Be the Death of Me

by hweianime

Summary

Or how Death lost Harry Potter's soul, had a small mental break and took a vacation.

A vacation as the Boy Who Lived. Because irony.

Notes

Hi hi~~

well this is my first Harry Potter fan fiction- I really hope anyone who reads this will like the idea of a Death!Harry

Honestly I've only vaguely got an idea on how to proceed in this but I guess we'll just see the response of this chapter first huh?
Anyway- don't own Harry Potter (obviously) but the idea is mine (it is I swear!)

soooo yeah,

Enjoy~~
Death's Departure

The One Where Death Departs

It all started out with a favor. Just a favor.

Fate had all but begged him to keep this child's soul alive despite the odds. One single soul. To provide something short of a miracle. Well, a miracle to the mortals anyway. Not so much to the personification of Death himself.

However, even if he could bypass this world's laws (which he most definitely could) with ease (and his eyes closed and his hands bound) such an act would incur enough paperwork on his desk for the godly being to be reluctant in participating in any such 'life-saving' activities.

But this was Fate. And getting a favor from Fate was not something one, even as all powerful as he, could ignore. So with great hesitance on his part, (he had seen who he was meant to save and the consequences of such an act of mercy, as well as the oncoming files he would have to sign, was staggering) a lot of wheedling on Fate's part, Death finally acquiesced. He would promise to spare the infant Harrison James Potter from his rather unfortunate encounter with a killing curse at about one year old. And he planned to keep to that promise.

Until one over eager, scythe-happy, reaper ruined it all.

And then somehow it snowballed from there.

"You. Did. What."

The reaper before him shuffled nervously. The cloak completely covering the dark figure, and looked like it had been sewn haphazardly with the shadows of the damned, writhed in agitation to the movement. Guilt and fear rolled off the creature in waves. Death idly mused whether it had been a good idea to implant those wisps of emotions in his servants in the first place considering the very subtle increase in mistakes that's been happening in recent years. Then again, he was sure he would have gone insane eons ago if he was surrounded by just dementors and emotionless reaper dolls for constant company.

"S-sorry." It rasped the word imbued with as much apologetic anxiety as it could muster. Death wondered whether he should've improved his subordinates vocabulary when he gave them their (admittedly lower than dirt) EQ. Of course, as he loathed too much noise that idea was swiftly squashed. Though maybe a few extra words wouldn't hurt...

"Can you bring the child back at least?" He sighed, long thin fingers the color of freshly preserved bones in the snow rubbed his forehead in an attempt to ease the growing frustration. "Please, please tell me you haven't put the soul in the reincarnation cycle already."

The silent response and the refusal for his cloaked minion to look him in the eyes with its own empty holes spoke mountains.

Death defeatedly slumped into his blackened burnt yew throne. After a millennium or a few, any pride and need for dignified appearances were easily outweighed by comfort. (Well, at least in front of his subordinates- honestly mortal souls held surprisingly high standards for him) and made an
undignified groaning sound. Unlike adult souls that go to various places in the afterlife such as Heaven, Hell, Purgatory and Valhalla to name just a few; children under the age of seven had to go straight back into the cycle of reincarnation. Harry James Potter could be a hatchling of a Hungarian Horntail by now for all he knew.

"Fuck me." He swore.

"Master?" The reaper rather timidly asked. "You want me to-" it trailed off with an uncertain scratchy noise as its black skeletal hand gestured at his body. Death didn't really understand where his subordinate was going with this until it began hesitantly stripping off the shadowy materials covering it.

"What? No!"

*Note to self: need to teach reapers basic modern slang to avoid any more future awkward propositions. Don't bother with Dementors. They're a lost cause.*

"Just... Leave. And put back your cloak. Please. I need to think."

The reaper gladly complied with the order, apparently having enough self-preservation skills to not wait for its master to remember it's punishment. Death just watched his little subordinate scamper out, passing through the bleak grey walls thanks to its intangible structure toward more physical objects, with a mix of annoyance, displeasure, and fondness. It wasn't often that his reapers, his subordinates, his children, messed up and it was admittedly both adorable and amusing to see them guilt-ridden and anxious like mortal children caught with their hands in their jars of cookies. It was a pity that it had to be this one thing that they failed so spectacularly at.

"Now..." Death murmured to himself. "What to do, what to do.."

He could not possibly take back the promise now. It had been years since it had been made and Fate would bitch for at least another three hundred, maybe more depending on how important the boy was. Not to mention how humiliating it would be, to think Death- the end of all things, the bringer of souls, the one who will always be the last to walk on the earth, powerful, feared and revered- couldn't even fulfill a simple agreement between entities. He would literally never hear the end of it. It was totally not because he had already signed and written up all the paperwork for the kid's extended lifeline. Certainly not because letting this go meant that three sleepless whole weeks worth of mindless paperwork induced torture would essentially become three completely and utterly wasted weeks of his life that he would never get back. No. Definitely not.

Putting the soul back simply wouldn't do either, as stated before. Replacing the soul could be done, but that involves time and careful deliberation on its compatibility with its new physical form. For a moment Death seriously contemplated ripping apart the whole reincarnation process just to find this one little soul. Of course, he wasn't stupid- he may literally have all the time the world had to offer but that didn't mean he was going to use it up rebuilding something he brashly destroyed on a whim and a favor. He already had enough on his hands cleaning up everyone else's end results- both mortal, deity and entity much to his ire.

Suddenly Death had an idea. His furrowed brow straightened from his pale face and a slow, tentative smile graced his surprisingly delicate features. Maybe he could, no, he couldn't, could he? It was a terrible idea. Terrible. Horrible. There were so many things that could go wrong and it would be awfully irresponsible of him.

Actually why not?
Why was he, Death, the one to always clean up? How come the rules he had were iron clad? Why was he always the responsible one anyway? Chaos did what he liked. Fate, well she screwed with people on a daily basis. Even Time, one of the only entities older than him and was practically covered in laws and rules he had to follow, created something called Time Lords and magic phone boxes to amuse himself. And don't even get him started on Magic. What did he have? A few weapons of mass destruction, a veil that transports souls directly from the living to his world and three artifacts that when put together would give a human a very special title among other things. God, everyone was right. He was kind of boring.

Death wasn't even technically going to break any rules anyway. Just... bend them a little.

Besides what would Order even do if he did? Kill him? That'll be a laugh.

So with a decisive nod, the entity of Death snapped his fingers and set to work. First was to write a quick clear message to everyone important that he would be for all intensive purposes 'gone' for an unplanned period of time. Next was to summon all his subjects spanning from all worlds and planes that held considerable power; from the Dementor Lord to the goddess Hel to Lucifer; and personally inform them the same thing in a bit more detail. They weren't exactly happy at the news but all were surprisingly rather accepting of the declaration (the only complication was that everyone practically demanded he'd still keep in touch with them all and make a visible effort in maintaining his paperwork). Death nobly ignored the small golden skull among other treasures being exchanged behind backs, as well as the way too gleeful look on Osiris's black-green face as most of the gold was passed to him.

He did not want to even touch the slowly growing suspicion his subjects had a betting pool on him for who knows what. Despite being the personification of Death, he sure was quite the pushover, he mused in absentminded bemusement.

After shooing everyone off with another snap of his fingers Death then focused on the initial problem. One very soulless Harrison Potter.

It hadn't been that long since the boy's soul had been taken from the body. Between the timing of worlds and dimensions, less than mere milliseconds had passed since the contact between one Avada Kedavra and crying infant. A good thing because for his plan to work Death required the body to be still warm and blood to still flow, otherwise the already rather unpredictable use of death and soul magic would be much more complicated than it already was.

He needed to swiftly make the necessary preparations, God there wasn't any time! Death, in a very human gesture, bit his lip as he crossed his arms nervously. Sudden bouts of risk-taking and acts of rebellion were not in his nature, not in Death's nature, he wasn't particularly volatile or the type to not think ahead. Death was always imminant, measured, planned. Everything marked down, every soul written, with sharp precision. Death in itself is not emotional, it is restrained and cold and simple. Death is not a means to an end but merely an end in itself. Death does not should not go against the flow of nature, of life, it shouldn't change, it should maintain.

Yet here he was, about to change everything, jumping foolhardily into something he didn't even research beforehand and only now realizing the potential mayhem he might cause- oh Chaos must be clapping his hands and laughing maniacally at his usually unflappable mature older brother right now. And he could practically see Judgement at the same time, frowning disappointedly at him in that condescending holier than thou way of his.

"It'll be okay." He reassured himself admonishingly. He was Death after all. It was more than a little embarrassing to think something like this was causing the personification of the end of life itself to fret like some teenager readying themselves to go on their first date. Suddenly the image of a
stereotypical reaper awkwardly fidgeting with a bright red tie as it sat on some fancy mortal restaurant made the worry slipped ever so slightly off his face as the corner of his lip twitched into a wry smile.

"Well, I've always wanted a vacation anyway." He softly joked to the empty room. And then proceeded to half-heartedly chuckle at his own joke like that wasn't sad at all.

And with that dry piece of humor Death promptly plunged his hands into his chest cavity, into the pure power that was concentrated there like black snakes twisting against each other. Gritting his teeth, slim fingers grazed over the strands of power, searching for the perfect place to claw into, picturing the small black haired little boy with the wide green eyes completely unaware of the blood that had been shed in his home. Words of ancient incantations from civilizations long ago flowed out without thought, as if the magic just knew and pushed the chant off his tongue like honey. It took agonizing seconds but he had felt the resonance tug at him. Acting completely on instinct instead of intellect, the entity failed to completely ready himself for the sensation as he twisted his fingers between flesh and power and magic.

Then Death pulled.

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For thirty anti-climatic seconds, absolutely nothing happened. As Death was contemplating his current situation, hands stuck in that nasty, sticky place between his ribs, saturated with his power to the point of tangibility squirming between his digits in a very discomforting way, the entity found himself regretting his rather illogical train of thought that led him to where he was now. And he just knew that his favorite silk robes were never going to recover from this gory aftermath either.

However before the entity began to extract his limbs out of his torso much to his irritation, disappointment and a bit of relief at the failure; Death felt a resounding lurch at his midsection. The feeling of being burned and constricted consumed him, if he had any breath or existent lungs they would have been promptly winded at the sudden drop in oxygen, the whole experience was completely wrapped in a blinding bright green light.

"Avada Kedavra."

The green light of the all-so-feared unforgivable spell practically blazed in eagerness from the yew wand. Lord Voldemort looked on impassively at the baby, Harry Potter, the Boy Who Was Going To Die In About 3 Seconds. It was a shame really. What a pathetic end to the Noble House of Potter. He almost felt bad at the loss.

Well. Not really.

Crimson eyes snapped to reality as he felt an unfamiliar sharp tug in his magic. The familiar Killing Curse that usually flowed so easily through his wand felt strained and taunt like a string pulled apart at the very strands. Voldemort, as aggressive as he was, instead of trying to break off the spell, pumped even more of his magic through. It should be impossible, the curse was supposed to be, no,
is instantaneous. The child should be dead and cold by now, looking at him with blank, unseeing eyes.

But Harry Potter wasn't dead, he didn't even look like he was affected by it. Instead of dull glassy eyes staring at him helplessly, they glowed. What was once green as the forest was slowly turning brighter, more vibrant, like those wide pupils were absorbing the Killing Curs-

Immediately the rising Dark Lord forcefully slammed his magical flow off, sharply cutting off the spell. The abruptness of ending such a sheer amount of power, intent coupled with his tainted Dark magic and complexity of the curse, however, was not without consequences. Pain worse than any Cruciatus wracked the serpent man's body. In retrospect, if the dark wizard hadn't been so taken off guard, a bit more aware or a little less insane, he might have recognized the feeling of pain. He would have recognized the torment of having a soul broken.

And as the last electric green tendrils were passed into the eerily silent infant, pained crimson eyes could only watch as now Avada Kedavra green eyes flashed with something that Voldemort could not identify. It wasn't Dark. It wasn't Light. It wasn't even Grey. It just... Was. And it filled the man with a fear he hadn't felt since he was just a young child when he realized how easy it was for people to die, like little Billy's unfortunate pet rabbit.

That was Lord Voldemort's last coherent thought before the backlash of his own Curse burst himself into ashes.

Death, or now he guessed he really should refer himself as Harrison Potter. Or Harry. Harry Potter sounded nice. God this was all very exciting. Either way, he watched with intrigued eyes as this albino snake-man that had oh-so-kindly wished to murder the previous owner of this child's body, said child's parents and probably their pet cat if they had one- had promptly disintegrated, turned into some sort wraith and fled the house. It was all rather unexpected, to say the least. Was the man important to Fate's plans? Something just felt distinctly 'wrong' about the now spirit-like mortal. A ritual gone wrong perhaps? He wondered...

But right now he didn't have the energy to really follow up on his curious train of thought. It probably wasn't even that vital anyway. Not to mention he wasn't Death right now. He was Harry James Potter. And Harry James Potter was tired and wanted a nice nap. It was going to be an interesting vacation as a living mortal and he needed a good long rest to prepare for what's to come after all. The whole 'wraith murderer thing' can be put aside for now. And so while Avada Kedavra green eyes fluttered shut, a small adorable quirked smile rested serenely on his deceivingly innocent young face as the immortal in a child's body dreamt dreams of adventure, opportunity, and a paperwork-free future.

Hopefully blissfully ignoring everything that had just occurred wasn't going to bite him back in the arse.
Death's contemplation on murder

Chapter Notes

Hi hi~~

Wow so happy I've got pretty good feedback for this story. Yay!

This ended up waaay longer than I expected.

Also better edited stuff is on my fanfiction account (same name)

Enjoy~~

The one where Death contemplates murder among other minor things

"Oh dear."

A woman, in her mid-fifties, with pale pink hair loosely tied in a bun, covered her mouth with a dainty well-manicured hand. Her gaze locked onto the letter with familiar clear, slanting handwriting. "Well, I'd never thought I'd see the day!" She huffed as she peered over the note at the other group of people watching avidly at her reaction.

"I totally agree Love," A young handsome man with windswept dark orange hair the color of a desert sandstorm clapped his hands and cackled in glee. "Me neither! To think- our silent as a grave, and just as boring, big brother Death- skiving his previous work to try mortality of all things!" The male playfully wiped a nonexistent tear from his eye with a loud sniff. "I'm just so proud."

A slightly older man next to him glared through his copper rimmed glasses, he had black hair peppered with the occasional streaks of white and grey that was immaculately slicked back. "Oh do shut up Chaos." He sneered, "This is a serious matter and it would be prudent if you didn't act so... You." He made 'you' sound like something dirty and very much unwanted on the bottom of an old shoe.

Chaos just gave a sardonic smile, "Is Order being a little pissy this fine meeting? I know I would be if I had such a large stick up my ars-"

"You are both acting like children!" Screamed a very distraught looking teenage girl if the state of her hair was any indication. They were a messy explosion of curls that while before was a canary yellow was now furious crimson. Both men scowled but nonetheless complied.

Another lady, this one with her own wavy waterfall of delicate curls, the coloring of clouds foreboding a coming storm and eyes only a shade darker, coughed subtly to garner everyone's attention. "Yes, well, Magic while you make a very... loud point-" The frizzy-haired female flushed, "-and while it would have been entertaining enough to watch Order and Chaos devolve to petty name calling-" Now it was their turn to flush, one with subdued bashfulness and the other with annoyance respectively, "-we do need to address the heart of the reason we all gathered."

"Well, I think it's perfectly clear why we've all gathered." Spoke a lady with tanned skin and pale green hair that was nurturing a small garden of daisies, "My counterpart has decided for some reason
that now would be a perfectly good time to leave his duties and go on vacation. Though my question is why now?"

The question was met with blank faces save for two who quickly glanced at each other in sudden realization, paling simultaneously as it dawned on them. Unfortunately for them, it was a very visible, non too discreet reaction and all eyes were swiftly upon on them like eagles after weakened prey.

"Magic. Fate. What have you done?" The tallest male, he had short hair that seemed to have captured a small shard of space just to decorate his head and a long dark robe that seemed to be weaved from the night sky to match, questioned in a tone that would not accept any falsities. Magic's hair had gone a stark white whilst Fate's, in comparison, seemed conflicted, a blotchy mix of grey and near black.

"Weeeeeeell..." The younger looking of the two shuffled her feet nervously, hands fiddling at the hem of her canvas painted shirt, ankle length bright orange skirt curling literally around her legs. "There's a chance that we maaaayy have an idea of who Death has taken over."

"It was just meant to be a favor." Fate cut in stubbornly. "We never even thought he would do this."

Order narrowed his eyes, he was the strictest of the group and was quite scary with his ability to discern lies, truths and the extent of a person's worth in general. Currently, the two females under scrutiny did not feel very worthy at all. "What. Did. You. Do?"

"I begged Death to spare one Harry Potter from a Killing Curse. Magic and I were bored and we haven't had a decent story to watch in decades!" Fate burst out, her delicate doll-like demeanor completely shattered as her face went pink in her haste. "Harry was meant to be a, to be a prophecy child and he was going to be so fun to mess with but something must have gone horribly wrong and knowing Death he always feels so guilty when he messes up-"

"Not to mention you've been harping about how important Harry being alive was and how terribly disappointed and betrayed you'll be if the mortal didn't live," Magic muttered unhelpfully. "And we all know how Death gets when he finally accepts to do a favor for someone."

Cloudy grey hair darkened even more, a wet sheen dampening any curls till the woman's hair was completely straight and black. "I'm sorry.." She said in a very small voice.

"It's not your fault. Well, not really." A hand belonging to the last woman, who had visible bags under her ink black eyes that contrasted greatly to papery pale yellow skin and hair the color of coffee, gently patted Fate's shoulder in reassurance. "What I'm curious about though," Chaos snorted loudly, "Of course your curious, yeah, let's all completely brush past the fact Death has literally left the building because God forbid Knowledge is curious!"

"Okay. What crawled up your pathetic arse?!" Order snapped irritably. "Even you're not usually this, this, this... Chaotic."

"Oh bravo Order, as usual, your arguments are always so simplistically eloquent. I can see why you were chosen for your personification now." If the glasses wearing male could burn holes with his glare, the entity of chaos would have been nothing but a small pile of ash. But since he couldn't, Chaos just smiled scornfully. "And if you must know I am merely feeling a bit... displeased at my favorite brother's disappearance."

Now it was Order's turn to smile snidely, truth-detecting eyes glinting in vindication, "That's a lie and you know it. Your not upset that Death has left," the smile turned into a sneer, "your just throwing a
widdle temper tantwum that he didn't tell you personally." The younger male bristled, his rage showing through, windswept locks unraveling messily, moving like it had been caught up in the desert-storm colors it held. "Is Chaos a liddle jealous? Sad that your favorite brother didn't even say goodbye? He'd probably told his deities and minions before you."

"Order..." Magic warned, much more attuned to the growing hostility in the room. It wasn't just Chaos being affected by the man's words after all. Unlike any of the others, death was a thing affected everything. Life did not necessarily relate to chaos or fate or space. Love and knowledge weren't always something people put together. Time may not ever really need order. And magic, while it did touch a bit of all the entity representations, did not completely have a hold onto them much like death did. So it was a logical conclusion that personification of Death would be the same too.

"I bet," Order continued, his usually cool steel eyes alight with misplaced anger, clearly he too was feeling a little hurt at the silent dismissal of the entity now gone, "I bet he didn't even spare them the indignity of passing his departure through a letter. I bet the only reason he saw fit to tell you through paper was because he probably didn't want to stand in any sort of proximity to your incessant childish behav-"

"AAaaaArrRGgggGHhh!" Screamed the furious representative of Chaos as he tackled the suited, glasses wearing man to the ground. "You fracking hypocritical BASTARDIZATION OF A WALNUT PIG!"

It took twelve minutes, a lot of shouting, some bloodshed and a healthy dose of magic to get the two entities to separate to opposite sides of the group.

The pink haired woman coughed awkwardly after the short but rather action packed distraction was over. "Uh, what were you saying before luv?"

"Yes. As I had been saying.." Knowledge inhaled, trying to reign in her annoyance at being so rudely interrupted, "I find myself curious at how Death, of all entities, had managed to even break out of his, well, to put it mildly, obedient personality."

Everyone started, brows all furrowing in contemplation at this. Death as said before, held a firm hold in all their beings. He was the end to all things and so all things would eventually fall to him. It made the entity the closest thing to a true God- all powerful, all consuming, all victorious. But of course, whatever God that had created them would not have, would never, allowed such a being of existence to walk on any sort of grounds. It just wasn't right.

But death in itself was not something that could be restrained. Nor manipulated. Chaos can be calmed. Judgement can be passed. Time can be measured. But Death can not do any of those. Too omnipotent, too excessive, too untouchable.

So instead, God took away as much of Death's control as possible.

It was a tad mortifying when it finally dawned on said entity that he had been made, on purpose, with that ingrained fault. His power simply just burst from him, like a powerful waterfall when he only wished for a trickle of water. The first time he had really lost control with himself he had destroyed planets, worlds, universes. Death had been inconsolable for two centuries, shutting himself even further in his realm. Not even Magic or Knowledge or Life or any of the others working together could help reign in Death's all consuming power. Yet while that power was free from any proper manipulations, it's embodiment was created, built with one major contradiction to such untamable powers.
A sense of responsibility. A strong, but sometimes too many, confusing morality. To be forced to worry, to be burdened with actually feeling the weight of consequences and on some level was cursed with a near compulsion of trying to keep everything in some sort of line only he could see. That coupled with his position and immense strength had resulted in the being holding a constant hesitance and paranoia of itself.

The other entities when they too realized the extent of Death's personality were all equally horrified at the idea. It was like psychological chains locking up what was just so natural to them. But on the other hand they all, on some level, could almost understand why.

Entities were powerful embodiments with personalities, and whilst rarely, fights between them do occur or sudden attempts at rebellion. Love tended to create mortals with so much beauty and an equally frozen heart to cause despair or incite destructive jealousy onto the world when she was in a mood, Helen of Troy was just one of many for example. Chaos and Order fought the most but the worst ever battle between them as far as they could remember, had resulted in Death, who found to his annoyance had gained himself the role of peacemaker in these headaches, having to split a large chunk of his realm in two pieces creating Heaven and Hell, just to give the two something to do in their petty little war. And there was one memorable time Life had gotten into her stubborn head that she should hold the higher power and death was just a cruel unneeded tragedy. In front of everyone, she had tried declaring an official war against Death- only to hastily take it back later after Death decided that they needed a little private talk... That consisted of three hours of logical reasoning, blatant looks of disappointment and guilt-inducing rhetorical questions by said entity.

Death was a constant neutral. He was not one to be aggressive nor was he particularly submissive either, never had he acted out of his place nor was the first to strike in a fight. And at the same time, he was the final straw that they used to reign the others back to their roles, to soothe the jagged edges and to calm the flames of discontent. It seemed so unnatural to be so selfless, to never fight for himself, only others yet it was who Death was. As ironic as it is.

Because of this inbuilt complex of his, Death rarely participated in any sort of power displays like other entities. In fact, there was nothing in the world made purely, absolutely by Death alone. Life who held no such qualms, had given birth to nature and brought forth the first organisms to roam. Time told the sun and the moon to move in a strict pattern he himself had calculated in order to create the days and nights. Fate used her hardened tears to gift the earth with stones capable of letting one see snippets of the unpredictable future. Order implanted the idea of, well, order so governments and systems may grow. Even Chaos after seeing what Order had done, decided to bestow the world with seven sins to watch as they in turn bred into new vices and insanities. Death however could not create anything on the sheer fact his very being was destruction and oblivion, if he wanted to leave a tangible mark, to gift or curse any of the many worlds residing; he had to work with another entity.

It was a common enough practice among the entities, nothing to be particularly ashamed of, a way to entertain themselves and experiment with their unique attributes as well as provide an excuse for intra-entity relations to be strengthened. For example; Love and Life got on very well together, both spreading beauty and joy in the simple things like the colors of the sunset or the smell of morning dew. Knowledge and Magic created a fearsome combination when they weren't bickering over the superiority between science and spells. Chaos and Order were completely on opposite sides of a very wide spectrum so they hardly worked together at all, yet when they did they produced the most marvelously complicated designs and ideas that became awe-inspiring double edged swords to whoever wielded them. But anything Death collaborated on with his fellow entities always ended up a little darker, a little wilder and a lot more dangerous than anyone of them hoped. Creatures that feasted on happiness, showed ones deepest fears, consumed your very soul. This only fueled his unprecedented fears and insecurities whenever he found once again his powers unleashed caused abject horror and terror and pure darkness into the world, even further. It was a rather cruel circle
reminding Death to be responsible, neutral, self-controlled. To never act out of his predetermined role. Never be more than means to an 'end'. Never more than the end.

"Well, maybe he finally decided enough was enough and 'live a little'." The green haired woman, Life, suggested with a warm smile, rather happy at the idea. Knowledge however in contrast, frowned.

"Life. That is all very positive but we are talking about Death. He does not 'live' even a little."

"You think his innate self-restraints are starting to slip?" Space asked contemplative.

The woman with paper skin and inky eyes took off her glasses and wiped them with a newspaper patterned cloth as she shook her head tiredly. "I.. I really don't know."

The group of entities all fell into tense silence. It was only a few moments later that one of them, a man of indistinguishable age with hair of copper wires and faint brass outlines of intricate cogs decorated his skin, spoke up. "This is the first time Death has rebelled and to be quite frank it is a rather mild act at that, I say we just let this slide for now and just watch over him. Who knows, it may be good for him to relax a bit."

There were soft murmurs at that, mainly ones of agreement but Order then responded in a low tone, anger and worry and a touch of fear underlying his voice dangerously, "Yes but what of us? What shall happen to his many Realms and all those who resides in them? This isn't like when we have our mid-existential crisis for God's sakes! This is DEATH." He stressed. Another thing that separated the being from his fellow entities; Death held not one but many domain's under his ruling and with that many subordinates, creatures and lesser 'gods', like the entities they too have never experienced Death's absence for any extended periods of time and the unknown effects of this was disconcerting.

"I'm sure his little demons and angels and other deities can manage one mortal lifetime without their boss." Love pointed out gently.

"Plus Chaos and Order have quite a bit of sway in the Heavens and Hells so they can always pop in to see if everything's okay." Magic weighed in.

"I will try and oversee the other lands when I can." Space volunteered.

The meeting continued from there with helpful suggestions and comments in ways to maintain the balance with the one person usually in charge from the shadows gone. At the display of order coming together Order, whilst still a bit unhappy, was definitely appeased.

"Well, I can't do much there." Fate said shyly, "But I can loosen my hold over the strings I weaved around one Harry Potter's life." The other's nodded approvingly. They hadn't even thought about how to help make Death's new mortal existence easier.

"Oh! Now that he's human I can give him the control over magic he never had." Magic smiled, cheered at the idea her kind but reclusive 'brother' could finally have a chance at wielding her beautiful gift without fearing the worst.

"Then I shall bless Harry James Potter with a durable body that can sustain the pressure of his overwhelming power." Life decided after some thought. "That way it minimizes the chance of his physical structure from self combusting or withering before his predetermined time is up."

Love shook her head, her light pink hair softly moving in a way that reminded one of flower petals flowing lazily against a summer wind, "Really, such impersonal gifts and blessings." She tutted mock disapprovingly, "I will wish for the dear to find love in his new journey. Love that will be hard to
find and even harder to work for but one that once gained will last lifetimes and break all impossibilities." The older lady looked wistful at her own description, half lost in her own romanticism.

Chaos made a disgusted gagging sound, much to every female's immense displeasure. "Great. Now Death is cursed to a smooshy romance novel of a life. For that, I will at least guarantee the guy an exciting life, full of action and twists and challenges even he will find interesting to face."

Judgement looked at his counterpart with equal measures of annoyed irritation and reluctant amusement at the blessing. "Well I guess I am, as usual, to keep our dear brother alive from whatever chaos you will incur. I will grant his human vessel an ordered mind and clear eyes to help aid with the crossroads of choices he will meet at."

"And I.." Knowledge continued, not wanting to be left out in aiding their absent brother, "Will bequeath him the gift of understanding, there are many things our brother had never really try to understand and even more that he just could not. Hopefully, he will learn from his experience and grow from it."

So into their discussion on what to do in Death's absence they completely forgot about their worries and in turn, the consequences implied, about the most powerful being in existence possibly slipping from his sight of his duty. About what it could mean when all the shackles fall and when there will be nothing left to restrain.

Nothing to truly stop a monster when finally unleashed upon them all.

Death, no, Harry did not foresee the trials and tribulations of taking over an infant's body. Everything was blurry and loud and... squidgey. He couldn't move the way he wanted to and the experience of soiling oneself was not something he wanted to ever do again. Ever.

He also didn't foresee his new guardians being such, such-!

Well, let's just say, if they keep up that attitude of theirs, Death will be more than happy to personally escort these poor excuse of flesh lumps to Hell. Well maybe not the obese infant, he'll have to see what Dudley (honestly that was one of the worst names he'd ever heard. And he'd watched in horror as Magic gleefully deemed their pet project- an execution spell that they made together when Magic was only a few centuries old- to be named in a bastardization parody of the mortal 'muggle' Abra Kedabra) grows up to be like. Though Harry did not exactly hold any high hopes with the way that spoiled child was practically smothered with gold, fluffy trinkets and whatever mortals these days smother their children with.

Whatever it was, Harry certainly wasn't getting any.

In all his years where he had watched Judgement do his work, constantly helping with Death's decision to place every soul, he had never truly understood why Judgement gave softer punishments to those from broken families and childhoods and such. Death while not made to be cruel was not made to be particularly emphatic either. It had taken nine hundred and sixty-four grueling centuries worth of emotional management classes, sympathy courses, basic psychology tutoring, intensive sensitivity training (which he had to repeat seventy-two times with Chaos before everyone just gave up, saying they were lost causes. Chaos being Chaos promptly fist pumped the air and declared victory for 'being fucking insensitive'. Death had suddenly felt very inadequate and secretly tried reading angsty teenage romance novels before burning them in disgust) and other rather tedious
studies on feelings taught by most of his fellow entities and also the occasional class by some deities (he remembered with great indignation having to sit in one class taught by Lucifer and Michael on family issues of all things!) to get his EQ and social skills to be where they were currently. Which, admittedly was still probably only slightly higher than a seven year old child. A very quiet, very anti-social seven year old child.

Of course now, as his infant form shivered in the darkness with only a thin sheet to feebly protect him from the dust and spiders of the tiny cupboard he lived in, now he was beginning to understand why some people in this world just want to watch it all burn.

So far in his new mortal life the only people he knew was; his parents noseless murderer who tried to kill him- and failed spectacularly, a very distraught black haired man who had grabbed him very abruptly from his nap and just as quickly discarded him for the sake of revenge, a half-giant with a very loud voice who also picked and passed him to the next person like a awful pass-the-parcel game to an old man with a long name and an even longer beard that, get this, dropped him on the doorstep of the Not-so-Noble House of walruses and horses... and left him there. In November. Who leaves a baby on the doorstep in November? Who leaves a baby on the doorstep, period?!

In conclusion, Harry and in turn Death, was decidedly very unhappy with this turn of events and was possibly starting to sympathize with the mindset of psychopaths and murderers that snap and gruesomely 'off' their family for 'seemingly' no reason at all. Both things did not exactly bode well for the future.

Harry sighed, any bitter thoughts about the mortals around him (that all made terrible role models for a rabid werewolf much less an innocent child) and how apparently Fate’s a bitch who had planned to make Harry Potter her’s, was pushed away as his infantile mind focused on more pressing matters. Like the need to go to the bathroom again.

Oh, he so was not enjoying his vacation so far.

"BOY!"

"Coming Uncle Vernon!" Harry shouted back as he moved toward the kitchen, stumbling slightly in his haste. He wondered what was wrong this time. "Is something wrong with lunch uncle?" The boy asked sweetly, pretending he wasn't clenching his jaw so hard he could hear his teeth crack.

"Of course not you idiot child, Petunia did an impeccable job- not that you would appreciate it." The blacked haired boy just stared blankly at the table filled with food as tittering laughter of the guests and his aunt responded at the jab. The giant man smiled an ugly smile as he bit into a large juicy steak that Harry had painstakingly cooked.

Then the small five year old gave a small quirked smile (which would have been seen as absolutely adorable to anyone who didn’t loathe his very existence) as his eerily bright green eyes lit up with quiet mirth. "Yes, I'm sure next time all of us should be much more grateful to the people who provide us with the food on our plates. After all, we wouldn't want to be ungrateful pathetic worms would we uncle?"

The guests sitting at the table with them shuffled uncomfortably as Vernon was turning a furious shade of puce. Harry watched absolutely fascinated at the change in coloring. He found a strange sort of intrigued interest in it. Dead people never did that.
"WHY YOU INSOLENT LITTLE FRE-"

"VERNON!" Petunia screeched in alarm as her husband was about to raise his ham sized hand at their creepy freak of a nephew, "We have guests." She stressed, the word 'guest' was said in a way that made it seem like the queen's special secret service was visiting- instead of some boring accountants in financial.

The fat man looked more than a little disgruntled at being stopped but he obeyed the unspoken command. Beady eyes narrowed at Harry and the boy had the sudden inclination to just... squash the man, like the fat cockroach he reminded him of. After living out this mortal lifespan he was really going to have to go do some serious therapy.

"Get out of my sight boy." The older male hissed in what was probably supposed to be an intimidating manner. Harry decided to comply nonetheless. And if he had an extra skip to his step at one upping his relatives, no one commented.

Against all odds though, Harry did actually enjoy life at Privett Drive. Well enjoy was a strong word. More content really. Sure he was constantly hungry, the verbal insults were annoying and the occasional beatings were not great but Harry couldn't help but smile at the whole experience. It was refreshing in a strange way, like trying a week old lemon for the first time after a whole lifetime of eating a prestigious array of high-class sweets. It definitely beat being a helpless baby at the very least.

He liked being able to do things. As a baby, he was unable to and as Death, he never really needed to; a few orders, a stack of paperwork or six, a few snaps of a finger and a wave of his hand for the rare need to actually use his powers, and he was done for the day. Honestly looking back, Harry could not comprehend how he could not have had his mind literally rotting from mind-numbing boredom eons ago. But right now he was having fun learning new skills and trying new things.

Gardening was great. Him being who he was, it doesn't come as much of a surprise that most things directly under his touch decay and die within twenty four minutes at most, forget hours. So he had relished the feeling of growing and cultivating the greenery around him (though it did take him a few tries not to accidentally let slip his new-found control and rot whatever vegetation he had been currently touching), watching with pride as seeds he planted bloomed under his touch. And then there was cooking. Cooking, Harry had found, was absolutely fantastic. Seeing raw ingredients by his own hands transform into a deliciously mouthwatering meal was nothing short of magic. The only thing he could think of to make the whole experience of cookery even better- was someone to let him try one of his own damn meals.

Another thing he found simply amazing was the inventions. He had heard a few things from his reapers and the occasional demon or devil (Hell was very enthusiastic in upgrading their realm) on the advancement mortals had made in technology but seeing it all was a completely different thing altogether. The first time he saw a washing machine he had watched the whole process, completely entranced, for a full hour, he would've lasted longer if Petunia didn't drag him off to do other things. Television was astounding, Harry would always try and sneak a look at the shows whilst doing his chores- he felt great amusement at how dramatic the plot was, especially when death was involved (he liked how popular he seemed to feature in the operas on soaps). And don't even get him started on the portable radio that walked men. Really. Mortals were ingenious!

In fact, the only thing that really drove him up the wall was whenever his work was criticized- which was unfortunately picked up on by his relatives who joyfully did just that. Harry didn't mind if he was called a freak (well he did mind but it wasn't particularly hurtful), he didn't mind the unreasonable workload or even the beatings (though it really didn't stop him from feeling the new
experience of pain— which was certainly not fun to any extent). Those things were things he could
ignore easily in his opinion. What he did mind was the lack of food, the purposeful loud stomping at
night to keep him awake and the rather counterproductive attempts at sabotaging his chores— though
that was more because of inconvenience and frustration than anything. But what he absolutely
loathed was being told his hard work was faulty or needed to be redone, especially when it wasn’t.
There was just something about it that made the usual indifference in him just burn with righteous
indignation.

Life was meant to be imperfect, she had flaws and holes and contradictions. So it just made sense
that if Life was imperfect, Death would be the closest thing to perfection there could be. In death you
are just a soul, nothing more nothing less. There are no more impurities, there are no rose-tinted
glasses to skew your view, there are no more bleeding scars but faded lines. All things come to an
end. The end is death and death is the end, a perfect circle that no matter how hard one tries can
never circumvent. And of course this need of perfection in Death would be transferred to the being
of it's personification. As Harry Potter however, he had been repeatedly been told that he was
anything but- an unwanted freakish child who was abandoned at their doorstep. While that was a
pretty cruel thing to tell a very malleable child (which thank god he wasn't or he'd been all kinds of
messed up) it truly failed to affect him because honestly, he'd heard worst slurs against him. Plus it
was all technically true what they said- he was unwanted by the Dursely's at least, since having
magic essentially in some form made him an outcast and different then freak while hurtful wasn't
exactly wrong considering what it meant, he was a child and he had indeed been abandoned on their
doorstep (but that was more because of irresponsible adults than anything).

As he was about to take a well deserved rest in his cupboard (he knew that after that confrontation,
Vernon was going to be very heavy in his punishment and it would be prudent to let his small body
get ready for the oncoming discomfort), a soft but still audible crash was heard upstairs. Harry froze.
He looked at the floor upstairs and then longingly at his cupboard that just recently he'd got enough
magical strength to charm for satisfactory comfortability, clearly torn between his curiosity and his
laziness.

"Oh what the hell." The boy muttered to himself before quietly making his way up the stairs.

As he got closer Harry heard worried murmurings, pacing steps and a continuous chant of 'Oh god,
dad's going to kill me, what am I going to do? Oh god, dad's going to kill me.' Needless to say, it
didn't take a godly entity to put the pieces together. Deciding to might as well go all in, Harry slowly
opened the door to Dudley's room and entered.

