosen something more drastic.

Harry laughed and his eyes gaining a mischievous spark that was rather appealing.

"That would be telling, wouldn't it?" Harry smirked, "Will my Ouroboros be able to come through this wards?" he asked changing the subject.

"They are your marked followers, nothing short of the wards around Azkaban could keep them away. It's one of the reason why the prison is so impenetrable. Outside magic cannot penetrate the wards, so they do not feel the call." Tom explained, "These wards are incredibly strong, but not nearly as strong as those in Azkaban, nor as old. It is believe that the knowledge on how to create wards such as those in Azkaban has been lost."

"How do you plan to take your followers out of Azkaban?" Harry asked curiously. He had no doubt in his mind that Tom would want to get his followers free, but if Azkaban was as impenetrable as Tom was suggesting then he wasn't sure what could be done.

"Well, there really aren't that many choices. We either raid it, or we raid it." Tom told him seriously and Harry chuckled, "I'm just waiting for Lucius to gather all the information I need on the wards and where my followers were placed."

"I'll be going too." Harry stated more than asked.

Tom frowned slightly, then nodded slowly.

"Alright. Will your Ouroboros be going as well?" Tom asked him.

"Yes. It's better to start on something like this than to send them on a raid with a much less controlled environment."

"Yes, I think so too." Tom nodded remembering some of his Death Eaters freezing up in more violent raids, most of them didn't make it past that first raid. "Do all of them know how to cast a Patronus?"

"Yes."

"Well, that makes matters easier. We should pair them with the Death Eater teams. They'll learn how to work together and it's easier for them to have a first raid with more experienced people to help them out."

Harry snorted and looked at Tom incredulously.

"From what I read your Death Eaters aren't really the helping kind of people." he remarked.

"Those that will be participating in this particular raid will be." Tom stated firmly, a dark edge in his tone, "The ones you are referring to are usually new recruits or low level Death Eaters. Those will do anything to get up in the ranks. The others know better. I do not care about their personal relationships but on a raid they will work together and help their colleagues if need be."

"Good." Harry stated just as firmly, "I will not have my Ouroboros endangered by those who are supposed to be their allies."
Tom nodded, he could understand that. He knew that some of his Death Eaters had turned on each other in raids just to get higher in the ranks. He made an example out of those he knew about. Fortunately most learned from those experiences. However with the Ouroboros it could go either way. He doubted that they would be attacked, but the newer recruits may believe that they would be praised if they got rid of the competition, so to speak. Well, at least it wasn't something he had to worry about at the moment. The teams he planned on sending were mostly of older members and a few of his Inner Circle that managed to stay out of Azkaban, he knew that those wouldn't do anything as idiotic as that.

"How do you think your Death Eaters will be?" Harry asked him curiously, "It has been more than a decade."

He sighed, his shoulders dropping just a little.

"I don't really know. I depends on which levels they were put. Barty was only there for a year, but it affected him quite a bit. Though I think it was more spending over a decade under the Imperius than that year in Azkaban."

"Barty? Barty Crouch Jr.?" Harry asked him, looking slightly disbelieving, "I thought he died."

"Oh, that's right. I didn't tell you about that. I was supposed to mention it on our date." the last part was said with a smug little smirk on his lips and Harry narrowed his eyes.

"It wasn't a date, you kidnapped me." Harry deadpanned.

"We did have dinner together. Alone in an intimate setting. Though, since you seem to be unsatisfied with our previous date, we could make arrangements for another one."

"You were saying something about Barty?" Harry did his best to ignore the growing smirk on Tom's lips.

"Yes, Barty. He was sent to Azkaban for torturing the Longbottoms. However his mother was dying and begged his father to take her son out of that horrid place. Crouch, no matter how bad of a father he was, loved his wife and fulfilled her dying wish. They went to visit their son and made an exchange while there. His mother took his place, and Crouch smuggled Barty out." Tom told him and Harry was part impressed with Barty's mother and part disgusted with his father, he could guess what followed, "Though instead of giving Barty his freedom, the man put him under the Imperius and kept him locked in his room. He merely exchanged one prison for another."

"Crouch was one of the Judges, though he missed a few events. Something about not feeling well." Harry mumbled, more to himself than to Tom.

"Yes... Sometimes Barty got a little enthusiastic when playing with his father," Tom chuckled darkly, "He had only good things to say about you."

"About me? I never meet him."

"True, though he meet you." Tom said cryptically, "You spent all of last school year with him."

Harry's eyes narrowed slightly and Tom could see his brilliant mind putting the pieces together. He would never tire of seeing those Avada green eyes shine with life.

"Moody..." Harry whispered, wide eyes focusing on him and Tom chuckled again.

"Yes. Brilliant, don't you think?" arrogance practically coated every word.
Harry just nodded, his eyes still a little wide.

"He must be brilliant for Dumbledore not to notice him." Harry remarked, "That's one Death Eater I wouldn't mind getting to know."

"He'll be here later." Tom was a little annoyed though he hid it well, he didn't like that Harry's attention was on someone else, even if in this particular case he agreed. Barty was one of his most valuable Death Eaters for a reason.

"What did you do with Moody?" Harry inquired, not that he cared about the old man. It was simple curiosity.

"He's in the infirmary. We are keeping him alive for a while. He'll have an accident after the Azkaban raid. I want people to have forgotten your little tripe before he dies. With the Azkaban raid and the revelation that there is another Dark Lord, people will be suitably distracted."

"People will be panicked, you mean."

"Panicked, distracted... same thing." Tom replied with a small shrug and Harry couldn't help but laugh.

They spent a few moments in silence, comfortable with each other in a way they had never been with anyone else. It never ceased to amaze him just how different everything was when Harry was concerned.

"I always wondered," Harry started, breaking the comfortable silence, "Why did you come after me in eighty-one?"

Well, he wasn't really expecting that question quite so soon. He contained a grimace and pondered his options. He could always lie, but when Harry found out he would lose him, he was sure of it. But the truth may drive him away as well. He had years to think about the prophecy. Years to decide what to do.

"Before you were born," he started, his decision having been made long before he knew it, he would not lie to Harry, "There was a prophecy-" that was as far as he got before he heard a groan coming from Harry.

"Really? A prophecy?" the amount of distaste in Harry's voice was slightly staggering.

"Yes, one of my Death Eaters overheard a Seer making a prophecy to Dumbledore." Tom confirmed.

"What did it say?" Harry asked calmly, a dark glint in his eyes.

"I..." Tom hesitated for only a fraction of a second, but it was enough for Harry to notice and he narrowed his eyes, "I don't know the whole prophecy." Tom admitted and Harry looked at him incredulously.

"You acted on a partial prophecy?" Harry closed his eyes, "Do I have to tell you how monumentally stupid that was?"

"Considering that I spent ten years as nothing more than a spirit; no, you don't." Tom snarled. He admitted that wasn't one of his better moments, but he had been terrified of the prophecy, terrified that someone would kill him, that someone would be born just to kill him.
"What did it say?" Harry asked him, his voice somewhat gentler, though there was still a slight edge of exasperation in his tone.

"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..." Tom recited, he knew the words by heart. They were seared into his mind, "That's all I know."

"Is there a way to hear the whole thing?" Harry asked, his eyes closed and a small frown on his face.

"There is." Tom informed him and Harry's eyes snapped opened, "Though I want to focus on Azkaban first."

"For someone who was so eager to act on only part of the prophecy, you seem strangely unconcerned with it now." Harry remarked.

"Will you act on it?" Tom asked as if he hadn't heard what Harry had said.

"I see no reason to act on two little sentences. How could you know that it even applied to me? Besides, even if it is me, it doesn't say that I will... what was the word again? Oh, yes, vanquish. I don't say that I will vanquish you, only that I have the power to do so." Harry replied nonchalantly, "Besides, I rather like you, Tom. I would prefer if you continued to be in good health."

Tom stared at Harry for a few moments, then chuckled. His eyes shone with interest and Harry felt his mouth go dry. Merlin, the man truly was breathtaking.

"Then it's decided, we will go back to the topic of the prophecy on a later date." Tom stated. Harry never ceased to surprise him. He just hoped that Harry kept that same attitude when they finally heard the whole thing. He had decided not to act upon it, even if the prophecy said that he would die by Harry's hand. He knew perfectly well that Harry couldn't win against him at the moment, however if the prophecy said that he would kill Harry... Well, he didn't know how Harry would take that. They trusted each other, but Tom didn't fool himself into thinking that Harry was tied to him. He knew that if Harry wanted to he would leave and not look back. He could only hope that by the time they went after the prophecy that Harry would be his.

"Still can't believe that you acted on only part of a prophecy..." Harry grumbled more to himself than to Tom and Tom shot him a disgruntled look. He knew that he had acted rashly, did his little serpent have to keep rubbing it in his face?

Tom was about to respond when a chime was heard in the room and he contained a sigh.

"My Death Eaters are starting to arrive," Tom told him, getting up from his seat, "Call your Ouroboros, discuss anything you need to with them, then join me. You can make your appearance as you wish, I'm sure you will be able to find me."

Harry nodded and Tom swept out of the room. The moment he was gone Harry slumped a little on his seat. Prophecy... A fucking prophecy! He cursed silently, making a mental note to discuss it with Sirius and Remus, they must have known something about it. At least he hoped so.

He took three deep breaths and sat straighter on his seat. Now wasn't the time to think about prophecies, now was the time to call his Ouroboros, now was the time to step on stage.

He delved deep into his magic, gathering it to himself, then commanded it to search the bonds of his Ouroboros, to call them to him. A silent message was in it, brushing against their minds; 'Come to me.'
It was nothing more than a soft caress but he knew they could feel it. He could already feel them reacting.

One by one they popped into existence in front of him. He couldn't help but smile when he saw them, their uniforms on and masks in place.

"It's time." he whispered, getting up from his seat and taking off his robe, showing his own uniform underneath. He slipped his own mask on and his followers dropped to their knees.

"Ouroboros!"

He smiled, the glee he felt hidden behind his mask.

Yes, it was time.

He was one of the first Death Eaters to arrive. He admitted that he was slightly surprised to see so many of them there. He was well aware that their Lord hadn't called upon all of the free Death Eaters yet. He hadn't even called all of the free Inner Circle yet. So for that many of his fellow Death Eaters to be present was rather surprising.

He couldn't shake the feeling that something monumental would happen that day, something that would change everything.

"Lucius." a voice greeted him. He turned around and saw Teodred making his way towards him, "Do you know why we are all being called?" Teodred asked him softly and he shook his head, "I see." Teodred murmured, glancing at their Lord who was sitting on his throne.

They still had a few minutes till the beginning of the meeting, reason why they were allowed to mingle a little. Lucius was sure that their Lord was giving them time to get over the initial surprise of seeing him, at least to those that hadn't been aware of it yet.

"Do you suspect what it is about?" Lucius asked just as softly, making his way to the front where the Inner Circle usually stood.

"I can guess," Teodred replied, "Though that would be all that it was, a guess."

Lucius didn't push for further answers. There were few people who could accurately guess what the Dark Lord thought, Teodred happened to be one of those people. However he very rarely shared those guesses.

He felt wards go up, signifying that the last Death Eater had arrived, and everyone fell silent. They formed into organized rows and waited for their Lord to speak.

"My loyal followers," their Lord's sinful voice reached their ears, "Welcome." piercing red eyes swept through them, "It gladdens me to see that even after all these years you still answer my call. Though, for a moment, I could not help but believe that you had deserted me." Lucius saw a few of the Death Eaters flinch and he almost sneered; fools, the lot of them, "When years passed and none of you came to my aid... But you all here now, so I wonder... why did none of you search for me then?"

Their Lord's magic filled the room and Lucius had to dig his nails into the palm of his hands to stop himself from shivering. The magic was saturated with such malicious intent that he believed that it
couldn't possibly come from a human.

The Death Eater beside him threw himself on the floor and Lucius sneered. Pathetic, weak, fool.

"My Lord," the man, Avery, whimpered, "Please! Please, forgive us!"

"Forgive?" it was a whisper, even so all of them heard it, "Forgive your abandonment? Your betrayal?"

Half of them flinched and Lucius truly didn't blame them. The magic was making it hard to breath even for him.

"My- my Lord, we would never... we never..." Avery stuttered and Lucius almost shook his head. The man had only himself to blame.

"If you would never, then why do you ask for forgiveness? If you never did, then there is nothing to forgive, is there?" if not for the magic around them Lucius would have almost believed that their Lord wasn't angry.

"I... I..." Avery bowed his head, still on the floor, and took one shuddering breath, "My Lord, we failed you."

"Yes. Yes, you did." it was a statement and Lucius didn't even hear the crucio that followed, but he heard the screams. Agonizing screams. And he was only thankful that their Lord had opted for the curse. If he had let his magic run free it would have been far worse.

A minute later, when the screams had turned into whimpered pleas, the curse was lifted. Avery continued to moan and twitch on the floor but no one made any move to help him. They liked living.

"Yes," their Lord continued, sounding almost sorrowful, "You have failed me," it was as if the simple thought was hard for their Lord, as if he couldn't understand how they could have done it and Lucius had to acknowledge the masterful acting. The shame his fellow Death Eaters were feeling was almost palpable, "However that is not the reason why I called you today. I called you here today to share with you wonderful news." their Lord stated grandly and stood from his throne. He stood in front of them looking and feeling larger than live and Lucius felt once more overwhelmed by the man he had chosen to follow, "Not only have I returned to power, ready to continue the fight for our cause, but we gained an invaluable ally!" Alley? Even he was a little surprised, he barely noticed the other Death Eaters' whispers. The Dark Lord didn't have allies. He had followers, some more useful than others but still followers. Lucius glanced at Teodred and saw understanding flickering in his eyes for a second or two before it was masked. "In this past few years," the Dark Lord continued and silenced the Death Eaters once again, "A new Dark Lord arose!" he declared and Lucius could feel the stunned disbelieve that went through every single one of them. "The two of us will show the Light that their time is up. We will bring in a new era where Magic will be free!"

The Death Eaters cheered, even if they were still completely stunned. However they were so completely concentrated on their Lord that only he and Teodred noticed the door behind their Lord's throne open and a smaller figure walk through.

Lucius felt himself freeze in shock. It couldn't be, could it? He glanced at Teodred and saw the same in his eyes. The same knowledge he had. Even so he couldn't believe what his mind was telling him, he had to be wrong.

None of the other Death Eaters noticed the small figure walk upon the dais where their Lord's throne was. They only noticed him when he stopped right beside the Dark Lord.
A fleeting smirk appeared on their Lord's lips and only because they were so close to the front did Lucius see the ravenous look that appeared in his Lord's eyes. Not that Lucius blamed him. The smaller, lite figure looked like sin personified. The trousers looked like they were painted on him. However there was something about the look that left him feeling slightly apprehensive. The whole attire was the right mix between seductive and frightening. He guessed that it was the mask. Death Eaters had masks, but that one... it just made it difficult to look at him. It was a blank slate. They couldn't even see the eyes, they could see nothing that indicated that the being behind it was human. And when the smaller male's magic saturated the air around them Lucius couldn't stop the shiver that went down his spine.

He knew the magic.

He heard a few Death Eaters moan and felt a moment of compassion for them. He didn't blame them, it was taking everything in him not to go down on his knees. He wanted to please the smaller man, he wanted to do everything, anything, as long as it pleased him. He felt the magic squeeze around them all one last time and then retreat.

A dark, seductive chuckle left the small figure.

"Hello, Death Eaters."

Lucius had been right all those months ago, there was only one other being that could possibly compare to his Lord, and now he was right in front of them.

Their Lord chuckled as well and took a step towards the smaller male, almost as if he could not stand to be away from him. He stopped right beside him, but his eyes swept over the lite figure and the hunger in them grew. Lucius had never seen his Lord looking quite so fascinated with anything else.

"My Death Eaters, I present to you, the Dark Lord Thanatos." Lucius didn't miss the pride in their Lord's voice and he was sure that Teodred hadn't either.

"Thank you for the warm welcome," the other Dark Lord said, even though the Death Eaters hadn't done anything aside from staring at him and whispering, "I am sure that my followers and I will have a great time."

At those words the shadows around the room started to move. Several Death Eaters that were closer to those shadows took several steps back, trying to put as much distance between them and the strange shadows without leaving their place.

The shadows grew and humanoid forms started to come from them, dripping shadows in their wake the closer they got to the dais. In a matter of seconds fourteen people were standing in a line in front of the throne, their faces hidden by the same blank mask.

They dropped to their knees, bowed their heads, and had their closed right fist over their chest and their left arm behind their back.

"Ouroboros!" they intoned as one.

They did all of it as one.

The word itself seemed to be saturated with their magic making it sound as if there were many more than just the fourteen kneeling in front of both Lords.

The Death Eaters started fidgeting as moments passed and no one said anything, both Lords just gazing at the sea of people in front of them. Though most of them couldn't help but stare at the
followers of the second Dark Lord.

They had been in that same position for going on five minutes and none of them had even twitched a muscle. If Lucius didn't know any better he would say that they weren't even breathing.