"Dudley? Something wrong?"

The fat child jumped at what was, for at least him, the sudden startlingly arrival of his little scrawny
cousin. There was a look of fear and guilt in the tubby boy's eyes, his large room filled with toys and
luxuries was covered in sticky, sugary liquid. "I-I, Freak you shouldn't be in my room!" Dudley
snapped.

The smaller of the two looked hard at the obviously soda covered bedroom and then at the owner of
said room, the boy's mask of anger might as well have been made out of cling wrap it was so see
through. 'A common defense mechanism.' Harry mused absentmindedly, recalling a few of his
impromptu psychology classes that he had been practically chained down to participate in. 'Loki was
a surprisingly good teacher. Too bad I've forgotten most of the stuff he said.'

"My name's Harry thank you. And I only came to see if you need help." Harry replied clearly and
slowly like speaking to a frightened animal. He'd never did great with children. They were so
illogical and messy and loud. It wasn't like he didn't like kids, they were amusing at times and held
some of the most delicate pure souls that were quite a sight to see, but it was in that way where you like dogs but don't necessarily want to keep one yourself.

Dudley's pudgy face screwed up in confusion. If it was just a bit redder and sweater the resemblance to his father when trying to do a crossword puzzle (and failing) was disturbing. "Noooo," he said, like prolonging the 'O' sound made his disagreement more convincing. "You're name's Freak. Or Boy. It's what ma and da call you."

Bright vibrant green eyes were struggling not to be rolled. How... Sad. Pathetic seemed like too harsh a word. Really, had the true Harry Potter lived this would be just another large ugly crack in the mirror of his childhood, just waiting to completely shatter. Children were just so stupidly, unknowingly naive most of the times yet simultaneously was so perceptively sharp that whatever comes out of their loud, little mouths had the potential to either be the floweriest of fluff or the most cutting of knives. Even he was taken aback at some of the things a child was capable of saying with their almost annoyingly pure innocence.

"Nope. My name's Harry." He corrected shortly, then before the other boy could protest and they would be forced into petty bickering, he quickly continued, "And I don't think Uncle is going to very happy bout this."

That definitely got Dudley's attention as his chubby face paled drastically. It was funny, if the boy was just a year or so older, he'd probably realize how much of a scapegoat Harry was and blame everything on him instead of feeling guilty for his misdeeds; not that Harry was complaining of course. The slightly older child wasn't as set in his views molded by his parents right now. Harry knew he could use this to his advantage with a few choice words, an act of 'selflessness' and maybe the boy wouldn't be so predestined to the same place his parents would go when he died.

With the kindest smile he could plaster on his usually apathetic features (Harry was sure that it came as more of a smug half-smirk but Dudley wasn't exactly a shining example of intelligence anyway) Harry shut the bedroom door behind him and walked over to the scared boy, his small slightly calloused hand gently touching the other's shoulder.

"In fact," Harry said serenely, his voice lowering like he was giving away a big secret, vivid green eyes practically glowed as they widened in fake worry, "I bet he would be furious Dudley."

His free hand strategically rubbed against his arm that held a large hand shaped bruise, completely aware of the brunet's gaze following the motion in growing horror. Ah the pitfalls of self-preservation. It could blind the best of people. "He w-wouldn't." Dudley stammered, then he shook his head and glared at his cousin, confidence returning a bit. "Da loves me. He just wouldn't!"

Harry inwardly tsked. Stubborn boy. Outwardly he raised his hands in a placating manner, eye contact still unbroken as he continued to smile calmly. "I know he loves you Dudley." The raven haired boy soothed, the larger of the two nodded self-righteously, "Yeah! That's right- Da loves me! Much more than you!"

Harry to his credit didn't even twitch, "Obviously." He agreed. "And that's why you're in big trouble."

Dudley stared at Harry, completely unable to comprehend how the two statements were related. Harry ignored him and continued on with his persuasions, speaking confidently, calmly and a touch condescendingly. "See, Uncle probably only loves me maybe thiiiis much." The smaller boy made a pinching gesture with his hands to emphasize his point, his overweight cousin nodded along dumbly. "And he always punishes me terribly when I do small things wrong right?" Dudley nodded again. "Now uncle, your da, loves you thiiiiis much," thin arms spread as wide as they can, at this point the
larger child had to interrupt.

"Exactly! So da wouldn't punish me like you when I do small bad things!"

Harry just gave a crooked smile, "Ah, but what about big bad things?"

Understanding dawned on the overweight young boy in a way only child-like, normally incomprehensible, logic could give and Harry watched with thinly veiled satisfaction as Dudley looked ready to be sick with fear. It was all false of course. Vernon and Petunia doted on his cousin with such enthusiasm the kid could probably have literal skeletons in the closest and they'll just scold him a bit and maybe send him to bed without dessert. But Dudley didn't have to know that.

"Wha-wha-what d-do I do Harry?!
" Dudley nearly sobbed, his fat jiggling as he shivered at the sheer idea of being treated remotely like his scrawny cousin in front of him. Harry shuffled awkwardly for a bit, slightly regretting his choice of action- even if it was kind of fun in a vindictive twisted sort of way. Being human was just so interesting what with these confusing emotions and all! He did feel a little bad about the boy though, but Harry figured that, as mortals say, taking a peg or two from him wouldn't hurt. And Dudley held enough pegs to open up a store. "Oh god, Harry! Please help me!"

Harry sighed, eyes closing as if the sight of his near bawling cousin was painful. Which wasn't exactly far from the truth. Kids were so loud. "I don't know Dudley... I mean I think I could do something.. But if uncle and auntie finds out.."

"I won't tell I promise!" Dudley burst out desperately. One vibrant green eye opened to look at the obese brunet. "Pinky promise?" He asked. He knew from eavesdropping behind walls that his cousin believed people should keep pinky promises like a dragon kept gold.

"Pinky promise!"

What a stupid child.

With a hesitant small smile, Harry ducked his head shyly and let his feet shuffle to perfectly portray uncertainty. Loki and Lucifer would be pleased at the deception. His more Heaven-based beings under his command, probably not so much. "Well then.. I mean, I guess for you Dudley I'll do my best."

Then with that tedious (even if it was slightly entertaining) manipulation of social psyche done with, Harry waved his arms in what he hoped was an appropriately fantastical manner (though he was pretty sure he was just making a complete arse out of himself but children do that all the time so hopefully he was fitting right in) and chanted the first magical sounding rhyme he could think of.

"Magic O' Magic, please don't be mean, Help me make my dear cousin's room clean!"

Harry, blushing furiously at the show he was making (maybe trying to go out of his comfort level was not as great as he had imagined, Magic was probably crying with laughter right now if she was watching) then spread his hands out to the room and sparks of beautiful fiery orange sparks scattered like petals on a windy day. Dudley watched in awe as the sticky remnants of soft drink vanished everywhere the sparkles landed and soon his room was spotless.

Truthfully Harry could've just as easily snapped his fingers or even just ordered the place to be cleaned but then it wouldn't exactly look as impressive to a child's point of view, would it? Actually would it? He didn't really know considering his lack of a childhood (and his current one really wasn't a great point of reference), was he being presumptuous?
Apparently, he was not because immediately after his little firework show faded to nothingness large beefy arms almost suffocated him in what Harry assumed was the act of hugging. He hadn't really had much experience in physical acts of comfort in his short mortality so far but if all of these hugs were like that he honestly didn't see himself liking them in any near future. Why on earth were they so popular?

"Oh thank you, thank you, thank you!" Was chanted into his bony shoulders. Harry lifted his eyes to the ceiling in disgust, his clothes weren't exactly thick and padded so he could feel the bodily fluids of the other weeping boy starting to seep into the fabric. Fantastic. He hesitantly tried to replicate the gesture in a rather clumsy attempt at a hug, it didn't help that he was trying to minimize as much body contact with the larger child as well.

After a few moments of this, the raven haired wizard nearly shuddered in relief (or more disgust as the sensation of wet tears and snot became more apparent on his being) when Dudley finally lifted his head to look at him. "But... How?" The child breathed.

Avada Kedavra green eyes looked at the innocent wonderment in those usually cruel childish ones of his cousin, in calculation before giving his signature quirked half smile.

"Magic."

"Okay, so what if you just charm it? Like when you managed to waterproof my jacket?" Dudley suggested. Harry shook his head in frustrated reluctance.

"It's not that simple." He explained. "I don't think you can magic-proof magic, it doesn't make much sense other wise. It'll be like trying to fireproof something with a flamethrower."

The brunette boy grunted in annoyance but looked considering and his favorite cousin couldn't help but chuckle a bit at the irony of it all. If Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia could see them now, their dear Duddikins helping his freak of a cousin with his magic, they'd have a right fit! His chuckle turned to an embarrassingly unseemly giggle at the image of Vernon going purple and Petunia mimicking a sheet of paper in terms of paleness.

Harry had never thought this one showy little act of goodwill would result in the boy being so enthusiastically intrigued into the inner workings of all things magic. Dudley had always seemed to be the type of lazy human being that would rather forgo any sense of dignity than lift a finger for himself to the raven-haired boy. But Harry soon, with startlingly clarity, realized that it was clearly not the case. He had watched before his eyes as what once would have been a malicious spoilt child, flourish into a curious, creative boy in just under a year. It was both heartwarming and incredibly useful to Harry watching the whole transformation.

Useful, because whilst he did have the raw power and pure magic to live very well in this world, Harry had never ever put that much practice in using his untapped potential. In short, he was incredibly rusty at drawing up his powers- he had admittedly very poor control in restraining his dangerous strengths and there had been no events of an apocalyptic scale that allowed him to properly exercise even half his power. And even then it was mainly his innate powers, the ones that come only to Death himself that he used when he could, magic (much to Magic's consternation and irritation) was barely even considered to him and therefore was more or less ignored until the times he collaborated with Magic herself.

Harry was rather regretting his lack of enthusiasm for it now.
Thankfully children were naturally curious little things, and having one constantly asking questions and testing ideas and generally trying to push the limits of their new obsessions. Whilst in most cases it would have had been simply maddening to the age old immortal in a small boy's body, he could only feel rather grateful to Dudley for it. His excitement for the art was contagious and Harry couldn't help but get caught up in the giddy feelings of accomplishment whenever they got time to successfully try new things they thought up. From simple levitation, to making cushions softer, to turning one of Dudley's old toy rabbit into a real one. The look of fascination and pure and utter happiness that emanated from him every time got the raven haired wizard near bursting with pride, it was hardly the biggest of miracles nor the fanciest of spellwork but no one had ever looked at any of his accomplishments with even half as much joy as right now.

The two's relationship had grown in leaps and bounds since then. Of course, Dudley still treated him rudely in the presence of the Dursley matriarch and patriarch, but behind closed doors, it was like the whole world outside didn't exist. Just them and their not so little secrets. It definitely helped Harry go through school as well, sure thanks to all the frankly untrue rumors of his (nonexistent) delinquency the small boy with unnervingly vivid green eyes was pretty much treated as an outcast- but thanks to Dudley and his friends, he hadn't been outright bullied by them like he could have been. Though personally, Harry would've rather liked to experience that, for maybe around two weeks, just to see what it felt like.

"Is there like some sort of anti-magic? Like anti-gravity or like a black hole that sucks stuff. We learnt 'bout that in class when you were... Uh... 'sick'." The larger boy looked slightly ashamed at when he said that. They both knew Harry wasn't really sick that day. He had been locked in his cupboard as punishment for accidentally shriveling Aunt Petunia's prized roses with his freakishness. However, Harry didn't seem to be bothered by the other's guilt, in fact, on that day he had been rather put out by his mistake and thought that some time out would do him good to improve his control. He would've liked some water though.

Shrugging nonchalantly, the raven haired child just stared hard at the old Walkman on Dudley's bed before replying slowly, "I don't really know Dud. I mean... I wouldn't even know how to picture something like that." A lie. Well sort of. Harry didn't actually know how to cast this particular charm but he had heard enough rants about 'the stubborn stupidity of England's magical finest and their unwillingness to cooperate with the 20th century,' by Knowledge herself to pick up a general idea on what to do. But he didn't wish to exclude his cousin (who had quickly grown on him like a weed, though to be fair he didn't exactly have much of a social garden to grow anything in the first place) and asking him for help both made it seem like they were equals and that Dudley felt he was useful. Harry inwardly smiled at his thoughts. To think. Him capably and successfully, emotionally manipulating a child. If only everyone could see him now. They would be so proud. No really. They would. All of them. Even Judgement and Time. They were kind of bastards that way.

The older of the two just grinned smugly while the other looked on in patient interest. Dudley was actually very good at picturing things in his head and putting those images into comprehensive clear words. A feat that unfortunately most mortals under the age of ten (some even older) could not do. Really, if his parents weren't such enormous bigots on all things magical the brunet boy would've gone far in creative writing, particularly in the fantasy genre. "Okayy- well a black hole is like this big giant black vacuum ball in space right? And it sucks up everything! Even light which is why it's so black! So here's what I think you should do-"

Harry shuffled nervously. Dudley was puffing his chest out, immensely pleased.
Piers Polkiss had his mouth wide enough to, as people say, 'catch the fly' or was it flies? Either way, Harry had thought it was a simply disgusting image and had no idea why such a thing was common enough to be considered relevant in these modern times. And they called him freakish. Honestly, mortals.

"That.." The skinny rake-like boy finally announced after a prolonged silence. "..is so cool."

Harry didn't know his cousin could possibly puff up further but apparently, he was wrong. While both bemused and admittedly a little touched at how Dudley was proud of him to be considered 'brag-worthy' to his best mate, he was still feeling a bit of nausea at showing a non-magical mortal, well, magic. But the older boy had begged and pleaded and Harry never really could say no to people he liked (which looking back now, was really the main reason of many wars, murders and whatever you would classify the mess responsible for his current mortality), especially over long periods of persistence. Plus, he was pretty proud of the loud-mouthed child being able to keep their secret for so long. So he decided to reward Dudley for his silence... By letting him break it- dear god Harry was such a wuss and he knew it. The green-eyed boy though at least had enough backbone (well he liked to think so at least) to insist on making Piers give a vow of silence that will make the other physically unable to speak of Harry's 'abnormal' acts.

Like turning into a big, black snake for one thing.

Harry hissed in pleasure as Piers tentatively yet bravely, in the way six year old boys stupidly do when they think they're invincible and that not even a two story drop could break them, scratched under his chin. If he could talk human at that moment Harry would've probably said something dry and witty about the difference between dogs and snakes but for now, he will let it slide. As long as the boy stroked his scales at least.

"He likes having his scales stroked." Dudley, his fantastic mind-reader of a cousin, happily pointed out in perfect timing. Piers, who he'd always liked and will never ever doubt his mob mentality again, complied. Harry hissed a very satisfied sigh as he found his friend (yes Piers and he had gotten on much more amiable terms since Dudley had insisted they both spent time with him. It had been weird at first, eerily like when a parent sets up play dates with strange kids just to spend more time with their friends gossiping about the new teacher and her atrocious taste in shoes, but when Harry had stumbled over a poorly hidden book on the occult owned by one horribly embarrassed but hopeful Piers, he knew they would get along like hell on fire) had much better snake-stroking skills than his cousin. Though when he said that to Dudley later on, the boy for some strange reason doubled over in laughter.

And so Piers joined their secret club, bringing a bucketload of very interesting (if not a little dark for a six year old) ideas to try out. Honestly, it was the most fun he had had in a very long while.

Needless to say, Harry Potter was at least not contemplating a mass family murder anymore.
Chapter 3- The one where Death takes a vacation from his vacation at being Harry James Potter

Alternate title: The one where Death and a Dark Lord becomes 'bros' but not really

Alternative alternative title: The one where a Dark Lord is stuck with his worst fear in a dark forest for about six days and realizes death (the person not the ending of his life) isn't so bad after all

When Harry was eight he realized that, really, he should've tackled the whole 'my parents' murderer exploded after failing to kill me and now was floating around vengefully, if not a but aimlessly, somewhere out there very likely plotting my untimely demise as well as some other people's' thing ages ago.

It was such a sudden stray lightning bolt (much like his scar but more metaphorical) that it really shocked the boy out of his nice fuzzy mid-afternoon daze. Honestly, Harry felt a bit bad for forgetting the wraith. But then again, the man had murdered his parents so... Anyway in his defense he hadn't had much free time for reminiscing about his infancy (actually he spent quite a bit of time trying to suppress those absolutely humiliating times) what with the Dursley's working him to the bone, his two friends with their overactive imaginations constantly busying him with their secret 'group school projects', marveling at mortal inventions and all this on a half empty stomach- it really couldn't be helped.

Today, however, the small boy with hair the color of the darkest midnight was for the first time in his current lifetime, bored. And no, being too exhausted and hungry stuck in his cupboard when he was younger did not count. The spiders living there had been entertaining enough to pass the time after all. Really they weaved the most interesting things when you give them a few dead flies and ask politely enough.

His aunt and uncle were away for the next week and a half for some sort of business conference, which he had promptly allowed any information regarding it to go from one ear and out the other. Dudley had been allowed to have that time spent at Piers' place which Harry had been banned from since that one time he had 'accidentally' somehow let in a big terrifying black snake a year ago. And his cupboard spiders and other animals that he occasionally conversed to in the house had been all killed last week by the terrible mortal known as an exterminator. So all that had left Harry alone at home to house sit. And when he said house sit he literally meant sitting around the house doing nothing.

Well he had a list of chores that would've made even Cinderella cry (a very interesting albeit a bit ridiculous story that Dudley smuggled from the library for him because honestly, how in God's name is it that in a whole kingdom only one girl has size five feet?) if he didn't have the beautifully useful ability of magic at his beck and call. God, when he meets Magic again, Harry swears he will kiss the blessed entity for letting him use her gifts so easily. And maybe take some time to give a stern talking to with Fate for extra measure.

But back onto the important topic at hand- his potential murderer person that Harry just knew was still out there. The snake-like man was... different to what he had encountered before. Not in a good way but not exactly in a bad way either. Well actually he wasn't really the best choice in discerning something good or bad, what with being all 'neutral' and 'un-judgemental' and the 'all souls are equal
in the eyes of death' kind of way that he is. Of course, while all souls are equal, the sad truth was some were just more equal than others.

Death had always thought of the souls of everything to be like glass balls. Harry, now armed with basic knowledge of modern day mortality, decided to change his metaphor for souls slightly and say they were like snow globes. Edible snow globes anyway. Each snow globe was different, unique. There were ones that were smooth with soft colors of spring and others were jagged with aggressive reds and dark icy blues. Sometimes there were snow globes the shapes of hearts or as small as one's nail or a shifting mass where one couldn't quite pinpoint its exact form. Ones that tasted of melting chocolate next to a roaring fire, of scotch and whiskey, of sweet strawberry ice cream in winter. But there was no 'bad' or 'good' soul in Death's eyes. There was plain. There was boring. There was ugly. There was pretty. But that was it. The extent of any real opinions toward them.

And then there was 'interesting'.

Oh, how he loved the interesting ones.

Everyone had their preferences. Angels liked the 'pure ones', the ones that glowed softly with pale colors that were as close to white as possible, perfectly unmarred and untainted by the evils of the world. Demons preferred the 'determined ones', those of twisted colors that fought with each other, the ones were streaks of brilliant golds and silvers that come from finding hope and resolve among the filthy despair that near consumed them, apparently those souls came from people who've prevailed, who survive the most hopeless of situations whilst still maintaining a semblance to a heart of gold. Apparently, they tasted absolutely sinful. Reapers didn't really have favorite types in comparison. Though they openly disliked the 'irritating ones', the ones who simply just refused to leave their physical bodies and screamed bloody murder (pun intended) as they clung on like rabid dogs to a bone, but that was more because it was a hindrance to their work than anything, Death found the whole thing vastly amusing.

The souls of swirling vortexes of colored complexities. With lightning bolts of fire, forests of mists, endless seas of storms. The imperfect cracks that run further than surface deep, black rotting jaded edges and winter dark shadows that whispered hateful words. These were the most beautiful souls, souls from the most ridiculously complex and intriguing of people. Whether these people had been benevolent saints or psychopathic murderers were of little consequence to the entity. In fact if a soul manages to catch Death's interest, that lucky being on the precipice of life and the afterworld would be swiftly offered a deal by him personally. It was nothing like a demon's offer, a devil's contract or even an angel's favor. If they chose to accept Death's deal then they were required to do was become part of his 'collection' for a predetermined amount of time. They were allowed their consciousness, awareness and, if the entity felt like it, bodies of their past selves. All that was asked of them was for their company.

For a minimum of, about, three thousand years, give or take a century.

Which really wasn't that bad considering that, depending on the individual, it was more of a 'get out of jail free card' for the ones who didn't wish being experienced to eternal damnation in hell. Those destined to heaven were usually less likely to accept of course, but after some reassurance that they could back out of their agreement if they were truly unhappy or if Death failed to be entertained by them, they could always be sent to wherever they were supposed to go, after all, being the ruler of all things dead did have its perks. In fact he vividly remembered one rather pretty orb he had come across a few decades ago, pale seashell pink with swirls of toxic green and oily dark streaks of paint that created smeared pictures of war, blue-eyed blonde smiles and a strange cross like symbol with all its legs bent the same way; a rather interesting looking soul but unfortunately and disappointingly an equally boring personality, what could've been a brilliant man had he not been swept up with petty
bitterness, overzealous hypercriticism and racist hypocrisy, the delusions he held were so tightly onto to the point it had been fiercely carved into his soul, even given the insight and reflections that all souls were blessed with when meeting their ends the man had refused to see, to accept anything but the biased veils he had blinded himself so irrevocably with. In short, the orb when blessed with speech again bore the entity so utterly with it spouting some Aryan nonsense on a broken loop and offended near every other soul in the collection that the soul was promptly thrown back to hell with Death huffing in his displeasure.

It really was just a guilty pleasure of his. Everyone had their vices. Even the all-powerful entities of personifications. Especially them. Love could not stop making real life soap operas with anything that remotely moved, mortals, immortals, animals, jealous lovers, love triangles, complicated backstories you named it. Life and Fate enjoyed screwing people over and placing bets on them. Magic was a prankster. Time was quite taken to collecting clocks from various famous dead people for some unfathomable reason (they don't even talk back! Isn't that just so boring?). Space had and could make alternate universes, enough said really. Chaos was... well Chaos was who he was. Even Judgement secretly had a Law and Order thing going on behind his uptight mask and glasses.

So when Harry meditated to try and look back in his mind and remember back when the self-explosion incident eight years ago (wow he did not realize how much time he had spent in that cupboard. Maybe he should ask about taking Dudley's second bedroom?) and noticed in startling clarity that the wraith like mist contained not one soul, merely the tiniest crimson red scorched shard, well, it didn't take that much more to clinch his decision to pursue the man.

Oh and because the man could possibly come back to destroy him or some such. Hah. Yeah sure. No, more like because having a vengeful murdering wand-waving jackass (excuse the language but Harry had lived in a cupboard, he deserved some leeway in explicitness when it came to describing one of the factors that put him in said cupboard) would very much disrupt or at least annoy him persistently during his holiday.

And also you know, there was nothing else to do for the next six days and Harry was bored. Was he bored enough to have tea and crumpets with his physical body's parents murderer one would ask? Harry would answer with a thoughtful look, followed them by a darkly amused smile with eyes colored deeper and brighter than any emeralds that glittered with things that no one but their owner knew of and say,

"Well, I can bet I won't be at least bored."

"Wow and I thought I was living terribly. Maybe Petunia's right, apparently I am a bit ungrateful, huh."

Lord Voldemort, or what was currently left of him, turned to face the person who so rudely interrupted his brooding (because Dark Lords do not sulk) in what he had presumed was an abandoned area in the darkest heart of a forest somewhere off of Germany. It was a boy. Small, scrawny, skinny. Couldn't be no more than six really. Messy, almost gravity defying locks the color of the darkest shadows itself decorated moonlight white features that seemed to glow under the darkness of the night and highlighting the most ethereal green eyes. Green like... Like... No... It couldn't be...

"I'm Death."

Well shite. That was worse than expected.
Suddenly Voldemort wished it was Harry bloody Potter in front of him. Freaking Albus Dumbledore with his condescending twinkles. Lucius Malfoy in a goddamn pink corset and matching high heels. Literally anyone else.

If he had the strength and power to speak the wraith-like mist would have wasted it on hissing indistinguishable swears like a snake that had it's tail stepped on. Instead he chose to glare as menacingly (and fearfully but it was very well hidden) as he could for a thing that didn't really have eyes. As if feeling the not-glare aimed at him, the boy that wasn't a boy, looked at him curiously and with an annoying amount of bemusement painted so clearly on his face it might as well have been written on his forehead.

"Ah, can't speak can you? Well we can't have that."

Delicately thin fingers snapped their fingers, the sound so much like an arm broken cleanly in half and suddenly the former human felt the sound of harsh raspy breathing, his breathing and it caught in his nonexistent throat at the realization. "How?" Was all he croaked out.

Death, the boy that reminded him eerily of the baby that had disintegrated his body to dust, merely smiled a smile that hinted he held enough unsaid secrets that saying even a handful of them with his tiny hands would somehow make the whole world a much less mysterious place than before, and shrugged.

"I am Death." He answered like it was the answer to everything. And it kind of really was.

This time the mist figure did hiss. "Why are you here? You cannot take me! I have done rituals to make sure of it! How is this possible?! There is just- you cannot take me!" The hoarse raspy voice was now cracking under the rising volume and the last sentence had hysteria practically bleed through every letter and syllable. It was almost funny. In a pathetic sort of way.

The entity of death, the physical manifestation of the thing the Dark Lord feared most, then raised a slim eyebrow and chuckled softly. It was such a human like gesture, the Dark Lord couldn't help but find it difficult to associate with the being that was meant to represent the end of all. "Ah, I understand your worries Mr. Riddle-" the wraith made a distinct noise that heavily implied that describing his distress as 'worries' was like saying that Dark Lords were only 'minor inconveniences'. "-but I am currently not on duty if you will, and therefore am not obliged to take your soul to eternal damnation where I'm sure you probably belong."

That was, surprisingly, not that reassuring to the intangible dark spirit. The younger looking death incarnate refrained from groaning at the obvious agitation of the other. How annoying.

"If it helps it isn't your time anyway." Harry, or now more accurately, Death tried. Comfort wasn't really his thing. Unless you just came from being tortured but he was pretty sure it was less his personal social skills and more the sweet relief from excruciating physical and mental pain. "Your uh, thing with your soul, whatever you did, helped potentially expand your lifespan." 'Though it would probably have been a much more fulfilling life had you not done it.' But Death decided to keep that little thought to himself.

Death swore he saw the intangible darkened air that was 'Voldemort' (he did not want to even believe that was this mortal's name. Flight of Death? Well that was just insulting) bristled in sheer rage alone. "You cannot take me." The wraith seethed now for some reason more confident. Hm. Maybe he was too comforting. "I am now untouchable by death. I am beyond that."

The childish pale face merely looked at the other in the most condescendingly pitying way it could muster. "Sure you are." The being assured half-heartedly like a bemused parent to a very small child
agreeing that yes, sugar plum fairies were real and so are pink nosed reindeers that stole strawberry cheesecakes from people's fridges on New Years or just something equally as stupid.

Voldemort suddenly felt the very familiar itch in his mind which he'd always got right before letting out a nice Crucio. Or an Avada Kedavra. Though if his last moments still in his body were any suggestion maybe just a good old fashioned muggle strangulation with his bare hands. See if that thrice-damned defied infant could live through that dammit.

The thin pale boy must have seen the other's rising ire with his unnervingly almost toxic green eyes because the smaller male promptly changed the subject. "So what are you doing in this… unwelcome part of the forest?" He attempted politely. Apparently that too was a sore part (honestly this… man was just so sensitive) as the dark vapour actually growled at him. A very rude mortal indeed then. To be fair though, Death was pretty sure if he had been vanquished by a mere babe and reduced to insignificant mist he too would be rather disgruntled at many things. But if memory served him correctly the man hadn't been the prettiest looking of people when he did have a body, not that he was judging by appearances but you had to admit- with a face like that, it was hard not to assume that the man not being a morning person was a big understatement.

"Why are you here then?" Voldemort asked shortly but with very well veiled curiosity underlying his irritation. Death merely brushed it off with a wave of his tiny, pale as bleached bone, hand. Rude mortal as he was, it was refreshing for him to be addressed like this with this instead of outright fear. The wraith was of course afraid of him, he could practically smell the terror, but the man wasn't pleading for his life, nor breaking down in front of him, he could respect that. After millennia of 'Please spare me I'll do anything!' and 'I don't want to die!' and 'Oh god, oh god, oh god, you bastard, please no!'- listening to it all got old very fast. Also the Dursley's have really numbed any sort of verbal insult thrown his way even more than past millennia had done. Which is actually pretty impressive thinking about it.

"A few things have happened recently but as you mortals say, long story short-" The eight year old boy gestured at himself as dramatically as a eight year old boy could, "-I'm on vacation."

"Death." The wraith disbelievingly and unbelievingly replied. "On vacation."

"Is it so wrong to believe that Mr. Riddle? I am in desperate need of a vacation, you know, everyone else gets one after all. Very offending that." The child chided, vivid bright green glowing playfully even with his rather emotionless stoic expression. "I've been stuck in this, well, putting it mildly- 'job' since the first living organism's last breath left the world, and not once have I ever been caught up with the paperwork. Seriously, you'd think it'd be easy being the physical representation of an immutable visceral force, but oh no, it's always 'this flesh lump decided to start a war over a shiny a bit of shiny yellow apple with another flesh lump and destroyed a small country, Death'; or, 'another overzealous bigot raised an equally overzealous and bigoted army and destroyed a large chunk of Europe, Death', or even, 'Loki and his family got into another little 'domestic' about him being adopted and New York pretty much got demolished, Death.' I mean, really. You'd think after hundreds of millions of years those idiotic deities would just go do some serious intensive therapy or something. Honestly-"

Realising he was effectively ranting to the killer of his physical vessel's parents (not that Voldemort knew that) the entity of death coloured ever so slightly in embarrassment, cheeks going the palest shade of pink humanly possible. If someone was more poetic they could say it made one think of a budding rosebud that had withered into winter ice which of course made really no sense but it sounded nice. Voldemort at that moment thought the colour like a drop of fallen blood diluted by a skull filled with ice-spun sugar which also made no sense but admittedly also sounded nice and poetic in the dark gothic sort of way which honestly did suit Death more than the previous
"So," Death coughed then smiled; not just a wry twist of the lips, an amused quirk at the edges of his mouth nor a baring of teeth, but a genuine if not a very faint smile; "I have decided to accompany you for a short time." and it was such a surreal thing, as being a partial bound spirit, Voldemort was just instinctively aware that this was really Death. It was like how he just knew he was stronger during sunset to sunrise and that he shouldn't be inclined to any holy grounds any time soon. He knew all this, he feared all this, all of death just as naturally as he knew Death was there in front of him, But all he could see was a mysterious tiny boy with striking green eyes that glowed more ethereally, white skin even paler and a petite slim smile brighter and warmer than any moon he had ever seen.

For a moment Lord Voldemort, Flight of Death, Tom Marvolo Riddle looked at that smile, at the boy, at Death-

-And he forgot to be afraid.

"You know I'm pretty sure that's not how you're supposed to fish." Voldemort the wraith pointed out very unhelpfully, his still raspy voice poorly hiding his entertainment.

The small boy, completely drenched and looking like a half-drowned cat, glared, wet hands gripping an equally wet stick that had been crudely carved to a point. It was obvious that the child was not pleased. It was also obvious the child was completely without fish.

"Couldn't you just go get some of those thin potato slices instead?" And oh if black misty spirit clouds could look condescending… Actually Voldemort was doing a pretty good job of it much to Death's annoyance. A part of him mourned the very short period where the Dark-Lord-on-hiatus had been quiet and actually pretty respectful (not to mention extremely boring to talk with) to him for all of, until he figured out that he wasn't actually going to die, like Death had reassured consistently. Then the snark came.

"It's not the same." Death huffed good-naturedly. "I wish to experience a 'true' camping trip and from what I've heard one must capture at least one fish, slay it, then consume its burnt flesh under the moonlight."

The wraith stilled its usual movement (which was more its vaporous form shifting slightly with the wind) and the smaller, more human shaped male could swear he felt Voldemort staring at him. "And where..." The not really a Dark Lord at the moment drawled, "in Salazar's name did you here that from?"

The entity in a physical form just hummed noncommittally, Voldemort wasn't fooled. The 'mysterious child of the shadow' act stopped working on the second day when he saw Death try climbing a tree- and failing quite terribly- to catch something he thought and he quote 'looked pretty'. It turned out to be a scrunched up sweet wrapper that was thrown there by the wind.

Voldemort found it hard not to stab such idiocy with poisonous cutting barbs worth of insults. Especially when said idiocy got old after the first hour and a half. But Death didn't vanquish, curse his soul with indignation and rage at his taunts. No the child just gave a wry humoured smile and threw his own insults, which were actually more passive than the Dark Lord expected verbal jabs from Death would be like (not that he expected to be trading back disparaging comments with the entity of death like muggle children with card games) but it was… agreeable. At least, he admitted, it
was better than floating in a dark forest with just himself and his thoughts.

"So what's your problem anyway Mr. Riddle?"

Voldemort stopped his, uh, fluctuating flight and turned to face (well more for his sake than the other's) the raven haired boy who was currently leaning against a fallen log, evidently having temporarily abandoning his attempt to create fire using just his hands, sticks and dried leaves. It had been a while since he had started and so far the only thing that's happened was the revelation that Death when frustrated tended to rot the things he touched. And turn things to ash and dust when particularly annoyed. The once-serpentine man did not want to see what Death was like when actually upset, though something told him that was a very, very hard thing to accomplish which really was an equally very, very, very good thing.

"My problem?" He asked with still more than a hint of a rasp. Years unable to speak does do that to people. At least his more hissing quality to his speaking was becoming slightly more evident over time.

The entity in question was staring back at the other, it was unnerving how much attention could be put in those unearthly glowing eyes. "You know," A pale hand waved in a flippant gesture to emphasise the space the wraith was presently consuming at this moment. "Why are you so bitter and all."

"I'm not bitter."

"You say bitterly with what is probably a bitter expression."

"Fuck off."

There was tense silence immediately followed by the explicative. If Voldemort held any less dignity (and had any arms) he would have slapped his mouth at what he had just spoken to the death child. Sure they constantly sparred with dry humour and sarcastic jabs (more the spiritual male than the other) but he'd never dared to even, to actually, to Death, and oh Salazer was the child shaking, in rage? In offence? Outrage? If their roles had been swapped Voldemort had no doubt in his mind the other would have been dead and rotting at his feet since their first few sentences exchanged due to impudence and failure to respect their obvious betters.

He was sure there was some sort of sacred unspoken commandment that read 'He Shalt not Swear Against the Embodiment of Death nor Shall he Speak Ill for the Poor Soul that Forsakes this Law He Shalt be Smited in the Most Abominable of Ways.' Not that Dark Lords were exactly meant for following the rules but Voldemort thought that this one would definitely be one of those firmly in the realms of exceptions.

But then the child threw back his head, shaggy unkempt to the point of defy gravity black locks strewn messily over his young face only emphasising the boy's dirty looks that only spending time in the wilderness could provide. But that hardly mattered when for the first time Voldemort heard Death laugh. It wasn't some magical fairy tinkling of wind chimes like his almost angelic physical appearance would suggest, nor was it the harsh chilling cackle, like frozen bone and rusted metal grinding together, of what he'd always pictured an incarnation of death to sound as either. No, it was soft and whispy, but clear enough to hear ring out in the quiet of the forests. There was no horrifying frozen terror that pierced through, no feeling of numbness seeping through the mind or body. It was strangely.. soothing. It seemed to echo, resonate, to his very being, his soul and ironically, he felt
more alive than he had been even with a body.

"I, I think," Death gasped between laughter, evidently this was something that happened few and far between, the Dark Lord of England should not be feeling an unexplained sense of smugness at the idea that he was one of those rare few that caused this. "This is the first time anyone has said that to my face." Then with a thoughtful look the boyish face added, "Well, without actually meaning it anyway."

The vaporous Dark Lord raised a nonexistent eyebrow. "What do you mean by that?"

"It's an embarrassing story. I rather not speak of it." And oh, if that wasn't a reason to want to hear it Voldemort, who after being touched by that laughter could feel his old insatiable curiosity and wonder and all those things he had felt when he first found out about magic, didn't know what was. "I can tell you about the time my headmaster burnt my wardrobe when I was a child." He offered, "An eye for an eye is only fair after all."

"Indeed Mr Riddle." Green twinkled and Voldemort had a sinking suspicion he had been tricked somehow, completely thrown off course by the young boy with calming, soul-touching laughter and a confusing sense of humor. He couldn't find himself feeling angry at that though. No, he was too busy being unwillingly enraptured by a story of a whole other dimension, of strange magic that would never be found in this world, of muggles with technology beyond imaginations, of aliens and of champions of death who tried courting Death with the lives he had slaughtered. He even laughed, actually laughed till his vaporous vocal chords grew hoarse, when Death finally met this self-proclaimed Champion of him to turn the alien man down politely, only to find that the Champion wasn't courting him, but Hel, a rather selfish little Norse goddess who wasn't even technically part of the 'big guns' of Hell much less the realms of death themselves.

"So what happened after you explained everything?" The wraith asked. Tiny shoulders shrugged.

"Before I tell you I must add that I was in my original form at that time and not in the body of a child." An downward curl of a faint grimace, "Because that would've been very awkward."

"And?" Voldemort pushed, a part of him slightly mortified at how eager he sounded, he pushed that away quickly though, it wasn't as if there was anyone actually there to judge him much less live to tell the tale.

Death chuckled, scratching his cheek a tad flustered. "Well, let's just say it was no longer Hel he was courting by the end of that little tea party."

Voldemort laughed. He didn't even feel his usual resentment, his hatred, his bitterness when he offered up stories of his life in return, maybe a touch of uncharacteristic self consciousness but that was it. The two most unlikely of pairs spent most of the day exchanging little anecdotes, some were funny, some were hard to speak about but all of them at least were more than a little dark and interesting to listen to.

"You want a marshmallow?" Death offered, the pale pink squishy sweet looking large in his delicate outstretched hand.

"I don't have a mouth." Voldemort deadpanned. He still couldn't comprehend that Death was offering him marshmallows. Maybe he had died and this was some sick joke form of limbo he found himself in. The child looking entity popped the marshmallow into his mouth, chewed thoughtfully
and then swallowed.

"That does not answer my question."

"You are such a child."

"Thank you. Now do you want a marshmallow Mr. Riddle?"

The Dark Lord sighed sufferingly as pink and white sugary confections passed through his body by a chuckling eight year old.

"What is that?"

Avada Kedevra green were bright and shining with undisguised mirth. "What do you mean?"

A smoky shadowy tendril poked at the glowing sphere of swirling forest greens and faint lazy waves of early morning sunshine. Voldemort recoiled almost instantly when the thing unexpectedly pulsed, turning an overall paler shade of yellow than before. Death smiled affectionately at the ball which he cradled gently like a fragile egg. "Oh, do you mean this?"

Voldemort glared as much as he could glare. The man did that a lot really. Death didn't mind. It was kind of adorable. For a person who liked throwing around killing curses like Zeus throws around his many, many offsprings. And lightening bolts. It really did speak volumes when the first thing that he thinks of when using Zeus as a metaphor is his sex life and not his innate legendary powers. So the representative of the end of all just continued on.

"It's a soul." He answered simply.

"A soul." The vaporous dark lord repeated slowly, gaze still on the object in question. "Where did you get a soul?"

"One of my beautiful children gave it to me as a present when I bumped into them by the lake. Really it was such a surprise to see it. And it was so worried for me, such a dear, and gave this to me.' Death smiled. Just a twist of his pale lips on what could've been described as hauntingly angelic features that gave the child a chillingly beguiling allure that drew even the most wary whilst still whispering ominously of danger that even a deaf man could hear. "I suppose it thought I was hungry."

Voldemort didn't ask about it again.

It was a uncharacteristically beautiful morning in the usually dark and uninviting forest. The sun was filtering through the trees, highlighting the small things that one could miss in the shadows and dark. Wildlife was chattering lively, the whole vibe not menacing and creepy but now warm and filled with curious wonder. Dew drops glistened like crystals of the highest clarity on grass adding to this magical beauty.

It really was a sad fact no one was there to appreciate it.

"Of course you all look pretty now," a very disgruntled young boy grumbled as he stared grimly at
the idyllic image that certainly was not there last night when a huge and frankly, very uncomfortably unpleasant storm had hit. It did not help that he had been sleeping in a tree that night and didn't have time to cast a cushioning charm before his butt was rudely met with muddy earth. A large part of him blamed the Dark Vapor Lord who had been suspiciously silent through the whole ordeal with the exception of an undignified loud snort when Death let out a colorful string of swears he had picked up from none other than him. It had been a long night filled with heavy rain, annoying debris flying everywhere (the boy swears that particularly sharp twig was aimed at his heart) and even worse; the insects flying or scuttling for cover and were unfortunate enough to get caught in the storm. Don't get Death wrong, he liked all creatures, just not when their twitchy little legs suddenly squish into his damn face.

He did not care what Mr. Riddle said. He did not scream.

"Stupid nature. This is why everyone built houses."

"Why do you call me Mr Riddle?"

Death raised a brow and looked at the wraith. He was currently trying to weave a makeshift net in an attempt to catch some fish. Sewing was never his forte, neither was making things, so really it was just a mess of dead vines littered randomly around the earthy soil. "Well I absolutely refuse to call you.." The child scrunched up his face with distaste, "Voldemort. I mean honestly. And you dislike the name Tom, which I personally don't understand, there are many upstanding men that holds that name. And calling you Marvolo seems a bit ridiculous-"

"Yes, yes, but how do you know my name?" Voldemort persisted. "In fact, how do you even know where I even was?"

Avada Kedevra eyes closed before opening slowly, the color glowing brighter, Voldemort always thought he had seen how vivid those eyes were but now, such hauntingly inhumanely green looked at him and he realised just how very little he knew. He almost felt humbled by the sheer age, the knowledge, the untapped power.

"I am Death, Mr Riddle. It isn't that hard an answer to come to."

The Dark Lord paused, his soul quivered, submissive to what it had innately recognised, no body to protect and muffle the sheer waves of death rolling against him in lazy waves. But he was not just a soul, there was more to that, more to him. He was a Slytherin with an advantage, he was being for some reason, favored by the entity and he knew it. So he kept going.

"Then why ask me things?" He asked. "Why the stories and chatting and those gaps in what you know of me?"

The boy; no, Voldemort couldn't see the child in the other anymore, there was only Death there; tilted his head slightly, eyes locked on his non-solid form as if weighing something before he answered. The wraith vaguely felt like he had just gone through a test of sorts and passed. "I, believe it or not Mr Riddle, am not omniscient. My realm is death. My powers are and only for death. My knowledge that naturally comes to me is only about death. Things like how a toaster works, the color of the sky as the sun rises and falls, things like that are not in my domain, my knowledge. Do you know why Mr Riddle?"

"Because they are unnecessary to you. Because they aren't things that would serve you as Death."
Voldemort answered, "I still don't see ho-"

"I can't see every individual soul, I can't bare it's memories just by looking at them, I cannot know everything about every single being in existence even if I wanted to. When they are dead, bodiless, passing on to the realms of my lands, then my hand is free. If I wish, I can know near everything about a soul, their names, birthdays, deathdays, all I need is them firmly dead, away from any restraints of life." Unearthly luminous eyes bore into his very being. "So tell me, Mr Riddle. Do you count as dead. Or alive?"

A flash of teeth that somehow was even whiter than his bone pale skin.

"When you figure that out then you answered you own answer."

"Ok this is ridiculous."

"I'm surprised you didn't think so when you decided to do this all.. muggle-like." Voldemort responded dryly, earning himself a glare and a huff and what was obviously not a pout from the child. "I'm rather impressed you lasted this long on berries and roots."

"Ugh." Death groaned. "I will never understand vegetarians. I don't think I craved meat this badly since that blood ritual withdrawal period where people stopped sacrificing slaughter to me."

"…What?"

"Never mind." The child waves dismissively even though the wraith was close to bursting with intrigue and questions at that, much to Voldemort's annoyance. "I'm getting some proper protein by the end of the day or I will burn this forest down."

Well if that wasn't an ominous sounding threat the Dark Lord didn't know what was.

The forest seemed to think so too as moments later every nearby bush began rustling violently, chatters of wildlife that had been muted since Death's arrival now sprung anew, louder than ever. The pair watched as finally, a wild boar finally made it's presence noticed. The thing was large and stocky, but held a slight limp that would've made itself useless eventually in the wilderness. It quietly trotted toward the child, bent it's head in what looked like respectful subservience before laying itself on the ground.

There was a silence, like the whole of the woods was holding their breath as one, hoping to see if the entity would take their peace offering. Then the boy that held the power of death, who was death, spoke.

"Huh."

"Shall I present you with a story Mr. Riddle?"

"You know I am not a child right?"

Death chuckled. "You are in my eyes."

"That still does not mean!" Voldemort blustered, bodiless form floating nearby where the strange
child lay.

"I can speak on and about the Four Founders of Hogwarts if it pleases you."

The indignant wraith paused, before muttering, "I suppose one tale would not kill me."

Death chuckled again. "No but I could if you're offering." Green glittered with childishly terrifying malignity, once again reminding the wandering half-soul again just who exactly he was 'sleeping' under the stars and talking with. As if sensing the wary fear the boy’s eyes rolled visibly at the bodiless man. "Honestly Mr Riddle, even by mortal standards you are so, what's the term? Springy."

"Jumpy." Voldemort corrected. Death clicked his fingers and made an 'ah' noise. "And forgive me if I feel that way about the physical manifestation of death when he tells you that he could end your existence at the drop of a hat."

Pale features crinkled into a small frown at the response, "I do not know Mr. Riddle how I can make you believe me but I can tell you that Fate is just as real as I and she does have plans for you that extends beyond me taking your soul during an impromptu camping trip."

"I should hope not." The wraith muttered but he definitely felt much more relaxed now, reassured at the implications of the statement as he read between the lines. He quickly switched topics before Death realised how much he had potentially slipped to the vaporous Dark Lord. Death may be very wise but he was naive too. Unusually so. Apparently death doesn't always make you less innocent in the ways of the world as many would think. "So how do you know about the Founders?"

A faint ghost of a smile. A flash of, was that pride? Yes, it was, there was pride glistening in those expressive eyes that could never really be conveyed on his face. "I collected them." Was all Death answered like a parent who was seconds away from pulling out some photographs of their children to coo about. "Beautiful strong souls all of them really. And you could barely separate them too, package deal they are."

The entity of death then looked down to the ground, feet shuffling and thin fingers fiddling on the hem of his dirty shirt as glowing green glanced coyly up at the shadowy spirit of Voldemort, looking more like a vulnerable child than anytime before. "Maybe one day, you would like to meet them Mr Riddle." Death offered shyly, "Not just them, but the rest of my collection."

Voldemort had heard much about Death's 'collection', it had been something that came up a short while back. He could just imagine shelves upon carved shelves of orbs much like the one he had seen before, illuminating the darkness with a contradicting cold warmth that few appreciate. Death would probably visit everyday, to watch colors bleed through colors and listen to countless stories that have never been spoken, points of view never being heard. He would with careful hands bring a few down to interact with others from long forgotten eras, to distant futures or from exotic lands to universes one could only read in books about. And Death would smile that faint smile as he watched it all, his own little lives, little worlds he had created that never could be.

"I would like that." Voldemort replied softly, honestly. Then he hastily added, "If I die. If. I am going to be immortal after all."

Death laughed.

Five days pass quickly and by evening Death knows he needs to be back at the Dursleys, back to Harry Potter. He had to get there a few hours before sunset for a quick clean over in the house so it
looks like he'd been there, working, the whole time, and maybe he'll have enough time to get rid of his muddy clothes and his duffle bag. It was going to be sad, leaving, he will miss the creepy dark forest, it's grown on him. Maybe he'll try getting Life to help him create his own forest, it'll probably much more dangerous and deadly but it'll be nice to have something resembling life that wasn't reapers in his personal realm.

He didn't know how to break the news to his vaporous companion though. Death knew how hard it will be for the dark lord, more than the other will know. Because souls are meant to be whole, natural, half souls can go on fine but any less becomes erratic and unstable, like gaping wounds it leaves them open to diseases of insanity, depravity and so many things that shouldn't belong in any healthy soul. And Voldemort wasn't even close to the picture of health in that matter. Unknown to the mortal spirit, Death's very presence prevented any worsening effects, grounding the wraith, stabilising him. If he hadn't been there to ward off the lingering diseases and disgusting parasites of the spirit, the mortal would've ended up even more corrupted than before.

But once he left, well, he could only do so much when the other wasn't even dead.

"Mr. Riddle?"

"Yes?"

Death could feel the weight of the wandering spirit's gaze on him and turned to face the look forwardly, "I must leave. You should be forewarned that once I'm gone you'll find yourself unable to properly remember my appearance but other than that most of your memory will be intact. I truly wish I could stay longer but circumstances stop me from doing so."

Silence filled the air and the entity mentally berated himself for his blunt words. Intensive sensitivity training for 72 times and this is what he comes up with. At least he had gotten better. He didn't add the fact that the man's going to go clinically psychopathic once he all but abandons him. That's progress.

"How long?" Was finally asked, breaking the silence. It was hoarse and human, so very human with the thick emotions the other would never had shown to a living being before now. Well technically he still hadn't shown them to a living being but it was the thought that counts and that thought made something in Death's mortal body feel a little hollower in his chest cavity.

"I'll go in a few hours. I won't leave till the last moments available. He'll just use magic to clean up his looks and hide all his 'camping' things in his closet.

Voldemort's shadowy figure was twisting and distorting itself in what Death could assume to be his conflicting feelings over his departure, but the dark lord reluctantly agrees. They sit by the riverside and talk. Death tells the other about gaining strength through possession, as an apology gift for abruptly withdrawing, the other takes the gift with surprisingly quiet dignity. It was all very pleasant but the knowledge of them parting ways hung over their heads like a hangman noose, unlikely as it were they had become possibly friends, 'bros' would be what Dudley would call it.

Finally Death looked at the lowering sun and knew it was time.

"I am sorry Mr Riddle."

Voldemort went silent before questioning, "Will I see you again?"

The boy with Avada Kedevra green eyes that glowed even on the starless nights gave a dry crooked
smile. "Probably when your dead." The wraith chuckled good-humoredly, "So never then." He deadpanned half serious.

"I suppose." Death mused, the corners of his mouth stretching a bit wider. "It was enjoyable while it lasted Mr Riddle. And I thank you for that."

The wraith made an embarrassed noise, no one has genuinely thanked him for his presence, how ironic was it that it was Death of all things that done so?

"Surprisingly I could say the same thing… Death."

Death chuckled, "Yes, very surprising." Then the child-like face turned solemn. "I really must leave now."

Voldemort nodded stiffly, not that it could be seen but the other must've known. The small petite boy walked into the shadows, vivid green eyes never straying from him as he slowly faded into the darkness. "Goodbye Mr. Riddle."

And then he was gone.

Harry Potter opened the door to greet the Dursley's, Vernon rather unceremoniously dumped his very heavy suitcase into his scrawny arms causing him to drop loudly onto the floor with a groan. At least he can blame the bruises on his arm for that then his failed attempt at tree climbing. Still doesn't stop him from mentally swearing to hell and back. Dark Lords apparently are terrible influences. Who would've thought?

His thoughts were cut off as the weight of the bag was lifted, bringing back all circulation to Harry's arms. Rubbing the sore limbs the boy looked up to see his grinning cousin with his hand out to help him up. "Hey Harry!" He greeted cheerfully. Harry grunted in what he hoped was equally as welcoming.

With the larger boy helping with the heavier bags, Harry was finished unloading in record time, giving the two some spare time to rush up to Dudley's room to catch up. Dudley chatted on about a new game console thing Piers got as well as this new book they got engrossed in (since the genre was fantasy based the brunet boy had to stash his copy at his friend's place) called Howl's Moving Castle which apparently was and he quote, 'bloody better than some stuff the telly comes up with' which from Dudley was high praise indeed. The older of the two promised to tell Harry all about it when he finished.

"So Harry, how did you spend the week?" His cousin finally asked, not that the younger minded, he liked listening to stories even mundane ones about how many cans of coke Piers managed to chug before he choked. "It must've been very boring." Dudley continued pityingly, guilt obvious on his large face.

The raven haired boy gave a vague nostalgic smile at the other and replied,

"Believe me or not, I find my ways to make sure my holidays are anything but."
The one where Death got molested by some snake. Which thinking about it was totally inappropriate considering his mortal body was ten, his immortal spirit was way over a millennia of a millennia and the snake was like, seven months old.

He was sleeping. Well kind of. Harry didn't really dream so it felt more like just closing his eyes and waiting for the blackness to consume him. He was pretty sure he didn't actually need that much sleep, two to four hours minimum per day probably, but there was nothing much really to do in his cupboard and it was a strangely soothing luxury he had never experienced when he was Death. Sometimes, if he was lucky, he even caught the strands of a dream; colors that floated by like unreachable strands of mist in the starless night, a feeling of icy cold wind on his face, scents of freshly cut grass and salty sea.

In fact for the first time Harry could feel the beginnings of sweet flavor on his subconscious tongue. It wasn't very strong but it was enough to vaguely discern the taste to be slightly tangy. A tart maybe? Piers had let him try a lemon one once. That was absolutely divine. He was close, so close to figuring out when-

"HARRY HARRY HARRY WE'RE GOING TO THE ZOO!"

Pain hit his side as he fell off his cot at the sudden banging on his cupboard door.

"Fuck." Harry muttered. And he had been so close too.

"HARRY HARRY HARRY!"

"SHUT IT DUDLEY I GOT IT!" He snapped. The boy may not need sleep but damn it all, he certainly wasn't going to be happy when it was taken away from him. Especially if it was a dream. Silence was his response and for a second Harry worried he had been too harsh to the child. Well until he heard the boy mutter,

"Woah ok, so Harry's a grouchy bed monster."

And it was just such a ridiculously, silly thing to say that Harry in his still hazy sleep-addled mind giggled. He didn't admit it but it had been such a relief to hear when the older boy joined in on the laughter. Thank god, he could not imagine having his cousin hating him just because this was the first time Harry had ever raised his voice at the large boy. Actually this was the first time he had actually yelled in his mortality. Ever. Hm.

But the paler boy realized just how little credit he'd given Dudley when his cousin didn't get offended. Dudley didn't get mad like he no doubt would've done years ago, he just laughed along. The boy obviously wasn't like his parents at all anymore, maybe still more than a tad spoilt and a quite a temper when upset, yet the larger kid had stopped discriminating others just because of what others said, more willing to stand up to what he believes in (admittedly it could use quite a bit of work but the larger child was getting there). Harry could see he was getting stronger in heart and when he peered at the boy's soul he no longer saw something dim and filled with dull muted
unattractive browns. Now it was bright and filled with rich silver swirls as well as orange sparks that went off like fireworks on New Years.

"But seriously Harry- the ZOOOOO!"

Of course the child's volume control hadn't changed one bit. Not that it wasn't endearing. In an annoying 'I'm going to choke you if you don't stop' kind of way. God he hated how loud kids were.

The scrawny pale boy groaned and hit his head on his pillow as his cousin proceeded to bang on his door again.

"Wassup boys!" Piers drawled in a terrible American accent. The gangly kid had been getting completely obsessed with those dumb slasher films that have been coming through and honestly, the first time when he sneaked through the Polkiss family window to join the two older boys to watch one of those rare movie video things of it on Piers' telly he had been quite taken to it. Ok so maybe the teenagers depicted in the show made seriously bad choices, the police were dumber than a drugged up hellhound and was in denial so deep that the Pit in the underworld looked like a shallow pool in comparison, and the plot devices were a little too convenient but he would be lying if he didn't yelp in surprise at the jump scare scenes or feel his heart beat faster as he watched the suspenseful build up. Maybe he'll get some of those films to give to the guys down under (not Australia, dig a little deeper than that) as souvenirs. Harry thought that film, The Shining, he was pretty sure it was called, would be quite enamoured by more than a few of the demons at least.

"Hey Piers!" Dudley greeted happily. Then he stopped turned to his scrawny cousin and jabbed him playfully with his elbow. Harry started at the sudden action and mock glared at the other before facing Piers with a slim smile. "Hullo." He welcomed simply with a wave of his hand.

"Shut it freak," Aunt Petunia who had been before then, watching her beloved soon with gooey love in her eyes, hissed in what was a very audible manner. "You're lucky dear Duddikins was kind enough to let you come. Don't embarrass us by speaking."

Harry slowly put down his hand mid-wave silently, causing an awkward silence to fill the air between the three boys and the Dursley wife and husband.

"Now look what you did." The horse like woman hissed even angrier, Vernon Dursley was also silently supporting his wife by sporting the same red color of her cheeks on his whole face. Harry wanted to fling his arms in the air in exasperation at those stupid meat lumps before him. Or maybe summon a few choice demons to drag them to a little special place in hell. Actually he just really, really wanted to punch them in the face. He had been pretty indifferent to his, well, he didn't want to call them caretakers, anyway he'd pretty much let them get away with everything because one- he was trying to properly experience life like a normal little mortal (as normal as someone like he could be) and was pretty sure maiming your relatives would not be considered in the acceptable range of that, two- Harry was still pretty sure this is what is considered 'normal' to be treated this way considering the circumstances therefore was willing to put up with this unless his life in this body was severely threatened and three- it would probably distress Dudley if he did that.

Instead he pulled on the most resigned look on his reserved face which frankly, coupled with his messy hair, bone thin figure and too-large clothing; just made him seem even more heart-breakingly pathetic. Like a drenched kitten that's just been kicked.

He could see Piers trembling with indignation and shock, clenching his jaws as well as his fist whilst
Dudley was looking up at the sky, his face red with humiliated disappointment and ashamed ire toward the people who raised him. Once the two adults had finally turned away from them, the two boys were by his side, hands firmly on his skinny shoulders as they whisked him toward the lion exhibit, with only a brief shout to their guardians to where they've gone.

As the sun shone, air filled with lions roaring, the buzz of life and his friends laughing and pointing out all the animals with glee in their eyes, the green eyed boy felt one of his increasingly less rare smiles that he found himself making more recently, stretch on his face. He hesitantly embraced the peculiar sensation of when happiness and contentment seeped into his chest like warm slick honey soothing over the slow burn of vindictive rage from before.

And he couldn't stop the thought on what a nice day this all was right now.

"Okay that was cool but now we've GOT to see the reptile exhibits!" Dudley gushed as the trio left the Nocturnal House. Harry really liked that one, all dark and filled with wondrous creatures of the night. He also enjoyed the aviaries, the African section, the Australian section, Asia... Okay so he was having a complete blast. The only thing he would've really wished to change if he could repeat it all again was the constant stares on him. And they weren't human stares. He had tried really hard to ignore those intense curious looks made by the general animal populace. It was seriously uncomfortable but sadly understandable.

Most of his creatures and fellow related deities usually inspired fear but Death, purely as itself, always had a sort of allure and pull to every being. It was where souls always end up, made, recycled, lived. And there was no denying that they all belonged in his realm as much as, if not more so, than Life's. However it was mainly the animals and other creatures that weren't human beings that were always just that much more susceptible to feeling and recognising that strange mix of yearning, fear and want in their souls. Maybe it was because of the lack of denial they hold toward themselves, an acceptance that they are part of one big cycle and they are safe with him, with Death. It clears up their view, their eyes and they can see easily that he wasn't there for them, not for any of them, not yet anyway. So they look with awe and amazement and even a touch of lust as they sense the deep unending power that lay beneath the surface of human flesh.

Still didn't make the experience of so many living eyes staring at him less weird though.

Dudley and Piers however loved it as his presence helped a lot in letting them all see the animals up close and personal. If he had to be brutally honest with himself, he too was finding enjoyment in seeing them so closely too.

It was so very unfair though. Life got all the cool stuff like anteaters and elephants and parrots. All he got was Dementors and Thestrals and Boggarts. Which, don't get him wrong, he loved them all dearly. But it was sadly obvious that his creatures all were severely lacking in a… color scheme among other things. On one side it was extremely boring to look at after the first couple of decades, forget centuries. On the other- hide and seek in his personal realms was a very challenging and fun game indeed.

"Oh, OH." Piers grinned as he waved the zoo pamphlet in front of the other two's faces. "There's even frogs and toads in there too. Maybe the right familiar for you is right here all along Harry!"

Vibrant green eyes rolled in mock-irritation. The boys ever since first laying eyes on that picture of a witch and her familiars had been completely obsessed in finding 'The One' for Harry. Dudley insists it would be something magical like a baby dragon or a nine-tailed fox. Piers went the more conventional route, stubbornly saying it would probably be a toad or a cat or something. Personally he was pretty sure he couldn't technically have a familiar at all, he wasn't even sure familiars were an actual thing in this universe, but it was a cute thought anyway. And vastly entertaining.
"I dunno Piers," Harry murmured shyly, "I mean, I've been so used to the bachelor lifestyle I don't know if I even want to the meet 'the One'. Then again," the black haired child sighed deeply and dramatically, "I have been feeling soo lonely..

The tallest of the three slapped him over the head causing Harry to stumble and burst into giggles. "Wanker." Piers muttered.

"I know he is but so are you." Dudley replied with a wide grin that fit very well on his face.

"I don't think that's how you say it." Harry pointed out.

"This coming from the kid who calls using a Walkman, 'musically walking the man'." His cousin teased. Pale bone white cheeks flushed ever so slightly, which in normal human terms meant the younger boy was blushing furiously. Piers slung a gangly arm over the small male's shoulder with a laugh. "Really Harry, for a guy who has a hard time making expressions show on your face, you sure get flustered real easy."

"Oh shut it." He grumbled, but twinkling vivid green eyes spoke of a completely different tune. "Let's just go see those scaly creatures okay?"

Harry rolled his eyes at the chattering crowd, back leaning against the wall. Vivid green finally landed on one of the glass exhibits, a large anaconda was watching him with very interested eyes. Actually most of the reptiles in the house was pretty much eyeing him like the most eligible mate in breeding season. It was a little unnerving.

"Ugh, kids are so loud am I right?" He casually acknowledged the large serpent. The legless reptile reared back as if surprised someone like him would address some-serpent like her. The anaconda though quickly caught and composed herself, though still quite flustered in snake terms, much to Harry's bemusement.

:Yessss O' Hooded One, my God of Death. They are indeed.: The snake agreed. :What brings the bringer of the end to our meagre abode?:

Harry felt a tad insulted in being mistaken as his horsemen, the Grim Reaper but he could see how the young serpent could fail to discern the two. After all the man was one of the closest things created by purely his own blood and power, not to mention whilst both usually don't venture out to the outside worlds often, the Grim Reaper had been quite the 'tourist' back in the old days. It was very adorable watching his young counterpart make friends with Pestilence, War and Famine- also beings Death helped make with the urging and assistance of Chaos. In fact, Death had been so proud of his most human looking creations he had asked Life to gift them with four strong and worthy stallions; hence, the Four Horseman. Very uncreative naming but what can one do?

For some reason Hell and Heaven got into such a tizzy over them too. Death really was very proud.

Anyway, Harry mused, maybe it would be easier to just say he was the horseman of Death instead of Death himself. It would only serve to be confusing to the snake if he tried to explain himself and it would be honestly much too troublesome for someone if they were only going to visit the place once. Not to mention he was sure the Grim Reaper would get a kick out of Death being mistaken for him instead of the other way round for once.

"I am here young one," He replied with no small amount of mirth hidden underneath his unsmiling face, "To try life as a magical mortal."

:Oh?: A snake in a nearby glass container, one who had brilliant bright green scales that dulled under
the presence of the entity's own vivid colouring, couldn't help but join the conversation, much to the anaconda's annoyance: :And how isss it like Death God?:

Harry mused at the answer thoughtfully before replying, "It is… very different to how I lived before. Strange. But not at all as terrible as what you all would imagine."

One of the snakes huffed, the boy had a bit of difficulty discerning which snake it was but he was sure it was the green one. :I would never replace my beautiful green scales for such soft fleshy ones.: She declared. The other nodded in agreement.

"Yes." The entity in a mortal vessel looked admiringly at shining green, the snake preening under the gaze, "I suppose it would be quite the disappointment for such a lovely sheen of scale to be wasted on boring outer meat."

The serpents were about to say something else (possibly fishing for compliments or trying to not-so-subtly check if he currently had a mate not that Harry understood why, every creature he's met so far who recognised him seemed to do that) but suddenly a voice interrupted their conversation.

"Oh my god you can talk to snakes!"

Harry turned to give his two friends a look, not in the least perturbed about their appearance from seemingly nowhere. Kids apparently when they wanted to can be sneakier than the shadows. Of course, it only could last for a few minutes at most considering most mortal youngling's inability and willpower to close their mouths for any longer.

"I've talked to other animals before. You've seen me do it." He answered. Then a pointed glare at Dudley. "You stole one of Mrs Figgs cats just for me to tell you it was hungry and that it saw what you did last summer. Whatever that meant."

"Bloody hate that cat." The larger boy muttered. Piers however, ignored his best friend's grumbling in favour of speaking over him to his second best buddy.

"Yeah but this time you were full on hissing at the thing Harry!" Piers practically squealed as he jumped up and down where he stood. "Hissing!" This time he did squeal. Harry just knew that if he had been tweeting like a bird the occult obsessed boy wouldn't even have been half as excited. Well, maybe if it was the cawing of ravens, them being death omens and all. Creepy child.

But this statement made the entity turned mortal pause, as Death he could communicate with all beings. It would be pretty awkward if he couldn't speak centaur or spider or even worse, Chinese. Every being is touched by death and obviously before he had so many reapers and death gods, Death had to do quite a lot of both the hands on work as well as write the files. So, naturally, a universal language filter was very much imbued in his being though it was more of a passive ability than anything.

Whilst he could speak in whatever form of communication he wanted to and while they would understand him and vice versa that didn't mean he didn't try actively pursuing the knowledge of each language. Considering he had since pretty much the beginning of time, he had at one point, began relentlessly learning all the languages he could the mortal way as an attempt to entertain himself and pass the endless flows of time. So usually he would at least know or was aware of, when he himself was speaking the language of serpents. Yet for some unfathomable reason it all seemed like what came out of his mouth was english to his ears.

How very strange.
Harry gave it exactly a moment’s thought—before shrugging and deciding that it really wasn’t worth much to think about it. Maybe his human vessel was just more attuned to snakes. Maybe his mother had a secret snake fetish (don’t judge him, he’s seen weirder stuff happen, how do you think Nagas, gorgons and such became a thing?) or maybe it was just a family trait on his body’s biological father’s side.

Either way, it did explain why every reptile was staring at him with some serious worship in their slit eyes, practically swooning. As well as trying (rather cutely in his opinion) to get out of their cages, to wrap around and claim him with the force of their will alone. At the corner of his eye he could see one determined black mamba that was bumping his head against the glass surface separating him and his god. Yes, a lot of animals Harry had met were in awe of him, naturally. Afraid, of course, enough for them to be very polite and respectful but still be attracted to the heady power of the being. But this was just a little ridiculous. It was exactly this reason why Harry didn’t ever make himself speak a species’ language when faced with one, as it always did give them a wrong ‘impression’ of Death favouring them or some other strange notion.

“Oh. That’s.. cool.” Was all the entity said rather blandly. Then Harry flashed the two a mischievous contemplating look, the older boys grinned when they saw their friend do that. Whenever that look came around it meant rule breaking and very fun things from their resident magic man. Unfortunately it doesn’t come often due to Harry’s rather obedient nature plus the boy usually being the scapegoat for most of their punishments. But when he got the ‘look’ in his glittering eyes they knew they were in for something completely awesome.

"Who wants to play with a few snakes?" Harry offered.

Dudley and Piers glanced at each other and said simultaneously with a grin, "Wicked."

"Oh please tell this one to pretend to strangle me, Piers, Piers take a picture of this!" The beefy boy exclaimed as a large brown viper slithered toward him as accordance to Harry’s hisses. Piers, currently with an intimidating cobra wrapped around his head like an ancient Egyptian noble’s headgear complied with glee. Crowds of families and children gaped and pointed at the trio who were surrounded by dozens upon dozens of snakes, probably thinking this to be some sort of show. Though it was mainly the smallest pale boy with the stunning green eyes in the limelight as the legless reptiles seemed to be much more attracted to him, wrapping around his legs and torso, almost stroking the child as if trying to entice him. A few people couldn’t help but fail to stifle a laugh when particularly aggressive black mamba slithered up the boy’s shirt earning a high pitched yelp of surprise.

"Wow that one really does like you.” Dudley wolf whistled mockingly, "Get a room you two.” His jeers were quickly cut off with an unmanly screech as Harry fished out the offending snake from under his clothes and threw it at him. Fortunately for Dudley, the snake was just as shocked at the sudden action and merely bumped off of the brunet’s still rather chubby figure and onto the floor hissing indignantly. Unfortunately for Harry that was the moment the other two thirds of the Dursleys arrived, signaled by his Aunt’s unmistakable shriek and his Uncle’s signature bellow.

"FREAK!"

Harry stared at the furious couple turning a rather ugly shade between red and purple. Then at his two wide-eyed companions, looking with fear mainly for him than themselves. Then at the snakes surrounding him, all heads reared up intimidatingly and protectively as they sensed the aggression and violent intent toward their Death God and potential mate (which no offence to the creatures, was
Dudley looked at the cupboard door in front of him. It was hard. So hard. To come to terms with what his family had done. What his parents had done. Harry didn't deserve any of this. Yeah he was a special kid with amazingly awesome powers but that didn't mean he should be punished. The large boy sometimes found himself wishing he too had Harry's magic abilities but it always faded fast, he had grown up with love and care and affection. Admittedly probably too much of it. But his cousin..

It's been eight days since that incident at the zoo.

Harry hasn't been let out properly once after the harsh beating his father gave when they arrived home that day, except the occasional times he was released for the bathroom but he was always immediately shoved back into that godawful place. But dear lord that beating that night. There was so much screaming and yelling and painful sounding noises that Dudley could still hear from his room, under his soft warm covers which he futilely used to try and block it all out, to ignore the wrongness of it all. Tears had sprung into his eyes as he heard his always so quiet little cousin inadvertently cry out with pain after the sickeningly familiar sound of something being whipped. That audible groan after a crash. The inevitable sob that Harry always will deny coming from him, saying it was just the human body's reaction as his bright green eyes are rimmed red from tears even when the smaller child always denied it. It was probably the worst 'session' Dudley had heard so far. He was sure he had heard the cracking of bone just like he saw on tv and suddenly he wished he hadn't watched so many violent shows, just so he couldn't recognize what was happening only a mere few feet away from him in his own house.

He stared at the cupboard. Such an ugly thing that hid an uglier secret. A messy peanut butter sandwich in one of his hands and an apple in the other. Placing them both down next to a cup of water, the brunet boy looked around nervously for any signs of his parents, an unneeded and paranoid gesture considering it was the middle of the night. Satisfied, Dudley silently pulled out a key from his pajama pocket and slowly unlocked the door. It had been hard to find the opportunity to snatch the little metal object and he couldn't stop the sigh of relief as the lock clicked open.

"Harry?" The large boy whispered fearfully. What if his cousin was unconscious? What if he was dead?! He had read that people can live a month without food and two weeks without water but Harry was just so tiny and fragile and he was a kid! Oh god, he could just imagined his closest friend's corpse staring at him in the cramped cupboard, eyes no longer glowing with life and magic, mouth opened accusingly yet no sound leaving his lips, his body as bone thin as ever and only slightly paler than before. "Harry please are you in there?" Dudley pleaded.

"Dudley?" A soft voice groaned. "Bloody hell how long have I been stuck in this hole?"

"Bout eight days. And probably a few more days longer too, my parents are seriously pissed." The older answered apologetically, then he added sorrowfully, "Happy Birthday Harry."

The unruly haired boy looked at him with touched amusement. "Thanks." Dudley felt his already guilt-filled body twist at that. He didn't deserve such an expression. Not when his family and him had done this to the other.

"I got you food and water." He offered, but it felt feeble and weak on his tongue. "Peanut butter. I know you liked it when I gave you half my sandwich at school."
Harry grinned, it wasn't a big smile, it never was but it was bright and real and Dudley just marveled at how his cousin seemed so delighted at this one measly, pathetic looking sandwich. "You made this for me by yourself?

"Yeah.." The large brunet murmured bashfully, it was the first time the boy had ever made something in the kitchen and they both knew it. "It's probably pretty terrible." He joked lamely.

The sandwich was taken gently from his pudgy hands by slim pale fingers, moving toward the raven haired child's mouth as he slowly but into it, even though Dudley knew the other must be starving the smaller boy savorod the simple meal. "It's delicious." Harry said seriously, on his face was a wide smile, the largest Dudley had seen on his cousin, which really to most people would be considered a generally normal smile but the Dursley boy was overcome with a warm bubbling of pride and real accomplishment at the sight. It felt better than when his ma and dad praised him. Way better.

"Oh, and I got these." He added before he forgot. Dudley quickly turned and ran to the television room and grabbed something from behind the tv before scampering back to the cupboard. "It happened the day after you got locked in." The brunet informed as he presented a heap of unopened envelopes to his now wide-eyed cousin. "I managed to get them all before ma or pa could see them. Thought if they found them you'll get hurt even worse." He explained, "It's weird. They just keep coming each day in the weirdest places!"

"Very eloquent Dudley."

"Oh shush Harry. Not all of us can know big boring adult words like you do you nerd. Anyway, just the other day there was some that came in ma's egg basket, and boy that was hard to snatch without anyone looking but Piers helped with distracting them."

Taking one of the letters Harry could easily make out in the moonlit darkness his name and the address that included the fact that he lived in the cupboard under the stairs. Wow. Whoever wrote this were pretty cold mortals if they knew he was living in less than comfortable conditions and only wrote him a bloody letter.

"Have you opened one yet?" The green eyed child asked curiously, fingering the edge of the envelope, itching to carefully tear it. His older cousin shook his head. "Nah, figured you'll want first crack at it since its addressed to you and all." Dudley cracked an impish smirk, "Also if that thing is cursed at least I won't be hurt."

"Jerk."

"I know I am but what are you?" The larger boy frowned as his own words registered in his mind. "Er.. That was not what I meant."

The duo looked at each other and burst out laughing. It was a little forced and a touch hysterical for both parties, as they tried to forget the guilt and resentment of the past few days and try to focus on each other. "So seriously you gonna open that Harry?" Dudley finally asked. Harry nodded and with a neat tear down one of the paper packet's side he took out a letter and started to read it out loud.

**HOGWARTS SCHOOL of WITCHCRAFT and WIZARDRY**

*Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore*

*(Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chf. Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards)*
Dear Mr. Potter,

We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Please find enclosed a list of all necessary books and equipment.

Term begins on 1 September. We await your owl by no later than 31 July.

Yours sincerely,

Minerva McGonagall

Deputy Headmistress

"Oh my god." Harry could not freaking believe this. There's a school. Well actually if he really thought about it of course there should be a school. It would be stupid not to have one. Not to mention Hogwarts? Wasn't that the Founder's school they always talked about? Huh. How ironic. But he was bloody eleven years old and was pretty sure that starting a magic school at a younger age would be in general, an all round smarter less stupid idea. What did magical families do with their kids for eleven years? Just sit in their houses like idiots? What about the non-magical families? Did they just expect those parents to go 'Oh. Magic? Well that does explain why little Amanda here could move things with her mind but I always thought she was a mutant like in those comic books, no big deal, at least I've finally got an answer after waiting in ignorant anxiety for eleven years.' then shrug the whole thing off like it was nothing? Actually, the better question was, what sort of backwards school was this then, to just drop something so big by note of all things? Not to mention did most wizards just live in cupboards under their stairs? Is that why no one was making a big deal about his living situation? Magical mortals seemed dumber than regular ones apparently.