"Now that introductions have been made you are dismissed. Go back home with the knowledge that victory is in our grasp!" their Lord exclaimed, gaining a cheer from the Outer Circle Death Eaters, "Inner Circle, stay behind." he ordered, turning around and sitting back on his throne.

With an almost lazy flick of his wand he made a second throne appear, identical to the one he had. Lucius was sure that it meant something but he couldn't quite grasp what it was.

Moments later the room was empty, aside from both Dark Lords and, what Lucius suspected to be, both Inner Circles. His eyes strained to the kneeling followers, who still hadn't moved.

He felt Teodred shift beside him and the other Inner Circle Death Eaters move closer together. It pained Lucius somewhat to see their numbers so depleted. It was only Teodred Nott, Severus Snape, Barty Crouch Jr., Mikhail Jugson, Gregory Montague, Julius Pucey, Alexander Avery, Marius Avery, and himself. Out of all of them only Teodred and Alexander had been there at the beginning. They had been part of the Dark Lord's court. But there were so many missing. Most of them in Azkaban. It was sad to see their numbers so reduced. Though Lucius was certain that they would be rectifying that soon enough.

"You, my most loyal followers, my Inner Circle, will have the privilege of knowing the identity of Lord Thanatos." their Lord stated and Lucius could see the excitement the others were feeling. Though he just couldn't feel the same way. He knew who it was, he knew who was still kneeling at Lord Thanatos feet. He knew and part of him wished he didn't.

Lord Thanatos chuckled, and even though Lucius couldn't see them, he was sure that his eyes were sparkling with mischievousness. It was a look he was familiar with. He always had that particular look when he was playing with people.

The mask started to dissolve and the first thing he saw was those killing curse green eyes.

He heard a small gasp coming from his right and he glanced to his side, noticing that Severus looked incredibly pale. He remembered how his son had said that the new Lord and Severus did not get along.

When Lord Thanatos' eyes landed on Severus and a malicious smirk appeared on his lips Lucius felt a stab of pity for his old friend. He did not want to know what Lord Thanatos had running through his head.

"You have known him as Harry Potter," their Lord told them, "From this day forth he will be known as Lord Thanatos. I expect you to treat him as you treat me. He is above you. He is my equal." he stated fiercely, those blood red eyes promising pain if he were not obeyed.

"My- my Lord, please..." Avery, the youngest, looked torn between glaring at the new Lord and looking imploringly at their Lord. Lucius shook his head, the younger Avery had always been much brasher than his father. From the look Alexander was throwing at his son Lucius knew that the man was worried for his safety. Their Lord had just told them to respect Lord Thanatos as if he were their Lord, and Lucius was sure that whatever was about to come out of Avery's mouth would be nothing of the sort, "He's but a filthy half-blood! He couldn't possibly be a Dark Lord. He's just worthless filth, just like his mud-blood mother!"
Lucius wasn't really sure what to expect, though it wasn't what actually happened.

The fourteen kneeling followers seemed to become shadows and disappeared from few, they hadn't moved, they hadn't seen any wands, they just melted into shadows. Then fourteen pillars rose around Avery and fourteen crucios left their wands.

It happened so fast that none of them had time to react, much less Avery who couldn't even move from his spot before he was hit. Though even if he had moved there was nowhere he could have dodged to avoid the curses. They surrounded him from all sides.

The agonizing scream that left Avery's mouth was bloodcurdling and Lucius could see Alexander grab his wand tightly, though he didn't interfere. None of them did. Lucius didn't think that any of them could have, even if they wanted.

The scream seemed to go on forever and all of them were so transfixed on what was happening that they hadn't seen the teen Lord move. But he was suddenly there. Inside the circle with the screaming, whimpering man and the curses stopped.

Avery continued to whimper. A small broken sound that Lucius had never heard coming from him. He couldn't quite stop the full body shudder that seized him. He couldn't imagine the agony it must have been to be under fourteen crucios at once.

The fourteen stood straight, hands behind their backs, and again were completely immobile. Lucius couldn't keep his eyes on them. They seemed almost unnatural. They moved and acted as one. They... they didn't seem to be individuals at all. It was almost... almost if they were an extension of Lord Thanatos, an extension of his will. It chilled him to the bone. It froze his blood in his veins knowing what his son had become. A look at Teodred showed him that he felt the same.

Lord Thanatos sat beside the trembling man on the floor and pulled his head into his lap. He started stroking his hair, almost cooing at him.

"Did that hurt?" he asked almost tenderly, a soft warm smile on his lips.

Avery whimpered a little louder and Lord Thanatos shushed him, never stopping his ministrations.

"I'm sorry you had to go through that." he sounded so honest, so sad, and Lucius wanted so bad to believe him. "Though it could have been worse." the magic in the room grew oppressive. It centered around Lord Thanatos and Avery. Avery's whimpers stopped and his eyes opened wide. They were filled with terror and Lucius felt another stab of pity for the man who used to be a friend. "It could have been so much worse." and Lucius believed him, "I could have taken your magic from you." there was a collective gasp and more than one of them took a step back. "Well, not really take it," Lucius let out a breath of relief that he hadn't realized he had been holding, "But I could stop you from accessing it, just like this." and the magic in the room surged forward, converging on Avery and the scream that followed would haunt their dreams for many nights to come. No one should ever sound like that. As if their very soul had been taken from them.

"Please!" he sounded so broken, worse than the few he had seen in Azkaban.

"Shh," Lord Thanatos continued to pet his hair and still had that warm smile on his lips, "I'll give it back to you." he assured him, "But you have to learn, we wouldn't want for this to happen again, would we?"

"No. No. No." Avery shook his head, "Please." he begged again and Lucius had to look away.

The magic filled the room again, then it was gone, as if it had never been there. Avery slumped on
the floor, tears dripping form his eyes, his body still twitching. Lucius guessed that it was as much form the crucios as from the strain of having lost contact with his magic.

Lord Thanatos got back on his feet, glanced at Avery one last time and went back to his throne. His followers taking position in a single line, their stance just as straight backed and immobile as before.

Lucius took his place back, along with the other Death Eaters and only then did he see his Lord's expression. He had never see so much lust in someone's eyes. There was so much raw need that it left Lucius momentarily stunned.

Though he supposed it shouldn't have surprised him. Their Lord had always had a certain fascination with Lord Thanatos, he could see how the little scene they had witnessed would have affected him.

"As you must have realized," their Lord hissed in a deadly whisper, "Lord Thanatos and his followers know how to handle themselves." he sounded pleased beyond belief and Lucius knew that many of his fellow Death Eaters would be subject to Lord Thanatos for punishment if they failed their Lord.

Their Lord glanced at Avery, still on the floor, then looked at Alexander.

"Take your son, Alexander." he instructed, "He will not be able to cast anything for a day or two. It was a shock to his body and core."

Alexander bowed to their Lord.

"Yes, my Lord." he straightened back up and looked at Lord Thanatos who was practically sprawled on his own throne. He bowed again. A deep, respectful bow. "My Lord." he uttered and Lucius heard Teodred's breath hitch. Both Lords' eyes lit up with pleasure and a genuine smile spread on Lord Thanatos lips. Lucius could hardly look away. Lord Thanatos was beautiful, there truly was no other word for it.

"Dismissed." both Lords told them.

The Ouroboros melted back into shadows and Lucius was sure that as soon as he was home that he would find his son there as if he had never left.

The Death Eaters bowed to both Lords, Severus still looking quite pale, and left the throne room as fast as they could.

Lucius caught Teodred's eyes and nodded when he saw the silent question in them. Yes, they would need to talk. He needed to talk with someone who also had a loved one as Lord Thanatos' follower. He closed his eyes when he apparated away. He could only hope that his son knew what he was doing.

As soon as they were alone Harry laughed.

"That was fun." he exclaimed, jumping from his throne. He completely ignored the hungry eyes watching his every move.

"Fun... that isn't quite the word I would use." Tom remarked, leaning back on his throne, "Though it was interesting."
"Was it?" Harry asked coyly.

He blink when he suddenly found himself pushed against a wall. He hadn't even seen Tom move.

"Must you torment me so?" Tom hissed against his neck and he shuddered. He was barely able to contain the moan that wanted to escape.

"Torment you?" he was rather proud to be able to sound so unaffected. "I don't recall tormenting you. I was simply showing them what would happen if they crossed me."

He hissed when sharp teeth bit into his neck. He glared at Tom, and melted into the shadows, appearing behind his throne.

Tom turned around slowly, his blood red eyes narrowed. Though it did nothing to hide the lust in them.

"And you say you do not torment me." Tom remarked, "How long do you intend to have me chase you?" Harry could feel just how serious the question was. There was no playful teasing, though he could detect just a hint of longing.

"For as long as it takes," he answered truthfully. He wouldn't give in to Voldemort, not until he was sure that Voldemort truly meant it. He wouldn't become the other Dark Lord's plaything.

He smiled at the Dark Lord and melted into the shadows.

He was almost running up the steps. In any other situation he wouldn't have cared, but this once he couldn't be bothered. He had been right. He had been right. He wished with everything he was that he hadn't been. He didn't even knock. He almost stormed into the office, his breathing harsh, his eyes wide, and his skin pale.

Albus looked at him, his smile dropping from his face when he saw him.

"Severus?" he sounded so concerned and he felt the urge to laugh. Albus wasn't concerned enough! He had warned him! He had told him that they should have done something. "Severus, what happened?"

"The Dark Lord called." he stated, trying to calm himself down. He needed to have a level head. He needed to think clearly.

Albus seemed to age in front of him and Severus almost felt bad about the news he was about to give him, almost.

"So it has started." Albus whispered, sitting back down. "How did he look Severus? Was he at full strength?"

Severus took a seat and breathed in deeply.

"He... he seemed even more powerful than before. It looked as if he had been back for a while."

"He may have been. The stone was taken a few years ago. Only Merlin knows what Tom has been doing this past few years."

Severus couldn't quite contain the bitter chuckle that left him.
"Oh, no. Not only Merlin. We know what he has been doing these past few years." he stated grimly, "He has someone with him, someone he called an ally, someone he stated was a second Dark Lord."

All the color drained from Albus' face and Severus knew that the dread the old man was feeling would only rise once he knew just who the second Dark Lord was. Severus didn't think anyone would have seen that coming. Even him, who strongly believed the boy to be dark, would never have imagined him as another Dark Lord, at least not so soon.

"No." the word was laced with disbelieve and Severus didn't blame the old man. "Did you see this second Dark Lord?"

"I did, Albus." he confirmed grimly, "It's-

Severus screamed.

He was burning, everything burned.

'Please, please, please! Stop it! Make it stop!'

It stopped and a chuckle raced through his mind. 'Naughty, naughty.' a child like voice whispered in his mind and for the first time in years he felt fear grip his heart.

He couldn't tell.

He should have known.

He opened his eyes, when had he closed them?, and saw Albus hovering over him. Worry etched on his face. He would have smiled at the old man if he could.

"C-can't say." he whispered hoarsely, his throat was raw. He grimaced when he tasted blood in his mouth.

"It's alright, my boy." Albus helped him to his feet, and conjured him a glass of water, "Just tell me what you can."

He drank the water, trying to focus his thoughts. He couldn't even think of ways to tell Albus who it was, not even hint at anything. He could feel his blood starting to heat up every time he even entertained the idea.

"The Dark Lord is back. His partner is named Lord Thanatos. They are as bad as each other and Lord Thanatos seems to enjoy punishing those that displease him even more than my Lord does."

"Tom let's him punish his followers?" Albus sounded surprised and Severus didn't blame him. The Dark Lord didn't share. Severus knew that. Severus believed that. That was, he believed that until that day. Until he saw how the Dark Lord looked at the brat.

He couldn't quite hide the disgust that marred his features. How could the boy let that monster touch him? How could the boy give himself to the man that killed his mother? Did power mean so much to him that he would whore himself out to the man that murdered his mother in cold blood?

"The Dark Lord called him his equal. Though Lord Thanatos has his own followers as well. They're called-" his blood boiled and he grunted in pain. It was nowhere near as painful as the first time but he was sure that if he tried to say more it would increase. 'No, no, no. It would ruin the surprise.' again that same voice in his mind whispered, followed by a giggle.
"I can't, Albus." he sounded almost defeated.

"I understand. Do not worry, my boy." Albus tried to assure him, "I'll call the old crowd together. I had warned most of them that something would probably happen. They are ready."

Severus closed his eyes. He didn't want Albus to see the despair in them.

How could he not worry? How could he not despair when their, supposed, only hope was warming the Dark Lord's bed?

Chapter End Notes

A.N.: Hey all. Sorry, I was supposed to have this posted last week, but I had a few problems. Though it's here now and I hope you all enjoy it :) Some things that happened in this chapter will be explained or added to further down the line. Harry is struggling a little with his attraction to Tom, but he isn't in denial anymore, which is a step in the right direction, lol.

I hope you all had fun reading it and I'll try to update as fast as I can :)

Thanks for all your support over the years. It means a lot to me :)
With a bang

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: This story is based on characters and situations created and owned by J. K. Rowling. No money is being made.

Warnings: This story has Slash. Violence and torture too.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

$Ouroboros.$ parseltongue

$Ouroboros.$ spell cast in parseltongue

Chapter 21 – With a bang

Harry was a little surprised when he went down to dinner and saw Sirius sitting at the table looking as if someone had killed his puppy. Usually he wouldn't have paid all that much attention to it, his godfather was slightly over-dramatic on occasion, however seeing Remus looking quite similar was a bit strange.

"Is something wrong?" he asked after he sat down.

Sirius and Remus shared a look, both looking resigned and a little scared, that more than anything picked Harry's interest. There were very few things that scared both men.

"We just came from a meeting with Dumbledore." Remus told him, "He had some concerning news to give us."

"What is it?" not even trying to hide his curiosity.

"Voldemort's back." Sirius told him grimly.

"What?" he was gaping, he was sure of it, but he couldn't stop it. How did the old man know? He had suspected that the meetings that Dumbledore had been having with Sirius and Remus were somehow related with Tom, but how could Dumbledore be sure of it?

"Dumbledore has suspected for a while now, however he got confirmation a few hours ago." Remus explained. Well that settled it than, someone had talked.

"Alright." Harry said, doing his best to appear rather unconcerned, though he was itching to torture someone. He wasn't that happy with the confirmation that they had been betrayed.

"There's more," Sirius added, looking almost fearul, "Dumbledore asked if we could use Grimmauld as Headquarters. My family was paranoid so this thing is more protected than Gringotts, so it would make a perfect Headquarters for the Order of the Phoenix. I agreed. I know we talked about which side to pick, I know that you aren't really light, but I don't want to burn all our bridges."
If Voldemort wants to kill you, you'll need all the help you can get." Sirius tried to explain his reasoning, but Harry wasn't really paying any attention to it. He couldn't get over the fact that he would be living in the enemy's Headquarters.

He tried, he really did, but he couldn't stop the laugh that bubbled from his mouth. This, this was just too perfect. He was laughing so hard that his sides were starting to hurt and when he looked up and saw Sirius and Remus looking at him as if he had gone round the bent he just laugh harder.

He was sure that Tom would be just as delighted with this outcome.

He brought himself under control and smiled at both Marauders.

"We need to have a conversation," he told them, smile plastered on his face, "Some things happened over the last... well, months actually, that you need to know. The Ouroboros are stepping on stage and you'll be doing your part."

Both men looked at him, slightly apprehensive. Harry didn't really blame them, it was one thing to suspect that he wasn't quite the normal fourteen year old, it was another thing to know it. But they had chosen to follow him and he couldn't keep them in the dark, well, metaphorically speaking of course.

"As of the day of the third task, I took my place as a Dark Lord." he told them bluntly. It was better that way, there was no need to beat around the bush, it had absolutely nothing to do with wanting to see their gob-smack looks, no, nothing at all... even if they were rather amusing, "Later that day," he continued before they could get over their shock, "While I was missing, I was having a meeting with the Dark Lord Voldemort." he was completely ignoring the fact that he had been kidnapped, it sounded far more impressive if he said he had been in a meeting. A meeting implied that the people involved had gone voluntarily, "We agreed on a partnership, since we have similar goals for the Wizarding World."

Silence filled the room for several moments. Harry reclined on his seat, sipping his orange juice as if he had no care in the world. He knew that Sirius and Remus would need a little time to process what he had just told them.

"You... you met Voldemort?" Sirius asked him, his voice trembling a little.

Harry nodded, opting not to point out that Sirius had met Voldemort as well. It wouldn't do to overstress both his guardians.

"What kind of partnership did you agreed to?" Remus asked, looking a little more calm than Sirius, though Harry knew it was just a front. There was amber bleeding into Remus' eyes showing just how agitated the werewolf was.

"It's quite simple really. We are both Dark Lords, we work together to achieve our goal. If we don't agree with something the other wants to do then we will talk about it. He has his followers and I have mine. The Death Eaters and the Ouroboros are two different organizations. They have different functions, however my Ouroboros will participate in raids as well. He has the last word when it comes to his followers and I have the last word when it comes to mine, however they obey both of us equally. That's about it, really." he shrugged, "So as you can see, living in the Order's Headquarters will be quite useful." the grin that appeared on his lips was nothing short of malicious and Sirius and Remus shuddered, "I doubt I will be allowed to attend meetings, however both of you will, I'm sure Dumbledore thinks you are both on his side, that would make you Order members in his books. So you'll pass the information to me. Both of you, as well as Neville and the Weasley twins, are Ouroboros belonging to the Sleepers division. For a lack of a better term, you are spies."
"Are... the Ouroboros, are they marked?" Remus asked him. Harry nodded, his eyes never leaving them.

"So... why aren't we?" Sirius asked, he looked a little out of it still. Harry had expected his reaction to be a little more explosive so he was pleasantly surprised.

"Because this is your last chance. The others... they knew what they were getting into, hell they were hoping for it. But both of you... You have always sided with the light, you always sided with Dumbledore. So I'm giving you one last chance, the only one you'll have, to back out. If you side with me and I mark you... there will be no turning back, and, no matter how much it may hurt me, I'll kill you if you betray me."

They fell silent again and Harry let them think everything over. He was glad to see that they were truly thinking it over and not just siding with him because he was James' son. He knew it was hard for them, they were practically siding with the man who had killed their best friends, their family, so he gave them the time they needed.

"With you on his side... Dumbledore won't really stand a chance, will he?" Sirius muttered, "Not that he isn't a powerful wizard, he is, but well... so is Voldemort. And now he has you. Even if Dumbledore managed to kill Voldemort, the Dark wouldn't lose because there would be you to keep up the fight."

"True..." Remus mused, "We are Marauders, we don't lose."

"No, we don't." Sirius agreed.

"Besides, from what I've seen of Harry, his policies aren't that bad, certainly better than what we have now."

Sirius nodded and both of them looked at Harry. It was hard to grasp that sitting in front of them was a Dark Lord. He was so young, he looked so innocent. He was their cub. How could he be a Dark Lord? But then they remembered everything else they knew about him and couldn't deny it any longer. They had always suspected, always known, that it was only a matter of time. It just so happened that it came to be sooner than what they anticipated.

"We side with you." Sirius told him, "There never really was any doubt about it."

Harry smiled at them, truly happy that they had remained true to their word. He got up from his seat and took out his wand. He vanished their sleeves and focused on his mark.

$Ouroboros.$ he spoke in parseltongue. It was easier for him to direct his magic when he was speaking in parseltongue. He suspected that it was because the mark was a snake. Besides, he had an easier time creating spells in parseltongue and since he needed to create his own spell to mark his followers he had oped to do it in parseltongue. He had to wonder if Tom knew it would come to this, if that had been the reason why Tom had given him books on spellcrafting. Aside from that it was a security measure, no one aside from another parseltongue could alter, use, or in any other way influence the mark.

Sirius hissed in pain, grabbing his shoulder. When the pain passed he glanced at his shoulder, there, in all it's dark glory, was the mark of a Dark Lord. His Dark Lord.

Harry studied the mark and was quite pleased with the outcome, it looked just like the ones from his Court, however the lines that made the ouroboros were just that, lines. The pledge was missing. Just as it should be. His Court was different, would always be different, as such their marks were
different as well. However the new marks would be just as tied to his magic, they would work the same way as the ones his Court had.

He aimed his wand at Remus and spoke the incantation again, feeling his magic answering his call.

Remus too grabbed his shoulder when the pain hit. And he studied his own mark with as much scrutiny as Sirius had studied his.

Remus looked at Sirius and their eyes locked. They were marked followers of a Dark Lord, there was no going back. Remus wasn't sure if the completely lack of remorse he knew they both felt was a good thing or a bad one.

The floo flared green though Lucius barely looked at it. He was busy drowning in another glass of firewhisky.

"That won't solve anything." came the soft voice of Teodred and Lucius finally looked up.

The other wizard had taken a seat at the desk, studying the bottle that was on it in front of him.

"You look as if you wouldn't mind doing the same." Lucius replied, after having a good look at the older man. Teodred looked old, tired. The last time he had seen the man like that had been after his son had been sentenced to Azkaban for life.

"I wouldn't," Teodred confirmed, "Though I know from experience that it won't solve anything."

Lucius sighed and put the glass down, knowing that Teodred was right. However he hadn't truly cared. He couldn't get the meeting out of his mind, even hours after they had been dismissed.

He had gotten home to find his son in the library readying a book, curled up on a sofa. He had wanted so badly to confront him, to ask him if he had been there. But in the end hadn't done it. He wasn't sure if he had been more afraid of a positive or negative reply from his son, but either way he had been far to cowardly to find out.

"I wasn't expecting for him to take his place so soon." Teodred said after a few minutes, still staring at the bottle.

"You knew what he would become?"

"You can't tell me you never suspected." Teodred scoffed, "The boy lived with you during the summer for a little bit, you never saw anything that made you think: he'll be a Dark Lord?" Lucius remained silent and Teodred nodded, "See? It was obvious, you just had to know what to look for. I just wasn't expecting for him to do it while still in school, never mind the fact that he's not even fifteen."

"Do you remember that interview he gave? Right at the start from the tournament? Where he said that he wouldn't represent Hogwarts but a group of students?"

Teodred snorted and shook his head.

"I don't think he could have made it more clear that he had followers, how didn't we see it?"

"Because we were as blind as everyone else," Lucius replied, "I went to school with the Marauders. When I read that interview that's what I thought of, not of a statement from a rising Dark Lord, but as a way for an orphan to be closer to his father." Lucius shook his head, "No matter how people
portrait us, we are still human, sometimes our emotions get the better of us and we become just as fallible as everyone else."

"And the new Lord knows just how to use that." Teodred sighed, "Both Draco and Theodore follow him." he saw Lucius wince but continued, "I know what it's like to be charmed by a Dark Lord, I remember how our Lord was before he submerged himself into his Dark Lord persona. Even before that there was always a gap between us, we always knew he never cared for us in the same way we cared for him; to be honest most of us believed he wasn't capable of it. I've seen how the Court interact with their King, I've seen how the Ouroboros respond to their Lord, it's... it's different from what we had. Their bond seems so much deeper."

"Shouldn't that be a good thing?" Lucius asked, not really knowing what Teodred was trying to tell him.

"Lucius, you told me that you believed that your son would kill you if his Lord asked it of him, do you still believe that?" Teodred asked instead of replying.

Slowly Lucius nodded, his eyes showing his heartache for just a moment.

"I believe it too now." Teodred told him solemnly, "I don't think there's anything those Ouroboros wouldn't do for their Lord. It is a commendable trait, but... I already lost my son to a Dark Lord, I don't know if I can survive losing my grandson too," he confessed.

Lucius looked away from the shattered eyes of the man that he considered a second father. He didn't know how Teodred felt, though he could imagine. Just thinking about losing Draco broke his heart.

"We won't lose them." he didn't know who he was trying to comfort, he supposed that it was as much for Teodred as it was for him.

"Won't we?" Teodred sighed, "You saw them at the meeting, we already lost them."

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A few days later Harry was almost bouncing of the walls. He was excited, more than excited, but he knew he had to get himself under control before the Order arrived. Though thinking about that only made him more giddy. He hadn't told Tom yet, he wanted to surprise him. Besides he wanted to make sure that Order members would actually be staying at Headquarters. Sirius had said something about a few of them needing to stay at Headquarters because their own homes weren't sufficiently warded. Truthfully Harry thought that it was a pretty crappy reason, and in any other situation he would have been more than angry about complete strangers invading his home, however this one time he could live with it.

He sat beside Remus in the library and glanced at the alpha wolf.

"Is everything ready?"

"Yes," Remus replied, "Dumbledore will be coming first to cast the Fidelius, then the Order will start to arrive. Sirius and I believe that Dumbledore will want to introduce you to most of the members, if not all of them. I don't know how many new members we will have since I don't know how Dumbledore is dealing with the recruiting. There is no one that claimed that Voldemort was back and there has been nothing saying that he is back, so I don't really know what he will tell people."

"Yes, about that... how does he know that Tom is back?"

"T-T-Tom?" Remus spluttered.
"Yes, Tom." Harry raised an eyebrow, "You didn't expect me to call him Voldemort, did you? Well... if we had a purely professional relationship I suppose I would call him that, or Lord Voldemort. However since we are... friends, I call him Tom and he calls me Harry. Though he does call me little King or little serpent on occasion."

"Friends?" Remus couldn't look more stunned if he tried, "You consider Voldemort a friend?"

"Yes," more than a friend actually. Harry didn't really know how to classify his relationship with Tom, friendship seemed far too mild for what they had. However for a lack of a better term it would have to suffice, "I have known him for a long time. The first time I actually talked to him was when I was eleven. Things evolved from there, I suppose. We got close so I am allowed to call him Tom, such as he is allowed to call me Harry. To my Ouroboros he is Lord Voldemort, just as I am Lord Thanatos to his Death Eaters."

"How did we never notice anything?" Remus muttered more to himself than to Harry, looking at Harry as if he was seeing him for the first time.

"You did notice." Harry said, "You can't tell me you never noticed how I treated my Court or how my Court treated me. You can't tell me you never suspected just what path I was taking. Nor can you tell me that you didn't see that I didn't hate Tom at all."

"I guess you're right." Remus said after a few moments of silence, "We knew it was coming. We just liked to believe that it would take a few years to actually be confronted with it."

"Yeah, I wasn't expecting it to happen quite so soon either." Harry muttered, "Though my Court was more than happy when they realized I had become a Dark Lord. I think they were even more excited than I was."

"They are extremely loyal to you." Remus remarked, "That was actually one of the first things I thought when I met you all, I couldn't help but compare them to the Death Eaters. They seem so dedicated to you... it's somewhat intimidating."

Harry chuckled and a mischievous smirk appeared on his lips.

"The Death Eaters sure thought that as well." he laughed when Remus spluttered, looking at him somewhat gobsmacked.

"You met the Death Eaters?"

"Yes, we had a meeting. Tom had to introduce his new ally to the Death Eaters, and I couldn't let my Ouroboros come out as weak. We knew that we couldn't take them in a fair fight. We may be good, but they have years of experience that we lack. So we had to do something that would make an impression."

"I'm not sure I want to know." Remus mumbled and Harry laughed again. Just then Harry felt the wards around them flare, judging from Remus tense shoulders he had felt it as well.

"Dumbledore?" Harry asked, and Remus nodded, "I guess that's why I can't seem to remember where exactly we are."

"Yes, the Fidelius went up." Remus told him, "Sirius should be coming up with the Secret."

Not a minute later and Sirius was bouncing through the door. He handed them a piece of parchment. He read it and just like that he knew where he was. He had to admit that the Fidelius was a rather impressive bit of magic. He couldn't help but wonder if they could alter it a little. He had to run it by
"Dumbledore went to get the Order members." Sirius informed them, "He told me that he wanted all of us to be down in the kitchen, to introduce everyone." Sirius rolled his eyes. Harry snorted and got up from his seat.

"Well, let's go meet our enemies."

Harry was sitting in the kitchen when the fireplace at the far end came to life, it's flames flaring green, signaling that the floo connection was opening.

Harry glanced up, curious to see who would be joining him and who the Order members were.

So it was quite understandable that he gaped in surprise for a moment or two when he saw a shock of red hair. Not just any red hair, but Weasley-red hair. He got his expressions under control just in time though, as the man, who he assumed was Weasley Senior, glanced at him and smiled. He was followed by another red-head, from the descriptions that he had gotten from the twins he would guess that it was their oldest brother, Bill if he wasn't mistaken. He was followed by Weasley, then by the Weasley girl, then by their mother, and finally his demons.

Their eyes immediately landed on him and a brief smirk spread on their lips. An answering smirk appeared on his lips as well, however before anything could be said or done the fireplace flared again and more people started coming through.

Harry quickly lost count of who was coming through since the amount of people in front of the fireplace made it rather difficult for him to see. However he was sure that there had been one or two that he had recognized, even if he couldn't really place them since he had only gotten a glimpse.

The last to come through was Dumbledore and Harry only recognized him amidst the number of people that were mingling in front of the fireplace because no one else had that long of a beard. There was a little shuffling around though they finally ended up taking seats around the kitchen table. Dumbledore took the place at the head of the table and smiled at them all.

"Well, now that we are all together, I would like to thank Sirius for allowing us to use his home as the Headquarters for the Order. Since some of you will be living here for the foreseeable future I believe it is a good idea to introduce everyone. Even if most of us already know each other." there were nods all around and Harry almost sneered, these were the people that were supposed to be fighting Tom? They were all so... well, he didn't really know how to describe them but he wasn't impressed. Things had been far more simple with Tom. He had called his Death Eaters, informed them of the changes and that was that. There was no get together as if they were one big happy family, "Very well," Dumbledore clapped his hands looking beyond happy with the outcome, "As you all know I'm Albus Dumbledore. Now, if we could go in order..." and so the introductions began.


He couldn't quite hide his smirk when the twins introduced themselves. Five hidden snakes in the Order, it was just too much. He had to really control himself to stop himself from outright laughing. Sure he would have to share his living space with complete strangers, not to mention the annoying
little Weasley, but it was so worth it. He wondered how they would react if they knew they had a Dark Lord in their midst.

When introductions were done Dumbledore beamed at them all.

"Good, good. Since most of you will be staying here most of the time I do hope we can all get along," his eyes landed briefly on him and Weasley and he almost groaned. He had hoped that Dumbledore hadn't noticed just how much he despised the youngest male Weasley, apparently he hadn't been so lucky, "Now-" the fireplace flared green again, cutting Dumbledore off and Harry glanced at it curiously, only to stare when the tall figure stepped out of the fireplace, "Ah, our last addition, Severus, welcome."

Snape sneered at everyone until his eyes landed on Harry. They widened just a smidgen and then his expression went blank. Harry on the other had was quite pleased that everyone was looking at Snape, so no one noticed the truly malicious smirk that spread on his lips. Well, well, well, the day was getting more and more interesting.

As it turned out the Weasleys would be the only ones that would be living at Grimmauld, everyone else would just stay in one of the guest rooms when they needed to. Though from what he understood these were the core members of the Order and the ones that he would be seeing most.

As soon as that was out of the way the children were ushered out of the kitchen and told to behave while the adults were in the meeting.

Harry went without a fuss, knowing that he could get all the information that he needed from Sirius and Remus. The twins followed his example, muttering about pranks making most of the adults tune them out. The other younger Gryffindors fought all the way out of the kitchen, all the while saying that they wanted to be involved, that they could help.

Harry snorted and shook his head. He couldn't see how any of them could be in any way useful. Still, it had nothing to do with him so he took refuge in his room. He sent a slight pulse of magic to his demons' marks, telling them to join him as soon as they could do it without anyone noticing.

Not five minutes later the door to his room opened and he twins slipped inside. They grinned at him and sprawled themselves on his bed, one on either side of him.

They were silent for a few moments, just enjoying being together, until Fred chuckled, a wicked smile spreading on his lips.

"I don't think we could have infiltrated the Order as successfully if we had planned it." he remarked, making the other two laugh.

"True," George agreed, "Though I do wonder what Snape is doing here."

"Well, there are only three options." Harry said, "He's a spy, he's a double agent, or he betrayed Tom."

"Which one do you think it is?" Fred asked. Both twins looked particularly serious, they, just like he, couldn't stand the thought of betrayal. Just thinking that there could be traitor in the ranks made their blood boil. It didn't help that it was Snape, someone that they despised with everything they were.

He was quite happy that he had placed the wards tuned to Tom's mark around the meeting room. Who knew what Dumbledore could have known by now if he hadn't? It was a tricky bit of spellwork, just as the wards around their little training room at Hogwarts. Though instead of being tied to
everyone they were only tied to him. It was a shame that he couldn't monitor who said what. It just stopped anyone from saying anything about him and his followers. They couldn't even think about ways to reveal anything to anyone. Of course it wouldn't affect people who already knew, for instance two Death Eaters could talk with one another about them, he was even hoping they did to be honest, but if anyone present didn't have Tom's mark then they wouldn't be able to say anything at all. Of course it had loopholes, just like all magic, but it would take a while for someone to find them since they would have to actively search for them and only a traitor would do it.

"Honestly... I have no idea. With the way he paled I would say that he was a traitor, though he could have paled just because he wasn't expecting to see me there. Both of you should keep an eye on him, he doesn't know you are part of my Ouroboros. I'll tell Sirius and Remus the same thing. Though I think that it will be easier for you since the animosity between the Marauders and Snape is practically legendary. It's far more likely for him to be one his guard when they are around."

"So they are in?" Fred couldn't quite hide his excitement.

"Yes, I marked them. They are mine now, Sleepers, just like you."

"We should try to recruit more, see who doesn't follow Dumbledore around as if he were the next Merlin." George suggested.

"What about your brother?"

"Bill?" Fred frowned, "We don't know. He never gave any indication that he was anything but light..."

"Then again, neither did we..." George remarked, "We could always try. Bill was always quite open with us. We could ask his opinion about several things, just bring it up in casual conversation."

"And I could always talk with him." Harry murmured, "You think he'll want to talk with me?"

"I don't see why not," Fred said, "Bill is a bit of a nerd, even if he doesn't look like it, so you'll just have to find a topic that catches his attention."