Dudley however, did not seem to share the physically younger boy's skepticism and disapproval about this whole thing. He seemed to be still stuck on the fact that there was a school for magical people like his cousin. The elder of the two began nattering on animatedly about the possibilities and how cool it was and something to do with broomsticks. Really. Children. But Harry had grown fond of his cousin and so indulged the boy in his eager ramblings and wonderings on what he thought Hogwarts would be like.

They talked and chattered about everything and nothing at all, until the moon slowly went down to meet the other half of the world and the sun was slowly making its way to greet them. The two parted ways, one much more reluctant than the other but after much reassurance from a cheerier green eyed boy with unruly shadow black locks, Dudley finally locked the cupboard door and left his cousin in that cramped little prison under the stairs.

Harry, once his cousin was gone, ignored the ache in his muscles and flesh and bones (pain, while a novel concept to the entity, was beginning to find the whole experience less morbidly fascinating and more throbbingly discomforting now) decided to pile the large amount of envelopes neatly in the corner of his room. It was the first time he'd received mail in this lifetime after all so he didn't want to burn the things just to make some extra space in his cupboard. Not that he was certainly going to let the place clutter up either.

As he began picking up the scattered pockets of paper, his sharp gaze found itself resting on a single stray envelope that had isolated itself from the others. At first glance Harry would have almost dismissed the pause of his actions- if he hadn't felt his ethereally bright green eyes glow faintly as they laid sight on it and the entity in him softly cooed with the familiar shadow of power that greeted him and entwined weakly to his own.

The malnourished child quickly, and to his slight vexation, messily pushed the Hogwarts letters into
a corner and collect the lone envelope that practically sang to him. As his fingers clung to the white
parchment Harry smiled as a fond nostalgia and achingly warm homesickness filled in him.
Trembling with these newfound emotions, ones that tasted bittersweet in his mouth and felt oddly
like when Uncle Vernon tried to strangle him but nicer, the entity tore open the letter with much
more eagerness than any magical school could entice from him. Harry immediately recognized the
messily, slanted handwriting, haphazardly ignoring the whole 'writing in a straight line' rule every
being tries to obey and smiled as widely as his face would allow.

Dear Death,

Or is it Harry now?

Well since Harry is kind of a super lame name I'm going to stick with Death. Or Big D. Of course
last time I called you that you kicked me out of Hell. Actually to be more accurate Lucifer kicked me
out of Hell. You watched with that half smile of yours and I'm pretty sure I saw you high five that
damn devil. It was a pretty unenthusiastic high five, one of the worst I've seen really, but I know what
I saw.

Anyway we're all watching you up there and I gotta say brother, I am. so. PROUD.

Harry snorted. Trust Chaos to say that..

At least one of us always has an eye on you and don't worry about your Realms, we've got it all
covered. Kind of. You have a serious lot of crap to do. It was Life, Knowledge, Time and my turn
this year to do your filing and shit and I swear to God I am so very sorry Death for instigating that
interplanetary war with Mars and that zombie apocalypse two decades ago. New appreciation for
your job. Still boring as though. No wonder you finally cracked and eloped.

Personally I bet everyone you would've left your stupid giant paperwork filled office when Hell
freezes over- and guess what? It has not. Trust me. I checked. Twice. Also your minions down there
are not happy you've gone and I've temporarily taken over, I would've thought they would have liked
if Chaos reigned supreme. Ingrates.

If it makes you feel better, no one won that betting pool on when you finally went. Space was the
closest because he said and I quote 'The poor man will probably only leave because of something
stupid he agreed to since you all are so pushy.' Which isn't exactly a proper guess so that doesn't

Also by the way, your relatives? The Durs-lames?

Yeah they are so going to Hell.

We've all cleared a nice little space there and started renovation with our little... 'personal touches'.
You should see Magic's contribution- like dear god, it made me feel inadequate and that's saying
something!

So you're probably wondering why we haven't written till now. Well we thought you needed some
privacy with your vacation... It's totally not because it took this long to figure out how your job works
and put some semblance of a plan to tackle your ginormous and frankly terrifying workload (even
Order was intimidated and he's freaking Order).

Anyway I'll just let you know we're all watching you -toOtally not betting on your life btw because
that would be wrong. Heh. Oh who are we kidding? I already won a pyramid as well as a large
chunk of some underground crypt in France because I just knew one of those scaly narcissistic
worms would try cop a feel haha. Once I'm off your paperwork duty I am SO raising some undead mummies and confuse the hell out of people by placing them in random states in America for no reason.


So yeah, no offense. America sucks.

And while all of us have really wanted to intervene more than a few times at what we saw but we (when I say that I mean they not me) have decided to respect your privacy and will occasionally send you letters now that you'll soon be away from those two disgusting dredges of human scum. I'm forced against my will to write that we all miss you and other such sappy nonsense but since Love will be taking a bat at the intra-realm correspondence thing next time I assume she'll be more than happy to cover all that jazz. Yes we did choose who goes next via a lucky draw, don't look at me like that damn it, but it beat fighting over who went first because let's face it- we all are selfish and suck and don't want to share.

I may have won the draw by cheating but that just shows how much I love you : )

Of course since we (this time I do mean we now) are snoopy nosy bastards, all of us will stoop to interfering a teensy tiny bit. Not too much. We need some fun too after all. Okay we need a lot of fun. Or bad things happen. Bad things.

(Whisper) Baaaaaad thinngs.

Okay I'm done screwing around now, okay well not really, but I am near out of time and Order is currently hunting me down with a very large, very scary looking knife gun. Yes, I know. That ass stole my knife gun. Wish you were there to see it. Or stop it.

Well since you can't write back (one way pen pals and all I'm afraid) I'll just cut this off now.

See ya bro!

Chaos.

Harry slowly closed the note with a smile and the warmest glimmer in his eyes. Wow, it was strange reading something by one of his fellow entities. The representative of death turned human didn't realise how much he had actually missed everyone till he saw this. It was… hard to explain what he was feeling but it was somewhere between nice, terribly uncertain and maybe some regret mixed into it just enough to make his stomach churn uncomfortably enough.

However his maudlin musings were put on hold as Harry watched with an intrigued expression whilst the ink on the back of his folded note began scrawling by itself in the embodiment of all things chaotic's more casual scrawl. Which was even messier than before, Harry had to squint and pull the piece of enchanted paper closer to make out the words.

P.S. I'm sending you some of my paperwork. :P
There was a short silence until the child suddenly realised the envelope in front of him, before innocently empty now looked… bulkier. Without a word, Harry summoned bright vengeful looking crimson flames with his free hand and lowered them threateningly at the document stuffed envelope, burning green eyes narrowing for a whole different reason as the wretched note continued writing itself.

*P.P.S. No you can't burn it I've tried. Order and Magic made it so the only way it's gone is when you've finished completing the stuff handed to you.*

The personification of death hissed but let his fire from his fingertips flicker out.

"Fuck you Chaos." Harry snarled at the offending pieces of paper like they were the reason he was apparently stuck with his work whilst on holiday. That act of defiance was not even close to satisfying considering the subject of his ire wasn't here to fully face his very displeased face. Coward.

*P.P.P.S. Fuck you too ;3*

This time Harry did crumple and throw the letter against the wall.

It mockingly straightened itself out.

The entity groaned and kicked the envelope now filled to the brim with all too familiar files and sheets and documents.

"Damn it."
Death's shopping spree

The one where Death talks his way into going to school (which lets be honest- is the complete opposite of what any other kid would've done), reprimands a teacher (another thing sane kids don't do) and meets a few important characters in the plot line when shopping.

"Uncle Vernon, may I please talk to you?" A small boy with hair as black as a burnt corpse, skin as white as a drowned one and bruises as red as the blood in his veins, timidly questioned as he quietly moved closer to the dining table. Harry had finally been allowed out of his tiny cupboard much to his relief (he had been getting a little stir crazy and he had been forced to consume his new spider friends when his hunger cravings got too bad for him to willingly endure) only to be forced back into his usual duties of cooking. A welcome change of pace if it wasn't completely mocking the fact that his nutrition level was far from healthy. However, it did allow him the opportunity to ask the one question he had been mentally going over in his head for the past few days in darkness. "Please?"

The obese whale of a pig merely grunted between bites of pork crackling. It was a disgusting sight but the meat smelled so good Harry was fighting his physical body's reaction to drool in a very undignified manner. Since the boy couldn't exactly determine if the noise from his biological uncle was affirmative or not, Harry decided to just continue.

"Well... Uh, sir. I just, well, you see.."

"Spit it out boy!" Vernon spat impatiently. Harry really wished the older man hadn't done that. Especially when facing him. Urgh. The boy though kept his face blank and free of the revulsion he was currently reeling from.

"I wish to go to Hogwarts sir." Harry answered clearly and honestly. Then the child gave his best self-deprecating smile. It was much easier to pull off then he thought. "It's a place for freaks like me after all."

Most people with a decent conscious and a semi-functioning heart would have long melted under such a sight, Uncle Vernon just sneered. "I'm sure it is freak. I've heard about what sort of.. school that place is from Petunia and I refuse to let you step one foot in there."

"But why sir?" He asked, the raven-haired boy decided not to cry at this moment because it would only demean himself for no manipulative value but he did add a slight waver in his soft voice. It probably wouldn't work with the obese male but Harry would like to think of this as practice against a brick wall. A very ugly fat brick wall that's consuming roasted pig at an alarming rate.

The man answered with said mouthful of pork so Harry couldn't really understand what was being said but the eleven year old was sure it was along the lines of 'Because I don't like you,' 'Because I can't stand you and don't want to see you happy in any sort of way,' and 'Because I'm a selfish arrogant ass who is going to speared and roasted on the spit by the fires of Hell.' When Vernon was finally done, so was Harry.

"Look Uncle Vernon." Harry started, all meekness gone from his short stature. In its place was a calm assertive air which, while did not dominate nor felt overall aggressive it did give an underlying cold silent intimidation that would make the most rebelliously stubborn sit up and straighten their backs unconsciously. "I understand. You think I'm a freak yes?"

The fat male nodded slowly, and the entity now mortal had the sudden and rather humorous deja vu moment of all those years ago when Dudley and he were in very similar positions. "Well what if I
told you Hogwarts is essentially an all-year round boarding school? If I went I'm sure I'll be gone for... Maybe nine months? I don't even have to show my face at Christmas, just one nine-week summer holiday every year."

Vernon stared at him like the child just spouted off the latest theories of astrophysics instead of the simple and clear explanation it was. Apparently his uncle was much slower in the brain development department than his son as his comprehension to read between the lines was terribly slow. Even with intentionally very large spaces outlined in crayon. Actually Vernon was probably still stuck on how his usually timid monster of a nephew had been wearing a facade instead. The moron most likely didn't even know it was a facade still. Idiotic lump of semi-sentient lard. What in Heaven's name was any reasonable being (mortal, deity and entity) thinking, deciding to let these distasteful example of human specimens live was beyond him. To think there was more of them crawling around on the same planet made the child's skin shudder in disgust much like the idea of feeling a swarm of oil covered cockroaches climbing up his arm.

After what was probably a good whole minute of silence between the two relatives, the younger decided to continue on just in case the thickness of the other's head had failed to be penetrated by his sound logic. "Uncle Vernon." He started slowly like speaking to a particularly dim child. "If you let me go..." The boy paused waiting a second for the simple words to slowly sink into his uncle's mind like rocks thrown into sludgy mud, "You'll won't ever have to bother with my freakishness for a long time. Your son won't have to either." He added thoughtfully.

That seemed to do something for his uncle as that blank unseeing expression morphed back to a much familiar shade of red that would've looked quite lovely on anything else but this man's face. It was Harry's last proper coherent thought before a beefy hand grabbed the hair on the back of his head and slammed his face hard onto the table. The entity in a mortal body could barely let out a grunt of pain before his forehead felt the impact a second time. And a third. And a fourth. Finally he was blessedly released from the tight hold on his hair and lifted harshly by his chin to face the angry older man, red-faced and panting from physical exertion. For some reason the first thing on Harry's mind when the fog of pain subsided slightly, was that really, Vernon should be in better shape considering the amount of practice he had in beating him black and bruised.

"Listen here boy." Uncle Vernon hissed, close enough for more spittle to fly onto his face, much to Harry's immense displeasure. The boy could smell meat and fat and garlic as well as something inherently sour on the walrus-like male's breath which made him want to point his, now bloody, nose in the air and sneer. It wasn't an expression he usually ever made, despite the fact he was indeed one of the few people who was genuinely considered actually 'better and above everyone else', it wasn't in his nature to be arrogant but something about this infuriating mortal made him want to pull all the damn stops. Harry was patient. But he wasn't that patient. "I'll let you go to that damned freak show school of yours but if you threaten my son again..." The elder of the pair trailed off in what was supposed to be, well, Harry didn't really understand what the effect was supposed to do but it evidently wasn't working. He just felt confused. Harry didn't mean to threaten Dudley, it was just meant to point out a positive outcome to his absence in a way that appealed to the man's delusional prejudices. How was that threatening?

The child nodded anyway, he had already got what he essentially wanted and it was good thing too since he'd smuggled out his acceptance letter he had written about four hours ago after breakfast. Hopefully those ravens really did know a professional messenger owl, those birds were a bit too proud and playful sometimes but Harry was sure those big black birds will do their job with as much professionalism a bird could muster. After all, when did the Grim Reaper (it still made him chuckle at being immediately type-casted as the being that was practically his son, if only they knew) ever ask a mere raven's help? They'll probably squawk about that for generations to come, especially if he gives
them a little thank you gift. Harry was thinking of something along the lines of a charmed silver egg that would sing or something.

Uncle Vernon scowled at the easy acceptance to his threat but seemed overall appeased. It didn't stop him from giving that extra hard shove to the thin child when Harry was turning to leave the room. The boy managed to save his face taking another hit by a flat unforgiving surface but his forearms were not so lucky, taking the brunt of the impact.

That was going to bruise badly in the morning. Actually, he was darkly interested at how messed up his face will look the next day. Harry really hoped he wasn't going to have a black eye though, what with his whiter than snow skin and blacker than the darkest sin hair. The last time he had one of those Harry swore he looked like a really ugly panda. Dudley and Piers said he looked oddly adorable with his giant sad green eyes added to the mix of his genetics which, strangely enough, didn't make him feel any better.

Harry knew his next step was to focus on the small problem of finding all of his required school stuff before term starts, instead of worrying about his looks but honestly what with the throbbing aches all over his body it was just easier to think about the more simple things in life. God he really hoped he wouldn't get a black eye.

*knock* *knock*

"FREAK GET THE DOOR!"

"YES UNCLE!" The boy shouted dutifully, running swiftly towards the door and valiantly ignoring the bruises on his knees, arms, head and his general soreness that usually came when his body neared the edge of fatigue and hunger. He had begun to seriously miss his old body, the one that wouldn't even twitch when a knife was imbedded into him, where tears from physical stress was something of an unknown and blood only flowed through his veins for decorative purposes. Harry had already memorized the pained sensation of aching muscles, tender skin and had noted every shade of bruise he had possibly ever had. Pain and hurt and stress was no longer the intriguing mysteries it had been before, it had become boring with Vernon's rather repetitive choice of discipline- dull, annoying, an unwanted inconvenience. Needless to say it was probably the driving force of why he was trying so hard to get into Hogwarts. It sounded a little cold. Very indifferent. But it was true and it was him.

Harry Potter was bored.

Playing the abused child with pretty powers in a suburban neighborhood with his two friends was fun. Still was. But it's lost that 'something' that made things refreshing and vivid and just that little bit more engaging. He was on vacation for god's sakes! And yes, while he's had much more freedom than he's ever really had ever, those past few mind-numbing days that only ended the day before last made Harry realize how little he was inefficient he was using his holiday time. The cupboard had long since failed to capture his interests anymore and become more tedious punishment and an obligatory resting place than the interesting tiny human cave he thought it to be.

Things he thought to be fascinating and admirable have started to lose its appeal. And that really was the sign that Harry should start to try something new. Something he had never done before. Something that he just knew would make Magic and Chaos and maybe Life roll around in laughter. It was something all entities had in them, though Death himself had never really acted on those impulses and he was sure everyone would be amused at seeing him indulge himself this way.
Because even he had to admit… Being a little bit of a drama queen and, as the mortals say these days, stirring an already overflowing pot, is always entertainingly funny.

So when Harry opened the door and came face to face with a serious looking woman in black robes, the stereotypical witches hat and an aura of stern discipline, the messy haired child couldn't stop the faint, cheeky grin carving itself onto his usual stony expression. Luckily thanks to his inability to properly express emotions, it usually came off as a polite shy smile to the people who barely knew him.

"Good morning ma'am." He greeted shyly. Harry made a show of widening his big child-like eyes in wonder as he took in the woman's appearance, knowing full well how the vibrant green shined in the morning light. "Are you here to see someone?" He asked, completely aware from the robes alone that clearly that someone was him. "I don't recall Uncle Vernon or Aunt Petunia telling me about any guests." The boy adds on anyway, emphasising his I'm such a sweet innocent child, please don't hurt me display he had going.

The woman looks down at him, her yellow-green eyes scanning over his petite figure, gaze pausing to take in his various bruises first before settling on Harry's vibrant eyes of intense green and lightening bolt shaped scar. Harry decided from that alone that this lady definitely had her priorities straight. A practical and observant woman. Whether she is essentially 'good' or not was something completely different.

"Actually I'm here for you Mr Potter." She began, her voice posh and serious but not unfriendly nor arrogant, multiple images of the stereotypical 'tough love' teachers on television and books came to mind at that moment. And from a look she had already determined his identity, so she was a smart women too. He could see himself warming up to her. "I'm the Deputy Headmistress Minerva McGonagall but you may just call me Professor McGonagall."

Oh.

Oh.

Suddenly the growing warmth of, not affection but something more akin to respect, plummeted to frigid cold extremities.

"You were the one to write my letter?" Harry questioned, all child-like politeness and meek kindness seeped out of his voice and face like blood gushing out of a disembowelled corpse. Tiny hands clenched and trembling with barely suppressed rage that he didn't even know he had, not to this depth, until now. "You were the one who sent it with my address? A very specific address I may add?" The last question asked in a furious hiss, low and dangerous and passionately fierce.

The professor recoiled at the sudden demeanour change in the boy, a flicker of fear at the sheer anger directed at her, of such magical strength harnessed and sharpened like a wicked blade threatening and looming, before it drowned in the guilt she felt as those accusing words imprinted in her skin like a burning tattoo. "Mr Potter, I didn't-" She began but paused, unable to think of anything to defend herself with.

When Professor McGonagall saw the letter write itself out, the address it was going to be headed to, a part of her didn't want to believe it, refused to. Albus had promised he would keep the boy safe for Merlin's sake! Even when she confronted him about it, when she argued, doubted, when she knew those Dursley's were the worst sort of muggles… Even after all that the woman knew she had still been hoping what in front of her was wrong, denying the truth. She was pathetically hiding from the harsh reality literally in front of her in the form of a bruised malnourished boy with green eyes that darkened with things no child should have gone through on their watch.
And she called herself a Gryffindor.

All that McGonagall could say in reply was a feeble, soft, "I didn't know."

"You didn't know?" How did the boy manage to make the words sound so innocent and mocking at the same time. Maybe it was just the shame in herself that was twisting and warping his words to hit harder than it was meant to. "You didn't see the writing on the envelope that informed you I lived in a cupboard under the stairs? You didn't know that I get locked in there enough times that I can probably recreate the space down to every last dusty corner and dirt ridden floorboard? Maybe you didn't know I literally eat the food scraps off my relatives plates when I'm lucky enough or maybe you didn't know that I'm more acquainted with my uncle's belt on my back then the taste of ice cream on my tongue!?

Each sentence was a personally made bullet, aimed against shattering whatever illusions, justifications the woman had built up as her reasoning, that Harry took a sickeningly vindictive pleasure in watching them fall as well as the colour from her face as he near screamed out what his body had to endure for the past eleven years. To be perfectly candid though, he wasn't really personally enraged at the treatment. After all he could've got out of it anytime he'd liked and gone to Tahiti if he wanted to, hell, he could have ruled Tahiti if he wanted to. But that wasn't why he was mad, well actually it was why, but for a slightly different reason.

He was furious on behalf of Harry Potter. Not him. But the Boy That Could Have Been. Because this treatment wasn't really meant for him, these people didn't know they were dealing with an entity of an age no one could truly fathom, a being of immeasurable power, one who found the concept of being in pain as exciting and refreshing as drinking soda for the first time, no, they thought him to be just a small innocent child. They thought him to be just a little boy yet they had beat him and starved him and isolated him with cruel remarks and callous lies. And maybe this woman doesn't deserve the tongue lashing he was giving her, maybe she honestly didn't know, or maybe she did know, she had an inkling ever since she saw the letter but like every other adult he'd met so far, had stubbornly refused to move from their ignorant bliss. Either way, Harry had decided that he was going to stir the pot good, and things were definitely going to change. Because whilst he couldn't really find much of him to care about how he was treated, at the same time the entity would never wish to even passively encourage such abuse and the people who left him on the Dursley's doorsteps were going to know that well. Children should never have to be treated the way he had been.

Also, for a less noble reason, that he would rather not admit to, it had been a while since he'd last had a near hysterical hissy fit and Harry just knew he needed to let one out ever since he'd missed his chance at the Reaper that essentially screwed him over. But that's totally not here nor there.

Minevra McGonagall opened her mouth to respond but words refused to come out of her mouth. She was appalled. And disgusted. And so, so sick to her stomach because she knew what the boy was saying were no exaggerations and that she had let them send him there, to that deplorable place with those hideous people. Harry couldn't possibly have known but it felt like he did, like he knew she was a part of it, somewhere, the reason for his mistreatment. Because she did know. She did know and yet just because she believed in Dumbledore she had reasoned any uncertainties away. And Harry's blunt words had stripped every excuse her mind could and had made to make up for her actions, or in this case inactions.

The child, Mr Potter, Harry, watched her quietly, eyes hardened and piercing like hooks that seemed to be trying to tear down the elder woman as he waited for her to struggle with something, anything, to say.

"I'm so sorry Harry." Because calling him Mr Potter just didn't seem right at that moment, the boy
she had swore to look after, that everyone swore to keep safe, James and Lilly's son, had been failed. And the distance of basic etiquette could not do anything to convey how much this was killing the teacher inside, how previous beliefs and trusts and faith of certain people have now shattered into pieces as she tried futilely to mentally pick them up and figure out where should they go now. "I knew your parents, and I knew that your... relatives weren't the most pleasant of people but I still thought Alb- I will make things up to you," She quickly changed the subject, as much as she loathed the one man who was most accountable for this right now, she didn't want to upset the boy further. "Your aunt and uncle will definitely be seen accountable for what they've done, I'll make sure of it."

"Do not worry Professor." The boy reassured wryly which didn't really help in terms of comforting but Harry was still more than slightly miffed about his mistreatment from his relatives and how little the so-called school had done when they written his address. He was slightly mollified by the honest confession though. Slightly. Think of it as righteous indignation if you will. But at the same time whilst he would love the Dursley's to be put in a prison and as unlikeable as they were, Harry couldn't possibly do that to Dudley. His cousin needed his parents still and it would be selfish for him to take that away for vengeful satisfaction.

God, his thoughts were so needlessly complicated. Even he had trouble understanding himself sometimes.

"Those two will be going to hell once their lives are ended and that's enough knowledge to satisfy me."

The stern looking woman who was still quite visibly pale and shaken at his appearance and careless reveal of his background, tried to compose herself as they walked to the end of the garden. "I didn't take you as the religious sort Mr Potter." She replied a little shakily, making Harry raise an eyebrow. "You didn't take me as a cupboard living boy either miss." Harry pointed out politely. He didn't understand why the woman's features paled further at the reminder then flushed with defensive anger. Really, you would think he would understand mortal humans a bit better now but they were still, in his opinion, just as confusing as always. "For someone who has really only met me less than an hour ago, I don't think you should be making any preconceptions of me already."

"I didn't mean..." She began, but the young boy interrupted her, much to her displeasure of the thinning of her lips were any indication.

"I understand Professor." He offered with a wry smile. "Most people can't help but make pre-conceived notions about other people, it's really just something people have to live through."

The older of the two paused to look at Harry curiously, something akin to pity and simmering fury at something that wasn't the boy but Harry didn't really know of what. "Those were very wise words for someone so very young." She said. Vivid green eyes blinked, unsure of the appropriate response to what seemed to be a compliment but sounded too sad to possibly be one. The boy just shrugged, like the action could let his discomfort roll off from his shoulders. It didn't but the gesture was oddly comforting. Humans with their strange little twitches. Harry found it only slightly unnerving how he was slowly and subconsciously learning these things.

"Well, not many people this young has experienced some things I have." He tried to reassure. It didn't work. If anything Mcgonagall looked even sadder. God dammit. "What I mean is," Harry hastily added as he looked up at the woman's forlorn expression, her lines in her face more pronounced and she just seemed so old and defeated, nothing like the cool powerful lady who knocked sharply on his door. "It's hard not to seek some sort of solace in a greater being. In a world where everything can break in a blink of an eye, can turn against you in a moment it's so very easy to find comfort in something that you believe will never leave your side. When you feel like the world
is on your shoulders and you have no one to turn to pass even a tiny sliver of your burdens, to speak about the fears that no one but yourself truly can understand it feels less sad and less lonely thinking that there is at least someone there for you, listening to your troubles.

The idea of something greater, something so big that no one can comprehend, is watching you, looking upon you without disdained contempt or warm love, is both humbling and comforting to think of and a belief I welcome open heartedly as a balm to ease my anxieties and worries. It's not a weakness to depend on someone that may or may not be real as long as it doesn't control you and when it fails to do that it can become a source of strength and courage that one would previously hadn't had the heart to uphold."

Harry smiled tentatively at the older lady, hoping his sincere explanation would help with whatever strife she was dealing with. It was true what he'd said. He really did believe in a God. One that was the reason for his existence and his fellow brothers and sisters. The entity always secretly liked the thought, that there were things bigger and more incomprehensible and more overwhelmingly powerful than he could ever be, out there. There was a strange, admittedly uneasy refuge he found in the belief of a greater God. Someone he could curse and place blame for his stresses and problems which ultimately come from everyone else cursing and blaming him. It made him feel less isolated. Less different. Less... Abnormal.

And maybe, maybe in the deepest darkest parts of his very being, maybe, he just didn't want to be the last one to walk and breathe alone as universes crumble, worlds become empty and everything finally succumbs into nothingness.

"Mr Potter, are you alright?"

Avada Kedavra green eyes blinked rapidly, his vision was unexplainably blurry and his throat felt strangely blocked. It felt like every part of him was choking but not really. Human bodies were strange, his had only reacted this way when he was in physical pain, was he hurting in some way?

"Ah, uh, yes Professor." Harry murmured softly, the raven haired child didn't really trust his voice not to remain steady if he spoke up any louder. Stupid human vocal chords, screwing up for no reason. "I'm fine, really I am."

The stern lady didn't look convinced at him at all but gave a short, sharp nod in acquiescence anyway. Though much to the eleven year old's immense intrigue, the woman's already pursed lips were practically non-existent at that point. "I see." Harry really did not think she did.

Still he coughed a little to clear his throat and Mcgonagall had the polite decency to attempt to ignore him trying to reassert his control over his physical body. The child decided he liked that about her, Harry always hated these sudden slips of unintentional weaknesses, he always found it humiliating, mortifying and unnervingly vulnerable. He was quickly finished calming himself and looked up to meet the professor's eyes and shyly nodded, a very light flush of pale pink dusting over his cheeks in embarrassment. "So, Professor Mcgonagall," he started, "What are some of the magical ways of transport? I'm guessing it isn't just riding a broom everywhere yes?"

Mcgonagall looked like she wanted nothing better than to relentlessly pursue her curiosity about his sudden loss of composure as well as his home life (he wouldn't be that surprised if she thought the two were connected) but the woman seemed to take the hint and began explaining things like the Floo Network, the Knight Bus (which really sounded like something he definitely wanted to try out, like, immediately) and Apparition. Harry was quite engrossed in the explanation, the female professor was evidently, very good at her job and was both patient as well as informative in answering his questions whilst they began to walk a bit toward their destination. Professor Mcgonagall after a while looked much more sure of herself as her tense strained posture relaxed
slightly as she fell into the comforting flow of teaching. It really showed how much she enjoyed her work and Harry certainly could not fault her for that.

So Harry happily listened on, interjecting occasionally with a few questions and some comments that, by the surprise on the older lady's face, was probably much too mature and intelligent for what a boy his age should be asking. But that didn't matter, if anything Mcgonagall looked fairly impressed (he ignored the flashes of anguish on her expression that was occasionally shot toward him) and a good distraction from morbid thoughts and troubling choices was something needed. For both of them.

"So this is the Leaky Cauldron?" Harry asked. It was a rather redundant question considering they were standing right in front of the dingy looking place, sign of it very easily visible to their line of sight. Though the boy would defend himself in saying that it was almost immediately right after apparating into the area and wizards apparently enjoy very uncomfortable modes of travel. He missed his own, non-nausea inducing ways to move between places, ways that didn't encourage the bile from his stomach to come out of his mouth and didn't feel like someone had enthusiastically shoved an out of control merry-freaking-go-round into his aching head.

"Yes," Professor Mcgonagall answered stiffly, her stern lines on her face softened as they looked down at the ragged, green-eyed boy's doubtful look at the place, "While it is charmed so muggles can't see the pub, it had been agreed on that if the rare unaware squib stumbles across on the place that the Leaky Cauldron would be designed to be easily ignored and unappealing." Harry still seemed like he wanted to grab a bucket and mop to clean the whole building up but was understanding at the least.

The woman couldn't help but feel the now familiar rise of distressed mournfulness for the obviously abused boy and vicious animosity toward the one man responsible for Harry's childhood. Mcgonagall closed her eyes in an attempt to quell the conflicting emotions eating up inside of her every time she noticed how gaunt the boy was, sickly pale his skin and the way he unconsciously strays away from contact. 'Damn you Albus. Damn you to hell.'

They walked into the place, The Leaky Cauldron was busy today, much busier than Harry would have thought a pub like this should be but he wisely kept his slightly OCD comments silent. A part of him wondered how bad Order, with his excessive OCD and hatred of germs and unnecessary dirt, would have freaked if he was the one being dragged in here. The man probably would have cursed the place down. Or screamed bloody murder. Or actually just murder someone bloody.

"Ah, McGonagall!" A bald man behind the counter greeted heartily as he caught sight of the pair. "Your usual I presume?"

"No thank you Tom, I'm currently busy escorting Mr Potter here to buy his school supplies." Professor McGonagall smiled thinly, but there was a touch of fondness there that made one think twice about her strict demeanor.

Harry gave a shy wave to the man but didn't stray far from McGonagall. Moments later he was glad for it. Tom's eyes widened in recognition at him, eyes landing on his scar like a dehydrated man to a bottle of water. "Bless my soul," the bartender breathed, awed, "It's Harry Potter."

And just like that the whole place goes quiet. Harry wonders how on Life's green earth did they know his name and why it wa-ohdeargodno someone was coming up to him. And grasping his hand in a firm if very sweaty handshake. The boy was not pleased.
"Welcome back, Mr Potter, welcome back." The man gushed warmly. Harry, not really sure how he winded up in this situation decided to fall back to his old non-life's experience in greeting his children and subordinates. So with his free hand he gently patted the larger hands grasping his, giving the grown wizard a small but kind knowing smile like 'Yes, I am completely aware of why you look at me like I am your world and not only am I not weirded out by the attention but I gladly welcome it and appreciate your feelings'. "Thank you sir, I cherish your kind words." Harry replied. The man looked like he was on the ninth cloud (whatever that meant).

Immediately when the wizard let go another witch took his place. "Doris Crockford, Mr Potter. I can't believe I'm meeting you at last."

As soon as they saw how warmly the first man was welcomed as well as how cordial and friendly the Harry Potter was, soon the child was swamped with eager fans. Harry, being the polite being he was, attended each enthusiastic show of support with affectionate fondness and humble gratitudes. When he looked at his professor the woman seemed torn between telling everyone to leave the poor boy alone and shove off, or to leave Harry to his admirers considering how surprisingly easily the child was fairing. She seemed to be choosing the latter option, the boy couldn't help but think the professor was probably still reeling from her own personal problems that have been served eleven years cold, courtesy of none other than him. Harry felt a little bad about that, he did, but he knew that the lady needed to hear the truth and his usual passive-aggressive approach to everything wouldn't cut it.

Still. He wondered that, if McGonagall wasn't slightly daunted by his recent outburst, the two could've possibly be almost halfway done shopping by now. The poor woman was probably bored waiting for him to finish up, not to mention tight on schedule now that he'd put her 'bout two hours behind. Maybe even have more kids, actual loud messy kids, to accompany. Paperwork too. Dear, dear. Now he really did feel terrible for yelling.

"If you have anything you need, anything," The wizard stressed, gripping his thin fingers like a lifeline, the boy was having a bit of trouble trying to not pull his hands away from this frantic lunatic, "Just owl me, Gregovich Juniperber, assistant administrator of the Magical Creatures section in the Ministry."

Harry gave the man a rather shaky smile that the older didn't notice or was too enamored to care, said his obligatory few words of niceties and awkwardly waited for the stranger's hands to let go. He did not. After two whole minutes Harry couldn't take it anymore and looked pleadingly at the professor now watching rather bemusedly at the hole he had buried by himself. Luckily it seemed she too was quite impatient to get away as well so the woman put her drink down on the counter and walked purposely to the two.

"I think it's time to let go of Mr Potter's hand." McGonagall suggested in a tone that did not say she was suggesting anything, the man flushed and quickly complied muttering hasty apologies which somehow still managed to fit in a smattering of compliments before leaving to do whatever he had been doing before. Green eyes watched the adult move from earshot before slumping against the wall he had strategically placed himself against, and sighed loudly. "Oh thank the lord that's over." Professor McGonagall flashed him an expression that could only bely bemusement.

"You are aware that the word 'no' and its concept is still well accepted even in the Wizarding world Mr Potter?"

"But Professor, that's so impolite." Harry whines, barely registering that he's not even acting but
actually being the child his appearance suggest, yet way too tired to care. "I couldn't possibly," the boy makes an indiscriminate sound and waves a hand in haphazard motions to loosely imply the idea of rejecting someone. Especially ones so eager with expectations so low. God he hated being such a pushover.

The woman quirked a brow, but mercifully let it go. Though if the humored shine in her yellow-green eyes were any indication, Harry was sure that they'll be some form of gossip when she went back. Magic or no magic, Hell or Heaven, the inner workings of a school will always be the same.

"Well come along then," she said walking briskly away, Harry already respectfully behind her, "I apologize if from now on I seem to rush you. I still have one other future student to go to today and we are very quickly running low on time."

The boy grimaced at even the notion of having to accompany children during what is clearly the holidays and explain to them a whole new world in a few scant hours. Repeatedly. There was probably some part of Hell that was exactly that. If there wasn't there certainly should be.

"No, I should be the one to apologize for wasting so much of your time." Harry answered genuinely.

Professor McGonagall gave a small tilt of her lips that could've been a smile, or just a twitch and a flicker of the shady bar lights. "You may have seen it as wasted time Mr Potter, but for those people that have waited eleven years to meet their savior, those brief minutes with you, it was anything but wasted."

Now he was sure the professor was smiling. Obviously quite proud and his selfless use of his time. Though Harry still didn't fully comprehend why he was so famous, from what he'd gathered he was quite the celebrity for… doing… something. The child wasn't exactly sure what. Apparently he vanquished a nameless man? A homeless man? "So do come on, Diagon Alley may wait for you but I certainly will not."

Harry smiled and followed.

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Diagon Alley was.. Nice.

It wasn't fantastastic like a toaster but it was pretty cool. Very colorful. Extremely lively. Seriously loud. Kinda narrow. But Harry could see the appeal. He wouldn't particularly wish to work let alone live there but nonetheless Harry could see the appeal.

Professor Mcgonagall who had been leading him on, paused in their journey to whatever destination they were before so determinedly headed towards in pretence of waving formally and signalling a huge bearded man's attention. The large male lit up in recognition and bounded toward them, the crowd parting for him easily for fear of being trampled otherwise. Harry could very much relate. Damn his malnourished tiny body. Though the malnourished part was a tad his fault.

"Harry," Mcgonagall introduced, "This is-

"Rubeus Hagrid." The half-giant cheerfully greeted much to the female professor's consternation at being interrupted. "Keeper of the Keys and Grounds of Hogwarts." A large calloused hand was pushed toward Harry to shake and the boy without hesitation took it, a little bit fascinated by how tiny his own hand was in comparison to the man's, it felt insultingly like pushing a chihuahua in front of a Cerberus. "And you must 'ere be Harry Potter!"
Hagrid's announcement as expected caused quite a bit of chatter and openly gawking among the bystanders, Harry winced slightly at the sudden influx of attention once again directed towards him. And they had just calmed and settled down too. The large male looked around with a slight frown at the increasing crowd and leant down close to Harry as he whispered, not so quietly, "You know I knew yer parents. Good people they were. Even carried ya when you were just a babe."

"My parents were wizards?" He asked, genuinely surprised. Harry didn't know that. Too be fair Petunia never liked to talk about her sister and he, as Death, only took a brief glance at their cooling bodies and not so much of their background in general. His mother was obviously a.. muggle-born, which Harry honestly loathed saying because he was fairly sure muggle was just one of the dumbest words he had ever heard in his presence and he was going to smack the back of Magic's head when he become immortal again for making him endure such incredibly dim-sounding language.