"So, anything involving runes, or any type of archaic magic. Parseltongue is something that he always found interesting, even with all the stigma attached to it." George elaborated.

"I'll see what comes up. I can always use it to avoid your more annoying siblings." he grumbled, "Really, what is Granger doing here? I never knew she was friends with your brother."

"We don't really know," George told him, "One day she just started hanging around him."

"I think it was more Ginny's doing." Fred mused, "She started spending time with him around Ginny's second year, from what we heard she was helping Ginny with charms."

"I haven't seen her around anyone else," George added, "She doesn't have that many friends."

"Does that really surprise you?" Fred asked, "She alienated almost everyone when she started badmouthing Harry for doing better than her in all subjects. Even if the Gryffindors didn't like Harry they didn't like how she went on and on about him not being able to do better than her without cheating. She never outright said it but it was clear that she considered herself better than everyone else. The Gryffindors may be a little dense sometimes but even they would pick up on something like that. It didn't endear her to anyone."

"Yeah, Thomas even defended you. Quite fiercely actually."
"Really?" he had never noticed the Gryffindor paying him more attention than any of the other students.

"Yeah," George nodded, "Neville has been keeping an eye on him. Now that you are a Dark Lord we think he is one of the ones we should work on. He would make a good follower."

"We'll see. I'll have the others scouting people in their houses as well." Harry said, "I think we should use our little slave. It's about time that she did something useful."

Both twins chuckled darkly, a bloodthirsty grin stretching their lips.

"That day is still one of the best we ever had." Fred exclaimed, his eyes shining brightly, "We had so much fun."

Harry grinned fondly, his hand stroking Fred's fiery hair.

"We'll have many more days like that ahead of us." it was a promise, one he couldn't wait to fulfill.

Harry groaned when the mirror he had gotten from Tom started to heat up. Not that he wasn't happy to talk to Tom, he would just like it better if it weren't close to three in the morning, especially since he had only went to sleep a little over two hours ago.

Dear Merlin who would have thought that his demons had been downplaying just how much of a harpy their mother could be. He realized that the woman meant no harm by it, but who was she to decide that he should share a room with Weasley just because they were the same age? It had taken a good three hours to make her shut up about it and she only did when Shacklebolt pointed out that it was Sirius' home and that there were more than enough rooms for everyone to have an individual room. It seemed even she was a little intimidated by the tall, dark, auror to push the matter further. He could guess just how relieved he had locked if the small smirk that had briefly appeared on the man was any indication.

"What?" he grumbled, shooting a sleepy glare, that was far more adorable than what he had intended, at Tom.

"Were you sleeping?" came the mocking inquire. His glare heated up a little and Tom chuckled.

"No, of course not." he replied sarcastically, "I enjoy spending my nights up till the early morning. Who needs sleep?" Tom smirked at him and he grumbled a little more, "What is it?" he ended up asking when he felt a little more awake, "I'm sure you didn't call me just to see if I was sleeping."

"I believe it's time." Tom replied, looking serious.

Harry sat straight up, eyes wide and an excited gleam appearing in them.

"Really?" he couldn't quite mask his enthusiasm.

"Yes," Tom replied, he looked as excited as he felt, "Get ready, join me and we'll go one last time over the plan, then we'll call our followers."

"Alright," Harry nodded, getting out of bed, "Give me a few minutes." he dropped the mirror on the bed and raced towards the bathroom. The bubbling anticipation he felt coursing through his veins was making him feel a little jittery. He could hardly believe that they were finally going on the offensive. They would step out of the shadows and the world would tremble in their wake.
Tom was waiting for him in the study, he was lounging on the same armchair by the fireplace. He looked somewhat lost in thought, so Harry sat in the armchair opposite his and waited for Tom to notice him.

He glanced around and saw a few papers spread on the desk, and what looked like blueprints of a building on the wall behind it. He would assume that those were the blueprints of Azkaban, since those were the only plans that Tom was working on. Well, not the only ones, Tom had always so much on his mind, but the only ones that were ready to be acted upon.

"Harry," Tom's deep voice caught his attention and he smiled at the older man, "That was rather quick, I assume you had no trouble with leaving?"

"No trouble at all, everyone was already asleep."

"Everyone?" there really was nothing that escaped the man's notice. Harry chuckled, the mischievous grin that he was sprouting making Tom just a smidgen nervous.

"Yes, everyone..." Harry's grin grew bigger, "I had such an interesting day. You wouldn't guess just what I found out," Harry did his best to look as if he had gotten his hands on the juiciest gossip, "Why, I've been told that the big, bad Dark Lord Voldemort was back. And my godfather, worried about me, agreed to use our home as the Headquarters for the Order of the Phoenix. I just had a lovely evening getting to know most of it's members."

Harry almost cackled. It wasn't every day you could reduce a Dark Lord to stunned silence.

"You live at the Order's Headquarters?" Tom asked, still looking quite stunned.

"Well, it's more the other way around. My home became their Headquarters, so technically they live with me. And my two demons are living there as well now, aside from that I marked Sirius and Remus as well; so the Order has four Ouroboros in their midst, five if you count me. I think it was a rather successful infiltration mission." Harry ended in a rather pompous tone and Tom snorted.

"Mission? It was handed to you on a silver platter. If I didn't know any better I would say you had a dose of Felix Felicis beforehand." Tom grumbled.

"Don't be a sore loser." Harry teased, "I'm sure that if you wanted you could have just as many spies in the Order. Hell, I'm sure that if you applied yourself you could even be induced into the Order." Harry was only partly joking, he had no doubt that if Tom wanted he could easily fool Dumbledore into letting him join the Order. Not as himself of course, but Tom was a good enough actor to pass as someone else, as he had already proven, "Speaking about the Order and spies, would you care to explain what Snape was doing there?"

"He's my spy. I had him spying on Dumbledore since the first war."

"How sure are you of his allegiance?"

"As sure as one can be of a spy." was Tom's dry remark, "I'm not all that happy that he revealed my return without informing me that he was going to do it, however there could have been certain circumstances that made it impossible for him not to reveal it."

"Such as?"

"He could have been with Dumbledore when I summoned him."

Harry hummed and leaned back on his seat. He had to concede the point, however that didn't mean...
he would trust the man.

"Even so, I'm rather happy to have cast those wards around the meeting room, who knows what he would have told Dumbledore otherwise."

"Yes... I noticed those wards." Tom remarked, "They were quite ingenious, how did you come up with them?"

"We have something similar around our training room at Hogwarts. We didn't want to chance anyone stumbling upon it at Hogwarts, in this case we didn't want anyone to talk about us, or to reveal us in anyway. The ward doesn't let them talk about us, and there is a small warning for those who try."

"Yes, I noticed." Tom murmured, there was that spark in his eyes that he always had when Harry did something that pleased him quite a bit. It was always mixed with a touch of lust and Harry had to admit that it caused a shiver to run down his spine. He truly should be commended for being able to resist the man for as long as he had.

"So, you woke me up for something..." he changed the subject, ignoring Tom's knowing smirk.

"Yes, it's time." Tom said firmly, "Especially now that Dumbledore knows for sure that I'm back, there is no time to lose. We can't let them up the security measures."

"Alright," Harry frowned slightly, "There are still two ways we could go about it, we have plans for both situations. How do you want to do it?"

"Well... with a bang, of course." Tom's smirk was positively sinful and Harry laughed. When their eyes met they could see them shining with excitement and their magic was dancing around them. Neither of them would let the world end with a whimper.

Harry glanced around the room, his eyes lingering for a moment longer on his Ouroboros, and waited for Tom to give the signal. It was time, their followers had been briefed and now they were about to turn the Wizarding World on it's head.

He caught Tom looking at him and he smiled, even though he knew that Tom wouldn't be able to see anything through his mask, that was one of the reasons why he allowed himself to truly smile.

Tom looked towards their followers again and took a step forward. Everyone stood at attention.

"Get ready, we'll be leaving in two minutes." Tom instructed and they hastened to comply.

They divided themselves into teams, seven teams with seven Death Eaters and two Ouroboros each. Harry had only called his Court and Tom had called all of his Inner Circle members, sans Snape after much insistence from Harry, and several Outer Circle members. They had opted to divide the Ouroboros up, so that they could gain experience in fighting beside someone else. Though Harry argued that it would be better to keep at least two together so that they had someone with them that they trusted. Tom agreed, knowing that they were a rather tight group and saw no reason to make them face their first time in battle beside complete strangers.

Harry and Tom would be staying together, they would be dealing with the aurors mostly. Harry suspected that Tom wanted to see how he would fare in a fight. He had nothing against that, since he wanted the same thing. He was curious to see just how well he would hold up against fully trained wizards.
"It's time." Tom announced and the teams started portkeying out. Tom took his hand and apparated them, since Harry had no idea where they would be going.

They landed on the shores of Azkaban and even though it was rather chilly, there wasn't that helpless feeling that usually saturated an area when dementors were around. Harry looked around and saw dozens of Patronus in the area.

He saw the twins' foxes jumping around, Draco's eagle flying almost on the opposite side he was on, Marcus' King cobra was slithering near his feet, Theo's German Shepard inching closer and closer towards him. He couldn't help but chuckle. It was always so interesting to see his Court's Patronus, especially because the Patronus acted on the emotions of their casters. It was a spell based on emotions. It was almost sentient, not enough to have a will of it's own of course, but it was highly tied to the caster which made it respond to it's caster's emotions and often times it acted upon them.

His Court's Patronus more often than not were around him, either snuggling up to him or being all protective. It was rather adorable, though he would never, even under torture, say those words out loud.

"Get ready," Tom whispered to him, "They have a squadron stationed here, and as soon as the wards come down the alarm will go off at the Ministry. Reinforcements will arrive then, though they only have one squadron doing the night shift, so it will take a little while for more than two squadrons to be present."

"I'm ready." Harry stated, his voice didn't even shake, though he was a little nervous. Not the bad kind of nervous, no, it was more of a jittery feeling. He could hardly wait.

"Morsmordre." Tom shouted, and his Dark Mark rose up into the sky, giving everything an eery green glow. Not a second later an alarm went off and aurors stormed through the gates.

Harry didn't even try to stop his cackle when the aurors froze in their places as soon as they came face to face with the Death Eaters. Tom's dark laughter joined his and the Death Eaters and Ouroboros made way for them. They walked towards the still gaping aurors and Harry saw that more than one of them was shaking.

"Aurors," Tom's deep voice washed over them and the aurors shuddered, "I am Lord Voldemort, and beside me is my partner, Lord Thanatos. All of you should rejoice, you will serve a glorious purpose. Your deaths will announce the beginning of a new age!" a few of the aurors, they looked rather young so Harry assumed that they must be new recruits, tried to take several steps back. Unfortunately those were the ones that caught his and Tom's attention and their wands came up before the rookies had done more than stumbled a step back.

"Avada Kedavra!" they intoned in unison. There was a flash of green light and two bodies hit the ground.

Fred and George didn't hesitate. As soon as the bodies hit the ground they were moving. They were part of a team that would engage the aurors in battle, and they did just that.

They were nervous, they didn't know what to expect, but they knew they couldn't falter. Their Lord was counting on them, and they wouldn't let him down. No matter what.

They put their training to use, they dodged, shielded and cursed. Spells flew left, right and center and soon neither twin was thinking. They were driven by instinct. It was life or death, and they had no intention of dying.
George couldn't say for how long he had been fighting, he couldn't even remember when he had lost sight of his twin. He just knew that one moment they had been fighting back to back and the next they weren't. Though he never truly lost track of where his brother was, even if he couldn't see him constantly. Sometimes he caught sight of him, their uniforms looking quite different from all the others around them, and was pleased to see that Fred was doing quite well.

A shield went up around him and he look back, surprised to see a Death Eater appearing beside him.

"How are you holding up?" the man asked in a gruff voice, George couldn't really place it.

George glanced at the bodies covering the ground, the blood on his uniform, the deadly magic saturating the air. How was he holding up? He laughed, a manic grin stretching his lips.

"Splendidly!" he exclaimed, not the least bit surprised to realize that he truly meant it.

The Death Eater laughed, cursing an auror in front of them. George watched fascinated as the man was turned inside out, he really wanted to know what curse the man had used.

"Well, that's something," the Death Eater remarked, "I have to say, you Ouroboros are alright."

George threw the man a smirk, even if the other wizard wasn't able to see it and nodded.

"You Death Eaters are not so bad either."

The Death Eater laughed again, just when new aurors started to appear.

"Reinforcements arrived," the older wizard muttered, "Ready?"

George gripped his wand tighter, and with one last glance at his brother he nodded.

"More than." he replied. Yes, he was more than ready.

Draco cursed when a diffindo clipped him on the shoulder. Thankfully their uniform took most of the impact, he would probably only bruise.

"You alright?" Wayne asked him, raising a shield in front of them.

"Yeah," Draco replied, sending a bombarda towards a group of aurors coming their way, "It's just..."

"Overwhelming?" Wayne asked, casting a cutting curse at an auror, who wasn't able to dodge completely and went down screaming and grabbing the stump that used to be his left arm.

"A bit." he looked around and seeing that they had a free path followed the Death Eaters into Azkaban, they were part of one of the retrieval teams and had to get the prisoners out.

"Do you regret it?" Wayne's voice was low, but Draco heard it loud and clear. There was worry there, though the threat in his voice was unmistakable. No matter how much Wayne may like him, he would not hesitate to strike him down if he turned out to be a threat to their Lord. Draco smiled, not the least bit offended or angry. He was proud. Proud to have such trustworthy comrades, proud to be a part of something like this.

"No, never." he replied firmly, his tone full of conviction and he knew that Wayne was smiling at him. He would never regret it, even if he had to bathe in the blood of innocents.
"Do you want me to do it?" Cedric asked when he saw him hesitate.

"No," Neville replied, "I'll do it. Just needed a minute."

Cedric nodded and started opening the other cells. He didn't blame Neville for being somewhat reluctant, they were about to open the Lestrange cells after all. If he were in Neville's place he wasn't sure that he would have the strength to face them, at least not without having a moment to order his thoughts.

Cedric could hear the Death Eaters opening the other cells and the cheers of the prisoners. He laughed too when he saw one of the Death Eaters being crushed in a hug. It was something that people tended to forget when they talked about the Death Eaters in Azkaban. They were people too, they had families and friends who missed them. That small reunion brought that to the forefront of his mind and he almost felt disgusted with himself. He had once been one of those that saw the Death Eaters as nothing but monsters who deserved what they got. He was so glad to have met Harry. Even with all the murdering and torturing he knew that he was a better person.

A wild cackle from behind him caught his attention and he turned around just in time to see Neville opening the cell of Bellatrix Lestrange.

She was looking at them with wide eyes, taking in their uniform, while Neville was opening the cell beside hers, the one from Rodolphus Lestrange if he wasn't mistaken.

"You're not Death Eaters." Rodolphus stated, his voice gravely and rough. His eyes were sharp, showing a lot less insanity than his wife.

Neville and he stood straighter, pride filling them.

"No," he replied, "We are Ouroboros." the pride he felt saturating every word.

"We follow the Dark Lord Thanatos." Neville added, his voice just as proud.

"Lord Thanatos and Lord Voldemort are allies." Cedric explained, "Everything will be explained to you as soon as you are back at Headquarters."

"My Lord is back?" the longing in Bellatrix's voice was hard to hear. Neither of them could imagine what it would be like to lose their Lord for over a decade.

"Yes, he's back." Neville replied warmly, the hate he had thought he would feel when faced with his parents torturers never making an appearance. He could understand why they had done it. He could imagine himself in their place. If Harry had disappeared they would have done anything to find him, no matter the cost.

Their laughter joining Bellatrix's happy cackle.

The Death Eaters couldn't help but stare when yet another auror went down. They didn't even see the Ouroboros move, he was no more than a shadow.

The Ouroboros that was beside them chuckled and cast another explosive hex, causing chaos in the middle of the auror squadron. Three seconds later another two aurors hit the ground.

"Just what is he?" a Death Eater muttered and Viktor laughed.

"Well, the best way to describe him would be silent killer. He's a wonderful assassin." Viktor
remarked. It was true, Blaise moved like a shadow, he had taken the spells that the twins found to move around inconspicuously and perfected them to a T. While the twins used them to spy, Blaise used them as the tools he needed to be a silent killer.

Harry had encouraged it, since he knew that Blaise enjoyed working in the shadows.

"You have assassins in the Ouroboros?" came the shocked exclamation from one of the Death Eaters around them and Viktor laughed.

"We are everything and anything that our Lord needs." Viktor replied, "Though he always encouraged us to perfect our preferred skills."

The Death Eaters nodded, their stance changing slightly. He could see that the Death Eaters were looking at them with different eyes. They were taking them more seriously. Not that they had much of a choice since they had seen Blaise take out more than half of a squadron of aurors.

Adrian laughed when he heard a giggle coming from a little ahead of him. Only their little Luna would make such an enchanting sound in the middle of a bloody battlefield.

She moved around the aurors as if she was dancing, curses flying from her wand, illuminating the air around her in beautiful lights.

Adrian cast a few shields around her, knowing that he didn't need to watch over the little blond but feeling better all the same. She was the most innocent of them, even when she was covered in blood almost from head to toe.

He saw a clear path to Azkaban and motioned for Luna to follow him, they had several Death Eaters to free.

Marcus and Theo stayed close to their Lord, even though they knew that Harry didn't need to be protected. It made them feel better to at least be within cursing distance, especially when wave after wave of aurors came their way. They seemed to be focusing on both Dark Lords, even if a few of them seemed to be shaking in their boots.

Still, they kept their heads in the game and did their best to deal with the aurors that came for them. They had paired together often enough that they knew each others moves as if they were their own.

The Death Eaters stayed away from them, seeing that they would be more of a hindrance to their teamwork than helpful. Though Marcus had seen a Death Eater cast a shield over them when he thought that they wouldn't have been able to shield a curse that was coming their way.

It was a pleasant surprise to see that the Death Eaters were treating them as part of the group. They hadn't expected to receive such a warm welcome. As long as they treated their Lord with respect, the Ouroboros would treat them just as well.

Graham cast a cutting curse at the auror, decapitating him in less than a second. He cursed when he saw that Fleur was a little unsteady on her feet.

"What were you hit with?" he asked her, raising a few shields around them to give her time to recover.

"Bone breaker." she replied through gritted teeth, "The uniform took most of the damage, but I think
it fractured my leg. Though I know it's not completely broken. It may be only a hairline fracture."

"Are you good to continue?"

"Yes, let me just numb the area." Fleur muttered, standing straight once more. She wouldn't fail Harry, no matter what.

Graham smiled at her, knowing exactly what she was thinking and agreeing. This was their first raid, they wouldn't fail. No matter what.

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Tom couldn't keep his eyes of Harry. His little serpent was almost dancing on the battlefield. He evaded curses with such a grace that Tom couldn't help but marvel. There was room for improvement, of course, but the natural grace and ability he had was a true beauty to behold.

The slight sadistic streak that Harry clearly had also shone through in most curses that he used. There were so many of them that lead to an agonizing death that Tom had to wonder just how and where Harry had learned them.

Harry laughed and the aurors stopped in their tracks. "Let's make things a little hotter, yes?" Harry asked sweetly and raised his wand, "Fiendfyre!"

A gigantic basilisk formed around Harry, not burning him in the slightest, though to everyone around him it felt as if their skin would melt off of them. The aurors started running, screaming for their lives and Harry laughed, launching his serpent after them. The unlucky ones that weren't fast enough were caught by the fiery beast. They melted on the spot, the smell of burning flesh managed to superimpose itself over everything else.

Tom observed all of it with fascinated eyes. He had never met anyone aside from himself who was able to control such a big stream of the cursed fire.

"My Lord," he turned and saw Lucius coming his way. He arched an eye-brow and Lucius gave a shallow bow as soon as he was beside him, "Azkaban was emptied." he informed him and Tom nodded.

Well, it was time to go than. He gave a signal to all of his Death Eaters, telling them it was time to go.

"Thanatos!" he called, catching Harry's attention, "It's time."

Harry nodded, telling his own followers to leave. He studied his serpent and a smile spread on his lips.

$Burn it down.$ he hissed at it, giving his magic purpose. The snake grew to double it's size and made it's way to Azkaban fortress.

Harry laughed and felt Tom's arms warp around him. The last thing they saw before Tom apparated them out of there was the gigantic basilisk envelope the fortress in it's fiery embrace.

Harry was still laughing when they arrived at Headquarters. He got himself under control and sat on his throne. He was pleased to see that all his Ouroboros were already standing at attention. More than one had blood on them, though he was relieved to see that none appeared to be hurt badly.
As soon as they noticed that their Lord was present the Death Eaters fell into their ranks as well and waited patiently for Tom to speak.

Tom's eyes swept over his forces, noticing that they were all present, meaning that none of them had died or was seriously injured. The prisoners had been portkeyed to the infirmary and he would look how his Death Eaters had fared for the last decade at a later date.

"Death Eaters, tonight we announced our return!" he exclaimed, "Tomorrow morning wizards and witches will wake up to a new era! Rejoice in the knowledge that we took the first step in having the world we have always dreamed of!" the Death Eaters cheered and he smiled wickedly, "Go now; rest, see to your injuries, and reunite with your friends and loved ones." the Death Eaters bowed and started leaving, though Tom could see Lucius and Teodred hesitating slightly. No doubt worried about their son and grandson, though not willing to give their identities away.

Harry noticed it too. He stood from his seat and prowled towards his Ouroboros. He smiled at them, even if they wouldn't be able to see it, he raised his hand and caressed Theo's mask.

"You did good today," he told them warmly, his voice telling them just how pleased he was with them, "Go rest, I'll be calling you later." the Ouroboros bowed, melting back into the shadows and Harry turned towards Lucius and Teodred, "They'll be home by now, neither of them is hurt." he assured them, and chuckled when both men almost sagged in relief, "Don't forget that they are mine now," he added when they were almost out the door and the two Death Eaters faltered slightly, "I always take care of what's mine." he added before they had left the hall completely and chuckled when Lucius glanced back at him before the doors to the meeting room closed.

Not a moment later he found himself pressed against one of the columns in the hall with his lips being devoured by Tom.

It took him a second to realize what was happening, then he was responding with just as much passion. He didn't seem to be able to remember just why he had resisted Tom for as long as he had.

He felt Tom nibble at his lower lip, asking for entrance and he granted it. Though he didn't submit. He dragged Tom into a battle for dominance, it gained him a low growl from Tom that made him shudder.

Tom's hands, that had been holding his head in place, went down to his tights and grabbed him, lifting him up. With no other option he wrapped his legs around Tom's waist. He moaned into their kiss when their groins brushed together. He could feel Tom smirking against his lips and retaliated by grinding against him.

Tom groaned, breaking their kiss.

They were both breathing heavily, their eyes bright with lust.

"I have to go." Harry whispered, not wanting to address what had happened.

"Why?" Tom growled, burying his head in Harry's neck. He started giving light kisses and nibbles along the expanse of skin revealed to him.

"I have to be home when the Order finds out about the raid." Harry replied, closing his eyes and trying to ignore the sensations running through his body. He thanked Merlin to have been able to think up such a reasonable excuse.

Tom growled again, biting him a little more sharply. Harry was sure that it would leave a mark. Tom didn't seem to want to let go, so Harry did the only thing he could, he melted into the shadows and
appeared behind his throne.

"I have to go, Tom." he repeated, doing his best to convince himself of that fact. He truly had to go, however it was becoming more difficult the longer he stared at those blood red eyes.

"You can't run forever, Harry." Tom's voice had dropped a little, sounding like liquid chocolate and Harry contained the shiver that wanted to run down his spine. Merlin, the man was sin personified.

"I know." his whispered reply echoed in the hall long after he had left.

Chapter End Notes

A.N.: Hello all :) I hope everything is ok with all of you and that you had a great summer, at least those that live in the northern hemisphere, for those on the southern hemisphere hope the winter isn't too rough.

So the new chapter is finally out. I hope you had as much fun reading it as I had writing it. Tom finally got his much deserved kiss, even if Harry freaked out a little and ran. Still, at least Tom got his kiss, though I'm sure he would have like more... he was all fired up form the raid XD The wards were explained a little more in detail and they won't be permanent, just for a while. It also explains why Snape wasn't killed as soon as Harry saw him. Severus still has an important role to play and he won't die that easily. It may not seem like it but I rather like him and he won't just roll over and die.

Lucius and Teodred... well, they don't know Harry that well yet... they'll come around.

The Lestarnges are finally in the picture, YAY. I adore them! They'll be so fun to play with, I can't wait :D

I want to thank all of you for your support. It means a lot to me and I hope you continue to enjoy my story

On a completely unrelated note; I was re-watching Deadly Hallows Pt.2 for the millionth time, or at least that's what my sister told me, and right at the end, you know the part, where Harry suddenly grabs Voldemort, you know which part I'm talking about, right? Well, it came to that part, and no matter how many times I've seen it, I still think: OMG they are going to kiss! That's when I realize that's I've been reading too much fanfiction lol
Chapter 22 – Darkness rising

She didn't like night shifts at all, truthfully she absolutely despised them. They were so boring, so mind-numbing boring that she sometimes honestly wished for there to be a burglary, or an assault or something, just so that the mind-numbing boredom would stop.

Fortunately that night she actually liked the company. Not counting Kings, the other members of the squad were people that she liked even though they weren't that close.

"You look to be on the verge of falling asleep," Kingsley remarked, taking a seat beside her.

"You can't tell me you aren't," Tonks grumbled.

"I claimed no such thing," Kingsley replied, a teasing light in his eyes, "Though I hide it better than you."

"I'm sure it comes from the years of experience," she teased right back.

Before Kingsley could reply an alarm sounded in the room, making everyone go on high alert.

"That's the Azkaban alarm," one of the aurors whispered, looking as shocked as most of the ones in the room.

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"Think it's a drill, Kings?" Tonks asked.

"I wouldn't count on it," he replied grimly, "Alright people, get ready for the portkey!" he called, watching as they all rushed towards the emergency portkey that had a countdown over it, "Tonks, this may be the really deal. Be careful," he whispered to her, before joining the others by the portkey.

Tonks took a deep breath and grabbed the portkey just before the countdown reached zero. She could only hope that if it truly was the real deal that the other squads arrived soon.

What seemed like an eternity later they landed on what could only be described as a battle field. It took a moment, just one moment, and the two aurors that had been beside her were on the ground, their lifeless eyes staring up at her.

"Tonks, down!" she heard Kingsley shout and just like in countless other situations she complied
without even thinking. The only difference was that those specific situations had been in training and this was truly life or death.

"Tonks! Tonks, look at me!" it took her a second to react, a second that took the life of another of the aurors standing near her.

"Focus, Tonks!" Kingsley gripped her shoulder and almost dragged her behind a boulder.

"Hey, Tonks, you have to focus," she finally looked at Kingsley, noticing the grim look in his eyes.

"Sorry," she murmured, "I'm focused."

Kingsley searched her eyes for a moment then nodded.

"Good. We have to move, they'll find us in seconds if we stay here. Stay close to me. Don't try to help those that are down, it will get you killed. Avoid shields, dodge the spells and save you energy for spell work," Kingsley advised, "Ready?"

"Yeah," she nodded, though she felt anything but ready.

As soon as they left the safety of their little corner spells started to fly everywhere and she didn't even think when she started shooting back. She wasn't even sure whether she was actually bringing the Death Eaters down, she didn't have the time for it, more focused on avoiding any curses coming her way.

The smell of smoke and blood was making her feel nauseous but she held it in, knowing that she could do nothing about it at the moment.

She dodged to the right avoiding a bright green curse, that could be nothing but the killing curse, and slipped. She grimaced when she noticed that it had been blood that she had slipped on, blood coming from a decapitated body not far from her. Based on the robes she knew it was a fellow auror.

And that was when she heard it.

Laughter.

She looked around, taking in the screams of the dying aurors, the ground drenched in their blood, and she couldn't help but wonder how anyone could laugh when surrounded by such devastation.

She looked up when she heard the laughter again and her breath caught.

"Kingsley..." she whispered, knowing that he wouldn't be able to hear her, so she was rather surprised when he appeared beside her, looking her over, making sure that she was alright, "Look, Kingsley," she told him.

Kingsley glanced at where Tonks was looking and he felt his heart stop for a fraction of a second.

"Dear Merlin," he murmured, "That's the Dark Lord, he's really back."

"Who's that with him?" Tonks asked, still looking at the smaller man that was moving through the aurors as if it were nothing.

"I have no idea." Kingsley replied, "He doesn't look like a Death Eater."

"Neither do those." she said, pointing towards a couple of wizards that were making their way towards Azkaban.
"We'll talk about it later, now's not the time."

Tonks nodded, and then she was moving again. Throwing spells and dodging curses, not thinking about anything else. She couldn't afford to think about anything else. Not about the bodies littering the ground, nor about the blood staining her robes, not even about the fact that she had lost sight of Kingsley.

She felt such relief when she noticed more aurors arriving, knowing that if they hadn't shown up then they would have been lost. Though that relief was short lived when she saw half of a squad dying as soon as they arrived, their deaths caused by two of those that didn't look like Death Eaters. Again she couldn't help but freeze for a second.

So much loss, so much destruction.

She heard giggling, a child like giggle, it sounded so incredibly out of place that she couldn't help but look where it was coming from, only to come face to face with a completely blank mask.

She couldn't contain the shiver of fear that ran down her spine.

"Such a waste," an eerie female voice came from behind the mask, "You should thank the fates, tonight is your lucky night."

Then everything went dark and she knew no more.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck." he growled, taking refuge behind a cluster of boulders.

He glanced down at his bleeding leg and cursed again. The auror squadrons were being decimated. Not that he was all that surprised about it if he were being truthful.

Fudge had dropped the required time for training and the required NEWTS that an auror needed. He could still remember his speeches about peaceful times and whatnot. Many of the bureaucrats had agreed with him, though only because reducing all those things saved them millions of galleons in expenses.

And now they could see the results.

All of the aurors, aside from the veterans, looked like school children fighting in playground duels.

The Death Eaters on the other hand fought just as viciously as ever, it was as if they had never stopped fighting. As if this last decade hadn't existed for them, they were fighting as they had when the war had been at it's peak.

And those other fighters, he had never seen them in the previous war. Just who were they? A special section of the Death Eaters? They were just as vicious as them at least.

He cursed again when an explosion sounded just behind him and almost jumped out of his spot when an arm landed at his feet.

"Merlin," he whispered, looking away.

Again he send a silent prayer to the Gods, hoping beyond hope that they were listening. Though, going by the destruction that surrounded him, he highly doubted that they were.

Laughter had him looking to his left, where he could just see the outline of Voldemort and one of those new fighters, though this one had a different colored uniform.
"Let's make things a little hotter, yes?" he was just able to hear the figure over the sounds of the battle around him, "Fiendfyre!"

His eyes widened when he saw the gigantic snake that formed out of the cursed fire. He couldn't help but stare when he saw the control the man had over the fire. For a second he was reminded of another attack that had taken place more than a decade before where Voldemort decimated an entire town with a snake just like that one.

It was beyond terrifying thinking that the Dark side had another fighter that had that amount of power. Terrifying but strangely exhilarating as well, what age was this that had more than one wizard as powerful as that? Being able to live in such a time was awe inspiring, even if he only admitted such a thing to himself.

If most muggles thought that an ordinary wizard had close to godly powers he couldn't help but wonder what they would think of these two. What would they think of wizards that even wizards thought of as close to godly?

"Thanatos!" he heard Voldemort calling and the slim figure turned towards him, that certainly didn't sound as if he were a Death Eater, not with a name like that, "It's time."

All of a sudden the snake grew to double it's size and made way towards Azkaban fortress and he could only stare as Voldemort wrapped his arms around the smaller man and apparated them away. Thanatos' laughter still haunted the battlefield when the gigantic snake swallowed the fortress in it's fiery coils.

He didn't know how long he stood there just watching it burn, however the screams of the hurt and dying around him brought him out of it. He looked around noticing that all the Death Eaters and those other fighters were gone, leaving nothing but desperation in their wake.

He cast a quick healing spell at his leg, knowing that it wouldn't be enough to heal it completely but at least it was enough to stop the bleeding and numb the pain. It was the best he could under the circumstances.

As soon as he could move without feeling complete agony he started looking over the aurors, helping where he could. He could only hope that the healers arrived soon, otherwise about half of the wounded aurors would perish, the wounds they had far to grave for the meager first aid spells most of the aurors knew.

When he saw bubblegum pink hair amidst all the brown, black, and blond he felt his heart miss a beat.

"Merlin," he whispered, racing to her side, "Tonks," he dropped to his knees beside her, looking for a pulse almost frantically.

He took a shuddering breath when he noticed a strong pulse. He hadn't felt such a relief in a long time. Tonks had been nowhere near ready to be in such a battle, and she was his partner, losing her in this... he would have felt as if it were his fault. He should have been looking after her, especially in this situation.

A quick counter-curse later and Tonks was coming to, looking a little bit out of it, but otherwise fine.

"Kings?" she asked a bit groggy.

"Yeah," he whispered, "Yeah, I'm here. Can you stand?"
"I... yes. Yes, I'm good," she replied, shaking her head.

Tonks looked around and her eyes landed on the still burning fortress.

"Dear Merlin," she whispered, "Who could do that?"

Kingsley didn't even need to look to know what she was talking about.

"Thanatos." he replied, "At least that's what Voldemort called him."

"A Death Eater did that?" she look incredulous and a little afraid, not that he blamed her, he could understand that fear.

"I don't think it was a Death Eater," he murmured, "It was one of those with different uniforms, though this one was in green. I... I'm not sure, but I think it may be another Dark Lord."

Tonks turned to look at him, her eyes wide.

"Another Dark Lord?"

Kingsley nodded gravely.

"We have to go back to the Ministry, get checked over by the healers on duty and see what Amelia tells us, then we'll have to report back to Dumbledore. He must be told what happened, especially about this other group."

Tonks nodded and followed him towards one of the portkey points that the healers were setting up. For once she wouldn't have minded if the night had been a boring one.