But his father? The boy was quite sure his father was a pureblooded magical mortal if this Potter name was what he thought it to be. Ah, the Peveralls, he had always felt a sort of connection toward them and their descendants, a very.. unique place in his heart if you will follow common mortal sayings. A pity their bloodline has all but dried down to a few rare individuals. It seemed Death will have no master after all.

The two adults both shared a look at each other at the innocent question. "You didn't know?" Mcgonagall asked. Harry shook his head.

"I was told my parents were alcoholics that died painfully in a car crash." He answered, it was technically true, his relatives love telling him that story. Seriously if he was a normal child Harry didn't even want to think how warped that boy's psyche would be. A part of him felt a little glad that he'd accidentally killed the child off, really, the soul would probably have been taken sooner than later anywhere- most likely suffering from starvation and scarred with the memories of abuse. Looking at those tiny shivering souls of children who had been treated with such hostility and cruelty were always so pitifully sad, it was the closest thing Death, with all his cold indifference and unattached distance to these mortal beings, had felt to heartbroken. If dying immediately at birth was like getting a big zero in the game of Life (yes she does love that game and yes she does always win) then in Death's opinion, dying after and as a result of, shockingly, dreadful mistreatment was definitely scoring in the negatives. Because really, how could you truly call that living?

The two adults looked aptly horrified. Hagrid was flushed pink with anger whilst McGonagall apparently decided to take a more ashen look. Harry had to say they did not look great in those colours. Though Professor McGonagall did marvellously managed to bring to mind the image of a statue he had once saw in Greece when collecting souls lost to that woman with snakes for hair. Nice lady. Very lonely. He had felt so bad for her he asked Love to help set her up with someone. Who knew basilisks and gorgons made surprisingly very attractive offspring?

"'Arry.." Two huge hands practically enveloped his narrow shoulders. "Your parents weren't alcoholics who died in a car crash." Harry grimaced as Hagrid's grip tightened, he wasn't exactly the physical peak of health currently much less enough to stand up to a large man like the one in front of him. The boy was pretty sure he didn't have enough strength in his human vessel to tackle down a scarecrow. "They were wizards."

Green eyes widened as he forced himself to look like the stunned hopeful child he was supposed to be. "Wizards?" He breathed out. Truthfully he just really wanted to get the charades over with already and check out Diagon Alley. He was already exhausted from greeting his weirdly intense fans, the entity really didn't want to act any more than needed now. "Like me?"

Hagrid gave him a wide grin beneath his hairy beard, genuine, caring, honest warmth that Harry had
always found hard to emulate glimmered so naturally in his eyes. The boy didn't even need to look at the man's soul to know that this man was exactly what he appeared to be. "Thumpin' good ones at that. And I'd wager, once yer trained up a little ye'll be even better."

Even if he already knew that it was true, Harry still failed to fight the bubbling pride and pink flush creeping up on him. The urge to follow up to this giant of a man's expectations was strangely appealing to him. The compulsion to please wasn't what Harry assumed was like having a father figure looking over you proudly would be like, no it was surprisingly hard to see this oversized being as something of the sort, actually the entity in a mortal vessel figure it more of the feeling of having a small child look up to you like you invented chocolate chip ice-cream. Endearing and a bit of guilt because he did not invent the delicious flavoured treat but still feels complied to play along since disappointing such naivety was his emotional equivalent of hunting a baby doe.

"Thank you." The boy murmurs, faint blush still dusting his cheeks. Hagrid just grins toothily, slapping on the smaller of the two's back and nearly causing said boy to tumble into the hard pavement. "No problem Harry!"

Before the moment of silence following became too awkward, Professor McGonagall coughed and said, "Well Mr Potter, it has been a very… enlightening and eye-opening pleasure spending time with you today, however as I am on a bit of a tight schedule I hope you wouldn't mind Hagrid accompanying you for the rest of your trip?"

Hagrid brightened at the suggestion, it seemed the man had been very eager to take the job and Harry couldn't possibly refuse saying no to that, even if he didn't already like the man. Although the boy wasn't exactly sure the man would make a great teacher, Hagrid showed signs of being certainly quite proficient in handling children despite his intimidating size. Not that he was a child. Well he is but. God it's so very confusing, Harry swore he was going to have age-identity issues once he was done with everything.

"Yes, I'll be delighted for Hagrid to accompany me. I am sorry though that you cannot continue to accompany me." McGonagall definitely smiled this time and Harry returned it with his own crooked one. Hagrid just kind of grinned in the background. The raven haired boy then bid his farewell to the professor and parted ways, now with a noticeably much larger companion than before.

"So Hagrid." The younger began, "Where to first?"

"Well Harry, I was just off heading to Gringotts for a li'l errand to run. Yer don't mind do ya?"

Harry shook his head, "I'm good, I think the professor and I were heading there before to get some money anyway."

The moment they stepped into Gringotts, Harry could feel himself under the intense scrutiny of beady black eyes that made the boy feel like some sort of unidentifiable treasure yet to be weighed and judged. Goblins. Gringotts was a wizarding bank run by goblins. Funny, Harry kind of assumed it would be run by wizards.

Hagrid excused himself to complete whatever job he had initially come here for when Harry was obviously quite engrossed in looking around the interior of the place. The moment the boy was left alone, the goblins who were currently free practically ran toward him. The number of the creatures that were still busy attending their clients were scowling heavily, clearly unhappy at the thought of missing out being one of the first to greet the powerful being of death they all instinctively
recognised. To be fair though the ones available were a little struck speechless anyway. They were just staring and fidgeting and while it was decidedly very endearing it was also quite uncomfortable.

"Good afternoon sirs," Harry greeted formally and kindly, seeing the short humanoid creatures weren't going to start anytime soon. "I wish to withdraw some money from the bank but I'm not very sure what sort of currency this world runs in. Would it be a bother if I ask you to help me acquaint myself to the basic structure of wizarding economics? I wouldn't want to impose."

"You wouldn't bother or impose us at all Death Lord." One of the goblins blurted out, the others nodding in agreement, their usual twisted grimaces smoothed out into blatant but polite awe. How well-mannered, the humans should definitely try and learn a thing or two from them. The young almost angelically delicate boy, who really would not exactly be the first thing that came to mind when someone said Death Lord, smile indulgently at the creatures.

"I thank you then. Though I'm currently answering to the name Harry Potter right now if you don't mind," More than half the goblins in earshot if possible, boggled even harder at him. Harry could just see their minds absorbing the information and consequently shifting their current world view just enough to make them a bit dizzy. Luckily goblins were known for their high intelligence and the backlash of the significance of the statement was minimised, for which the boy was grateful. "Now," Harry clasped his hands together, "Who wants to tell me about your bank, who wants to show me my vault and who wants a hug?"

The last question was kind of a joke. But that didn't stop him from feeling a tiny bit offended that the majority of hands voted for boasting about their bank as opposed to being hugged.

"How much?"

The blonde teen at the register stared at the small mountain of books that actually was larger than the buyer of said books. To be completely fair though, the buyer looked like he was eight years old but still.

"Give me a moment." She muttered still gaping at the sheer number in front of her and how she really should have took the morning shift today. The boy looking up to her with gorgeous big green eyes gave a small, shy smile. "Thank you miss." And damn if that made her want to just pick the kid up and coddle him because Merlin he was cute.

The books ranged from basic fairy tales like Beedle and the Bard which she expected for the boy's age range to a very controversial grey text on Removed Runes And Rebellious Rituals Since 1500s. That one made her give a very scrutinizing look in where the child looked anywhere but her.

"Is this for an elder brother or sister?" She tentatively asked. "Because this seems like it's a bit too, uh, mature for you."

He shook his head, unruly black locks swaying at the motion. "No that's for me," the boy replied innocently, "I was raised by muggles so I want to know everything about this world before I join it."

The teen gave an 'ah' noise. "So first year at Hogwarts? Oh, and that'll be seventy-three galleons and nine sickles."

"Yup." The boy chirped as he fished out the coins from his pouch. "Thank you very much."

As the kid gave an extra adorable wave as he left the store, the blonde shop assistant couldn't help
but laugh. As it drew the attention of her fellow employee who was arranging the books up front before, she pointed at the door where the pretty boy with the really obscure taste in books just left and said, "If that kid doesn't become a Ravenclaw I'll eat my smock."

"I'll wait outside fer yer okay Harry?" Harry nodded obediently and went inside the store. A part of him was unsure at the protocol for actual clothes shopping. He's purchased books and an assortment of strange items in his past before as a whim or passing interest but clothing was always just a bother to him. Plus with a snap of his fingers he could dress and look however he wanted anyway so clothes shopping was unnecessary. It was probably the longest time anyone has ever gone, in the history of any universe, without needing to purchase clothes and Harry was truly sad to watch the streak finally end.

"Excuse me, I'm looking for some school robes?"

A squat woman dressed all in mauve who held a friendly grandmotherly air that reminded Harry fondly a bit of Love, greeted him with a warm smile.

"A firstie? Don't fret dear I'm sure we have your size. Anything else?" The woman, Harry was pretty sure was Madam Malkin, asked. The boy tilted his head in thought before answering,

"I'll need three sets of school robes, five casual robes and two traveling cloaks- for casual robes I don't have much of an opinion nor preference other than they be consisted mainly of dark colors but no black." He was a little sick of millenniums upon millenniums of seeing and wearing nothing but black but he certainly wasn't sick enough to think that he would ever look good in canary yellow. "For my cloaks, maybe one dark green with gold trimmings." He added thoughtfully, he'd always enjoy that combination of colors. "And blood red and silver. Other than I'm in your very good hands ma'am." He gave what he hoped was an absolutely winning smile to the elderly lady who blushed and grinned.

"Well aren't you a charmer Mr-?"

"Potter." Harry answered, "And I only charm the pretty ones."

For the woman's credit she didn't even bat an eyelash at the name given, only focusing on the boy's attempt of a compliment. "You. Are. So. Adorable!" Madam Malkin squealed, pinching his pale cheeks hard enough for actual color to mark visibly. Thank god for his innate healing because the boy would hate to explain those pink blotches on his face to Dudley. He wouldn't have been above lying and saying a dragon kissed him instead of an old witch pinched his cheek. "Anyway, go to the back sweetheart for your fitting, there's another young man being fitted up right now in fact."

Harry gave his thanks and a wink that he usually just reserved for Love or when he was about to reveal one of his rare pranks, and went to the back of the store.

"Hullo. Hogwarts too?" Why on earth did everyone keep asking if he's from Hogwarts? It wasn't like it was one of the only magical schools of England or anything. Oh. Wait.

Harry focused his previously wondering attention immediately the source of the bored drawling voice that came from the middle of the room. "Yes." He replied simply as he hopped onto one of the footstools, the raven haired boy eyeing up the new customer. It was another boy, his age, platinum blonde, looked like some elven fairy prince from stories and was consequently haughty as hell. The kid looked almost out of place in the brightly coloured clashes of colour and fabrics. Not that Harry
could really talk what with his whiter than white skin and darker than shadows in the night hair. Honestly, if he didn't have such obscenely intense coloured eyes one would think him straight from a black and white film.

"My father's next door buying my books and mother's up the street looking at wands," said the white boy. And that wasn't racist, (because mortal humans were incredibly touchy about that now) this child was literally white with the exception of his eyes which were grey. Though one could argue it was dark white. Or light black. And Harry blamed all humankind for how strange a turn his thought process has become in a mere eleven years. Or maybe he was always like that but now he had somehow learnt the art of awareness somewhere along the line. "Then I'm going to drag them off to look at racing brooms. I don't see why first years can't have their own. I think I'll bully father into getting me one and I'll smuggle it in somehow."

Harry looked at the other child. Really looked. Not enough to the point where he not-so-metaphorically could see into his soul but just at the little things. Because in his experience so far as a child, when you are greeted by a strange being your age that you wish to be friends with, they tend to either do two things- wait for you to start a conversation they can desperately latch onto, or they ramble about the first things that come out of their tiny heads in hopes the other person would join in. Sure this platinum blond seemed to be confident, but Harry could pick out the frequent glances his way and that little twitch in those fingers like he was determinedly trying not to clench them.

"Have you got your own broom?" The elven looking child asked. No, actually he looked a bit like those Veela now that he thought about it.

"No," Harry said. Because one, why on earth would he? And two, why on earth would he? Actually did the boy say 'racing brooms'? Never mind, Harry didn't really want to know.

"Play Quidditch at all?"

"No," Harry repeated, wondering what on Life's green earth a Quidditch could be. It sounded insanely stupid. Of course Magic would create some sort of thing with such a name just to laugh at the fact that people will now use that name seriously and with a straight face. It was just like her. And Chaos. And Life. And- well one gets the idea.

"I do - Father says it's a crime if I'm not picked to play for my house, and I must say, I agree. Know what house you'll be in yet?"

He had to give this child some credit here, the blonde was stubbornly persistent. If it were him, Harry would not have had the sheer will to keep socially leading a dying conversation. Not that he was letting the conversation purposely die. Just Harry had near no idea what this kid was on about.

"No," said Harry, "I don't actually know." Five words was apparently all he could come up with, he mentally whacked himself.

"Well, no one really knows until they get there, do they," White Boy hastily reassured him. The blonde had this air about him that made near everything sound condescending so most people would have thought the boy to be rudely dismissive at this point. Or just plain arrogant. Fortunately for the young child, Harry was certainly not most people. "but I know I'll be in Slytherin, all our family have been - imagine being in Hufflepuff, I think I'd leave, wouldn't you?"

"What's wrong with being in Hufflepuff?" Harry couldn't help but question curiously. "Other than the name of course." He could not stop himself from adding.

White Boy looked absolutely relieved that he finally had gotten a proper response this time, then
sniggered at the dry comment. "Yeah I know, it sounds completely pathetic. Suitable for the people who get sorted there I think."

The raven haired boy raised an eyebrow, "Well that's a bit harsh. Seriously though what's wrong with Hufflepuff that you'll actually leave school if you got into it?"

Now it was the other boy's turn to raise a brow. "You don't know?" Harry shook his head. The blonde sneered, though Harry was pretty sure that was more an ingrained response. His family had probably some sort of aristocratic standing and not to stereotype, but those 'old' families always encouraged their countries social prejudices. And Harry had a feeling he was just about to be introduced to one of them.

"There are four houses of Hogwarts- Slytherin is the best house." He began like it was just the most obvious thing to start off with. "It has all the most 'pure' and cunning of individuals, Ravenclaw is alright, the ones who get in there are all nerds and bookworms though, Gryffindor are for the stupid idiots," Harry decided that it just meant the warrior- or as you said nowadays the sporty types, "And finally Hufflepuff is where all the rejects who don't belong go. They say they have loyalty and all but everyone knows that that's hippogriff shite."

Harry frowned, not exactly willing to agree with the idea but still unsure how backwards this place really is. Loyalty was one of the best traits to have in his opinion, but at the same time it was quite the double-edged sword that is not only hard to earn but just as hard to wield. And in an environment filled with children where the flashy obvious traits of strength, wisdom and intellect were valued, loyalty would just seem to be a consolation prize in comparison. Definitely an under-appreciated group if he'd ever saw one if this was public opinion.

"I-"

"Say how come you didn't know that?" White Boy cut off curiously. Then without even waiting for a response the child must have come to his own conclusion and sneered even harder. It was hard not to roll his eyes, Harry was pretty sure he was about to meet with Prejudice no.2 now. "You're parents are our kind aren't they?"

"If you mean they were both humans with magic then yes." Ah, so there's disdain for people without powers here, very cliche. "If you mean alive then no. I was raised by my aunt and uncle. They aren't witches or wizards though." Harry continued just to see the other squirm a bit.

He was slightly disappointed with the lack of discomfort the child was showing at such casual admittance to being an orphan, though the blonde did fail to hide a pained wince before he tried to look as apathetic as possible. "Oh, sorry," Someone really should tell the blonde boy that apologies lose it's effect when you're also attempting to sound like you couldn't care less. Whoever raised this one must really have all kinds of issues because this, this right here, is a terrible example of faking condolences. It was literally the first thing Death had to learn and if you can't even fake a simple 'I'm sorry for your loss,' well, you are clearly doing something wrong.

"Um. Thanks?"

"Though it really must be a shame that you had to live with muggles your whole life, I couldn't even imagine it!" There was a disgusted intrigue in the blonde's voice and Harry wondered what sort of stories had his parent's told to make the idea of living with non-magical mortals sound like living like animals in the jungle. But this seemed like a pretty okay topic to participate in anyway so Harry decided to answer, ignoring the disdain that come when the word 'muggle' was said.

"Yeah it probably would be strange for you to cook your own meals without magic I'm guessing."
He agreed. The other just looked at him with incredulity.

"You actually have to make your own meals?" He asked horrified. Harry gave a wry grin.

"Please, I have to make my aunt, uncle and cousin's meals too. I am very good at it." Harry boasted, proud of the fact he could cook. "Don't your parents cook for you sometimes?"

For a moment the boy's stuck-up facade shuttered and a lonely wistful young child was revealed to green eyes before pale features distorted back to a contemptuous frown. "Of course not," He sniffed, "That stuff is house elf work, not for proper wizards like us."

Harry wanted to prod a bit further about it but decided that it would probably not be for the best right now and changed the subject. "Well since I haven't been here for long why don't you tell me some things you like to do?"

White Boy appeared to be genuinely surprised by the question this time, "What I like to do?" Harry nodded slowly like he was speaking to a particularly dim-witted child. For all he knew he might be. Or he's just emotionally stunted. Which would be great. They could be emotionally stunted together.

"Yes. Obviously." Harry drawled sarcastically in what he considered a very good imitation of the other boy. It earned him a chortle and an uncertain smile which definitely meant he did alright. Maybe. "How else would we become friends otherwise?"

"Friends?"

Harry looked at the other boy, who was staring right back at him in a sort of tentative, wary, suspicious hope in his grey eyes.

"Friends." He repeated firmly, giving the blonde a crooked smile. One that was shyly returned and made the other boy look more like a child than some egotistic wannabe adult.

But before the blonde could respond, Madam Malkin, who Harry really only just fully realised had been hear taking his measurements the whole time announced, "That's you done, my dear," and Harry, feeling a bit sorry for not having any more excuse to talk to the boy, hopped down from his footstool.

"I'll see you at Hogwarts." The platinum blonde blurted out as he turned to leave. It took a bit of effort not to chuckle at how cute this elven child was but Harry managed to tone it down to a very amused smile.

"I suppose you will."

"This is fer you, 'appy Birthday Harry."

Harry stared. And stared. And stared. And stared.

"So.." Hagrid started awkwardly, visibly fidgeting as the boy stared at the stunning gift in the cage. "Do yer like her?"

"Oh my god." Harry spun to face the large man, dark hair swirling even without any wind and eyes glowing brighter than any emeralds glittering under an open fire. Because this was his first ever pet. One he has direct responsibility to care and nurture. The color of untouched snow and blazing intelligent amber jewels that were eyes, "Like her? Hagrid I fucking love her. Thank you."
Hagrid beamed like the praise was shining pure gold in his hands. Huh, maybe there was creature blood in the man since it was obvious to Harry that he does on some level recognize his true form. Half-Giant perhaps? Though it might not be so strong considering how slowly and subtly it was showing itself, even by mixed blooded individual standards, but it was there. Not enough of it for the male to kneel at his feet the first time Hagrid laid sight of him but enough to feel a swell of satisfaction and unexplainable bliss at the thought of pleasing the green eyed boy. It was an interesting thought that would need further investigation later down the road. A little bit disturbing. But still interesting.

"You are such a beautiful girl aren't you?" Harry cooed as amber eyes gazed at him before puffing her snow white feathers up as the owl preened proudly under the attention.

"Hagrid I may take a bit here, you don't mind if I meet you at that ice cream place in an hour do you?"

Hagrid looked both like he wanted to protest in leaving the eleven year old alone and gladly leaving the shop filled with strange unpleasant odors and bizarre, equally unpleasant cuttings of creature parts. "I dunno 'Arry..."

"Please?" The boy asked, making sure to use what Piers and Dudley call, 'puppy dog face'. "I wouldn't possibly know what flavor to get and I trust you'll know some of the most interesting ones."

That seemed to decide it for the older man, "Oh all right then," he acquiesced happily. "But no more than an hour. Or I'll get worried."

Harry gave a small lopsided grin. "Of course." And waved the half-giant goodbye. As soon as Hagrid left, the eleven year old turned and headed to the end of the wall covered with potion ingredients, looking carefully at them like he was in a sweet shop. If sweet shops contained much more compelling things like pickled newt toes or that thing in that grows in goat's stomach. Bezo roar or something.

"Is there something you are going to take or are you going to just stare and take up space like a mindless block of wood?"

Harry looked up to see an undoubtedly intimidating and tall man looking at him, sneering at him. Pitch dark, greasy hair that went down almost to his shoulders, framing sallow but not sickly features and long robes that billowed magnificently with the slightest of wind which made the boy wonder where he could pick up a set. But really caught his attention, what really made Harry look and see was the man's eyes. Obsidian black, unfathomable, darker than the starless night. He'd heard people describe colors of eyes as 'pools' but this man's were deep enough to be considered oceans of ink. Harry felt drawn to those eyes, the windows of the soul, and frustratingly enough those windows were closed. Enough so that a brief second of green clashed with black wasn't enough for the boy to open them. And he really, really wanted to open them.

The lines of the stranger's sneering face deepened further, emphasizing the disdain so clearly transcribed in his expression it wouldn't have been clearer if it had been literally written on paper. "You're lack of response is probably a good thing considering that if you do speak you would probably lower my IQ to staggering levels."

And woah wasn't that just the rudest thing that Harry had ever come across from a complete stranger that he had only just met. It also effectively snaps him out of his soul-searching daze with a charming
yet icy smile that would've made Frosty the snowman shiver. The boy may have let himself take the verbal abuse of his biological relatives but 'let' was the key word. He let Uncle Vernon and Auntie Petunia define him as a freak and a lying ungrateful stupid brat but there was no way he had so little pride that he would just let some haughty random man with an affinity for gothic colors to walk over him. Despite his outward appearance and personality he was an entity of near omnipotent strength. Also he had enough passive-aggressive experience to make Chaos keel over and beg like a friggin dog if he wanted to.

"Yes well it's quite obvious from your... pleasantries," The word was emphasised in a way that made it anything but, "that you value your intelligence greatly. Which is unfortunate considering my words are filled with generously bestowed wisdom if you bother to listen hard enough."

The face of the hook-nosed morphed from a sneer into one of shock, either from the child's unexpected vocabulary or just from some kid actually just responding back at the scathing remark and not have already burst into tears, before finally settling into something near expressionless with the exception of a raised brow and the smallest quirk of the lips. Harry could almost say it was an expression of pleasantly surprised.

"I could listen with a muggle stethoscope until my ears crumble to dust and I bet not even a trickle would come from the fountain of wisdom that comes from your mouth." The elder man retorted, though it lacked the harsh bite it held before. Harry could just feel his own cold veneer melting quickly as well.

"It sounds like my mouth isn't the problem then. Maybe you should get your ears checked sir?" Harry asked innocently, though it was ruined slightly by the involuntary giggle that escaped from his lips. Against his initial reaction, the boy was having quite a bit of entertainment with the easy verbal sparring. He'd almost never got to exercise any sort of wit when he was an all power primordial force of death, though it was to be expected considering every god and entity both feared, loved and highly respected you. Even the silver tongue of the Norse God of Mischief rusts and the sharp comebacks of the Devil dulls when faced with Death himself, which really was a pity because he swears he could at least hold his own if those two actually tried. It had been funny at first, seeing them try and insult him without actually insulting him until it just became incredibly, incredibly sad.

"Maybe you need your head checked boy. Considering you were just caught staring at a jar of bezoars like they were a stack of chocolate frogs, truly tells us many things about your lack of sanity."

"Maybe I was contemplating how a bezoar is formed in a goat stomach and why only that particular animal apparently provides the properties needed for the formation of stone-like mass to be able to act like an antidote to general poisons."

The man's eyebrows shot up, now visibly impressed. Well visibly if you squinted really hard. "And were you?"

Harry gave the man a cheeky look of sardonic amusement. "Of course not sir, I was looking at the pretty Flitterby moths next to it. What with me being just a simple child and all." It was obvious that the dark robed male was fighting valiantly against his own amusement in order to preserve his generally unhappy looking demeanor. But before the stranger could reply, the store manager came and stole their attention.

"Sorry for the delay Professor, but I've got the powdered bicorn readied here for you." The man, professor, pierced the stouter employer with a chilling glare that ironically made the other sweat vigorously, before giving a short nod in approval. "Good. Then give me my purchase and I
shall take my leave then." The order was hastily complied and Harry couldn't help but giggle again at the sheer panic the intimidating man could create in others, he'd always found a perverse pleasure in making others squirm. From the spark of humor in the professor's eyes, and the twist of his lips, he too probably shared the same opinion.

The shop employee however, apparently did not share there silent twisted humor and decided to show said displeasure through glaring at the younger of the raven-haired pair. Dumb human mortals. Unable to even sense who is far the more powerful of the two just because of this fixation of appearances. "And how may I help you kid?" The manager groused, definitely not in a 'helpful' mood. "Did you let go of your mummy's hand at Honeyduke's and lose your way here?"

"Actually my mummy's dead, do not insult my intelligence and for your information, I just needed to get the things for my first year at Hogwarts which I would have gotten already if the service here wasn't so absurdly incompetent." Harry gave the same fake icy sweet smile that he had given not a few minutes before. A soft cough, barely heard, made the child's lips twitch upwards before they smoothed itself out again. Apparently the professor recognized that smile, and the condescending implications to it. God he hoped the professor was from Hogwarts, Harry was liking him more and more.

The store manager looked quite furious but bit his lip and went to get the aforementioned items regardless. For a person who just insulted an eleven year old customer, the man was surprisingly very professional. When the boy pointed that out to the professor lingering near the exit of the store he got another cough-laugh that made Harry smile. A genuine one that made his green eyes shine and his pale cheeks heated ever so slightly with warmth.

"So I assume you're a muggleborn first year for Hogwarts?" The man's deep baritone voice was nonchalant and didn't betray the slightest hint of the curiosity Harry was sure he had.

"You assume correctly. Though I'm what is seemingly defined as 'muggle-raised' apparently."

The boy studied a vial of oily looking eggs as he waited for the implications for that statement to sink in. "I see." And there it was. "So who.." The professor trailed of as he waited for Harry's answer to fill in the gaps.

"My aunt and uncle took me in. And before you make some inane awkward comment about how generous they must be, please desist. They are terrible human beings who certainly did not raise me out of the goodness of their shriveled hearts."

That probably came out a little more callous than he intended. The professor seemed slightly blindsided by the near casual viciousness that just came out of mouth of a child. He didn't show it of course but Harry could tell. Well, he made an educated guess. Reading the man was quite the challenge.

"Professor Severus Snape." Was what the tall black clad adult replied. Because that apparently was the appropriate moment to introduce oneself. "I'll be your Potion Professor and I'll be expecting you to read your textbook before the term starts."

"I've already read the textbook." Harry shot back, half lying, he had scanned it during a short fifteen minute break, "I'll be expecting you to teach us that Draught of the Living Death potion."

"That's far too advanced for a simple first year to comprehend much less prepare. I expected you to at least know that if you've really read the book."

"Well I expected you to realize I am no 'simple' first year."
"Quite." Professor Snape drawled. "I also expected you to address yourself when I in courtesy did so to myself."

"First off your courtesy was ill-timed and secondly why should I be obligated to reply to it?"

"Maybe a foreign concept called 'manners'? It may be too high class for someone whose obviously been living on the streets."

"Maybe I'm just a rebel?"

"A rebel whose managed to voluntarily read a whole textbook in less than a day?"

"I said I was a rebel not an unintelligent time-waster."

"I never implied anything of the sort."

"Then if I did go to your class for the first time without reading the text you wouldn't accuse me of something along those lines?"

"Touché."

By the time that they stopped the shop manager had gathered all the general first year supplies for potion making and was calculating the costs. "That'll be thirty-four galleons Mr-?"

"Potter." The boy answered, not letting his gaze leave the potions professor's. "Harry Potter."

At the sound of his name Harry could hear a choked noise from the area of the cash register, the employee was probably doing something extremely entertaining with his face but as tempting as it was, striking green eyes refused to leave the angular features of the potions professor's face. Angular features that have gone blank, unreadable and indiscernible. Frankly, it looked like the man was withdrawing into himself and that confused and admittedly stung him. "Professor."

"I must go."

And he did.

Harry stared at the empty spot where the tall man with a cutting glare and an equally sharp wit once stood not just a few seconds before.

"Mr Potter?" The boy turned away to face the store manager, absentmindedly noting how much the man's attitude has changed just by a simple name. Then again, so did Professor Snape.

"Yes?"

"Uhm. May I have your autograph?"

Harry sighed.
Death's three way

The one where Death gets some letters and goes on a train- and promptly gets himself in the middle of a three way. Ugh oh my god guys not that sort of three way. Jesus Christ. Get your heads out of the gutter it's only first year... Not that there's anything of the sort in later years... You know what? Forget about it. Just... Just read the chapter.


Honestly, mortals these days.

My Dearest Death,

What a simply beautiful boy you've ended up being! I do hope you'll keep those eyes when you come back, they are simply the prettiest green I've ever seen.

We are all missing you greatly back here, yes, all of us. Despite what all those 'macho' men here say, they are all sulking and wishing you hadn't left. I caught Time actually try and sneak out of his overseeing duties just for a visit. Which would be funny if it didn't mean I just lost one of my best cupids to Space. I don't even want to know what that man would do with my cherub.

Speaking of Space, he actually made an alternative universe where this Harry Potter character actually doesn't die- protected by some sort of ritual and a mother's love, which I thought was a fantastic excuse to use in place of an entity having to throw themselves literally down to stop a curse, however apparently the idea 'makes no sense', has 'too many flaws and inconsistencies' and is 'such a stupid weak sauce argument'.

Your siblings are simply terrible Death! No sense of romance at all!

That universe will be up and running soon and we all can't wait to see how much your presence has caused the original fated timeline to stray. Don't tell Fate but I'm sure your story you're writing with your steps is going to be much more entertaining than what she had cooked up. Ah but I guess that is the price of divine intervention is it not? To let the stars pave out your destiny with not a hint of resistance truly is the path of the unfortunate and weak.

Anyway dear you have GOT to start shopping more! Tailored clothes would look simply adorable on a kid, Life wants you to get navy jeans and Fate insists on a three piece suit. Throw out all those hand me downs Death, I know you don't really care much about looks... Well you do, we all do, but honey, your the least vain out of us all.

Also on the note on appearances- you really ought to shape up and eat a bit more, Life prescribed running and pressing a bench or something plus fruit, veg, protein and dairy. I mean this is basic stuff for living Death, how could you not know- wait, no, never mind, that answers my question. Just please try to make an effort in not being half-dead darling.

Wish you were here,

Love,
Love

P.S. Order is next up to write. Take what he says with a grain of salt okay? For a man who prides himself in strict discipline he is quite emotional - even though it's only you and Chaos that can manage to drag that passionate side out of him.

P.P.S. Would you be a dear and help me with these documents? Chaos told me how you did it for him and I thought that a sweet boy like you certainly won't turn down a little frail lady like me right?

Kisses

Death,

It has come to all our attention that you have been personally placing yourself in a stupidly precarious position with your new life. Malnutrition. Dehydration. Hand me down clothes. A shitty excuse of a box that you can't call a cupboard let alone a suitable room for a child. Letting those ugly lumps of fat and bone push you around and raised a hand against you!

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING DAMMIT

You are so lucky that Life has given your vessel some serious recovery speed and that Magic helped with the boost but those ingrained qualities were sewed into you to try and prevent the unnatural degradation of your mortal body. It was not for you to try out self abuse on nor try out any form of

Children from various ages and sizes, all from around the neighbourhood of one Privett Drive gathered around a particular large tree in the park, chattering excitedly with determination and glee lighting their eyes. In front of the amassed group of juveniles there stood three boys, a tall rakish dirty blonde with spiked up hair, a slightly large, rounded brunet and a thin delicate raven with glowing green eyes. It was the brunet that spoke up, "Thanks for all coming everyone, I'm sure you guys know the general gist of the rules or heard it from the others." There was a collected murmuring of agreement, "The time limit is till sundown and the winners gets bragging rights and enough candy to make them sick for a week!" Much more energetic murmuring now, some where even squealing.

"Not that that's ever going to happen ever." Piers muttered to the younger boy next to him as their friend began explaining the general rules and regulations. Harry gave a quirked smile, "Well you and Dud were pretty close last year, though I still think using a net to slow me down was a foul. And that Anna Shallot girl was pretty good too."

"Because you let her! That's not fair that her aunt runs the library and she promised free reign over the books if she won."

"For your information I got free reign anyway, apparently being considered second best was good enough."

"Potter you are a sneaky little-" Piers failed to finish the insult as cheers all screamed out from the crowd of mini mortals, taking that as his cue Harry walked up next to his cousin, winked at the gathered competitors and then ran the other direction like the hounds of hell were playing fetch and he was the stick. Distantly he could hear the roar of,

"Let the fourth Annual Harry Hunting Game begin!"
suicidal activity for your own morbid curiosity and pleasure dammit. Don't say it wasn't because I remember the last time you tried seeing what happens when you break pieces of a soul just because and I quote, 'I want to know if they hurt' and 'Wouldn't it make just the prettiest little paperweight when you glue it all together?' and fine, yeah, I could care less about a few measly mortals but this is you we are speaking of here.

Anyway, on a more pleasant note, I see you have gotten your magical school acceptance letter. Hogwarts wasn't it?

God I hate those darn places.

There's no proper order there, well there is some semblance of order but those magical idiots play with it like a children's jump rope. The Ministry there is no better, probably worse than the school. This is why Magic should have consulted me instead of played around with Chaos in the making of her community.

Actually it's chaos here too, well not Chaos- the slacking coward has gone off to hide somewhere away from what even I admit is your monstrous load of paperwork. Your filing system was atrocious by the way, I fixed it by age of universe, then planet, species, then time period and finally alphabetically. I mean I know it's been forever since anyone other than you have seen these records but that doesn't mean you should let it all dissolve into, well, you know.

Where were we? Urgh writing everything in a letter makes me feel like some dumb prepubescent female mortal, the fact I'm supposed to just spew out my thoughts with no rhyme or reason is making my head throb alone. I'm rereading my previous words and the urge to gag at paragraph structure is overpowering. This is ridiculous. Not that communicating to you is ridiculous brother, your one of the few people of equal standing that I actually actively seek your company from, however I rather do so in person than on some frivolous note.

This has nonetheless been an... experience and even with my reservations I do look forward to contacting you again. Time's turn is next, though knowing him he'll probably just be as boring as watching paint dry. Yes I know, that's hardly fair.

Paint can be fairly interesting depending on the medium after all. Hah. And they say I have no sense of humor. Take that Chaos, you imbecilic lump of melted crayons.

But seriously. If you don't stop this purposeful negligence on your own behalf I swear to god I will personally come down there myself and smite your human ass right where you stand.

"ALBUS! HOW COULD YOU?!”

"Minerva what are y-"

Sounds of objects hitting solid surfaces, indecipherable screams and the frantic sounds of running echoed outside the halls.

"Merlin.” A short, goblin of a man looked up in a mix of bafflement and bemusement at his fellow coworkers who were also giving similar looks as they walked closer to the source of chaotic noise. "Someone's obviously been killed."

"Don't be so dramatic Filius,” The taller hook nosed professor of potions drawled. The group paused as the crash of something glass was overheard followed by a muffled wail of 'My lemon drops,' and
a furious hiss that sounded suspiciously like, 'Screw your lemon drops and shove them up your wrinkled old-' Snape looked down at shorter male, "Clearly someone's obviously massacred all the orphans and puppies on the west side of London."

A plump kindly older looking woman snorted at the declaration, "Honestly, whatever it is I'm not going twenty broomsticks close to it until that raucous all calms down."

As the small number of gathered professors quietly looked at the gargoyle guarded door of their headmaster's office and listened to the violent threats and pleading and destruction, they all nodded solemnly. Curiosity could wait till tomorrow. Today they keep their health in check and lurk away from the battlefield commencing beyond the doors ahead.

"Uncle Vernon can you help m- never mind." Harry muttered as the obese adult shot him an ugly glare. "I'll get it myself."

Staring balefully at his heavy looking suitcase, the green eyed boy grabbed the sides and pulled, cursing Order and his scathing but accurate comments about the thinness of his arms. Hedwig, his beautiful pet owl, cooed on encouragingly. It would be very adorable and all if he hadn't been busy lugging his custom made trunk with the strength of a scrawny eleven year old. Instead it just felt slightly condescending. Harry didn't know what to feel about having the snow colored bird grow enough of a spine to stand up to him whilst knowing full well what he was. Luckily for Hedwig, bemusement won over any sort of feelings along the lines of 'How dare thee mock someone as worthy as I, thou shalt be struck down by the sky for thou petty insolence.' Yeah, he'd gotten over that complex pretty quickly ever since the Greek deities came into play. The incest, alcoholism and Oedipus drama was enough to put any sort of high horse in its place.

He wondered briefly how uncle Vernon would do in Ancient Greece. Probably flogged to death due to being excessively... Vernon. Or crowned emperor. It really was a toss up between the two in those days for the incredibly selfish and greedy.

"Well." The green eyed boy started awkwardly, "This is goodbye then." Harry had already bid his heartfelt goodbyes to Dudley and Piers before but he felt it impolite to just say nothing to Vernon considering the man had drove him to the station.

"Pity you'll be coming back." His uncle sneered.

Well alright then.

And with those pleasantries done with, Harry clicked his tongue in an order for Hedwig to follow and pushed the trolley holding his trunk without a second glance. Though when he was at a safe distance the boy made a gesture with his middle finger at the flesh lump, he wasn't sure if Vernon saw it or why the gesture was considered so rude in the first place but Harry found it deeply satisfying nonetheless. He would say it was a human thing if he hadn't seen Chaos doing the action many times behind certain other entities backs. Maybe it was just a juvenile thing?

But back to more pressing matters. The raven haired child squinted at the signs, Platform 9, then Platform 10.

9 and 10.

9.
Oh dear god Harry knew he forgot to ask something important.

"Excuse me sir," The old man in the security uniform smiled at the small fragile looking child before him. Though he did raise a brow at the owl on said child's thin shoulders. "Do you know where, uh, Platform 9 and 3/4s is?"

And the boy looked just so embarrassed that he had to actually even ask such a thing that the elderly security guard chuckles. The mortification at the reaction failed to make it any less funny. He put his hand on the raven haired kid's shoulder, the empty one not the one with a gigantic white bird on it, gently and answered, "Boy I don't know what it is with this tradition but every year a bunch of kids like you always ask me the same thing. And I don't know what those gosh darn older boys tell ya but there ain't any 9 and 3/4 here."

He chuckled again as the scrawny child buried his face with his hands and groaned. It may have been his old ears but the guard could've swore the boy said something along the lines of "Cannot believe this" and "Damn magic to the pits of hell" and maybe some sounds that sounded distinctly bird-like. The owl cooed and bopped its head like it almost understood what the young child muttered.

Not really sure what to say, the man just patted his shoulder again and offered a lollipop.

"Eck." Harry scrunched up his face as he licked the sugary sweet piece of candy. "This is unsurprisingly gross." Scrutinizing the pink sweet and rolling the stick between his fingers he murmured to himself. Maybe it's the context flavored with my mortification that's ruining the taste."

Why would anyone expect humans to become less annoying with magic? The boy swears they just become stupider and more embarrassing. To make him stoop to this- this degradation! And yes, maybe he shouldn't fault them for keeping their dumb secret but honestly, this was one of the most crowded stations around- surely somewhere a little less populated would have just been good sense? 'I mean,' he mentally groused as he gnawed at the lollipop and intensely scanned the crowd with narrowed glowing eyes, 'if an old man has been asked where this thrice damned platform is so many times to the point he just assumes its some sort of well known hazing ritual that has to mean something doesn't it?'

Finally sick of the too-sugary sweet Harry pulled out a holly wand from his worn jeans, black as charcoal and with a shine like a well-polished onyx. He could still here the squeal that old wandmaker made when he finally chose a wand and said wand blackened so fast Harry might've as well have set fire to the thing. And he would be lying if he hadn't been a tiny bit tempted to. Wands seemed to be a bit redundant in the not-really-currently-an-entity's opinion. Sure they made nice training wheels for the beginners but to make them compulsory was just wasteful.

Despite his own misgivings about having to pay for something he really did not need, it was apparent from the second he stepped into the old shop that the wands certainly did not share any such misgivings for him. Before the old shopkeeper, Ollivander, such an eccentric man, could even welcome him the whole establishment practically vibrated where it stood with sheer magic-fueled excitement. Because while wands aren't the most sentient of objects, they were known to choose their users. And what wand didn't want a piece of four feet three pure unadulterated power?
"Curious, very curious. This has never happened before." Ollivander breathed, glazed silvery eyes filled in absolute awe as another wand jumped hoops to impress the petite green-eyed child in front of him. "It shouldn't be possible, no one should be compatible with all of these."

"Yes, well," Harry hedged, unsure and frankly unwilling to even try explaining that it wasn't everyday the physical manifestation of death walked in and essentially asked these magic sticks for assistance and how said sticks probably realized how revered they would be, maybe even more than the Elder wand. It wouldn't be true of coarse, he made the Elder wand. But that didn't stop the wands flinging themselves to get his attention.

Another swish of his wrist and the stick (Apple wood and dragon heartstring) produced a beautiful flurry of small canaries with the deep, vibrant colorings of a peacock.

"Wonderful! Simply wonderful!" The old wandmaker clapped his hands with childish delight, "This is simply incredible! To see such high level magic surely this is-"

"No, no definitely not."

It took what seemed to be hours in the store. Wand after wand. From complicated firework displays to exotic flowers blooming from the cracks of hardwood flooring to impressive displays of dominance where they tried to disintegrate the competition. Even Ollivander with his excitement was feeling the strain of it all. Harry kind of wanted to just say yes to a wand so he wouldn't have to see the older man's face when he rejected another one, the man had been a very good sport though despite with him being so picky. Also his arm was really sore.

"I wonder..." Ollivander dashed to the back of his shop, leaving Harry alone with at least a hundred rejected wands. With a satisfied sigh, the boy dropped his wand waving hand and prayed that the wandmaker would be in wherever he was for a good, long while.

Which of course meant that the elderly man was back before he could say 'Amen.' The boy tried his best not to grimace at Ollivander's reappearance, something he was sure worked thanks to the stiff muscles on the face of his meat suit.

"It's an unusual combination - holly and phoenix feather, eleven inches, nice and supple."

Respectfully the boy didn't comment about how elderly men, or just anyone really, should not ever use the word 'supple' when in the context of handing a long phallic-shaped stick of wood to a child, and took the offered wand with a polite nod, waiting for the inevitable show of extravaganza. Harry really hoped it wasn't fireworks again, it hurt his eyes. And his eyes were way too pretty to be covered up by circular pieces of glass.

But there was no fireworks. No extravaganza. No show. As soon as pale fingers clasped the wooden brown stick, Harry could feel his skin warm and tingle as a rush of what he realized was pure exhilaration swept over him in the most affectionate way. Glowing, he was glowing, both internally and externally. A smile, wide and ecstatic and pure, involuntarily stretched on his face as lightening bright green eyes turned to Ollivander. The man was muttering 'Curious, most curious.' Under his breathe but Harry ignored it, too focused on the powerful, honest to god emotion pulsating through him. It felt like golden lava being pumping into his veins in what could only be the best kind of way.

"Sorry," said Harry absentmindedly, "but what's curious?"

"I remember every wand I've ever sold, Mr. Potter." Ollivander looked at the child with his pale
eyes, "Every single wand. It so happens that the phoenix whose tail feather is in your wand, gave another feather -just one other. It is very curious indeed that you should be destined for this wand when its brother why, its brother gave you that scar."

Now that got his attention. Harry swallowed. Wow Fate really thought this whole thing through. Obviously not subtly considering that was the most obvious plot foreshadowing in the history of probably ever, but she still did think this all through.

"So.." Harry trailed off, "Do you have this in black? Because this colour does not go well with this new cloak I bought and…"

Say what you will, if he was going to own a pair of training wheels for wizards, Harry was going to have a nice design dammit. Wands though, were like very overeager puppies, the boy found, once again proven when his holly wood wand twisted itself into the sleek beautiful black thing it is today. No bumps nor markings, just perfect unmarred darkness in his hand.

With a little twirl of the thing the pink stick of candy transformed into a thin bar of plain chocolate. It was a little sweeter than he preferred and had a strange aftertaste that was suspiciously strawberry in flavour but in Harry's opinion it was infinitely better than what it had been before. So as he nibbled the treat and leaned on the trolley that carried his luggage and owl, the child let his eyes survey the crowds quietly.

There was no way he was going to go through such indignities of asking a complete stranger something like that again, oh no, Harry was going to make sure he's found one of the magicals and follow at a polite, well-hidden distance. As his friends tell him, it is considered the way of the 'ninja', though Harry does wonder about the accuracy of the statement. But the rules were fairly straightforward and easy to apply in situations such as these so the boy shrugged off any doubt of these 'mad ninja skills' away. They were useful and it was way less of a trial emotionally to participate in and- did that lady just say muggles? Jack in the pot.

Focusing his gaze Harry locked onto the talking key that would show him his destination. It turned out the key was a plump woman who was talking to four boys, all with flaming red hair. Each of them was pushing a trunk like Harry's in front of him and, here was the clincher- they had an owl. With triumph the entity-on-haitus pushed his cart after them, stopping when they stopped, with enough distance between them to be just near enough to hear what they were saying.

"Now, what's the platform number?" said the woman. And either that meant the school changes it's pick up location every year which was smart and a bit worrying, all these children had never been to Hogwarts either despite the age variations which was more worrying for those kids then him or the woman has quite 'a lot of air in the head' personality that Petunia tells everyone Mrs Canningway has, and this lady has completely forgotten the platform number even after coming back to the same place for the last, maybe six years if he estimated the eldest boy's age correctly. And that was a lot worrying.

"Nine and three-quarters!" piped a small girl, also red-headed, who was holding her hand. Or it could have just been a test for her child. Harry decided to go with that, he was trying to give the benefit of the doubt here. "Mom, can't I go..."

"You're not old enough, Ginny, now be quiet. All right, Percy, you go first."

What looked like the oldest boy marched toward platforms nine and ten. Harry watched, careful not
to blink in case he missed it, but of course the moment the elder redhead reached the dividing barrier between the two platforms, a large crowd of tourists came swarming in front of him and by the time the last backpack had cleared away, the boy had vanished. He tugged at his black messy hair in frustration and quietly whispered a few choice words in a native Peruvian dialect of river dolphins which earned him way more than his fair share of nearby stares. Not that he care currently. His attention was all on the next redhead.

The lady must have said something because the next child replied with a grin, "I'm not Fred, I'm George," said the boy. "Honestly, woman, you call yourself our mother? Can't you tell I'm George?"

The woman looked a little chastised. Did that happen often? To be fair though, looking at the near identical counterpart grinning at his brother even Harry would be hard pressed to figure which is which at first sight.

"Sorry, George, dear."

"Only joking, I am Fred," said the boy, and off he went with a sly wink. Harry couldn't help but chuckle, cheeky child, Chaos would've loved him. His twin called after him to hurry up, and he must have done so as the moment he distracted himself with his thoughts the other was gone. This was getting ridiculously vexing.

And when the third brother managed to slip his sight, the thin boy narrowed his furiously bright green eyes, grit his teeth and began pushing through the crowd with his trolley. Apparently the higher powers (and when he said higher powers he meant the bastards he considered family) were set on making him do this.

"Excuse me," Harry quietly began, he could feel his cheeks burn which probably meant his white as snow face was now visibly (though really not by much) pink.

"Hello, dear," she said looking down. "First time at Hogwarts? Ron's new, too."

She looked pointedly at the last and what seemed to be the youngest of her sons. Ron was gangly and about as tall as Piers, with freckles and the customary flaming red hair that Harry just knew was some sort of trademark gene in this family.

"Yes," the green eye boy nodded as he answered the question as politely as one could muster in a single word. "The thing is-" He hesitated. It was one thing to admit weakness when said weakness was some sort of crippling problem that could cause issues in the future but it was just plain embarrassing to tell some random person that he didn't know something that really should've been known. There was a difference. There was. "- the thing is, I don't know how to-" Harry trailed off, making a vague indiscriminate gesture that was supposed to imply the train station platform but could've have been interpreted as flying kittens for all he knew.

"How to get onto the platform?" she said kindly, and Harry nodded relieved.

"Don't worry," she said. "All you got to do is walk straight at the barrier between platforms nine and ten. Don't stop and don't be scared you'll crash into it, that's very important. Best do it at a bit of a run if you're nervous. Go on, go now before Ron."

The boy in question, Ron, gave a rather weak smile which he responded back in turn before facing the very solid looking wall in front of him. "Okay then. Here goes, well, me actually."

The boy started moving slowly toward it, building up speed from a brisk walk to soon a full out run as he got closer and closer. He forced his eyes open, both eagerly intrigued by what he would see
and fearful that this was some very cruel joke that would result him in meeting his end literally face first. The involuntary but inherent fear in his body won out mere centimetres away from the barrier and green eyes closed as his body tensed expecting the incoming crash.

A crash which did not come.

Harry opened his eyes and was greeted with a whole new and completely packed platform on the other side. Waiting by it was a rather gorgeous scarlet steam engine whose smoke drifted lazily over the heads of the crowds. The sound of cats and owls and the occasional amphibian joined the oncoming barrage of clamour, fitting right in like they belonged in this symphony of noise. The only saving grace to it all was that with this many people, Harry found the animals less able to recognise his presence among the masses. Of course it didn't stop them from honing in on him like catnip or an owl treat or whatever toads liked, when he got unfortunately too close.

A new thing he had learnt from this experience. Hedwig made a fantastic bodyguard. Harry definitely needed to repay that half giant of a man with something in the future. He didn't know what but he'll figure it out eventually. Say what you wish about Death, but his debts never go unpaid.

As he pushed his way through the families saying goodbye and the children in tears or in anxious anticipation, Harry realised he had another problem. He couldn't just bring the trolley into the train. He would have to carry his trunk and Hedwig and everything into there.

"Bugger."

The first few carriages were already packed with students but Harry determinedly pressed on through the crowd until he finally found an empty compartment near the end of the train. Putting Hedwig gently down first onto one of the seats, the boy then started working on pulling and heaving the damning trunk toward the train door. The stairs were proving to be an absolute nightmare. He could barely raise the thing high enough to move it over and Harry had already felt the unwelcome pain a trunk corner could bring when smashed on his foot. Twice.

"Need a hand?" It was one of the red head twins from before, the one that went second if Harry recalled.

"God yes." He groaned as he draped his small body over the large trunk dramatically, a hand on his heaving chest and another hand over his forehead in a poor rendition of a damsel in distress. "The trunk has slain all my efforts and I am unable to defeat this mighty beast."

The twin stared at him gapingly and for a moment Harry thought he had misread the situation and the other's personality but he needn't have worried as the older male seemed to have recovered rapidly, laughing heartily at the exaggeration. "I like you." He responded before turning to his counterpart, who had been watching a short amused distance away, "Oy, Fred! C'mere and let us help this princess to her carriage."

"Of course my liege." Fred easily caught on to their little 'bit', giving a sweeping bow before aiding in moving the large luggage. With the duo's chivalrous help, Harry's trunk was swiftly moved to be snuggly placed in a corner of the compartment, though not without a few 'My lieges,' and 'slain the mighty dragon back in ye olde days,' and even one particularly loud 'Off with yer head peon!'.

"Thanks a lot," The boy said gratefully, brushing his sweaty black mess of hair away from his face. Twin small sharp intakes of breath were made and green eyes looked up to see the similar freckled
faces watching him with a mix of amazement and awe.

"Blimey," One of them, Fred, pretty sure it was Fred, spoke, "Are you?"

"He is," Confirmed the other one, George, scrutinising Harry's forehead and making him feel just generally uncomfortable, "Aren't you?"

"Aren't I what?" He had to ask.

"Harry Potter," chorused the twins. And oh right, he was apparently famous here for some reason that he hasn't been informed to.

"Yes that's me," Harry replied with a shrug. The sooner everyone here got over this strange affixation with permanently scarred underage boys the better. He had even caught his eye on a few books about him at the stores and wasn't that just disturbing bordering on out right violating.

As the two boys gawked at him, Harry took his time to muse on how he wished to spend his time on the train. The first few minutes when the scenery started changing between station to country was always a fascinating thing to watch but even he would find himself growing bored after a while. A book to read? He wanted to finish the last four chapters of Trixi Titan's Terrible Twin, the second book of some sort of series for pre-teen wizards and witches. It was terrible to be frank, but the kind of terrible you scoff and degrade yet still compels you to finish until the very end. After that maybe he'll start on Love's share of paperwork. The easier ones of course. It does sound like a pain however and it would ruin the marvellous trip to magic school so maybe he'll just take a nap instead, yes, that s-

"Fred? George? Are you there?" A voice called from the open train door, the raven haired entity identified it to be the mother of the twins. The near identical boys both shared a look that probably passed a whole meaningful conversation between them whilst Harry could only see the raising of brows and minutest of head movements. "Coming mom!" George shouted while Fred leaned down to the short green eyed child and murmured a, "Holler if you need saving from any evil trunks yeah?"

Then with a grin and a wave respectively, the two cheeky red heads hopped off the train leaving Harry who watched it all with a quirked smile. Those brother's reminded him entertainingly like his own chaotic brother split into two. And wasn't that a scary thought?

As the train finally began starting off to it's destination, Harry couldn't help but watch with a little bit of wistfulness at the redhead family's matriarch and her daughter waving and laughing and crying as they ran to keep up with the steam driven machine just to prolong the moments with her family. It was all a rather touching scene.

Then the door to his compartment slid to reveal the youngest boy from the redheaded family that seemed to be a recurring theme for Harry today. Maybe it was a sign?

"Anyone sitting here? Everywhere else is full." The boy asked nervously. Harry hesitated for a second before shaking his head and the other child sat down, sneaking a non too subtle glance at him before staring at the window.

"Hey ickle Ronniekins," Two familiar and similar faces popped into view, "Listen, we're going down the middle of the train." "Lee Jordan's got a giant tarantula down there."
"Right then," Ron mumbled clearly disgruntled or some other sort of emotion that wasn't pleased. Harry however looked up in interest.

"A giant tarantula? Really?"

The older boys glimpsed at each other before facing the raven haired child with charismatically endearing wide smiles, "Yeah, it's pretty wicked. Have we introduced ourselves yet?"

"How rude we are brother-"

"Well I'm Fred-"

"-and I'm George Weasley."

"Hello Fred, hello George." Harry greeted amiably, already warming up to the duo, "I'm Harry Potter as you know."

"So you really Harry Potter?" The youngest of the Weasleys blurted out, apparently not happy at being the only one ignored. Green eyes blinked at the sudden outburst, "Uhm. Yes I'm pretty sure." With a thoughtful look at the twins he asked mock confused, "Am I Harry Potter?"

Fred walked closer to the pale child, eyes narrowed and fingers stroking a non existent beard on his chin. "I say," He clapped his hands in a sort of 'Eureka!' moment, then pointed accusingly at Harry, "You're an impostor aren't you?!"

George gave an exaggerated gasp and stumbled toward them, "Oh my stars!" He drawled in a terrible American lady's accent, "Heaven forbid say it ain't so sir!"

Fred nodded gravely, "I'm afraid so ma'am. Now boy, tell me who you really are."

Harry shook his head, shaking, eyes big and watery and bright. "I can't," He whispered, "For the sake of the family, I can't."

"Tell us!" Fred boomed, though the effect was ruined by the utter mirth in his eyes and his fellow counterpart near vibrating to contain himself. Harry, also having trouble restraining the humour of it all looked the tall freckled older boys in the eye and said, "Fred. George... I am your great grandfather. I've come into the future to scope out you two to see if you're worthy of fighting in the great dragon war."

There was a beat of silence before the three all broke down to the point of tears. "Merlin," One of the twins, Harry couldn't see past his blurry vision, heaved between raucous laughter, "Did not expect that." The other was too busy guffawing and bent over holding his stomach to answer. Ron just seemed confused and slightly upset.

"So are you Harry Potter or are you not?" He demanded a little rudely.

"I am, I am." The pale green eyed boy nodded as he wiped away his tears of laughter, something that has never happened before he would add, and nodded. Then he took a look at the still laughing teenagers and burst out into uncontrollable chuckles again. Times like these he really appreciated humankind as it is.

"So Harry," George began after all of them, save Ron, finished expressing their humour, "You want to come with us to meet Lee and the tarantula?"

Fred nodded cheerily, "He's a bit of a scary beast when you first see him but if you give him a few
treats and a pat on the head the guy'll like you just fine."

"And the tarantula too." George added with a snicker.

Harry gave his usual quirked fond smile at the two expectant teens but then he caught sight of the glum younger redhead and felt a tad guilty for dismissing him this whole time. Reluctantly he shook his head, "Love to guys, really, but I think I'll stay here for a bit longer. Sorry." He tilted his head a touch toward Ron who now was gaping at him openly. The twins seemed deflated but understanding nonetheless.

"That's cool Har,"

"We'll just-"

"-have to-"

"-catch up-"

"-later!"

The small, almost skeletal child grinned and waved the duo away. Their brother too waving as well. When they were gone however, Ron immediately zoned in on Harry.

"So you really are the Harry Potter?" He asked again.

"Yes." Harry said slowly, the placating if not patronising way he usual went when going about explaining something annoyingly simple to an equally as simple being.

"Oh - well, I thought it might be one of Fred and George's jokes," said Ron. "And have you really got the... you know…" The freckled boy gestured at his forehead. With a soft sigh Harry decided to indulge the kid and pulled back his bangs to reveal his lightening shaped scar. Ron openly stared.

"Do you remember what happened when.." Oh. OH. He was famous for THAT? Really? Well, he supposed that killing someone as an infant was quite the impressive feat, even in this world of wizards. Mr Riddle did hold that ridiculously offending alias of his so he must've held some sort of negative image bad enough for a child murderer to be revered to.

"I don't remember anything before the attack." Harry answered honestly, "My first memory though was a flash of green light, almost of the colour of my eyes see? But I remember almost everything else that happened after."

"Wow." Ron said, like it was an actual riveting masterpiece of a story rather than the vague explanation it was. Before the conversation could die out into awkward silence though Harry quickly asked, "So you know a lot of magic then?" The redhead made a noncommittal noise which really meant nothing to the other, and answered back with a completely different topic of question.

"I hear you live with muggles?" This child was kind of rude. Harry decided. Though most children are usually anyway. He couldn't wait till his year turned into teenagers. Handling teenagers shouldn't be so hard right? "What are they like?"

"Terrible. Well, not all of them are, I was just unlucky. My cousin's cool but my aunt and uncle are some of the meanest pricks you'll ever meet I swear. Your family seemed pretty cool though, three older brothers and all."

"Five." He answered gloomily. Harry internally winced, yeah he knew what a big headache that
could be, and he lived in literally a whole separate dimension to everyone. The entity in him couldn't even imagine all his 'family' living together under one sky et alone one roof for an extended period of time. "I'm sixth in our family to go to Hogwarts. So I've got a lot to live up to you know? Bill and Charlie have already left - Bill was head boy, Charlie was captain of the Quidditch team. And now Percy's a prefect. Fred and George mess around a lot, but they still get really good marks and everyone thinks they're really funny. Everyone expects me to do as well as the others, but if I do, it's no big deal, because they did it first. You never get anything new, either, with five brothers. I've got Bill's old robes, Charlie's old wand, and Percy's old rat."

To emphasise his point the boy pulled out a sleeping fat grey rat from his jacket. The moment green eyes laid themselves on the creature he almost recoiled. Is that-?

"His name's Scabbers and he's pretty useless, barely wakes up. Perce got this owl from my dad as a reward for being made a prefect, because we usually don't affo-" Pale freckled skin went pink and Ron stopped speaking, choosing to stare furiously at the window and the scenery outside. Apparently someone was ashamed of their economical status.

Deciding to pity the boy, because really, he could have been so much worse off, Harry knew, the green eyed boy recounted his own days at the Dursleys. That seemed to relax the other some. And soon both of them were sharing stories and complaints of their childhood, it was all quite nice.

They were interrupted after a while when their door slid open to reveal a smiling woman pushing some sort of trolley filled with sugar delights. "Anything off the cart dears?"

Ron looked sulky and embarrassed again as he shook his head and pulled out a brown bag of presumably homemade lunch. Harry, who had no such domestic treatment nodded happily and walked to the corridor. He'd never really handled his own money for treats himself, always having it given to him by his cousin and Piers but there was something almost empowering about finally being able to get his own food. Well get his own food and actually eat it immediately anyway.

There was an amass of things he had never seen before, cauldron cakes, sugar quills, something called pumpkin pasties. It was a little disorienting. Thinking about his fellow companion in the compartment Harry bought four of everything. A bit excessive but it wasn't like this was going to cripple him financially, what was the point of gold if you didn't make a few unintelligent buys anyway.

Carrying it all, Harry quickly dumped all the treats unceremoniously onto an empty seat. Ron looked faintly amused. "Hungry?"

"Starving." The raven child tossed a friendly smile before biting into a liquorice.. wand? He got five good chews into it before he pulled a face. "Okay maybe not that starving." Ron laughed at the disgusted expression before making a face of his own as he pulled apart his own meal.

"Ugh mum always does forget I don't like corn beef."

"I'll take them," Harry offered, the other looked a bit dubious, like the idea that someone would want these sandwiches was the height of madness.

"You won't want these, they're dry and kinda mushed." He began protesting but the smaller boy stopped him before he got to into it,

"Nonsense, I kind of like savoury stuff more than sweets anyway. Candy ain't my biggest thing really." The redhead looked slightly affronted like Harry just insulted his mother and father and everyone else he loved. "Except chocolate," The green eyed boy backtracked hastily, "If you steal
my chocolate I would have to kill you. Anyways I did buy extra for us to share anyway, so swapping would be more than fair. In fact, take those liquorice wands, like immediately. I insist.

Ron giggled, "You're weirder than I thought." He commented as he snatched the remaining black sticky wand shaped sweets, "But.. thanks."

"No problem. Now.. those sandwiches?"

"Okay now these are real chocolate."

Harry eyed the packet warily. "Are you sure? Because I don't think I can take another one of those beans of those, you lying bugger."

"Oi! I didn't lie! I just said that there was chocolate flavoured ones. Not my fault you got fish and baked beans." Ron grinned unrepentantly. The other scowled half heartedly.

"But chocolate frogs? They aren't real frogs are they?" The freckled boy laughed, "No of course not. Blimey! You really have been living with muggles."

"S'what I said."

"Anyway nah, they're just shaped like frogs and move like them but they're perfectly chocolate I swear. What you need to see are the cards which are inside the packet. Collectibles featuring famous witches and wizards you know?"

The smaller of the two nodded sagely, Dudley had a huge cricket card collection a while back, the sport not the bugs. That would be strange.

He unwrapped his chocolate frog and took out card. It showed a man's face. He wore half- moon glasses, had a long, crooked nose, flowing silver hair, beard, and mustache. Harry stared. He knew that man.

"Albus Dumbledore." He read out loud. "Currently Headmaster of Hogwarts." Green eyes looked at his friends blue. "I know this man."

"Of course you know him Harry! He's like, one of the most well known and loved wizards ever!"

"No, no, I mean I didn't know that but I mean I recognise him." Harry furrowed his brow into a distinguishable frown on his face. "He's the guy who dropped me onto the doorstep as a baby after, you know."

Ron's mouth dropped open, which was disgusting since he was chewing a pumpkin pastie and a liquorice wand together making a very unappealing vision. "He dropped you on a doorstep?"

The raven haired child nodded firmly. "In November." He stressed.

"Blimey, I mean, you sure?"

"I told you I remembered near everything after the green light right?"

"Yeah."

"Well my memory may be a little fuzzy but could you honestly say it would be hard to forget
someone that looked like this?"

He pushed the Dumbledore card, with his long beard and brightly coloured clashing patterns of clothing at the taller boy.

"Huh, guess not. Wow."

They dissolved into silence as it became obvious Ron was having trouble knowing how to process this information. Harry tossed a packet of the chocolate frog to the other who took it gratefully and they both ate in the quiet sounds of the moving train. The quiet however, as always, became too uncomfortable to continue. "So," Ron coughed after swallowing his second frog. "Wanna see me try this spell my brothers taught me?"

"Yes please."

The freckled boy rummaged around before finally retrieving a very battered wand. It had definitely seen better days that wand. Just as the wand was raised, poised for action and a spell readying itself on his lips, the compartment door was opened again. This time with a plump, timid boy and a bushy-haired girl already in her robes.

"Has anyone seen a toad? Neville's lost one," she asked in a way that somehow sounded like an order but without the authority backed up.

"Sorry no." Harry replied, Ron shook his head in support. The girl however had shifted her attention elsewhere though.

"Oh, are you doing magic? Let's see it, then." She sat down next to the redhead without even asking for permission, now that was definitely rude. Ron, understandingly looked a bit taken aback by his sudden increase in audience. "Er all right then." He cleared his throat.

"Sunshine, daisies, butter mellow, Turn this stupid, fat rat yellow."

The boy waved his wand a bit but nothing really happened. The rat stayed grey and unperturbed in his sleep. Ron looked disappointed and as Harry was about to say something that hopefully would be considered comforting the bushy haired girl butted in.

"Are you sure that's a real spell?" said the girl. And wow, even Harry knew that was just not how you start making friends. It was right up there with 'You're dead and going to Hell,' and 'You do look fat in this dress, thankfully you won't be wearing it where you'll be going.' He didn't even know souls could go that hysterically offended.

"Well, it's not very good, is it? I've tried a few simple spells just for practice and it's all worked for me. Nobody in my family's magic at all, it was ever such a surprise when I got my letter, but I was ever so pleased, of course, I mean, it's the very best school of witchcraft there is, I've learned all our course books by heart, of course, I just hope it will be enough - I'm Hermione Granger, by the way. You?"

The pale boy glanced at Ron who was red in the face and stunned at the sudden influx of words that had just come so rapidly from this female creature's mouth.

"I'm Ron Weasley," Ron muttered reluctantly.

"Harry." Was all he answered, Harry was not in much of a mood for someone to speak about his life like that they knew it because of some books they read right now. And he knew similar types to this girl. They've researched everything about the world and would think them some sort of expert. It'll
go away eventually but he rather not the inevitable barrage of questions and preconceptions of his own life to start right now thank you. "And I think it is a real spell. Ron was probably just flustered with the new eyes on him." He added defiantly.

The girl looked shocked at being rebuffed from her statement whilst Ron shot him a grateful look at the support mixed in with incredulousness that screamed 'What the hell you doing mate?' Mortals, really.

"Really." She huffed indignantly. "Okay then, do it again." She said bossily.

Blues eyes looked at green which just nodded encouragingly. Ron gulped but determinedly held his wand over Scabbers, and began the rhyme, unaware of a certain black haired friend of his also focusing intently on the rat.

"Sunshine, daisies, butter mellow, Turn this stupid, fat rat yellow."

A wave of his wand and the children all gasped as the rodent turned a bright shade of yellow. Scabbers still slept through it all though. After getting over the surprise Ron couldn't help but beam at Harry who returned the gesture, then smugly raising a brow at the sputtering girl.

"But that's, that's not,"

"A real spell?" Ron finished for her. "Well I think it is unless my rat just suddenly learnt the ability to change colours."

"Yes, well, anyway, we'd better go and look for Neville's toad. You two had better change, you know, I expect we'll be there soon." She sniffed and turned her body away from the two boys and strode out of the compartment, taking the timid boy, who had watched and said nothing this whole time, away.

"Whatever house I'm in, I hope she's not in it," said Ron. He threw his wand back into his trunk carelessly and Harry wondered if that was the reason for it's poor condition. "Can't wait to show George the spell worked. I was actually so sure it was some sort of dud when it didn't work the first time."

"Well we can't expect to get everything right the first time." The smaller of the two reassured, "What houses are your brothers anyway?"

"Gryffindor. They're all in Gryffindor." And the gloom was back again. This kid sure had some sort of complex about his family. "All my family are in it. Don't know what would happen if I didn't get in. Though I guess as long as it ain't Slytherin I'll be okay."

"Slytherin?" Harry recalled a certain pale platinum blonde who insisted on Slytherin to be the best house there. He really was getting very mixed signals here. "What's wrong with them?"

"You're joking."

"Really not Ron. It seems pretty alright to me."

"That's the house Vol- I mean You-Know-Who was in!" Harry raised a brow.

"So?"

"SO!? That's where all the 'dark' wizards go!" Ron hissed, looking paranoid like one of these dark wizards were going to jump in from the window to defend Slytherin's honour. Harry was not
impressed.

"I'm sure that's not true. Just because there's a few particularly bad apples doesn't mean you should throw out the whole sack of them." That was a good metaphor the mortals said. Something that made more sense then pots being able to call kettles black. Ron still looked unsure, the entity in mortal form sighed.

"Look say those beans of yours. Say nine out of ten times all the green coloured beans are really gross flavours like sprouts or some sort." The freckled boy wrinkled his nose at thought but nodded, "But the one out of ten is like, the best flavour ever."

Blue eyes gazed at nothing dreamily, "Caramel fudge ice cream."

"Uh, yes, that one out of ten is caramel fudge ice cream flavour. So knowing nine out of ten is super gross stuff would you stop eating the green coloured beans altogether."

"No! Course not Harry, then I'll miss one of the greatest flavours ever!" Ron denied vehemently, Harry smiled pleased.

"And that's the same with Slytherins, so maybe most of them are really bad dark wizards or something, but would you be so mean to dismiss the few cool ones?"

"Well when you put it that way.. Wait but what if there aren't any good ones? What then?"

"Well you got to taste them first to find out right?"

Ron looked horrified. "What?"

Harry giggled, "No you dope! I meant give them a chance. You wouldn't know what flavour a bean was without tasting them so you need to give these Slytherins a chance to prove themselves."

The redhead still seemed unsure about it all but nodded thoughtfully nonetheless. It was an improvement either way. "Alright Harry. For you I'll give them a tiny chance."

"That's all I can ask. All I can ask."

In the middle of a heated one-sided discussion about the basics of this Quidditch game Harry still thought sounded extremely dumb the door to their compartment slipped open again. This time it was three boys, and Harry recognised the one in the middle from Malkin’s. He looked much more snobbish but the raven haired boy could see a glimmer of childish eagerness in cold grey eyes as the gaze rested on him.

"Is it true?" the child of white asked, "They're all saying Harry Potter is around here."

Harry gave a quirked smile and nodded, "That's me." The pale boy responded with a faint flash of a smile before his was gone.

"Oh this is Crabbe and Goyle by the way," The blonde gestured carelessly to the hulking figures that could not possibly be eleven year olds. Then again he should talk, he looked eight rather than what his physical age should be. "And I'm Draco, Draco Malfoy."

Ron gave a slight cough, which might have been hiding a snigger causing Draco to look at his direction and sneer.
"Think my name's funny, do you? No need to ask who you are. My father told me all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles, and more children than they can afford."

He turned back to Harry, ignoring the furious reddening of the freckled boy's face. That wasn't very nice. Very rude. Harry did not know how he was going to survive till teenage-hood. It must get less complicated right?

"You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there."

He held out his hand to shake Harry's in what was probably a gesture of friendship, even if it was a terrible way of doing so. He'd almost thought of not even accepting it but the boy had seen how lonely the other was. How desperate to have an actual friend, he'd seen the blatant yearning when they talked about family and offered friendship before and he couldn't in good conscious dangle these hopes just to snatch it away from small naive fingers. Of course he had to set some ground rules too.

"I appreciate your help, I really do Malfoy," He began with what he wished was an easy smile that didn't betray the strain he was feeling in such a messy social situation. They did not cover this in intensive sensitivity training dammit. "I did say I want to be friends with you before," Draco smiled triumphantly and he could feel the betrayed glare boring right at him by Ron, "but," The smile was gone and the glare had lost it's intensity yet it still felt like Harry was in the middle of a mortal minefield. "but Ron is also my friend and if you can't accept my decisions and tastes then I'm sorry. I hope you are still willing to be friends despite it though."

Harry stuck out his hand this time as during the talk Draco's had fallen to his side. Grey eyes studied the outstretched hand warily now, meanwhile Harry twisted his head to face Ron and sternly said, "This goes for you too. I don't like choosing sides, if you guys can't get along after giving it a shot fine. But I refuse to be tugged around because of that understand?"

The redhead nodded stiffly. The show of equality seemed to clinch Draco's decision as well as he took the hand and firmly shook it. "Fine Potter," he drawled. "But don't expect me to do whatever you say, I am a Malfoy after all."

"Yeah that really means nothing to me." The green eyed child bluntly said, causing Ron to burst into laughter at the gaping expression of Malfoy and his cronies. "Where have you been living? Under a rock?" The blonde asked, the idea that someone didn't understand the greatness that is Malfoy beyond him. "Nope, just under some stairs." Harry deadpanned with sardonic humour.

"Oi! That's mine!" Ron shouted in the background as one of the large bodyguards, Goyle, reached to grab a handful of Bertie Bott's beans. The larger, rock of a boy slowly stared at the sweets in his hands, then at the fuming redhead and shoved it all into his mouth. It was hard to tell if that was malicious on his part or just very slow on any uptake. Draco actually looked a little ashamed at that.

"Oh yeah well, watch this!" The freckled boy copied the action, shoving a fistful of the beans in his own mouth, the two goons, not to be out done continued shovelling the various tasting jellybeans into their maws. Ugh.

"Charming." Draco muttered.

"We sure know how to pick 'em." Harry murmured in agreement.
"What is going on?" It was at that moment, Hermione Granger came back into the scene. She then wrinkled her nose in distaste as she saw the three boys stuffing their faces with candy whilst two others watched at the sidelines with disgusted bemusement. "You know those will rot your teeth terribly, I know, my parent's are dentists."

Ron looked positively tomato like again and Harry absentmindedly wondered if it was healthy for your head to get such sudden rushes of blood so many times in one day. The freckled boy swallowed whatever he was chewing so he could properly scowl. "What do you want?"

"Just telling you all to better hurry up and put your robes on, the conductor says we're nearly there."

"Oh well that's it?" Before he could even get an answer the pale blonde nodded, "Good, now leave us so we can get changed."

The bushy haired girl looked quite put out at the dismissal but continued on nonetheless. "All right then. I only came up in here because people outside are behaving very childishy, racing up and down the corridors," said Hermione in a snifty voice. "But I see when I'm not wanted." She added as she left. Draco closing the door behind her as Ron glared.

"I don't think she does really." Malfoy drawled.

"Here here." Ron grumbled, and the two gave each other a small grin before they realised who they were and who they were talking to and promptly looked at opposite directions. Harry chuckled. They would be best friends yet.

Finally a voice echoed to the train, warning all the students they were approaching their destination in about five minutes time.

"Well," Draco gave a stiff nod as the trio turned to go, "See you at Hogwarts I suppose."

Harry smiled, "Yes, see you there."

Ron and the two hulking other boys just grunted, both with mouths too busy occupied with confectionary. The blonde and raven haired children just rolled their eyes at the gluttonous antics and parted ways.

"So Ron, what do you think?"

"They're pretty okay.. for Slytherin."