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"It's the middle of the night, Albus," Sirius grumbled, looking more asleep than awake while he was sitting at the kitchen table in Grimmauld place, "Why did you call us?"

"I am afraid, I have horrible news," Albus said gravely, "Azkaban was attacked by Voldemort."

Absolute silence filled the kitchen for a fraction of a second.

"WHAT?!" Sirius was the first to react.

"It is true," Albus seemed to age in front of their eyes, "Kingsley and Nymphandora were there, they were the ones that told me about it."

All eyes turned towards the two aurors, only then noticing just how tired both of them looked.

"Oh dear," Molly looked both of them over, trying to see if there was anything wrong with them, "Are you hurt?"

"Nah, I'm fine," Tonks smiled at her, "I was only stunned."

"I am fine as well, Molly," Kingsley assured her.

"Thank Merlin," Molly sagged against Arthur.

Most of the Order present looked at her with sympathy. They knew that since the death of her brothers that she grew anxious every time any Order member was involved in a battle against the Death Eaters; they could only imagine how much worse it would be now that she had children in the
"Azkaban was emptied and completely destroyed," Kingsley told them, "The auror squadrons that were present were completely decimated. We lost dozens of aurors," he continued grimly and Tonks looked away, pain and grief marring her features.

She had no idea how many friends she had lost in just one attack. Was this what was waiting for them if war truly broke out? This pain? This grief? Gods, how were they supposed to not lose hope when they were faced with such devastation?

"Unfortunately that's not the worst," Kingsley forged on, even though he was just as pained about the deaths as Tonks, "There was another group there. I never saw them in the previous war. I'm almost positive that one of them was another Dark Lord."

The silence this time was different. There was an undercurrent of fear that was impossible to mask.

"What?" it was a whisper and it was impossible to tell where it came from.

"Another Dark Lord?" Sirius asked flatly, "And we are only learning about it now? What about our trusty spy?" he sneered at Snape, "Why didn't you tell us about this? About the attack? About this second Dark Lord? If you can't tell us even this much what use are you?"

Snape sneered right back, glaring at all of those that were nodding, agreeing with Sirius.

"Now, Sirius, I have already told you that Severus has my complete trust," Albus told them all softly, "Severus had already informed me about this second Dark Lord, and yes, it is another Dark Lord," he confirmed grimly, gaining dismayed looks from all those present, "Voldemort himself introduced him to the Death Eaters, as well as the new Dark Lord's followers."

"What can you tell us about them? How long has this Dark Lord been around? Why are they allied? Why haven't we heard of him before?" Bill asked, looking at both Albus and Snape.

"I am afraid there is not much I can tell you about them. Severus was spelled to silence."

"Quite convenient that, isn't it?" Sirius grumbled, ignoring Remus who was trying to shush him.

"What can you tell me?" Arthur asked, moving the conversation along, knowing quite well just how those two hated each other.

"Voldemort introduced this new Dark Lord as Thanatos. He has his own followers. It is unknown for how long he has been active, or what his goals are," Albus told them.

"What about followers? How many are there?" Sturgis asked, looking more at Snape than at Albus.

"There were fourteen at the meeting. I do not know if he has more," Severus said and even with that bit of information he could feel his blood starting to heat up.

"Were there more at the Azkaban attack?" Albus asked, looking at Kingsley.

"I don't know, Albus," Kingsley sighed, "They were different from the Death Eaters. Their uniforms... It was difficult to tell who was who. I could have seen the same person at different points and I wouldn't have known. The Death Eater they have all different masks, we may not know who is behind it, but we can tell it's another person, at least you can see their eyes. These followers... the masks had no face. They were just blank."
"They were creepy," Tonks added, not quite managing to suppress a shudder, "Though I do know that one of those new... What are they called? Do they have a name?" she directed the question at Snape.

"I cannot reveal their name," Snape stated flatly, making Sirius snort.

"As I said, that's quite convenient, isn't it?" Sirius couldn't help but goad him.

"Shut up, you overgrown mutt," Snape sneered, "If you knew just who the Dark Lord Thanatos was, you wou- arghhh."

All those present jumped from their seats when Snape crashed to the floor screaming his throat out. Most of them were looking at him in horror.

"Severus, my boy," Albus knelt down beside him, "What happened?"

"The wards," he got out through gritted teeth, "What I was about to say may have given a clue to who it is and they stopped me before I could say it."

"This is why you can't say anything?" Remus murmured more to himself than truly asking the question.

"This Dark Lord Thanatos sure looks vicious," Diggle remarked, taking his seat back and looking at Snape whom Albus was helping back onto his seat from the corner of his eye.

Kingsley snorted, also sitting back down.

"He burned down Azkaban with an enormous snake made out of Fiendfyre. So, yes, vicious is something that can define him."

"His followers aren't any better," Tonks added.

"Yes, that was what I wanted to ask both of you," Albus was still glancing at Severus every so often, though he knew that Severus would take it quite badly if he fussed any more about him. If there was one thing Albus knew he hated it was showing weakness, especially in front of Sirius and Remus. "Can you tell us anything about Thanatos' followers? Anything that would help us in to identify them?"

"As I said, their uniform makes it extremely difficult for them to be identified," Kingsley shook his head.

"All I know is that one of them is definitely a woman."

"Oh?" Albus' bushy eyebrows rose, "How did you come by this knowledge, Nymphandora?" his lips twitched slightly when he saw the glare the young woman aimed at him.

"She stunned me," she told them, "I heard giggling and it was such an odd sound in the middle of all of that chaos that I turned around to look where it was coming from. I came face to face with a completely blank mask, let me tell you now those things are creepy, and she said something then she stunned me."

"What did she say?" Albus was leaning forward slightly, hoping that it would be something that would be able to help them.

"Something about it being a lucky night. I didn't really pay all that much attention to be honest. I was
more worried about the wand she was aiming at me."

"That is quite understandable, my dear," Albus smiled at her and leaned back on his chair. He took a deep breath, looking over all the Order members.

It were far less people than he had hoped, especially since the threat seemed to have doubled. They had suffered heavy losses during the last war and even though they trusted him they were afraid of losing even more. And then there was the unexpected death of Alastor. He had known that his old friend had suffered heavily during the war and that some curses hadn't been completely healed but he had no idea that they had been slowly draining his life. The Healers had told him that they were surprised that the old auror had been able to hang on for as long as he had.

"I believe that there is nothing more we can do tonight. I ask that you keep an eye and ear out. Try to find out something about this new Dark Lord and his followers. See if there is anyone with new policies and ideals. The more we learn about this new threat the better we can prepare ourselves for it."

"We will keep an eye on things," Arthur assured him.

Albus thanked them and the meeting quickly came to an end, most of them anxious to get home. Only Kingsley and the Weasleys remained behind. The Weasleys being permanent additions to the Manor for the moment and Kingsley being far too tired to do anything but crash on the nearest bed.

As soon as Sirius thought that everyone was asleep he sneaked out of his room. He knocked on Remus' door, waiting impatiently for him to open.

"Padfoot..." Remus sighed, once he had opened the door, "I should have known. Are you sure you want to do this?"

Seeing his friend's determined expression he nodded and followed him. Truthfully he wanted to do it just as much as Sirius, he just wasn't sure if they should.

Remus could see Sirius taking a deep breath, then he knocked.

"Enter," not a second later came the reply, and they did just that.

Harry was sprawled on his bed, looking far more awake than he should have been considering the time.

"I take it that Dumbledore called a meeting about the Azkaban raid," Harry said as soon as the door was closed, "That was quick."

"So you were there," Sirius murmured more to himself than the other two occupants of the room, "Why weren't we called? Aren't we your followers too?"

Remus could see that Harry was a bit surprised by the question, not that he could blame him, he sure hadn't expected Sirius to ask him that. Truthfully he had expected a rant or something along those lines.

"Yes, I was there, as were the Ouroboros," Harry replied, "You weren't called for two reason. One being that I wasn't sure how you would react to being in a room full of Death Eaters and the other being that there was the possibility that if you were hurt in the raid there wouldn't have been enough time for you to get healed before Dumbledore called a meeting. Considering how quickly the meeting was called it was a valid fear. Speaking about the meeting," Harry continued before they could say anything, getting up from the bed, "How was Dumbledore alerted so fast?"
Remus and Sirius subconsciously straightened.

"Kingsley Shacklebolt and Nymphandora Tonks were part of one of the squadrons that were called, my Lord." Remus replied, looking straight ahead.

He supposed it should feel strange to call Harry his Lord, but it didn't. He could almost feel his magic purring in contentment. Harry was his Lord, his chosen Lord, so it made perfect sense calling him that.

"I see." Harry hummed, leaning against the wall and staring out of the window, "I suppose it was too much to hope for that Dumbledore would take a little longer to have more information about my followers. At least I prevented Snape from saying anything. How did he act in the meeting? Show me," he directed towards Sirius, who looked him in the eye as soon as the order came.

Legilimency may not be his strongest point, but he was skilled enough to see the memory if the person had it on the forefront of their minds.

In a matter of seconds he had seen the whole meeting and he couldn't help but chuckle.

"It's good to see that my wards are working so well," he murmured, then he smiled at Sirius, "You did good in creating doubt about his usefulness. It may not seem like much but those little things stay in people's minds and when things start to turn sour they won't be able to stop themselves from thinking about them."

"So he truly can't say anything?" Sirius asked, trying to hide the small vindictive smile that had spread on his lips when he saw Snape screaming.

"No, he truly can't," Harry confirmed, "I convinced Tom not to call him to the raid. I do not trust Snape and I believe it would be a mistake to let him know to much. Though he is Tom's Death Eater so I can do nothing about it unless Snape goes against me or if my Ouroboros are directly involved with whatever raid or mission. Keep an eye on him," he instructed and both men bowed their heads.

"Yes, my Lord," they responded in unison.

"Good. Now, the next time there is a meeting I will be calling both of you as well. Your uniforms will be in your wardrobes. I had Kreacher take care of them. You have until then to come to terms with the Death Eaters you'll see there. Get together with the twins, they'll tell you how I expect my Ouroboros to behave. That will be all."

"Yes, my Lord," they gave him a slight bow and left the room, both feeling as if their heart was almost jumping out of their chests.

"Merlin," Sirius muttered, leaning against the wall, "Did you feel that?"

"If you mean my magic practically purring when I called Harry my Lord, then, yes, I felt it."

"Do you think that's how they feel? The Death Eaters?"

Remus took a shuddering breath and almost dragged Sirius back to his room.

"I don't know," he answered, as soon as they were inside, "If it is I don't know how Severus can even think about betraying Voldemort."

"Maybe he isn't betraying Voldemort, maybe he's playing the Order. I never trusted that git," Sirius threw himself onto the bed, for a moment looking like the teen he had ceased to be a long time ago.
"So you think Harry's wrong?" Remus asked and even he was surprised by how harsh he sounded.

"No, I don't." Sirius replied grimly, noticing the amber bleeding into Remus' eyes, "I don't trust Snape. I don't think he can be loyal to anyone but himself. He always was such a weak little thing." he didn't even bother to hide the disgust he felt, "It wouldn't surprise me if he had turned from Voldemort because he couldn't take being cursed for his incompetence. He would always start whimpering, crying just minutes after we started on him, and I think Voldemort would have been far more brutal than we could ever be."

Silence filled the room for a moment and then Remus snorted, falling on the bed beside Sirius.

"What is it?" Sirius frowned.

"I was just wondering how we could have fooled ourselves so much when we were younger," Remus murmured, "We were never Light, Sirius. The way we took enjoyment in Severus' suffering should have been our first clue."

"We were young," Sirius whispered, "We were stupid."

"So stupid," Remus agreed.

"Can I stay the night?" Sirius asked and Remus sighed, looking at Sirius and seeing all the doubts the animagus had, all those fears that only he ever saw.

"Alright," he nodded, knowing that there wasn't anything else he could say, "Though if you shed I'll make you sleep on the floor."

"Thanks, Moony," he almost didn't hear it.

A soft smile lit up his face.

"Anytime, Pads."

The first thing he did as soon as he was home was go to his son's room. He didn't even think about it, he just knew he had to see him. He knew how he had felt after his first raid and he would never let his son go through that alone.

Logically he knew it wasn't the best move he could make, he wasn't even supposed to know that his son was one of them; but Lord Thanatos had given him permission, hadn't he? He had confirmed that his son was one of them, so he was allowed, wasn't he?

Even if he wasn't he doubted that he would have been able to stay away.

He reached his son's room in record time and opened the door without even knocking.

When he saw that the room was empty he froze, panic overwhelming him for a second, then he heard the shower running and breathed in relief.

He was just taking a shower. He was home.

He fell on the nearest armchair, the relief he was feeling leaving him momentarily weak in the knees. Dear Merlin he had never thought that he would feel so out of it. Would he have felt the same if his son had decided to follow his Lord? He didn't know, he supposed he would never know. From what he had seen he doubted that his son would ever turn away from Lord Thanatos. Even if his son was so inclined he was sure that his child wouldn't survive it, and he knew that even if he asked his Lord
to help him protect his son that it would be for nothing. His Lord was enchanted with Lord Thanatos and he knew that there would be very little that would make his Lord actively go against Lord Thanatos.

That, more than anything else, made for such a balanced partnership. His Lord may be more experienced and have more followers, but Lord Thanatos had a control over his Lord that was unprecedented. It was exhilarating seeing them interact, it made him have hope for their future.

"Father?"

He looked up, slightly startled that he had been so lost in thought that he a missed the shower turning off.

"What are you doing here, father?"

He looked his son over, who only had a towel wrapped around his hips, his eyes narrowing when he noticed the bruise on his left shoulder. Though what kept his attention was the Ouroboros branded on the fair skin. He wanted to hate that mark, but he knew he couldn't. He knew it had been his son's choice to have it, it was something his son believed in and he could never hate something that his son loved so much.

"I wanted to see how you are."

"I'm fine, father."

"Draco," he sighed, "Please, son, I'm your father. I'm worried. I've been in your place, I know how hard a first raid can be. Just... talk to me."

Draco's shoulders seemed to drop and he fell heavily on his bed.

"Dad," Lucius was startled by the use of dad, it had been so long since his son had called him by anything but father, "I'm truly fine. I'm better than fine actually," Lucius was surprised by the small smile that appeared on Draco's lips, "We did our Lord proud, we didn't fail him."

"You killed people today, Draco."

"I know," his son replied grimly, "And I ask for Magic to have mercy on their families, but I do not regret it. They stood against our Lord, nothing but death awaits those that stand against him. The sooner the world realizes that the better for everyone involved."

Lucius got up from his seat and knelt in front of Draco, taking his hands in his slightly bigger ones. He was a bit astonishment to notice that his hands were only marginally bigger than his son's. It caught him of guard to see how much his child had grown.

He looked into eyes so similar to his own, trying to see the truth in them. He found nothing but complete conviction in his beliefs and a fierce loyalty towards his Lord.

He got up and leaned into his son, kissing his forehead.

"I'm proud of you, Draco," he murmured, needing him to know that.

Even if they had chosen different paths, even if it came down to them fighting each other, he needed Draco to know just how proud he was of having him for a son. He couldn't have asked for a better child, he couldn't be prouder of him.
He felt Draco sighing and slump slightly against him.

"Thank you, dad," came the murmur not a second later and he closed his eyes.

It was hard letting go, extremely so, but in the end he knew that he could do nothing more than be there for his son when he needed him and he could only hope that Draco knew he could come to him whenever he needed to.

"Grandfather," he wasn't really surprised to see his grandson sitting in his study waiting for him, "How's father?"

"So, not hiding it anymore?" he asked instead of answering, taking a seat behind his desk.

"Hiding what?" Theo asked, sitting straighter.

"Your allegiances."

"I never hid them," Theo retorted, "You always knew where they were, with whom they were."

"I always suspected, yes," he confirmed.

He sighed and looked his grandson over. It always surprised him to see just how much he had grown. He couldn't believe that it had been fourteen years since he held this child in his arms, only a baby at the time, lamenting the fate that had befallen his son.

And now in front of him was a young man, someone who knew what he wanted in life. Someone who was willing to fight and kill for what they believed it. Who had killed for what they believed in.

And there was no doubt that he had killed. He had kept a close eye on the Ouroboros. He may not have known which one of them Theo was, but he had seen just how vicious every single one of them had been.

He freely admitted that he hadn't expected for them to be so bloodthirsty, to be so willing to take a life. Most of all he hadn't expected for them to be so good at it.

"He trained you well," he told Theo and he could see his grandson's eyes light up with pride.

"Our Lord always encourages us to improve ourselves, to work on what we love. We do it gladly, we want him to be proud of us. Even before he took his place as a Dark Lord, he was already everything to us."

"Yes, I could see just how enchanted you were," Teodred murmured, "Tell me, Theo, do you love him?"

"Yes," came the sure, firm reply and he almost sighed.

"My Lord he's... He's quite enthralled with Lord Thanatos. He doesn't share."

"I know. I've seen how he looks at my Lord. That doesn't change the fact I love him," Theo smiled, "I doubt I will ever stop loving him, even though I know he won't ever love me back in the same way. I don't mind, as long as I can stay beside him."