Harry rolled his eyes again with a soft smile.
Death's Sorting

The one where Death freaks out about getting wet, makes future plans for redecorating and oh, gets Sorted... and somehow ruins that. Which is frankly bloody ridiculous because all he had to do was sit down, put on the hat and lay back.

Or the one the author was too indecisive, said 'Screw it,' and consequently resulted in this stupid sorting hat scene that, she just knows, is going to bite her back quickly in the future.

"Firs years, firs years o'er here!"

Harry shivered unhappily in the cold. Apparently the makers of Hogwarts uniform had failed to give adequate thought on what to do when winter comes. And it hasn't even started snowing yet. Fantastic.

The boy glanced at his red headed friend who was doing no better. "Guess we should head over."

"Guess so."

They trailed through a narrow path in a forest, everyone was quiet with only the rustle of trees, quiet crackling of leaves under shuffling feet and the soft chattering of children filling the air. Harry heard the boy who lost his toad sniff a few times. Whether it was from the temperature of his incompetence at keeping one pocket-sized thing on his purpose Harry wasn't sure.

"Nearly there!" Hagrid shouted, his large form visible even across the river of children, "Just round this bend!"

With that encouragement everyone quickened their steps, and even Harry was unable to shake off the vibrating excitement and anticipation that came seconds before the forest revealed what would be essentially his home for the next seven or so years of his life.

It was... marvellous really.

The first thing you saw was a great black lake, glittering under the darkness of the sky, beyond that was lazy rolling hills of greenery the land was so well known for, and perched on top of it all was a castle. Harry had heard many attempts at describing the building, back when he was Death and souls were just stories to be told, it's towers, it's turrets, the windows, the sheer size. But none of it did justice as his gaze raked over the magnificent castle, standing proud and glorious and strong as it too must be watching them with as much curiosity and expectancy as they were. Each brick and stone, worn and old, exuded an old power that Harry could barely just feel from the distance. A warrior's protection, a scholar's curiosity, a sly man's wisdom and a mother's love. Such wonderful traits embedded into the magics surrounding them all, everyone unaware of the fine tapestry being weaved in the spaces which are unseen, curling around their innocent fingertips as they too, unknown to them, become one in this invisible web that is Hogwarts.

To be honest, Harry was a little jealous he didn't have a castle like this.

"No more'n four to a boat!" Hagrid called, breaking the silent awe of the children and pointing to a fleet of little boats sitting in the water by the shore. Harry did not like what he saw. And what he saw was a tiny wooden boat of a thing which was expected to allow four children sized mortals to stay afloat and un-drenched for probably more than thirty seconds. The petite boy internally swore he was never getting in that thing with Crabbe and Goyle. Because, just, no.
Clearly Draco was having the same idea as he took one look at the boats just innocently floating there, then at his two hulking bodyguards, then back at the flimsy boat-shaped driftwood, before dashing off to join Harry and Ron. Much to Ron's very visible displeasure. Apparently it will take quite a bit of effort for the two to ever become solid friends. Hermione, upon seeing the trio entering the boat, bid farewell to the still sniffing boy who lost his toad to run up and join them. And now both Weasley and Malfoy were simmering in something that was as far as pleasure as one could get with the arrangement. The two boys as well as moving away from the bushy haired girl, were trying to sit as close as they could to the black haired child whilst contradictorily, trying to still maintain as much distance from each other as possible.

Harry would have found a lot more amusement in all of this but once again, he couldn't help but worry about the boat he was now on- and was rocking very ominously now that he mentioned it. Dammit, if he gets soaked in this chilly weather he was actually going to kill someone. And coming from him that really should be a threat well-wary of.

"Oi you okay mate?" Ron asked looking at the other's even paler complexion. "You look whiter than, well," The freckled child gestured to an affronted looking Malfoy.

"Not everyone can be stupidly poor, freckled and ginger, Weasley." He sneered causing said ginger's freckled face to heat up in indignation. But before the angered boy could splutter something out, Draco glanced at the green eyed boy, who was still looking forlornly at the edge of the boat, and said, "Though Weasley is right Potter. You look simply terrible, don't tell me you're afraid of the water?"

Somehow the blonde had this astounding ability to make even a simple question of worry sound like the most condescending, insulting thing to ever come out of anyone's lips ever. Whilst Ron looked even redder on Harry's behalf, Harry himself could feel a small curl on the edge of his lips at the question. Malfoy was quite the adorable child wrapped up in thorny barbs wasn't he?

"I'm not afraid." The raven-haired boy stated, glancing up at Draco before looking back down at the boat, "I just shudder to think what would happen to my person if we tipped over."

Ron snorted at the idea, clearly one of those people who would probably laugh it off and find it a funny story to tell everyone afterwards. Malfoy however also looked down at the black cold waters beneath him and decided to mimic Harry in terms of trying to be as small as humanly able whilst maintaining his usual air of decorum. The red head stared at the sudden shift in posture and the irate looking pair next to him. "You guys aren't bloody serious." He deadpanned.

"Shut up and stop rocking the boat so much." Draco snapped, Harry nodding in serious agreement. "Do you know what bog water would do to my hair?" The aristocratic pureblood bemoaned.

"Your hair?" Harry asked baffled, "Why would you care about that? We could get some sort of disease or worse! I've read stuff on parasites found in lake water that breed and hatch eggs under your skin and there is no way on Life's stupid green earth am I going to go through that." He insisted as Draco paled even whiter, almost matching Harry's particular shade at the moment.

Ron stared at the two like they were the crazy ones before bursting out from laughter. The other boys in the boat were not amused.

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"Everyone in?" shouted Hagrid, who had a boat to himself. Smart man. "Right then - FORWARD!"

And the fleet of little boats moved off all at once, gliding across the lake and Harry couldn't help but sigh in relief. Thank God, they were magic boats. Ron chuckled again as he must have noticed the relieved expression on his face. But other than that, everyone was all silent, staring up in childish
wonder at the great castle looming overhead. It towered over them, majestic against the starry sky while they sailed closer to the cliffs where it stood, magic heavy and comforting in the air, beckoning the new students even closer with promises of beginnings and friendships and homes.

'It would be hard not to feel some sort of connection to this place, no matter who you are.' The non-entity mused as he admired the view.

It took an underground tunnel, a passageway in the rock and a generous expanse of grassy hill before they eventually all arrived at the huge, Oak front door. The half-giant checked if everyone was present and okay before taking three large knocks on the castle door with his even larger fists. The door immediately swung open revealing a stern faced Professor McGonagall.

"The firs' years, Professor McGonagall," said Hagrid.

"Thank you, Hagrid. I'll take it from here."

She opened the door wide and lead them through the entrance hall. It was almost as big as his own hall back in his personal realm, not as long though. It was lighted with burning torches which Harry thought was a little old fashioned considering there must've been more 'magical' decorations to use instead, and they followed the older witch across polished stone floor. The green eyed child could already hear the chattering of hundreds of students as they neared their destination, the rest of the school must be waiting for them to come in. The boy shuddered a bit at the thought. He really did not think the whole 'school equal noisy children' thing properly did he?

However they weren't immediately pushed toward the noisy hallway but instead ushered into a small, empty chamber off the hall. All of them standing closely together nervously as eyes watched McGonagall, waiting to be told what to do now.

"Welcome to Hogwarts," said Professor McGonagall. "The start-of-term banquet will begin shortly, but before you take your seats in the Great Hall, you will be sorted into your houses. The Sorting is a very important ceremony because, while you are here, your house will be something like your family within Hogwarts. You will have classes with the rest of your house, sleep in your house dormitory, and spend free time in your house common room.

The four houses are called Gryffindor, Hufflepuff," Heh. Hufflepuff. It almost made Harry feel like he was in some sort of weird parody of a children's story book series. "Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. Each house has its own noble history and each has produced outstanding witches and wizards. While you are at Hogwarts, your triumphs will earn your house points, consequently any rule-breaking will lose house points. At the end of the year, the house with the most points is awarded the house cup, a great honour I hope each of you will be a credit to whichever house becomes yours." Green eyes blinked lazily at that. Was that meant to be an actual punishment? Losing metaphorical points which would fail to give you a presumably shiny large cup at the end of the year that technically you don't even personally own? These people better not make any serious karma inducing mistakes because Hell was going to be a big surprise for them.

"The Sorting Ceremony will take place in a few minutes in front of the rest of the school." She took a breath from her lengthy introduction and then eyed the toad boy's, Neville's he was pretty sure someone called him, cloak that was somehow fastened on his ear and a smudge on Ron's face. Feeling self conscious Harry attempted to brush down his own messy hair in an effort to look neater. "I suggest all of you smarten yourselves up as much as you can while you are waiting."
"I shall return when we are ready for you," Professor McGonagall stated as she left the chambers. "Please wait quietly." Despite the 'please' added at the front of the sentence, the boy had a distinct impression that it was most definitely not a suggestion.

The pale raven haired boy turned to his redhead friend, "How exactly do they sort us into houses?" he asked.

"Fred said it was some sort of test." Ron shrugged, but Harry could clearly see the beginnings of anxiety and worry. Children this age are unsurprisingly very full of expression, even the more reserved ones like Malfoy. "Hurts a lot apparently, but I think he was joking." Though the freckled boy sounded unsure despite the self-reassurance. A few kids who were listening in looked even worse off than they did before. Draco was tugging at the edge of his robes, pretending he was just adjusting them. Granger, whom apparently took Ron's word a bit too seriously, was whispering very fast about all the spells she'd learned and wondering which one she'd need and generally freaking everyone out even more. Neville was a mess. Harry could see even Goyle and Crabbe tapping their feet and fidgeting with their hands respectively, and he was pretty sure the two were literally just charmed carved blocks of granite.

The majority of them though, all fixed their eyes toward the door with dread and heavy nausea. Like the stern professor was going to appear at any moment with red horns, holding a trident (seriously, mortals have the strangest imaginations) and whisked them all away to their doom.

The quiet tension built up to suffocating levels, so you couldn't blame Harry when he violently jerked at the sudden screams of the children behind him. "What in the living-" His curse on his lips died as gasps formed on the people's around him. Because the cause of his shock was most definitely not in the realms of the living.

About twenty ghosts had just appeared, passing through the back wall like the stone was nothing. A pale white hue and transparent, but not enough so that one couldn't see the intricate details of each ghost if they looked close enough, they glided across the room talking to one another, hardly glancing at the first years. They seemed to be arguing. What looked like a fat little monk was saying, "Forgive and forget, I say, everyone deserves a second chance."

"My dear Friar, haven't we all given Peeves all the chances he deserves? Many can argue we give him far more than he deserves actually. The man gives us, spiritual beings, all a bad name and you know, he's not even really a ghost and- I say, what are you all doing here?" Some ghost had apparently finally noticed the group of gaping first years.

"New students?" The Friar asked helpfully. A few heads nodded. Harry just smiled serenely, it had been a while since he had, had any contact with any of the dead. And school ghosts of all things! Fascinating, he didn't remember the Founders telling him about them. Though most of the ghost happenings probably happened after their time. Because if they did, Harry was pretty sure the name of the school would be Hogwarts: Murder House for children. And that was not a name you wanted to attend to for schooling.

In the midst of his musings, Harry realised someone was staring hard at him, looking up he saw it to be one of the ghosts- wearing a curly powdered wig, with robes covered in silver bloodstains and carried chains in his hands. The pale boy gazed a bit longer at the paler ghost, then tilted his head in acknowledgement. That apparently was the cue for the spirit to rush over to his side, bowing low and attracting much attention. "Death Lord." He breathed, his breath cold and barely more than a hoarse whisper. The other children wouldn't be able to hear it much to Harry's relief. But unfortunately, the other ghosts must have, for they too were staring with awe and amazement in their eyes before also gravitated quickly toward him, circling at a respectful distance as they murmured wondrously at the
unexplainable emotions their intangible bodies were filling up with in the entity's presence.

"Death Lord."

"Is it really him?"

"He's kinda smaller than I expected.."

"Of course he is you imbecile, did you leave your brain as well as your body? Obviously he's graced our plane of existence as a human for a reason."

"Lord Death."

"Our Lord."

"Death Lord."

A few of the braver ghosts reached out to stroke an arm or brush a hair out of his way, when they saw how indulgently the boy, their Lord Death, allowed them this pleasure soon all of them were gathered, surrounding the boy with open curiosity and reverence. Harry merely smiled at his subjects, stubborn ones these were, unwilling to come back to his realms to play school of all things. Who would've thought.

The other children however, did not seem to share his easy acceptance of the situation. Generally the looks on their faces were a mix of uncomfortable wariness down to horrified curiosity to just plain terrified. Harry was willing to bet the ones near tears were from non-magical background.

"What are you doing?" A sharp angry voice rang out and all heads, solid and see-through, turned to face the stern professor who'd returned. "Harassing a first year, for shame, I expected better of you all. Move along now, the Sorting Ceremony is about to start."

The raven haired Death Lord could feel the tense crackling in the air caused by the spiritual beings congregating protectively over his small human body, completely unwilling to obey the woman's orders. Harry certainly could not have that, so he held up his hands in a passive surrendering gesture and whispered, "Do as she says my wayward souls. I do not wish to interrupt this, uh, sorting of ceremonies, was it?"

With great reluctance the ghosts looked at the powerful entity hidden underneath layers of human flesh and blood, one by one, slowly floating away through the opposite wall. Once all the spectres were gone, made perfectly sure by the keen scrutiny of Professor McGonagall, the teacher turned to face the students.

"Now that, that small bit of drama is over, please form a line and follow." Professor McGonagall told the first years.

Getting oddly nervous, Harry did so, feeling a bit of comfort in the fact Ron stood behind him and Draco with his goons in front as they walked toward and through the double doors of the Great Hall.

Lit by what seemed to be thousands of candles that floated mid-air over four long tables adorned with glittering golden plates and goblets, as the rest of the students were waiting. There was another length of table where the teachers were sitting which was where they were herded up to, coming to a halt to face the hundred of students (and the occasionally ghost that was looking right at him) staring at them whilst the teachers watched their backs. It wasn't the most tender of sensations Harry can tell you that much but the view was great. The Great Hall was astounding. Harry was definitely not jealous. Especially not of that frankly amazing ceiling dotted with stars. Jesus Christ where could he
order some of that? Actually wasn't Jesus a carpenter? Hmmm…

"It's bewitched to look like the sky outside. I read about it in Hogwarts, A History." Granger whispered, a little redundantly if you asked the boy. What did you think they did to the ceiling? A satanic demon ritual to make a deal for some really rad special effects done for their hall- actually… that could work…

A four-legged stool was placed down in front of the children, drawing Harry's future plans for his realm to a temporary halt as he, along with the rest of the first years, watched intrigued at a point frayed looking witches hat on top of the chair. For a brief second Harry thought they had to pull something out of it like those fake mortal magic men on the telly that Dudley insisted he replicate (with actual magic of course). Maybe depending on what they pulled out it'll determine what house they belong to.

Of course that hypothesis went out the window when 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 Hufflepuffis 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!

The whole hall burst into applause as the hat finished its song. It bowed to each of the four tables, well, as much as a hat could do so, and then became still again. Like it didn't just sing a some surprisingly catchy and deep tune.

"So we've just got to try on the hat!" Ron whispered to Harry, visibly relieved. "I'll kill Fred, he was going on about wrestling a troll." The raven haired child snorted at that.

"Your brother's sound like fun."

"Yeah." The redhead muttered. "Fun like waking up to find you've grown bunny ears."

"Did they at least match your hair."

"No."

"Shame."

"Harry you're kind of a wanker you know that?"

"Yes well such is the burden I must bear."

"..What?"

"Shut it you two." Draco hissed, though the corner of his mouth was twitching as though fighting back the urge to snicker. "Professor McGonagall is speaking."

It was true, Professor McGonagall had by then stepped forward holding a long roll of parchment. Harry did not envy her job at all. "When I call your name, you will put on the hat and sit on the stool to be sorted," she said. "Abbott, Hannah!"

A pink-faced girl with blonde pigtails stumbled out of line, put on the hat, which fell right down over her eyes, and sat down. 'Seemed pretty simple.' Harry thought. 'Though that's what I thought when I agreed to Fate's request so,'

"HUFFLEPUFF!" shouted the hat.

The table on the right cheered and clapped as Hannah went to sit down at the Hufflepuff table. Harry saw the ghost of the Fat Friar waving merrily at her. They all seemed very nice, with a name like Hufflepuff one would usually expect that though. Or at least you would safely presume they weren't serial killers who enjoyed the taste of blood and vodka or something.

"Bones, Susan!"

"HUFFLEPUFF!" shouted the hat again, and Susan scuttled off to sit next to Hannah. Yes, thinking about the name more, they probably had the most comfortable furniture too. Soft pillows. Couches. Damn. Now he wanted to go Huffle with the Puffles.

"Boot, Terry!"

"RAVENCLAW!"

The table second from the left clapped this time; several Ravenclaws stood up to shake hands with Terry as he joined them. Ravenclaw were the intelligent ones right? They would obviously have their own personal library. And with a library comes amazing books to read and lay down with.
Harry always did enjoy books, not to mention they seemed like the most quiet out of a noisy lot.

"Brocklehurst, Mandy"

"RAVENCLAW!"

Yes, Ravenclaw seemed pretty good too.

"Brown, Lavender"

"GRYFFINDOR!"

Or perhaps Gryffindor would be where he would go? In this life he was willing to try exercise his new found freedom and what better way than the house of the courageous?

"Bulstrode, Millicent"

"SLYHERIN!"

Though Slytherin he could definitely see himself fitting in. If Malfoy was a bit of an indication there was some sort of power play going on in there but it all sounded quite prestigious and apparently his vessel had an affinity to snakes. Plus, Harry would bet his whole Gringotts account (and it was a big account considering the interest the goblins had given him) that their rooms were filled with silk, ornate decorations and refined but still lavish furniture. And if that isn't a good place to garner some ideas for tasteful designs for his own use than what was?

"Granger, Hermione!"

Already up to the 'G' section. Huh, this was going faster than he'd thought. Then again, for most people the sorting took seconds, the longest he'd counted was a sandy haired bloke, Finnegan something, who took about a minute or so.

When finally called, Hermione almost ran to the stool and jammed the hat eagerly on her head. This one took even longer before the hat finally shouted,

"GRYFFINDOR!"

Ron groaned loudly, mostly drowned out by the cheers, unheard by most except Harry and Draco. The blonde was smirking, reaching out to pat his hand half-mockingly, half-sympathetically on the freckled boy's shoulder. "There, there Weasley. At least Slytherin, and therefore I will be okay."

"You know that if you're going to be in Slytherin you'll be taking classes with them right?" Harry pointed out, causing Malfoy to pale. Both looked at each other in a moment of shared misery and commiseration at that, forcing Harry to hide his laugh under a faked cough.

"Neville, Longbottom!" it was the boy who kept losing his toad, who was called next, he looked so nervous that he fell over on his way to the stool. The green eyed boy winced at that. You had to feel bad for that. It took an even longer time sorting Neville. When it finally shouted, "GRYFFINDOR!" Neville shot off, probably from all the built up tension and nerves, still wearing it, and had to humiliatingly jog back amid laughter.

"Malfoy, Draco!"

"Well that's me." The noble blond drawled, swaggering forward toward the stool with confidence most of the other children had failed to show beforehand. The hat barely touched his slicked back
Draco joined his two hulking child golems looking immensely pleased. Harry clapped for him which made the child grin even brighter. Ron gave him two claps which really was more than Harry expected.

There wasn't much more left on that list, which was good for McGonagall, that sort of needless strain on her voice would definitely ache a bit tomorrow. Then again. Magic.

"Potter, Harry!"

The hall broke into hushed and not so hushed whispers that made the called-on boy feel distinctly outside the realms of comfort as he begun walking up to the rather rickety looking stool. He also felt slightly irritated at them all. God. Even when trying to be quiet children were still loud. Perhaps he shouldn't have accepted to come to Hogwarts after finding out his sudden fame. There's going to be attention and gossip and stares everywhere.

As Harry felt the fabric of the hat brush against his bird's nest of raven hair, the would-be official wizard couldn't help but feel quite giddy at the idea of being sorted. Ok more the sorting itself than the actual getting into a house thing but still. Magic would be absolutely ecstatic to find out some of these wizards actually had the imagination to make a talking, sorting hat when he tells her about his experience. Knowledge would probably be more intrigued at how it had been made whilst the others would wish to use it for their entertainment most definitely. Honestly though, he just thought it would be pretty nice right now to talk to someone closer to his age.

Then a piercing scream hit everyone's ears.

It was filled with such blood-curdling fear and anguish it took Harry a few seconds to move past the sound and realize the source of it came from his head. Well, on top of his head. It seemed his excitement caused his still rather fragile control on his more 'deadly' powers to slip out more than usual. The hat if it was really sentient through human magics, would probably be feeling like its on the edge of its own demise, literally meeting death head on if you will. No wonder it was freaking out so bad. Oops.

As much as Harry felt bad about the whole 'terrifying the centuries old hat' thing this was quite the embarrassing predicament he found himself. And when he could feel the self aware article began to shift in a desperate attempt to get as far as possible from him that's when Harry realized he needed to intervene. Now.

'DESIST AT ONCE HAT.' He mentally ordered with as much authority as he could inject. If the thing was going to act like he was a tyrannical God then it wouldn't mind if he lived up to its expectations. The hat complied near immediately, though it did whimper a bit. 'GOOD. NOW SIT DOWN AND SHUT UP. '

The shuffle and hesitant shifting back on his head confirmed the order. Harry would not lie. That pleased him in a the more primal 'godly' side immensely. 'GOOD.' He praised though the hat shuddered at the word like it was slime dripping down into its fabric.

That really was the problem with soulless but self-aware objects, they weren't considered 'alive,' so they fell under an obscure part of Death's domain but they didn't have a soul which would've been able to inherently connect with the entity in a way that he had been told felt 'terrifyingly like being welcomed home.' Without that feeling there was only dread, cold and dark and unendingly horrifying to look straight into. Since there is no soul to collect, to remake and remodel, just complex strings of magic and emotion and some faint spark that could easily be misinterpreted as a
personality. Because of all that, death to these things is what is considered a 'true death' and they know it and fear it.

Which is really such an inconvenience. It had been such a long time since he's met anything this self aware, which really makes this Sorting Hat quite the work of art, so he'd completely forgotten this was the reaction he would garner in close proximity. Wands didn't count because they weren't really sentient enough to identify anything other than capability, suitability and power of a potential master. If pressed (like hard to the point that some of his bones were already cracking from the pressure) Harry had to say he preferred the almost perverse need to please him in comparison to being treated like he was some apocalyptic, invincible being that could destroy one's very existence with a mere thought. Well, he was an apocalyptic, invincible being that could destroy one's very existence with a mere thought, but that's really not the point here.

The hat must have felt the entity's disapproval because the magical article of clothing whimpered again. Harry mentally sighed. "DON'T YOU, I DON'T KNOW, HAVE TO SORT ME OR SOMETHING?"

'O-of course Death Lord!' A timid voice squeaked in his mind. 'Where do you wish to be placed sir?'

'AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE ABLE TO DISCERN WHERE I'M MOST SUITABLE?'

'Well, you're suited near equally to all of the houses my Lord.' The hat answered, apparently getting a bit more comfortable as he re-entered his designated role. 'Loyalty to the literal death and hardworking despite your complaints, such curiosity you have fulfills the thirst of knowledge you would need for a Ravenclaw, snake-like cunning as well as manipulation is inside you in droves and finally courage. That one was a bit tricky, but yes you have courage, it's rather new if you don't mind me saying, did something happen recently milord?'

Harry thought back to the start of it all, his all powerful self flitting around his grim throne room fretting about breaking the rules, then that sudden flare of insistent determination silently encouraging him to actually do something for once. To act out of his role. To be more than just an end. The boy chuckled softly, how a few tiny insignificant years, ones that would have passed by him before as naturally as air through his fingertips, now held so much, molding and changing him in a way eons has failed to do. 'You could say that...' His inner voice softer, more human like than it has ever been before. The hat too must have sensed a changed as the boy could almost feel it's shift in demeanor, still fearful but now ready to please and pledge loyalty at a drop of a, well, it.

'So my Death,' the Sorting Hat began more confidently, now finding itself quite eager in sorting this unworldly being, 'What House would you want to honor yourself into? The House of the Brave? The Cunning perhaps? Or do you wish to indulge in Knowledge or plan to dabble with the Loyal?'

'I get to choose?' Harry asked, genuinely confused, 'I thought that was your reason for existence.' He pointed out, with a slightly accusing tone.

'Yes, well,' the sentient hat huffed, 'You're one of the few who can be put in any House milord. When that rare happenstance occurs it is not up to me anymore, I can only guide and nudge a person in the direction of what I think is best. I am something to be recognized and heeded but not necessarily something to be followed mindlessly.'

The entity-child smiled at the backbone and wisdom this hat was showing to someone who just a few moments ago, had the thing literally almost running for the hills. To be fair, death did do that to people, uh, sentient clothing.

'Ok,' he acquiesced amiably, then with little to no thought at all he decided, 'I wish to go to all of
The hat stiffened, which probably in clothing-speak meant the thing had frozen in shock.

'You can't do that!' It protested indignantly.

'Why not?' Harry asked baffled, 'You said I was well suited for all four houses so why should I limit myself to only one? Because I am certainly not going to relive this life three other times just to figure out what living how the other quarter lives, that would be tedious. Plus I need to test out the comfort of Hufflepuff, the use of spacing in Gryffindor, the artistic tastes of Slytherin and the libraries of Ravenclaw for a.. project I'm working on.'

Ignoring the blatant implication the boy could easily time travel or cross worlds (which was extremely hard to do by the way) the Sorting Hat gaped, disbelief at the sheer dismissal at century old tradition this individual was insisting he should break. All for the sake of what suspiciously sounded like interior design.

'But,' it began weakly, 'that's never been done.'

'Well Death's never destroyed a magical hat with his bare hands before but it isn't that hard for me to do so is it?'

A strangled fearful sound echoed in the child's head. Apparently the joke was not well appreciated. Note to self: jokes about ending another's existence? Not funny to particularly sensitive people slash objects. Who knew.

'So?' Harry asked, rather patiently all things considered he may add. 'May I here your verdict?'

The hall hushed and quiet had began murmuring to themselves in confusion and anticipation. What was taking so long?

After the hat suddenly gave a terrified ear-splitting scream as it twitched erratically the moment it descended on the Boy-Who-Lived's head the magical artifact suddenly went ominously still and silent. It had been twenty minutes since then. The teachers were giving sidelong looks of worry that were probably meant to be subtle but failed miserably considering the face that every student could easily see them at the front of the hall right next to the current person of interest.

Professor McGonagall looked distinctly uncomfortable, which no one could really fault considering they were all equally at a loss at what to do in this situation as well. Though considering the professor in question was the one in charge of the Sorting it was obvious most of the pressure for someone to do something was on her. Just as it looked like the woman might take off the hat, because what else were they supposed to do- It wasn't like the Founders gave them a set of instructions when they created the hat- the magical artifact opened its mouth and everyone stilled, waiting expectantly.

"GRYFFINDOR!"

A cheer went up in the house of the brave but it didn't last long before,

"SLYTERIN!"

The Gryfindors opened their mouths no words coming out from them, the Slytherin's were no better
but they would like to think that they expressed their disbelief in a more dignified manner.

"RAVENCLAW!"

A few weak claps were given by stunned Ravenclaws, one of them in their true house fashion, was writing down the whole event as well as questions and theories accompanying this anomaly. Though most were just struck completely dumb, eyes glued to the hat who was opening his mouth. Again.

"AND HUFFLEPUFF!"

Harry Potter, Boy-Who-Lived-to-Defy, then took off the hat, placed it in the stunned hands of one Transfiguration Professor, looked at the equally shocked tables of student before him and asked, "So, where do I sit?"

And then the hall descended into chaos.

An emergency meeting was held right after Harry finished the feast. Harry honestly was not surprised. If anything after all that shouting and general confusion he actually expected to be whisked off to some office the moment the Sorting was announced. It looked like a lot of the professor's clearly wished to do that, they had barely focused on the frankly delicious meal before them, choosing to gawk at some scrawny green eyed boy. Wasteful really. Because the food was delicious.

In the end before the emergency meeting, Harry had decided to sit with the Gryfindors. The Ravenclaws had looked like they were willing to crack open his vessel's skull to pick at his brain so that was not an option. Hufflepuff was still a stupid name. Slytherin while probably the house that would give him the most peace, was decided against as well, simply because they too were staring at him much too much like the Ravenclaws, just with an extra sharp edge of calculation that the boy did not want to deal with currently. And that left-

"I can't believe you've managed to get sorted in all the bloody houses!" Ron exclaimed between mouthfuls of food. Harry politely chose to look away from the mess his red headed friend was making. Hermione Granger who was sitting on the opposite side of them, didn't even try not to look completely disgusted.

"Well, I," she began rather haughtily, "think that you've obviously must have done something." The bushy haired girl sniffed accusingly, "It doesn't say anywhere in Hogwarts: A History, that you can be in more than one house, much less all of them!"

"Is there anywhere in there that says otherwise?" Ron shot back, the boy arguing more for the sake of dislike of the girl than an actual belief that people can be in four houses. Granger flushed at the rebuttal, and was generally silent for the rest of the conversation.

"But really, all four houses," A boy with hair the colour of sand mused, "How will your classes work? Where will you sleep?"

Harry paused from his meal. He had not thought about that at all. However he quickly shrugged any such worries off. He was on vacation for God's sakes. This was the professor's headache, not his. And wow, it felt good to pass off responsibility.

"I'm Seamus Finnegan by the way," the boy added with a friendly if not slightly nervous smile.

"Harry Potter." He replied,
"I know." Seamus nodded, "Pretty sure everyone does actually." Harry nodded too.

"Yeah I've seen the story books. Awful stuff really."

"So it isn't true?" Someone asked down the table. Apparently everyone was unabashedly listening in on the new celebrity.

"Nope." Harry answered simply, cutting a small appropriately sized piece of steak and putting it in his mouth with some obscenely tasty mashed potatoes. Did they mash these things with ambrosia? He would not be surprised if the answer was yes because oh my god. "Raised by muggles. Never have I ever, and I quote 'Rode off toward the English country horizon on the last flying unicorn as the sunset paved my path to the journey beyond.'"

Most of the older kids snorted at the boy's sarcasm whilst an alarming number of them actually looked disappointed. Granger was notably one of them.

Ron, who'd already known all this since the train ride, had ignored the general conversation in favour of freshly baked bread. In the lull of silence though he looked up from his meal and gave a grin at Harry. "Don't know about you but those biscuits with that gravy? Delicious. You ought to try some."

The two friends shared a smile, one childish and friendly, the other small and relieved, then Harry snatched one of the pre-dipped savoury biscuits on the redhead's plate. "Oi! Not cool!"

"You can take some of my mash, it's bloody brilliant." Harry offered amusedly at the other's overprotective outburst for food of all things. Green eyes looked unseeingly at what appeared to be nothing before giving a subtle nod and murmured, "Compliments to the cooks."

Harry blinked as he suddenly found a mini mountain of fresh steaming mashed potatoes on his plates. The butter on top still in the process of melting down on the potato-y goodness. Ah, house elves. Such over eager and willing to please creatures. Maybe he'll have time to find their kitchens and help out for a bit? They'll probably have some sort of fit though.

"How did you do that?" Ron's blue eyes were wide and he was breathing hard like he'd just found his own personal messiah. The redhead tried to do his best imitation of Harry, blank faced he looked at the wall and murmured under his breath, "Please can I have some more chicken drumsticks?"

Looking down at his plate the boy's stoic facade broke into the widest grin as he grabbed a large sauce covered chicken drumstick and bit into it with relish. "Merlin this is the best place ever!"

"Hey I did not look like that!" Harry exclaimed in a playful protest. Jabbing the other boy in the ribs with his elbow enough to make him gag a little but not choke.

"You totally did," Ron teased as he flicked a pea at mock outraged green eyes, revenge for the almost making him choke from his food. As nice as those biscuits were, he did not want them to be the last thing he'd ever tasted. "The only way I could've been more like you is that I dip my hair in tar and powder my face."

"Well now your just being mean. My hair is way too nice to be compared to tar."

Ron rolled his eyes as he chewed his food. "Ponce you are."

"If I'm a ponce, you're a pig Ron."

As they traded retorts and ate, it seemed soon everyone became more comfortable around them as their attention soon drifted off to other more mundane things and topics. There still was far too many eyes on him for his liking but Harry was used to such things anyway and ignored them all.
"That does look good." A ghost dressed with ruffles commented wistfully as he watched Ron munch on the chicken. Harry looked up at him with a slight frown, "Do you want some?" He asked. The intangible being's eyes widened and shook his head, "No, no, I couldn't, I mean, I didn't wish to insult milord."

"It's Harry Potter." Harry quickly corrected, glancing to see if anyone heard the last muttered slip up, a few were watching them but not with enough attention to catch the last bit. "Please call me Harry."

"Of course, excuse my insolence my Lo- Harry." The small child gave a small smile at the ghost, "I don't think I've introduced myself? Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-Porpington at your service. Resident ghost of Gryffindor Tower."

"Nice to meet you Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-Porpington." Harry greeted politely, earning a pleased smile in return.

"I know who you are!" said Ron suddenly. "My brothers told me about you - you're Nearly Headless Nick!"

The ghost looked extremely unhappy with the nickname, it didn't sound like a very good one either, but seemed to be visibly refraining himself from acting out his full displeasure, fully aware of who else was watching him. "I would prefer you to call me Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-" the ghost began stiffly, but Seamus Finnigan interrupted.

"Nearly Headless? How can you be nearly headless?"

Harry wondered if pushed hard enough, ghosts could turn red, Nicholas de Mimsy-Porpington looked pretty close to doing so. "Like this," he said irritably before tugging his ear causing his head to fall over, a thin bit of skin off his neck keeping it connected to his body like some morbid sort of hinge. The stunned shocked faces seemed to please the nearly headless spirit before remembering Harry's presence. The ghost coughed sheepishly but Harry just giggled in response, boosting the transparent mortal soul's pride immensely as he preened at the sound.

Flipping back his head onto his body he turned to face the Gryffindors, speaking earnestly about that House Cup nonsense again. Harry continued with his meal.

Considering his background as a malnourished human, it honestly didn't take long for his stomach to signal its fill, groaning in contented bliss. Harry still snacked on a brownie slice but otherwise it was obvious he had finished his meal. As he sat contentedly looking at the other kids still stuffing their faces with pumpkin pie and other such treats, the corner of his green eyes lingered on the increasing shadow hovering over him.

"Mr Potter, the Headmaster would like to see you in his office before the feast is finished. If you please?" Professor McGonagall asked, an arm waved toward the entrance they came from, suggesting very firmly to follow. Harry nodded and moved from his seat, completely aware the great hall had quieted down and watching the scene play out like hawks. A quick glance told the boy that the Headmaster as well as three other professors weren't at their seats either. Most likely waiting for him. Harry wasn't going to lie, context that he just ruined thousands of years old tradition and traumatized artifact leading said tradition aside, it was a little flattering.

"Lead the way Professor."

From the lack of lips on the woman's mouth, Harry was pretty sure he should have said something else. Pretty sure.
"I've brought the boy Albus." Was the first thing McGonagall said when she entered the room. Harry looked around curiously, he couldn't help but compare the room to his own office. It was a large pleasingly circular room, filled with strange silver decorations that whirred and gave off funny puffs of smoke occasionally. The walls were filled with bookcases and portraits of snoozing people, it was a good guess that they were previous headmasters, and overall the place felt quite inviting. The only thing his office and Dumbledore's had really in common were the fact they were circular in design and filled with books. Though looking at this vastly more pleasant looking room, Harry wondered if he should redecorate.

Though he did like to think his chandelier made from brightly shimmering souls were much prettier than those boring candles. So there.

In the midst of the office stood three men and a woman. The woman was elderly, and of a slightly plump figure but held a kind reassuring smile, striking him with the image of Love, it was even stronger in her than Malkins. Next to her was a very short old fellow with a shock of white hair and green robes, brown eyes looking at him with intrigue, excitement and a glimmer of confusion mixed with the familiar look of devotion - elf or goblin blood then. Harry decided he liked the two immediately.

On the other side of the group spectrum though was the darkly dressed professor he'd met before in Diagon. Well not really. The Professor Snape he'd met in Diagon was an imposing intelligent man with a dry snarky humor filled with barbs and jabs. This Professor Snape was sneering, clearly unhappy and looked like his words were armed with grenades and knives, ready to completely cut him down with vicious glee. It confused Harry immensely, this sudden change of regard and attitude. And, while it confused him, it also made him feel a sharp empty stabbing sensation on his throat that tasted bitter and dry on his tongue. That was a new emotion. It wasn't anger, no, sadness? He wasn't sure that was right either. Something more complicated obviously. Disappointment. Yes, something along those lines. Whatever it was, Harry found he did not have much care for it so he promptly moved his attention to the last man, standing in the middle of the group.

"I know you." He blurted out, it wasn't tactful but sometimes tact wasn't necessary in certain situations. Whether this was one of them or not he honestly didn't know. "You were the old man who dropped me off on that doorstep. Mighty cold of you. Just like the weather then really."

The old wizard apparently did not see that being the first thing out of his mouth. Well Harry didn't either. Oh well. McGonagall was now glaring at Dumbledore fiercely, the elder of the two cowering slightly under the intense look. The other teachers glanced at each other but otherwise said nothing, Snape's sneer flattened into that blank unreadable look he'd seen before the man left from the potion store. So those three had no idea what that was about either.

"Harry, my boy," Dumbledore spoke hesitantly, his eyes, which had been bright blue and twinkling before, dimmed guiltily, "I do apologise if you have had a hard time at the Dursley's but there is a reason for that."

Harry blinked a few times before realising what the man was trying to say, shaking his head the boy responded firmly, "Yes I did figure there was some sort of reason you left me there. I wouldn't think you were the sort of man who would just pick up newly orphaned babes and put them in less than pleasant households for fun." He paused for a bit and then made a slight face on his pale features, "You aren't are you?"