Teodred sighed and slumped slightly on his seat.

"I was afraid you would say that," he murmured, more to himself than to Theo, "I just want you to
be happy, Theo," he added a little louder.

"I am happy," the smile that lit up Theo's face was one he had never seen, "So happy, grandfather. You truly don't have to worry about that."

And Teodred couldn't find a shred of deceit in his grandson's eyes. Theo was happy with the hand that fate had dealt him, which was something few could say, especially when it was such a hard fate.

He knew how hard it was to be beside the person you loved and know that they didn't love you back, though at least Theo was granted the chance to be more than a follower. Hopefully Theo would grow out of love with Lord Thanatos, just as it had happened with him.

"Your father is in a magical sleep until tomorrow," he said, changing the subject and answering Theo's question, "The healers told me he wasn't as bad as many of the other Death Eaters but he would need a while to recover and the best way to start the recovery is to put him in a healing sleep. We'll go see him tomorrow after lunch."

Theo nodded and got up from his seat, just before he left the room he turned towards his grandfather.

"Thank you," he whispered, smiling at the man who had raised him with so much love and care.

"Anytime, my child," Teodred smiled, "Anytime."

The mood was rather morose when Harry went to have breakfast the following morning. He glanced around the kitchen, looking at who was present, and took a seat beside Remus.

"What's wrong?" he asked looking at the adults present, only to be glared at by the youngest male Weasley.

"As if you wouldn't know," Ron sneered, "Your Death Eater mates must have told you all about the Azkaban breakout."

"Azkaban breakout?" he asked, looking stunned, "What Azkaban breakout?"

"Don't act as if you don't know!" Ron shouted, jumping up from his seat, "Nott must have told you all about how his Death Eater daddy is back home!"

"Ronald!" his mother scolded, looking at her son wide eyed.

"No, mom, he's one of them. He's a filthy Slytherin and you expect us to live here with him?!" Ron turned around to look at his mother, "He's probably telling his Slytherin friends about everything that happens here! He shouldn't be here!"

"Watch your tone," Sirius snarled from further down the table, "This is my home, Harry's home, and he will always be welcomed here. I can't say the same about you if you continue attacking my godson."

"But he's a Slytherin!" Harry raised an eyebrow when he noticed Ron stamping his foot like a three year old.

"Your point being?" Sirius asked, with all the aristocratic disdain that his parents had bred into him.

Ron looked at Sirius for a second, then glanced around the room, when he noticed that even his family were frowning at him he stomped out of the kitchen, looking like a petulant child.
"I kinda lost my appetite," Harry mumbled, looking down, "Excuse me."

Not a second later he was leaving the kitchen and a small smirk spread on his lips. Oh, this was going great, he couldn't believe that the little Weasley would make it so easy for him. If things continued like that then even if Weasley heard something no one would believe him since they were used to Weasley going on and on about him being a Death Eater. He chuckled thinking about how Weasley would react if he told him that he was actually a Dark Lord. Maybe he should let it slip, just to see his reaction, he was sure that it would be quite entertaining.

He took refuge in the library, knowing that it was a place that the two youngest Weasleys avoided like the plague. All those that mattered would know where to find him, so he picked up a book and curled up on an armchair, planing on spending his morning doing nothing but laze about. After the hectic night he had, he believed it was more than deserved.

Unfortunately his brilliant plan was disrupted when he heard footsteps coming his way. He glanced up and was quite surprised to see the eldest of the Weasley children coming his way with a tray of food.

Bill smiled at him and took a seat on a nearby armchair, putting the tray on the table.

"Hey, I thought to bring you something to eat, even if you aren't that hungry it's always best to have something in your stomach."

"Thanks," he mumbled, taking a chocolate muffin from the tray, "You didn't have to."

"I know," Bill leaned back, sighing, "I just didn't want you to think that we are all like Ron."

"What do you mean?" Harry frowned.

"Ron... he's really close minded, rather prejudiced in fact. I didn't want you to think that we are all like that. The twins, for instance, are very open minded people, I doubt they'll mind that you are a Slytherin. Though it's probable that you'll end up involved in some sort of prank," he finished with a mischievous smile and Harry could see the resemblance to his two demons.

"Why are you telling me this?" Harry asked, looking at the older red-head confused.

"We'll be staying here for a while... it wouldn't do if you weren't comfortable in your own home. So maybe making friends with us would help with that."

"Friends, huh?" Harry chuckled, "Alright, Bill. Let's be friends."

Bill grinned at him and summoned a book from the shelves, settling in to read.

Harry laughed and picked his book back up. Friends, huh? He could work with that.

"Ready to go?" he asked his grandson.

Theo nodded, though he could easily see just how nervous his grandson was. Not that he blamed him, he would be too, if he had been about to meet his father after more than a decade.

He took a firm hold of his grandson's shoulder and apparated them away, knowing that his Lord had added all the Ouroboros to the wards, so he wasn't worried about being able to pop in with Theo.

"This way." he directed as soon as they arrived, going towards the private room that had been given to his son when he was put in a healing sleep.
Theo hesitate for a moment when they reached the door. He had thought about this moment for so long that he couldn't believe that it was finally happening. He never thought that he would feel as nervous as he was feeling. His father had been in Azkaban for so long, what if it had broken him? He had seen that Sirius hadn't made it out of there in one piece, he hid it well, but Azkaban had scarred him deeply. What if his father was worse?

And how would he react to the fact that he was a Ouroboros? He didn't know how he would react if his father was against it. He wouldn't turn on Harry, that he knew, but could he accept a father that was against the choices he had made? He didn't think he could and he knew that that was something that would destroy his grandfather, which was the last thing he wanted to do.

He took a deep breath and followed his grandfather into the room, knowing that there was no point in delaying it, only to freeze as soon as his eyes landed on his father.

He had never expected for his father to look so much like him. True, he had been told by his grandfather that he looked a lot like his father, he had also seen pictures; but actually seeing it was quite a shock.

He looked as much like his father as Draco did his own. It was slightly staggering.

"Tadeus," he heard his grandfather murmuring, looking at his father as if he were the most precious thing in the world. He could only imagine how much his grandfather had suffered over the years, knowing that his father was locked up in a place like Azkaban.

"Father," the voice was rough from disuse but it was lined with a hidden strength that made Theo feel somewhat proud. In that moment he could see that Azkaban hadn't broken his father. It may have weakened him, but it had far from broken him, and that showed his father's strength more than anything.

His grandfather sighed and took a seat beside the bed.

"How long?" his father asked.

"Fourteen years," his grandfather replied.

He heard his father take an unsteady breath.

"Merlin," the raspy whisper held so much pain that Theo almost flinched, "Theo?"

"Theo..." a small smile appeared on his grandfather's lips, "Theo has become a young man to be proud of," his grandfather turned towards him, "Come meet your father, Theo."

Theo tried to move but as soon as his father's gaze landed on him he froze. There was so much longing in his eyes that it took Theo's breath away. What must it have been like for his father knowing that he had a son that was growing up and that he wasn't able to be there? Did his father regret that he hadn't bought his way out of Azkaban like so many other Death Eaters? Part of Theo hoped he did, but a bigger part of him was proud that his father had shown such loyalty to Lord Voldemort. It was the same kind of loyalty he had towards his own Lord.

"Theo?" there was a trace of awe in his father's voice, "You look so much like me."

Theo couldn't quite contain the smile that blossomed on his lips and walked towards the bed.

"I've been told," he stated, conjuring a seat beside his grandfather and missing the wide-eyed look he got from his father, "Though, if I may say so, I believe I am much more handsome."
He was delighted when that earned him a raspy laugh from his father.

"I'll have to agree with you," his father smiled at him and Theo felt all the tension he had been feeling in the last few hours melt away, "I was away for fourteen years, so you'll be in your fourth year at Hogwarts, right? Which house?"

"Entering my fifth, actually," Theo grinned, "And I'm in Slytherin."

"That's my boy," Tadeus smirked proudly.

"He's also part of the Court." Teodred added slyly and Theo almost groaned when he saw his father's eyes widen.

"There's a Court?" came the hushed whisper and Theo glared at his grandfather.

"Yes, there is," he replied. He may not be happy with his grandfather blurting it out like that, but he was proud of the Court and he would never deny it's existence, "There's been a Court since my first year. It was established in my first year."

"When were you recruited? The King must be awfully young for there to still be a Court if it came together in your first year."

Teodred actually snorted making his son stare at him in slight disbelief and earning another glare from his grandson.

"I was recruited in first year, and the King is in my year."

"Well, this proves it," Tadeus muttered after a couple of seconds of silence, "I must be having a Dementor induced hallucination."

"I thought the same thing, minus the dementor bit, when I learned about the Court," Teodred said when he saw his grandson bristle in indignation. The last thing he wanted was for Theo to slip into Ouroboros mode.

"So it's true?" Tadeus asked his father, "There's a King that young?" seeing his father nod he turned towards his son and he startled at the look in his son's eyes.

He had seen that look before, on himself and many of his fellow Death Eaters. He had never thought the he would see it on his son's face, especially directed at him. A look that promised death to those that dared say anything against his Lord. He glanced at his father and caught the miniscule nod that he gave him, confirming that he wasn't seeing things, that he wasn't imaging that look.

"Could you tell me who the King is? And who's part of the Court?" he made sure that there was nothing but honest curiosity in his tone, not wanting to aggravate his son any further.

"Our court is a bit different," Theo replied, a small fond smile spreading on his lips, "We don't only have Slytherin members. From Slytherin there's myself, Draco Malfoy, Blaise Zabini, Adrian Pucey, Graham Montague, and Marcus Jugson. Though Marcos already finished his schooling and is now working in the Ministry for our Lord. In Ravenclaw we have Luna Lovegood and a slave," Tadeus shivered when he saw the truly malicious smile that lit up Theo's face, "In Hufflepuff we have Cedric Diggory, and Wayne Hopkins. In Gryffindor we have Fred Weasley, George Weasley, and Neville Longbottom. In Beuxbatons we have Fleur Delacour, though she finished her seventh year as well. And in Durmstrang we have Viktor Krum who also finished his seventh year. And our King, our King is Harry Potter."
"That's... that's not quite what I was expecting," Tadeus replied after a moment, making Theo laugh.

"That's what so great about it," his smirk was nothing short of devious, "No one was expecting it. No one was expecting him."

"You can say that again." his grandfather murmured and Theo threw him a smirk, "Theo, would you mind going to the infirmary and get a healer? I want to know if your father is stable enough to take him home."

Theo threw a look at his grandfather that clearly told him that he knew that he was just trying to get him out of the room, but even so he nodded and left, leaving the two older Notts alone.

"Things changed while I was away," Tadeus remarked, as soon as the door closed behind his son.

"You have no idea, my son," Teodred told him, "Theodore was there during the raid in Azkaban."

"What?" Tadeus whispered, "What was our Lord thinking? Taking children on a raid? To Azkaban no less?"

Teodred sighed.

"It really wasn't our Lord's choice," he replied, "Things are different, Tadeus. Theodore isn't a Death Eater, he will never be a Death Eater. He follows someone else."

"Someone else?" Tadeus frowned, "I don't understand."

"There's another Dark Lord. He's allied with our Lord. Theo's one of his followers."

"He recruits children?" Tadeus snarled, more worried about that fact than about some new, unknown Dark Lord.

"I wouldn't call it recruiting." Teodred murmured, "They flock to him. They are enchanted with him, completely under his thrall. Don't make the mistake of thinking of Theo as a child, Tadeus. I saw them fighting. Their viciousness would put many Death Eaters to shame and their loyalty and dedication is something to be envious of."

"Who is it? How did he do it?"

"It's-"

Tadeus stared at his father with wide eyes when he saw him thrash on the chair as if he were being put under the Cruciatus, the suddenness of it making it impossible for him to stifle an agonized cry. It lasted only a couple of seconds and it left his father panting and looking wide eyed. For a few moments there was nothing in the room but the sound of heavy breathing. Then almost hysterical laughter broke the silence ad Tadeus could do nothing but stare while his father laughed.

Teodred straighten on his chair and a small smirk spread on his lips.

"Devious little Dark Lord," he muttered, "No wonder our Lord is so enchanted with him..."

"Father?" Tadeus' tentative question made him focus on his son again.

"I'm fine," he assured, smiling, "It was only a secrecy ward."

"Secrecy ward?" Tadeus snorted, "That's the first time I've seen a secrecy ward make someone cry out in agony."
"Well, he's a Dark Lord, what else did you expect?" Teodred chuckled lightly, "I guess that it's a warning, I could see that it was nowhere near as painful as it could be. Apparently we cannot talk about it. Though I talked with Theo about him just yesterday... maybe we can't say anything to those that don't already know who it is?" Teodred wondered, marveling at Lord Thanatos ingenuity, "I suppose you'll have to wait to know more about him."

"I hope you realize, father, that this doesn't reassure me in the least."

"I'm sorry, Tadeus, truly. If I could I would tell you everything I know. If it makes you feel any better though know that Theo is happy. Truly happy. He has a family in them. They are loyal not only to Lord Thanatos but to each other as well. They are family."

"Alright, father, I'll trust your word," Tadeus leaned back against his pillows, feeling far weaker than he would have liked, "But I want to be there at the next meeting. I want to know just who captured my son so."

"I'm sure our Lord will call you, though I must warn you, Tadeus, be careful not to fall under his thrall as well."

"I'm loyal to our Lord!" Tadeus exclaimed indignantly.

"I am not saying you are not. Lucius is as well, and that doesn't change the fact that he is completely enthralled with Lord Thanatos, even if he hides it well. Though I think no one is as captivated as our Lord."

Tadeus stared in disbelief at his father, not quite able to accept what he was telling him but knowing that his father would never make something like that up.

"I'm becoming more and more curious about this Dark Lord Thanatos."

"You'll meet him soon enough, my son."

"I haven't heard a sigh as deep as that since I was studying for my NEWTS," Bill remarked, taking a seat on an armchair beside Harry.

He chuckled when Harry glared at him.

"You would sigh too if you had a fan-girl living in the same house as you," Harry grumbled, "I'm sorry to tell you this, but your sister creeps me out."

Bill outright laughed at Harry's mulish look.

"Honestly it doesn't really surprise me that she has a crush on you," Bill smirked, "Our mum told her stories about you since she was a small child. Ginny's been dreaming about being Mrs. Harry Potter since she was five."

"Oh Merlin," Harry groaned, "Don't tell me that she still thinks that?"

Bill's smirk was answer enough and Harry closed his eyes in exasperation.

"Well, I'm sorry to disappoint her but I don't really swing that way," Harry told Bill, after a couple of seconds lamenting his luck.

"Oh?" Bill threw him a lascivious smirk, "Maybe I'll be the Weasley seducing the innocent, little Slytherin."
Harry laughed and smirked right back.

"Do you think you could keep up with a Slytherin?"

"Oh, will you look at that? Who would have thought that you were such a feisty, little snake," Bill grinned, looking quite pleased.

"I'm a Slytherin, what did you expect?" Harry looked at him innocently and Bill laughed.

"True, I should have known that behind those innocent looks was a devious mind," Bill smiled.

"I'm unsure if I should take that as a compliment or not," Harry grinned, he could see why the twins enjoyed their time with their older brother.

"I don't think anyone would be able to do anything else but compliment you," Bill replied smoothly, making Harry raise an eyebrow at him.

"Have you met your younger brother?"

"Well... Ron's never been the brightest lumos," Bill deadpanned and Harry laughed, "So, what is that book about? I can't make out the title," Bill asked and Harry could see nothing but genuine curiosity in his expression.

"It's an old book about runes and how blood can make some combinations more effective. It was banned because the Ministry considered it Dark Magic," Harry replied honestly, curious to see how Bill would react.

Bill glanced at the innocent looking book.

"Just owning such a book gets you time in Azkaban," Bill murmured, his eyes flickering from the book to Harry.

"True," Harry nodded, "Don't you think that that is one of the most stupid things ever? Banning knowledge simple because they are afraid," Harry shook his head, "It disgusts me that people like that are our leaders. They are killing magic, and you know what's worse? We are letting them."

"They are trying to protect the people," Bill argued, but there was no fire behind the words. It was as if he was simple saying what was expected of him and Harry felt a surge of satisfaction race through him. Apparently the twins were right. Bill was different from the other Weasleys.

"Do you truly think so?" Harry asked him, a small knowing smile on his lips, "They care nothing for the people. They just don't want us to have more power. Think about it, how would they control us if we knew more? If we had access to magic that could bring down Azkaban for instance? It's all a matter of control. Those who have it, and those who don't."

"And we don't?" Bill asked.

"And we don't," Harry agreed.

"But you want it," Bill stated, looking him over.

"Who doesn't want to be in control? At the very least to have control about what we can learn, is that to much to ask for?" Harry got up from his seat and let the book drop on Bill's lap, "Have a look, then tell me that I'm wrong. After you've read it tell me what's so evil about that book that it deserves to be banished and just owning it should give the owner time in Azkaban. Read it and then tell me,"
then Harry left, leaving Bill looking at the book on his lap.

Harry couldn’t quite contain the smirk that appeared on his lips once he was out of the library. Things with Bill were going really well. He couldn't have planned it better if he had tried, the book he had been reading was just the right one to get Bill to see things their way. There wasn’t anything harmful in it, being mostly related to healing, wards, and protection. But Bill had been right, just owning that book was a one way ticket to Azkaban, hopefully it will be enough to show Bill that things weren’t as the Ministry painted them.

As soon as he reached his room he put some wards and silencing spells up, knowing that with Order members in the house it was better to be safe than sorry.

Once he was satisfied with the protections in his room he called for his Ouroboros and sat on his bed. One by one they popped in, their uniforms on and their blank masks reflecting the light of the candles in his room.

"Welcome Ouroboros," he smiled at them, "You may remove your masks," they touched their masks and they dissolved as if they had never been there and Harry smiled when he saw all of his Ouroboros, Remus and Sirius included.

Not a moment later all the Ouroboros were sprawled around his room, knowing that once the masks came off they were allowed to behave as they always did with Harry. Remus and Sirius may not have known but they were taking their cue from the others.

"I'm glad to see that you are all well," Harry smiled and snuggled closer to Theo who was lying next to him on the bed, "I saw that you were hit by a few spells."

"It was nothing," Draco assured him, "Our uniforms took most of it. I was only slightly bruised."

"Yes and I only had a hairline fracture, a bit of skellgrow took care of it," Fleur told him.

"I'm glad. How are things going with your father, Theo? Have you seen him yet?" Harry asked him, slightly worried about his friend. He knew that Theo had been rather nervous about meeting his father. He truly hoped that Azkaban hadn't damaged the man too much.

"Yeah," Theo smiled, "I saw him this morning and he's already home. He's a bit battered but he's going to be alright. He knows I'm part of the Court. My grandfather also talked with him alone, so he may know that I'll never be a Death Eater."

"How do you think he took that?" Draco asked him, "My dad went to talk to me after the raid. He said he was proud of me, but he looked... I don't know, kinda sad, I think."

"You're growing up," Remus replied, looking at them fondly, "Your parents are proud of you, but sad to realize that they have to let you go. It's something all parents go through when their children reach their teenage years."

"It is true," Viktor nodded, "I remember my father, usually rather stoic, with tears in his eyes when I started my last year at Durmstrang."

"And mine was always smiling when he saw me when I graduated Hogwarts. He was strutting around like a proud peacock," Marcus shook his head, though there was a fond smile on his lips.

"Exactly," Sirius nodded, "Just as Remus and I looked at Harry full of pride when he told us he had become a Dark Lord at the age of fourteen," Sirius informed them making Harry snort.
"I would call it looking at me completely flabbergast, but sure, let's call it look of pride," he smirked at them.

"You can't really blame us, cub," Remus told him, "It's not everyday you realize your ward is a Dark Lord. Don't tell me you lot weren't surprised."

"We knew what he would become," Fred grinned.

"We hoped, we didn't know," Cedric corrected.

"Yes," Luna agreed, "We hoped."

"Why did you hope for that?" Sirius asked them, "I always found the way you treated him... well, I always thought you treated him like a Lord, like your Lord, but how did it come to that? Why did you hope that he would become a Dark Lord?"

"Well, I can't speak for the others, but for me it was the magic," Blaise murmured, "I always felt connected to his magic, I always felt better when he was with me. I could feel the magic humming in my blood when his magic touched me. I wanted to always have that."

"It was the same for me, though his beliefs were a big part of it too," Adrian mused, "He was the first person that I've meet that wasn't Black or White, Dark or Light, Good or Evil. He cared for none of those things. He only cared about magic and that was different. It was something that we could all believe, Magic is our life! Of course we want to protect it, to make sure that Magic is free. It's a worthy cause."

Several of the others murmured their agreement and Harry smiled, more pleased with them than he could probably express.

Remus and Sirius could do nothing more but stare at these teenagers that were ready to take on the world for what they believed in. When they were their age they hadn't worried about much but their next prank. It certainly put things in perspective for them. It also made them incredibly proud of Harry. They didn't know how James and Lily would have reacted to knowing that their son was a Dark Lord, but they were sure they would have been damn proud of what he was trying to achieve. Just as proud as they were to be a part of it.

"What?" Harry grumbled glaring at the smirking face in the mirror.

"Someone sounds grumpy," Tom teased, his smirk widening when he saw the glare aimed at him increase.

"Someone's going to get crucioed if he doesn't get on with it and lets me go back to sleep," Harry snarled.

Tom chuckled and Harry looked away, knowing that he wouldn't be able to stay angry at the man when he was looking at him with such fondness.

"I was calling to ask if you could come over now. We have a few things to discuss before we call a meeting," Tom told him.

Harry cast a tempus and sighed when he noticed that it was half past three am.

"Don't Dark Lords sleep?" he asked almost inaudible, making Tom chuckle.
"We learn to get by on the few hours of sleep that we do get. So, will ten minutes be enough for you to get ready?"

"Give me fifteen. I'll take a quick shower just to make sure that I'm truly awake. See you soon," Harry turned off the mirror and went to his bathroom, muttering about workaholic Dark Lords all the while.

Once he was dressed he made sure that the wards around his room were up and used the portkey that Tom had given him.

He landed in Tom's office and saw him sitting behind his desk looking over some papers.

"What are those?" he asked, taking a seat in front of the desk.

"Reports about the state of the Death Eaters that were in Azkaban," Tom murmured distractedly, "They seem to be doing better than what was expected, it seemed as if the dementors didn't feed as much from them as we had thought."

"They didn't?" Harry frowned, "Do you know why?"

"That's something I intend to ask them once we meet with them to discuss our alliance."

"Do I have to be there?"

Tom glanced up when he heard the reluctance in Harry's tone.

"I didn't know you had anything against dementors," he remarked.

"I don't, not really," Harry told him, "They just make me uncomfortable. They make me feel weak, I hate it."

Tom hummed, leaning back on his chair.

"I know what you mean," he said, "I feel them same. I don't think anyone can truly become immune to them. But I truly want you there. You're my partner, I want you to be involved in these proceedings."

"If you promise to give me a mountain of chocolate after we're done I'll go," Harry grumbled, though there was a small smile on his lips.

Tom smirked and Harry almost felt the urge to flee. Something told him that he wouldn't like what was running through that devious mind.

"I can agree with that," Tom's smirk was all sorts of dangerous, "I'll even help you with it's consumption. I can think of many different ways to make the process so much more enjoyable and make you forget all about those pesky dementors."

Harry narrowed his eyes at the smirking Dark Lord.

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean."

"Oh?" Tom raised an eyebrow and that cocky smirk made Harry want to slap him, "Maybe I should be more explicit. Maybe I should tell you how I'll melt all that delicious chocolate over your scrumptious body and lick it all off—"

"There's no need!" Harry quickly interjected, knowing that he was turning red, "When will this
meeting take place?" he asked, desperately wanting to change the subject and wanting those hungry
eyes to turn away from him.

"In a week or so," Tom replied, though the smirk never left his lips, "At the moment every inch of
Azkaban Island is being turn over by aurors and they'll probably have a few of them there even after
they've turned over very stone. We'll let things calm down before we meet with the dementors."

"Alright, that's fine with me. The Order is trying to find information on my Ouroboros, so letting
them think that we aren't doing anything at the moment would be best."

"What are your Ouroboros doing?" Tom asked, leaning forward.

"Recruiting," Harry smirked, "I have five Ouroboros out of Hogwarts, two of them in the Order.
They are working on bringing other people over."

"You're trying to convert Order members?" Tom looked skeptical and Harry smirked at him.

"Why, Tom, do you doubt my abilities?"

Tom actually snorted.

"I'm certain that with enough time you could even convert my Death Eaters," he admitted, "I was
just lamenting the fact that if you do convert Order members that I couldn't curse the annoying
flaming chickens," Harry could swear that was a pout on his lips for a fraction of a second and
couldn't help but laugh.

"If I do convert them they won't be flaming chickens anymore, will they?" he asked logically, though
there was a smile on his lips that betrayed his amusement, "Besides, you still have all those that I
won't be able to turn to our cause. You'll still have plenty of people to curse."

"I suppose I must content myself with those," Tom sighed woefully and Harry couldn't contain his
laughter.

"Is that all you wanted to discuss?" Harry asked as soon as his laughter calmed down.

"I want to call a meeting now," Tom told him, leaning back on his armchair, "I want to introduce
you to my followers that were in Azkaban. Though I'll only be calling the Inner Circle."

"Alright," Harry nodded, taking out his wand. A whispered spell later and he was in uniform, only
his mask missing, "Switching spells." Harry answered when he saw Tom's raised eyebrow.

"Let's go than," Tom smirked, getting up from his seat.

Harry didn't miss the way Tom's eyes roved over his body while they were walking towards the
meeting room and had stop himself from reacting.

Truthfully the kiss that Tom had given him was still on the forefront of his mind. No matter how hard
he tried to forget it, he just couldn't. He could still feel those lips on him, could still taste them. He
would be lying if he said he didn't want to have a taste of them again.

"Harry."

Tom's voice brought him out of his thoughts. He turned around only to find the man sitting on his
throne and looking at him curiously.

He looked so regal, so sinfully perfect that he couldn't stop himself. Honestly he didn't even know if
he wanted to.

Tom froze on his seat when Harry turned towards him and a predatory expression crossed his features.

He didn't move when Harry gripped the armrests of his throne and straddled his lap.

Nor did he move when Harry nuzzled his neck.

"I hope you're proud," he shuddered when Harry's lips moved against the sensitive skin of his neck, "You made it so that I can't think about anything else but your lips, your kiss."

When Harry nipped at his neck his hands flew to those slim hips.

"Harry," he growled, knowing that his control was on the verge of snapping.

He wanted to say that he had been expecting it, but the truth was that when Harry crashed their mouths together that he was completely caught of guard.

He couldn't help but groan when he felt those perfect lips against his own again. He wasted no time in exploring that sweet mouth. Merlin, how he had longed for this.

His grip on Harry's hips tightened and he pulled the body above him against his own. He smirk against Harry's lips when he pulled a moan from his little serpent.

"Shut up," Harry grumbled pulling away slightly, though never really separating his lips from Tom's.

Tom chuckled, happiness shining in his eyes.

"Alright," he nibbled on Harry's lips, enjoying the shiver that it caused Harry, "I can certainly think of other things we could be doing," he thrust his hips against Harry's smirking at the delicious moan that he got from him.

He captured Harry's lips again, delighted when his little one immediately responded. Harry's hands flew to his hair, pulling his mouth away. He didn't let that stop him, he went straight to Harry's neck, enjoying the delicious moans it caused.

"We have a meeting," Harry said breathlessly, his hips rolling against Tom's groin, making Tom bite down on his neck. Harry groaned and Tom quickly soothed the pain it caused by gently licking the spot.

"Forget the meeting," Tom mumbled against the silky skin, he thrust his hips crashing their erections together. Harry threw his head back, gasping as pleasure flooded his body.

"We can't, Tom, not now," Harry told him, though he didn't even try to move from his place on Tom's lap.

Tom froze when Harry's words penetrated his lust fogged mind.

"Not now?" he asked, pulling away from Harry, "Does that mean that you stopped running?"

Harry forced himself to focus; he could hear the seriousness, the urgency, in Tom's voice.

"I'm not sure if it's the right decision," Harry admitted, "But I can't deny that I am attracted to you. But make no mistake, Tom, I won't be some toy for you to use and abuse, do you understand?"
"I would never do that to you," Tom told him and Harry could see the honesty in his eyes.

"Good, otherwise there would be one less Dark Lord walking this earth," Harry said sweetly.

Tom laughed and brought Harry close for a voracious kiss.

"Only you would be able to threaten me and walk away," Tom remarked, when they came up for air.

Harry smirked, slipping down from Tom's lap, rubbing against Tom's erection and earning a small muffled moan from the older Dark Lord.

"I'm special like that. Now let's call our followers."

Tom smirked, and motioned to the throne next to his. Harry took his seat and sent the call to his Ouroboros, knowing that Tom was doing the same. With an almost negligent wave of his hand a blank mask covered his features, "What?" he asked when he saw Tom frowning slightly.

"I don't like not being able to see your expressions," Tom confessed.

"It won't be for long," Harry told him, "I'll vanish it as soon as you introduce me to those that were in Azkaban."

"They'll be here soon," Tom murmured, feeling his followers answering his call.

Moments later pops started to be heard and Death Eaters appeared in the meeting room, while the Ouroboros melted from the shadows, forming a line in front of Harry.

Harry noticed that all the Death Eaters had their masks off and he couldn't help but wonder if they did that because it was an Inner Circle meeting. He could see several people that he hadn't seen before, knowing that those must have been the ones that were in Azkaban. He grimaced when he saw that Snape was present. He understood why Tom called him but it didn't mean that he liked it.

When all their followers were present Tom stood and he followed him.

"My friends," Tom smiled at his Death Eaters, "It gladdens me to see all of you amongst us again," he stopped while the Death Eaters cheered, "Your loyalty, your dedication is something that I will never forget. Your sacrifices over the last decade will be rewarded."

The Death Eaters stood straighter, and Harry could see the pride practically dripping from them. Harry couldn't help but wonder if he would have been one of those proud Death Eaters if he hadn't become a Dark Lord. Would he have been able to submit to Tom so completely? Would he have been able to follow Tom as blindly as his Death Eaters did?

Knowing his personality he doubted that he would have been able to do it. He knew that he was far too independent to be able to be a follower. However he could see why the Death Eaters were so loyal to Tom, how they became so enchanted with him.

"Over this long years the Light thought us defeated. We had to cower away in our homes, hiding our magic, our birthright. Now we will prove the Light wrong. Not only are we not defeated, we gained an invaluable ally," taking that as his cue, Harry took one step forward, "Lord Thanatos and his followers, the Ouroboros!"

Harry stood proudly beside Tom, looking the Death Eaters over. He could clearly see the surprise in some of their expression. Though there were a few that were looking at him with open curiosity. If
he weren't mistaken three of them were the Lestranges and the other one, considering that he looked like an older Theo, could only be Tadeus Nott.

"Hello, Death Eaters. As Voldemort said, I'm Lord Thanatos. However since you are the most loyal of his followers you will learn my true identity," his mask started to dissolve and he smirked when all of the recently arrived Death Eaters gasped, "I am Harry Potter."

"Harry Potter?" he heard one of the Lestrange brothers, Rabastan if he wasn't mistaken, mutter.

"Yes," Tom nodded, "Harry Potter. The Light's greatest hope, is our biggest ally. An ally that will aid us in our fight against the Light. In our struggle to make all magic equal."

"We will stand united against the Light and show them the true strength of the Dark," Harry added.

"When the time comes we will shatter the Light with this revelation. We will show them that even their icon for everything that is Light stands with us, not as a follower but as another Dark Lord. Another wizard who fights for Magic to reign free," Tom continued.

"They will despair knowing that their only hope for salvation was never one of them. That I and countless others were never one of them. My Ouroboros will lay in wait, they will move amongst them, they will be their friends, their family. No one will know their identity. The Light will never see them coming," Harry smirked.

"Their hope will be lost," Tom's glee was hard to hide.

"Magic will be free!" Harry exclaimed passionately.

"Darkness will rise!" Tom proclaimed.

The Death Eaters cheered with the Ouroboros joining them not a moment later and both Dark Lords shared a triumphant smirk.

Chapter End Notes

A.N.: Hello all :) Here's the new chapter. I hope you all enjoy it.

So there were a couple of people who wondered why Dumbledore isn't doing anything against Harry; the answer to that is really simple, he has no idea that he has to do anything at all against Harry. I know that things seem to be easy for Harry. And that's because they are easy for him. He has no opposition. He doesn't have opposition because no one knows they should be opposing him. Once Dumbledore finds out that Harry is Thanatos he will act, he will oppose him. The Order won't be a bunch of weak wizards that don't know how to cast a Lumos. They'll be trained fighters, fighting for what they believe in. At the moment the aurors seem weak because they were caught unaware. They had over a decade of peace, they weren't prepared for what happened. Though once the Ministry gets their heads out of their asses and put the veteran aurors in control of the squads things will change. It won't be an easy takeover, nor will it bloodless.
I truly don't mind when you ask me questions or when you share your opinions of my story, I welcome it actually, but please, don't say that Harry doesn't have this or that. You have to give me time to actually reach that part of the story. I'm sorry if I sound somewhat harsh, that's truly not my intention, but I've already answered this about a half a dozen times. So, please, let the story get there, ok?

On another note, I have a poll up in my profile: I'm writing a few more stories, I just don't have them up yet. The poll is for you to decide which three you want me to upload next. It won't change the update speed for the stories that are already up, since even if the new ones aren't uploaded I am still working on them so it won't take any time away from the ones that are already up. So, I would really appreciate if you would vote. The three with the most votes will be up in around a month.

I am also participating in the Quidditch League Fanfiction Competition over on FFN, it's a lot of fun :) Go show my little one-shots a bit of love :D *shamelessly begging for you to go support us XD, Go WASPS!*

Works inspired by this one
Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!