The twinkle was back and full of humour now. "No, I assure you I'm not." Dumbledore chuckled.
"I'm still unhappy with you though."

That stopped the chuckling.

"I also thought the doorstep bit was overdramatic and very unnecessary. I've thought about it for a while now, and I'm sure there wasn't any reason for that was there?"

The wizard accused shuffled his feet.

"Ah, yes. I do apologise for that but that really isn't what we are he-"

"I wish for a proper apology."

"Why you arrogant-" The tall hook nosed man began furiously, but was stopped by a hand from Dumbledore.

"Harry's right Severus." He said sternly, "He deserves that much and more. While I think some of the stories Minevra has said might be slightly exaggerated in the heat of the moment-" Both professors addressed turned red at that,

"I was NOT exaggera-"

"Of COURSE she was exaggera-"

"nonetheless we all know that Petunia wasn't the most.. accepting of muggles."

"Worst kind." McGonagall hissed, furious at her tale being diminished to such extent. The next time she swore, instead of going to Dumbledore about this again she'll head straight for St Mungo's.

"Harry I am sorry for dropping you on that doorstep when you were a baby." Dumbledore apologised, he did look genuinely ashamed of his actions. Harry would let it go. For now.

"Apology accepted." The child nodded, causing the man to beam.

"Marvellous," The headmaster smiled, "Now back to the minor technicality at hand."

"Minor." Professor Snape snorted derisively. Like the word had somehow personally offended him.

"And don't you think we're going to drop that previous subject like you did to the poor boy on that doorstep." The plump woman added, with a near murderous look that didn't suit her kindly face well at all. Dumbledore coughed and wiped his brow. "Of course, course, wouldn't dream of it."

"Hope you do." McGonagall muttered non-too quietly. The bearded man either didn't hear her or chose at the moment to ignore it.

"Mr Potter, do you know why you've been placed in, ahem, every house?" The short professor asked, trying to move back to the topic at hand. "We've tried consulting the Sorting Hat but with all the secrecy spells placed on it and it being very stubborn in giving even the most obscure of hints.."

"Well. I asked for it to place me like that." Harry answered. The potions professor sneered at the simple answer.

"Don't be stupid, foolish child. You can't just ask the Hat to do something!"

"But I did. It said that I would do well in any house so I picked all four." The boy looked distinctly unimpressed by everyone, unable to see what was wrong with what he'd done.
"You can’t just ‘pick’ all four Mr Potter." The plump witch pointed out not unkindly. "That wouldn’t be fair to the other students would it?"

"But they didn't ask." Harry retorted, unaware of how much he sounded like his physical age currently. "Furthermore it would be unfair to me to just choose randomly a house and then spend the rest of my school life regretting it."

"How selfish of you Potter." Snape drawled with a raised brow. "Though I shouldn't be much surprised."

"Severus." Dumbledore admonished, the black-clad man gave an ugly glare but silenced himself. "Now Mr Potter, Harry, I don't think you understand the repercussions of what would happen if you become.. Well.. I'm not fully sure what to call it right now."

"An individualist?" The short man quipped in helpfully.

"Good enough," Harry tilted his chin up and looked challengingly at twinkling blue with glowing green. "Then by all means please enlighten me of your.. Repercussions." He confronted, the last word said in almost eerie similar tone of disgust and disbelief to the tall potions professor's own voiced protests. For a second Harry Potter didn't look like an eleven year old child, a small boy, for a second he looked old and powerful and painfully dominating. But then those strikingly bright eyes of the boy's softened ever so slightly and it could have almost be dismissed as a trick of the lights and shadows, the boy became a boy again and Dumbledore could swallow down the lump of -fearloveconfusionawespectdreadhope- emotion back from where it came from.

The others may have disregarded it but the Headmaster of Hogwarts, Leader of the Light, Defeater of Grindelward, knew better. From the even paler pallor on his spy's face he knew the other must have sensed it too.

What was that?

"The matter of your dorms." Professor Flitwick, as he had introduced himself, tested with a spark in his eyes. Somehow it had become some sort of odd battle of questions as Harry answered all their concerns with astounding ease.

"Switch on a bi-yearly bases. Every holiday I move out of my current dormitories and into a new one until next holidays."

"Classes." Professor Sprout said next.

"Well I can really be put anywhere you want to so that's not a problem. If anything, that makes things easier for you all. Or you could just swap me around, fifty percent with Slythindor and fifty percent Ravenpuff. Or you could go accordance to whichever dorm I'm sleeping in."

"House points." Professor McGonagall added.

"I don't personally care either way."

"Its our reward system Mr Potter. You can’t just not care."
"Fine. Then if for example, you were my teacher in this instance, I'll be considered in the class Gryffindor to prevent unfair discrimination."

"But what about favouritism?"

Harry shrugged, "It's one or the other we could argue really. As I said I don't mind, we could make me exempt from the point system as well but that'll draw even more attention." The woman nodded in acceptance at the answers.

"And for the teachers that don't have a house affinity like Professor Quirrel?" Dumbledore asked?

"Whatever suits the timetable the best. Again that's your decision really."

"Uniform." Flitwick squeaked out, getting much too excited over this.

"Colouring charm."

"Long term projects."

"Then obviously I stay in that class. There's no need for me to hinder my own education if it demands I require to keep in the same house in that instance."

"Okay, what ab-"

"This is ridiculous!" Professor Snape suddenly spat out. "Why are we all going along this farce?!"

"Because the Sorting Hat said so. And from what I gather you guys follow this Hat more avidly than the talking yellow sponge square does with his conch on the telly." Harry replied near on habit by now from all the questions that had been thrown at him.

The older hook nosed man looked somewhere in between 'unsure what to say' and 'going to throttle someone's neck violently'. Harry did so hope it was the former. He rather liked this neck of his. Helped him to breathe and everything.

"-so I'll be a Slythindor for Potions, Transfigurations, Defense Against the Dark Arts and History of Magic."

"And you'll be a Huffleclaw for Charms, Herbology and Astronomy? Blimey, that's confusing." Ron replied, "At least most of the fun stuff we'll be with us." He added thoughtfully while Harry quirked a brow.

"Us? So Draco's part of an 'us' now is he?" The green-eyed boy teased and the red head to flush slightly, "No! I-I meant us Gryffindors. Just because Malfoy isn't a complete slimy jerk and your friend doesn't mean he's mine!"

"Sure, sure. Whatever you say Ron." Harry snickered, before eying the table of green tied students getting up to leave. "Oh, I have to go now."

Ron looked quite unhappy at the prospect that Harry wasn't going to be bunking with him till next year. "I kinda get why you chose those snakes first since it'll be best to get the creepy dungeons out of the way but I don't see why Gryffindor could at least be before Hufflepuff." He grumbled. The smaller of the two pat the other consolingly. "Well I heard the Hufflepuffs talk about how their
dorms are near the kitchen Ron, and if I can find the kitchen-"

"You have my blessing mate."

Harry grinned.

"Off to the dungeons, I'll go then."

...

Extra- The one where we see the other entities try doing Death's duties. Part 1. Probably. Assume there will be possibly more. I don't know.

"Hello boys and girls," A man in a dark black suit with silver skull buttons set with blue ghostfire and what seemed to be a Green Day shirt underneath, burst through the large heavy doors of Hell, hair the color of a desert sandstorm flying around like it had been caught in one and a wide grin that could put Cheshire cat's to shame. "Daddy's home!"

His greeting was met with disgusted looks of derision.

"For the last time," A demon, Beelzebub? Pretty sure it was Beelzebub, Lord of the Flies and all that gross stuff; sighed as he reluctantly pulled his hands out of some guy's entrails- like he'd rather have hands in disgusting organs than speak to the still grinning redhead- and wiped the blood on his shirt. "You are not our father Chaos."

The 'you stupid ass' was left unsaid but very much implied.

Chaos pouted, "Aww are you guys still mad about me recreating the whole Noah's arc thing here in hell? C'mon that was centuries ago! And I know for a fact you guys survived! Bloody cockroaches you all are really. Though you do get that from me I suppose." All the demons present glowered dangerously, a few even were reaching slowly down for something, Chaos couldn't see what. Though as an entity, he generally had very little skills in the area of self preservation so he kept going,"Also you all would sell all the souls of Hell just so you could call Death, daddy! I mean you guys have worse daddy issues than your so-called holy counterparts upstairs you know?"

Something bloody and sticky flew right at the entity, smacking his nice suit with a sickening sound. The man was sure it was a bit of an oesophagus.

"Well.. That was rude."

...

"This is ridiculous."

"Well Order," Uriel sniffed haughtily. Oh, Order hated the fact these angels were made with his own characteristics, it had seemed like such a good idea at the time. The only comfort was that Chaos stupidly did the same thing too. Any being with even one of that entity’s traits was a headache in itself. "I speak for the rest of us in that we do not require restructuring. We are doing fine without our Father."
"You know you should be calling me Father right? Death is technically your mother if we're going to really look into this family metaphor of yours." At the furious looks of the winged creatures Order readjusted his glasses and rolled his eyes. The awe they held for his brother was actually bordering on perverse. So much for holy lights. "Daddy complexes and abandonment issues. All of you." The entity muttered.

"Get. Out."

"Fine but I'll be back and I expect you guys to get over it and accept I'll be in charge for this unfortunate period of time."

Order didn't even know Angels could swear in Enochian. And if he did have a mother he would've been greatly offended.

... 

" Fucking hell."

Time looked at a sweating exhausted entity of Space who appeared suddenly next to him, leaning on one of his prized grandfather clocks, much to his irritation.

"What's wrong?"

"All the universes are what's wrong brother." The man tugged frustratedly at the galaxies in his hair, "Some of them didn't get the memo that Death has left the building and it's like the moment I turn my back to focus on something else for a second I look back and the Apocalypse has started!"

Time winced sympathetically at his closest brother's plight. A part of him was rather grateful about how peaceful his clocks were in comparison, just the occasional tune up and the uncommon time paradox that needed a bit more of a personal touch but that really was the limit of his interference. "I can slow down the clocks for those worlds if you like?" He offered, but Space shook his head regretfully.

"Once the Apocalypse is in motion only the inhabitants have a chance of stopping it. Do you know how stupid this is?" Space bemoaned, "Their daddy leaves and suddenly a hundred years later they decide the best coarse of action other than waiting aimlessly is to hit the emergency kill switch!"

"Uh, brother, I know this isn't the best time... But you do realize that since Death's gone you'll have to do your own paperwork in regards to any apocalyptic events that happen under your watch."

The only response the entity of time got was a faint thumping of his usually composed brother's head on the wall.

...

"I blame you." Magic hissed as another reaper came through, wobbling under the sheer weight of documents. Fate whimpered at the sight, tugging at now ink stained grey hair as she had just had to complete some sort of contract for Hades and other Greek, Roman deities related to the underworld. It had been six hundred pages long and not a single word didn't make her not want to rip up everything to tiny unreadable shreds.

"I know."

"I mean seriously blaming you so hard right now."
"I don't know about you but I'm finding this delightful. All this inter-death politics, quite fascinating really."

Love smiled as Knowledge without waiting for a reply turned and headed straight toward a group of rather intellectual looking gods conversing in a strange mix of Gaelic and Romanian Lizard-tongue. Taking a sip of the simply fantastic blood red wine as she surveyed the usual black gothic decor of Pluto's grand hall mixed with touches of spring flowers with an approving eye. Truly a fine example of compromise. She knew those two would work things out eventually, pity how it all started, what with Zeus's meddling, the old coot.

But now was not the time to curse the stupidity of gods, now was the time to celebrate a certain couple's anniversary. And who better to do such a beautiful blessing to reaffirm that love then her?

It had absolutely nothing to do with the fact that she sent her sweet Death most of her share of the paperwork. Love sipped her wine again, her smile turned sly. Nothing at all.
"Draco wait up!"

The blond turned from the front of his fellow first year Slytherins - already he'd showed them his rightful place at the head of the pack, as expected of someone of his upbringing - and looked surprised as a familiar small boy with a mess of hair blacker than even his father's finest inks, electric green eyes and an all too familiar scar contrasting brightly against pale white skin, strode quickly toward him. Draco couldn't find it in himself to push down the flutter of delight and happiness that made it's way onto his face like he'd been taught. However he quickly covered it up with surprise.

"Potter, what are you doing here?" He asked. Ignoring the faint buzzing of excited chatter around him as the Boy-Who-Lived came towards them.

"I'm going to be bunking with you guys for the first half of the school year." Harry replied, "I'll explain the system later, for now I'm eager to see the dorms. It is true they're located in the dungeons yeah?"

Draco gave a quirked half smile much like Harry's usual ones, though Harry knew that was the most he would probably get with the other in front of such a crowd of people. Upbringing around here certainly was a strange thing. The green eyed child could not possibly fathom why any parent would stifle such bright large grins on their children's faces, no matter the heritage. Well, he didn't really smile properly either but in his defence he was older than any current planet and meat suits were much stiffer with the finer muscles on your face when said meat suit wasn't yours to begin with.

"Obviously Potter," the blonde answered, "Didn't you read Hogwarts: A History?"

Harry scrunched up his face, "Ugh you sound like the Granger girl. She wouldn't stop talking about that book, thinking back on it now it's probably the reason how I vaguely remembered the snakes lived in the dungeons."

Now it was Draco's turn to pull a face, "Don't compare me to that mud- I mean annoying girl." He quickly covered up, but of course the shorter of the two caught the slight change of wording.

"Wait." Draco was looking distinctly uncomfortable, looking at the ceiling of the Great Hall and completely avoiding Harry's curious gaze. "What where you going to say before?"

"Before what?" The blonde questioned oh so innocently, causing glowing green eyes to narrow suspiciously.

"You were going to call Granger something else."

"Annoying? Because she is you know. Even you must-"

"No, no, no, you were about to say something before that."

"I did no-"

"He was going to call her a mudblood." A dark skinned boy interrupted. Blaise Zabini, one of the
last to be sorted and Harry only remembered him because he looked just as haughty as Draco first appeared but vastly different colouring that served to amuse him greatly. Though right now looking at the subdued expression on Malfoy's face and the thinly veiled aggression on Blaise's it was hard to see any similarities he'd thought he saw before. "Is that a problem Potter?"

If the green tied house hadn't been listening in before, they certainly were now. If gazes could cut glass the boy felt he would have been neatly dissected and sold to the highest bidder by now. They seemed to eagerly wait for his response, like it would determine his place in the world and how he was to be treated. Harry was now wishing he picked the Hufflepuffs first. They seemed super nice. And fluffy. And nearby food. Warm. Little to no expectations. Actually, why didn't he take up with the Puffs first actually?

It's stupid name. Right.

"Well if someone can explain to me the term then I'll see whether I have a problem with it."

The majority of the group seemed taken aback at his response. They were expecting a response, an opinion, not a question. "You don't know what a mudblood is?" Another boy, Harry can only remember his name was definitely not Theodore for some reason, asked curiously.

The petite child shook his head at Not Theodore's question. "I was raised by muggles who refused to tell me anything about magic. Technically, I only learnt about me being a wizard when I got my letter."

Everyone who heard the statement gasped, horrified, appalled and sympathetic at once. A few even looked like they were going to be ill, violently so. Crabbe and Goyle had their mouths open, like the idea of not knowing about magic was so uncomprehendingly impossible for them their thought processes have melted. Even Draco looked paler than his usual pallor. The raven haired saviour just stared at the sheer reaction a few simple truths can create, it was fascinating if not a little exaggerated.

"You lived with muggles?" Someone said in disgust.

"They didn't tell you about magic?" Another whispered, as if the concept was some sort of horror-esque myth magicals told their children. People muttered at the question, almost sickly afraid at the answer. Harry didn't understand. To be fair though, he found a lot of things he had trouble understanding with such strange responses. That wasn't even one of the worst things those meat lumps had done to him, didn't even make it to top ten, yet everyone was acting like he just confessed to murder.

He also didn't understand the reactions when people confess to murder either but that was not currently the moral of this story.

"Yes I lived with muggles. And yes they didn't tell me about magic." Harry shrugged off, ignoring the flurry of scandalised whispers that went even past inter-house barriers. He could see a couple of the Ravenclaws shooting aghast looks at him in the corner of his eye much to his faint annoyance. Children, they are just the most overdramatic little fleshies. "So anyone wish to inform me what this mudblood thing is?"

A few were about to open their mouths to do just that when they promptly closed them with a audible click as a large shadow of a man loomed over them, visibly unimpressed by the gathering. Black eyes immediately locked on the raven haired Boy Who Lived and the man's face contorted into a sneer. "Why am I not surprised?" Harry felt Professor Snape should be. After all, the man barely knew him enough to make such implied assumptions. They were correct assumptions but still. "Potter, cease whatever nonsense your going on about and let the prefects do their job."
And then the potions professor left as suddenly as he came, robes billowing some sort of nonexistent wind. The green eyed child wondered how he could get his robes to do that.

Two of the older looking kids coughed embarrassed and stepped out of the crowd, the rest of the Slytherins with the exception of the first years began leaving, but not without a few backward glances first.

"Well, hullo, I'm Gemma Farley, sixth year prefect of Slytherin." The blond girl introduced cheerily enough, though it seemed slightly strained. From the looks shot at his person, it didn't take much to figure out the reason.

"And I'm Justin Brookwells." Came a much more subdued voice, a brunette with his hair pulled back in a slick ponytail who looked on the students with a mix of disinterest and a dash of condescension. "We'll be guiding you to the common rooms and then your dorms."

And off they went.

The Slytherin common rooms were almost exactly what he pictured. A little nautical, shipwrecked kind of feel but it was all very refined and high class at the same time. A tad chilly as well, though that was maybe because of it being located in the dungeons and, from the indication of the windows, under that giant lake they boated in before. Damn. Harry really should've ordered some warmer robes or something with fur.

Dark green and splashes of silver and some darkened gold seemed to be the main color scheme in this place, unsurprising, these people apparently really took this House pride thing seriously. Harry wondered if this wasn't just one of the pettiest things he'd ever heard really. House Cup. Hah. Such amusing things the mortals are. They make amazing magnificent things like metal vessels that fly through the air, boxes that tell stories through images.. And then they come up with this idiocy.

When Order talked about maintaining a balance, Harry was sure he didn't mean this. Though stupidity in every world seems to breed so much it's hard to believe there's any balance at all. It's almost surprising there is no personification of Stupid. Surprising, but immensely relieving nonetheless.

The first years chatter nervously as they are gathered in a tight group in front of the older years. Draco, Goyle and Crabbe were some of the few that didn't look like a completely jittery mess of nerves, Harry liked to think they had to attend some weird sort of class for that. Zamboni over there seemed to have joined them to because they all looked like child sized statues of nobility, waiting patiently. Expectedly. Much like the older kids actually, oh they were subtle enough but Harry could pinpoint the source of their stares and brief glances to the most shadowy corner of the already shadowy room. The boy knew he could easily figure out the reasoning, whatever or more likely whoever is skulking in the corner, but where was the fun in that?

As the prefects shifted, it was barely any movement, a tilt of the head, a nudge to their friend, the smallest twist of their lips, the sort gestures you make before getting ready for an interesting show. Harry nudged the boy standing next to him looking somewhere else, still didn't know his name other than he was not Theodore. "Hey, not Theodore," he whispered, weirdly enough the kid actually responded to that, "You're looking the wrong way."

"What?"

Harry inclined his head toward the dark corner, "Keep your eye out over there. I think someone's about to start a scene."
Not Theodore looked at him confused but complied anyway. Curiosity always won over most things with children. It almost made them predictable. Well almost half way there anyway.

Soon enough Severus Snape, robes blacker than the darkest starless of nights strode through the shadows like he owned them, surprising several young students as they gasped or gave double takes. It was dramatic and very well timed and admittedly, not exactly unattractive to the entity in the mortal vessel.

"How did you-"

"Shhh I'll tell you later." Harry interrupted, eyes glued to the tall, dark and handsome hook-nosed professor before him. He did not want to miss what was about to be said.

"You are all Slytherins now." He began, intense gaze raking over them with such focus the green eyed boy near shivered as it passed then lingered on him. "You are the school's most cunning, most ambitious, and you all have the potential to be the best. Our House to us is power, it's our pride. It represents us and therefore you represent it." Woah, hey no pressure at all. "As you may not with our House comes a certain... Reputations with it. This will hang on all your heads like a noose ready for anyone to hang you with the first chance they get,"

Dear lord this is not an appropriate welcome speech for eleven year olds. The only place Harry could think of on the top of his head that is suitable is prison. And even then he's pretty sure no one tells those murderers they've got to do their best to represent their gang. Actually they may. Harry really must try prison sometime, there were always these stories he heard- this ritual of 'shanking' and something else in relation to dropping a soap bar? Such strange cultures and rituals that seem to be more of the seeing is believing variety.

"You will be scrutinised by your peers, your teachers and even by your own headmaster for almost every action you make. Just by being in this House people will immediately think you to be a Dark wizard, a Death Eater or just someone you can't be trusted. Outside the confines of this wall no one would take mercy on you."

Jesus Christ. He bet Hufflepuff never said anything like this. Again, Jesus Christ.

"But that is why it's even more prudent to stick together. That means, if a member of your House is in trouble you will assist them. We snakes stick together, unified in our House. There is safety in numbers and we are your numbers. We aren't like those Gryffindors, we hold self-preservation and so I don't expect you to barge head first into any sort of stupidity, if you see trouble coming towards you, you come toward me."

Huh. That sounded almost kind.

In a harsh, dark and a little insulting sort of way. But then, from what little he's gathered about the man, that seemed to be his personal slogan.

"Now as you all know the password for now is 'callidus mentis', this will switched every two weeks and the new password will be written on the noticeboard the day before it's to be changed. Tomorrow all of you have a free day, apparently this is some sort of way to acquaint yourself with Hogwarts. Heed what I said. Be cunning, be smart and don't be foolish." Snape gave a short nod at the prefects and one last glance at the gathered students before then making his leave as swiftly as he came.
"May I take one of the window beds?"

Draco looked ready to protest since he had immediately staked claim on a bed faced across and about a bed to the right of Harry's chosen furniture. Something about it being his father's or other strange sentimental nonsense. However not Theodore answered with a "Sure, go ahead." Before the Malfoy scion could verbally show his opinion, making the platinum blonde look like he was about to have a right sulk.

The bed next to him was taken by not Theodore - who introduced himself properly and was actually just called Thodore Nott, who knew? - and the one across him was Crabbe's, with Draco next to him and Goyle a bed over. Draco however, apparently wishing to be closer to Harry for some unfathomable reason demanded Crabbe to switch places with him, the large boy agreed readily enough at least, more than happy to sleep by Goyle.

Zabini, the more aloof of the five Slytherins (Harry decided he didn't really count), claimed the bed closest to the door next to Nott. Everyone seemed pretty excited about the oncoming year, even the dark skinned Italian boy.

"So what are you looking forward to the most Potter?" Nott asked curiously, the child as far as Harry could tell, had warmed up rather quickly to him since he helped point out their Head of House. How strange. Not that he was complaining but the green eyed child had found human mortals always seeming to be such suspicious little things, what with their constant questions and doubts, even children these days looked like they wanted constant proof and reasoning. Was the social interaction known as 'friendship' somehow different to that in this aspect? Or maybe this sudden rise in trust can only be satisfied in the younger age groups after meeting certain levels of checkpoints?

"Well, I think I'm quite looking forward to Transfiguration and maybe Herbology?"

Nott wrinkled his nose at the answer, "Transfiguration I get but Herbology?"

"Yeah Potter," Draco added in, eager to join in conversation. His presence drew in Crabbe and Goyle and by default Zabini who didn't wish to be left out of the group. "That's probably one of the most boring classes we've got to take! Almost no magic at all in that one."

"Hey I think it'll be rather relaxing." Harry defended, his gaze turned to Zabini who was trying to look disinterested at the whole thing, "Zabini you agree with me right?"

The dark skinned boy looked almost surprised he'd been brought into the debate but quickly recovered by giving a small smirk, "I guess it sounds alright, though Malfoy I'm pretty sure Astronomy is going to be the most boring class this year if anything."

The pale blonde groaned dramatically, even going so far as to fall onto his bed with an audible thump. "I totally forgot about Astronomy! My father told me it was a waste of time it was. At least it's once a week, Merlin help me." His bodyguards grunted in agreement. The other three boys chuckled amusedly.

"Hey at least we got Defense Against the Dark Arts, that sounds pretty cool." Nott offered.

Zabini snorted. "Please, did you see that quivering mess of a teacher at the Great Hall? The one with the turban?"

"Nooo." Draco replied looking suitably horrified. "That man? He practically had a seizure every time the Hat opened its mouth!"

"Um. I didn't really notice him." The brunette boy confessed. "To be honest Potter was kind of
distracting the whole time."

Everyone nodded in agreement. Harry looked at all of them then mock scowled, "Well I refuse to apologize for my stunning good looks if that's what you're implying." He sniffed making all the boys burst out laughing.

"Oh dear god, and I thought going to deal with one Draco on a daily bases was bad enough." Zabini snickered out causing Malfoy to give the boy a slap over the head.

"Oi!"

"You're such a hypocrite Zabini, I know for a fact minor countries have died from drought with how long you take in the shower." Nott pointed out with a cheeky grin. The Italian spluttered.

"That's not true!" He denied, "Most of my time spent in the bathroom is so I can properly apply my skincare products."

"Because that's so much better." Harry smirked.

"It- I- shut it you ponce!"

"Why do people keep calling me that?"

They all paused to stare at the Boy Who Lived and as one, re-burst into laughter. Honestly, the Slytherin first years had been unsure about this Golden Boy coming onto their territory but seeing Potter joking easily around with them, pouting at their jibes and easily trading barbs with them- well it was safe to assume maybe this term wasn't going to be so bad after all.

"Hello I'm Harry Potter."

"T-Terry Boot," The small boy stuttered looking at him in awe. His new friends were apparently no better.

"Padma Patil." An indian girl immediately greeted, almond shaped eyes glimmering in excitement, "Would you like to sit down?" She asked eagerly. The raven haired boy nodded amiably, sitting next to Patil and turning to face the boy next to him. "And you are"

"Anthony Goldstein," A curly haired blonde managed to get out with a nervous smile. Harry returned it politely, apparently the Ravenclaws weren't the best with small talk.

"Uh, so have you guys read the Magical drafts and Potions textbook? Apparently there's literally no order in how the thing has been organised."

Boot stood up from his breakfast, slammed his hands onto the table and yelled "WHAT?" and then ran off to go get his textbook.

They all spent the rest of the meal debating over possible patterns, theories, reasons and just comments in general about Potions. Overall, not a bad use of time if Harry didn't say so himself.

"Oi Harry mate! Come on and join me and the rest of the Gryffindors out exploring round the castle!" Ron shouted with a grin as he ran up to the Boy Who Lived who was just finishing his meal and conversation with the Ravenclaws.
"Potter, forget them and join Crabbe, Goyle and I in checking out what's beyond the outer walls of Hogwarts." Draco drawled as he strode toward the two, pointedly sneering at the redhead's glare. Harry who had been quite innocently doing well on his own looked at the two large boys behind the blonde confused. The entourage just gave him a some halfhearted shrugs as an answer. "We've even brought some Bertie Bott's Every Flavoured Beans to munch on during our stroll."

"Hah! Harry prefers chocolate to candy Malfoy- take that!"

"I mean I don't-"

"Hmph, well thank Merlin we're also carry a few packets of chocolate frogs as back up right Goyle?"

"Right."

"Wha- that's cheating! Harry, I'll show you the Gryffindor common rooms as well! I mean I know you're Slytherin right now but technically you are also a fellow Griff-"

"You've never seen much magic have you Potter? Why don't I show you a few spells my father taught me?"

"Well my brothers Fred and George- you like them right Harry? Yeah well they've actually known some real proper good spells, specially pranking ones. I'm sure they'll love to show off some if I asked."

"Oh yeah? How about-"

"Uh Malfoy?"

"Yes Weasley?"

"Where's Harry?"

The two boys looked around to find a previously Harry occupied space now empty.

"Great you weasel. You scared him off."

"I did?!" Ron spluttered, "If you hadn't come you gelled up bloody ferret and went on and on-"

"It is so good to finally speak with you my Lord-" The ghost that snatched him away greeted excitedly.

The boy gave the spectre a nod and corrected politely if not firmly, "Harry Potter."

"Ah, yes." The ghost nodded eagerly, "Apologies... Lord Harry." Then he giggled like it was some sort of inside joke. Harry really didn't see much humour in it. But he gave a good natured sigh nonetheless.

"I suppose that's really going to be the best I'm going to get huh?"

"And you deserve the best milord."

Suddenly another spirit, this one was the friar from the day before appeared. Soon enough as if
drawn by a beacon more intangible bodies soon followed. "Milord why don't you allow me your gracious company whilst I show you around some of the nicest spots to view the greenery?" The friar asked, however before Harry could even open his mouth another ghost interrupted.

"No, no, Lord Harry will walk with me as I take pleasure in guiding him around the dungeons. After all he will be living there with me for the first half of his year here," Bartimus or better yet known as the Bloody Baron insisted.

"Exactly Baron! You've got our Lord for half a year, do not be so greedy. Now our Lord would much rather take a stroll up to the towers and maybe meet all the paintings?" The Grey Lady, or Helena Ravenclaw, chided.

"At least my dungeons would guarantee in preventing the Death Lord from meeting a certain poltergeist yes?" The Slytherin House ghost rebuffed smugly.

All the spiritual beings shuddered at the thought. Harry however looked curious. There was another ghost that he hadn't met yet?

"A poltergeist you say?"

"No!" The Gryffindor House ghost denied vehemently causing the Bloody Baron to roll his translucent eyes.

"Smooth Nick." He hissed. The nearly headless spirit beamed.

"Thank you."

Harry sighed.

"Good afternoon Sir." Harry greeted with a slight smile as a hunched older man he had seen pass by once or twice, was about to walk past him. The hunchbacked semi-bald grouchy paused, and stared at the small pale boy, with suspicious twitchy eyes. It was almost like he wasn't used to being addressed normally. Aw. Harry almost wished now that he had that problem. It was either students who wished to speak to the Boy Who Lived or ghosts wanting to pay their respects to their Death Lord. The boy felt he almost forgot what it was like to greet someone else first for once.

"Potter." The man growled like he had just ripped the walls of Hogwarts down with a giant metal ball instead of greet him like any polite individual would have. The child mentally sighed, what was up with people either swooning or spitting over his name?

"Yes I am." Harry answered back smoothly, "Unfortunately I do not know your name Mr-"

The man was still staring at him like a criminal who've grown three heads but at least replied with an awed if not extremely wary, "Argus Flich." Harry tried to give his most reassuring, sincere smile.

"Alright then, Mr Flich. It has been very nice to meet you."

A meow then distracted the air as they both looked down to see a scrawny thing of a cat preening as it lovingly curled around the child's leg. Harry grinned as he bent down to scratch the back of the feline's ears, snickering softly at the way the dust coloured cat just melted into his touch. Glowing green looked up at the old man. "Is she yours? She's rather lovely."
Flich nodded mutely, for some reason in some state of shock. Unusual man this one.

"What's your name miss?" Harry addressed the feline, stroking her head as he did so. She purred something making the child cock his head slightly, "Mrs Norris is it?" Another string of meows. The boy's smile widened. "It's an honor to meet you too."

"You can.. You can understand her?" Filch said, his voice now with more wonder than suspicion. Harry nodded.

"I've always had a... knack with animals you could say sir." Harry stood up, brushing off any stray hairs of his robes as he did so before facing the hunchbacked man again. "From what I gather Mr Filch you are a very dedicated caretaker of the school. Mrs Norris speaks highly of her master." The balding caretaker flushed pink with pride at that, all traces of mistrust wiped clean by the simple words of praise.

"It seems you're one of the few kids who've learnt some manners." Filch groused reluctantly through his reddening skin tone.

"My relatives actually were very helpful in that actually."

"Really? Thought you everything to do?"

The boy's grin grew shark like, more predatory and fearsome than any boy's face should ever have the right to be, "More like everything not to do." With the implication in mind the green eyed creature, because Filch could never feel comfortable with ever imagining this young boy to be like those other snotty children now, rubbed slowly his other forearm and drawing the old caretaker's gaze. "They weren't good people sir."

Filch's stomach rolled at that nauseously. He may despise children, may believe some good corporal punishment like back in the day would do a fat lot of good to them but child abuse was a whole different story. The squib looked at Potter, really looked. The skinny almost skeletal figure, bone white skin that looked like the effects of sunlight simply slid off the boy, how dangerously sharp those cheekbones were.. His stomach didn't just roll, they outright flipped and twisted like a professional quidditch player on a pepper up potion.

And then the creature, so kind and polite, with eyes that were so ethereally vivid they glowed like bright green moons and skin as pale as bone and hair like tendrils of chaotic shadows, smiled at him-Argus Filch, hated old squib of Hogwarts- clasping tiny delicate fingers around his own worn calloused ones and said, "Good people are always the hardest to find. However Mr Filch, for someone like yourself to be so dedicated to this school I do believe you are at least not a bad person. So I do so hope we can be on good terms."

Pale blue-ish eyes flickered at the small hands around his own, gaze filled with something small and child-like and vulnerable before the old man tightened his lax grip against smooth cool skin. This was a child to be watched. This was a child to be protected. He could feel it even deeper than his bones, Filch could almost say in his soul. Harry Potter was special.

"Well," Filch coughed awkwardly, unused to saying anything kindly to well, anyone really, especially to the bratty students of the place. However Potter's genuine graciousness made him want to try. At least for the raven haired boy. "Mrs Norris usually doesn't warm up ta most brats so I guess I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. I'm heading to my office now, if you want you can follow around for a bit and I can point around a few little interesting bits of the castle most younglings tend to ignore."
Harry tilted his head to the side, much like how he did when listening to his beloved feline companion, listening to his words, not hearing, those were two very different things. And then the creature gave a fond look, like he was an animal that pleased him with the words he had said. It should be demeaning, offending. But it just warmed him up and made him feel whole. It was terrifying. And amazing.

"I would very much like that Mr Filch."

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The library was already closing up for the day when he finally found the place. Harry cursed under his breath in the hissing baritones of a Burmese Python. He can't believe he passed what could've possibly been a delicious cinnamon slice that Filch had ordered for this. This right here was the reason why things like patience was a virtue. Because if he had patience, he certainly wouldn't be without dessert.

The boy turned to go back, or at least head to the dorms but his stomach dropped a bit when he realized the halls looked distinctly different from not five minutes ago. Harry swiveled full circle confirming his fears. He didn't recognize the area. And now he was lost. This was the sixth bloody time already.

Hogwarts. What a little bitch.

As if reading his thoughts, the castle shifted again. This time Harry was sure he'd been moved to one of the uppermost floors of the castle. Harry was wrong. Hogwarts was a gigantic bitch.

Of course then the floorboards tripped him.

The boy may have been imagining things but he swore the faint draft in the hallways was the god damn giant castle shaped piece of rubble's way of laughing in his face. Chaos and Magic would love her. He hoped Order disliked her, then he could band together with him and tweak the damn sentient building to at least not feel the urge to prank physical representations of death.

"When I figure out how to properly utilize my magics I will redecorate you so bad you'll wish the mortal mundane's 80s fashion came to take you first." Harry hissed.

Another draft of wind was his response.

For a split second the sentence 'Looks like you beat me to the punch in that race... Bitch.' Flickered into his head. And WOW. Never had he ever met a magic castle with so much sass. He didn't know if he liked it or not.

Also sucks to the castle, his wardrobe was gothic at best. The original English European type with subtle frills and black lace edging, not the leather clad with buckles that the people of the more 'modern' worlds were into. Actually confession time, he may have gotten a few gifts consisting of those sort of clothing and he may have liked those much more than he would like to admit.

Anyway, what was the point again?

Right. Harry was lost. Hogwarts was a massive female dog in the rudest possible way. And he was pretty sure it was almost past his ridiculous eight o'clock curfew.

Did he mention that he had no idea where he was?
"Shitting magic castles." He grumbled. The Founders certainly never told him that part of the tale where their building apparently has a thing with all powerful entities.

It was way past curfew. From the setting of the moon Harry would've guessed it was about nine to who knows fuck but he really, really wants to break in the beautiful bed of his. He can't believe he's missing time with those delightfully soft pillows. The boy was not happy. And he was dangerously on the precipice from being snarky to outright mean.

Amazingly at least, the entity stuffed in a child's body hadn't encountered any teachers nor prefects scouting around. In fact he hadn't encountered anyone. Just the sleeping paintings had kept him company for the most part.

However that all changed when he bypassed one corner and a very familiar child caught his eye, causing him to pause and backpedal.

"Crabbe?!"

Crabbe who had been wandering around aimlessly (Harry would like to think his aimless wandering at least looked purposeful, the larger boy just looked like he walked in circles and was just dizzy) turned to face the green eyed boy in surprise.

"Harry? What you doing here?"

"Could ask you the same question really." The smaller child shot back, disgruntled at the fact that he, all powerful God - with a capital G thank you very much - Death incarnation, was somehow on the same level as this dim eleven year old who closely resembled a large chunk of granite. Easily said, this was not exactly his proudest shining moment. Quickly he moved on. "Uh Crabbe? Any idea where we are?"

The large boy grunted in what seemed to be a negative manner. Harry looked at the unfamiliar hallways and staircases forlornly. The darkness of the coming night fall wasn't exactly helping things either.

"Brill."

Harry began to stride toward a random destination, glancing back occasionally to make sure the golem child was still loyally plodding along behind him. The raven haired child knew he shouldn't be so harsh on the kid but really, how lonely did Draco have to be for Crabbe and Goyle of all people to be what is perceived to be his closest friends?

"So what are you doing here anyway? Shouldn't you be with Draco and Goyle, not that I'm complaining mind you. Just curious." He asked, the sound of quiet footsteps not enough to fill the room. Honestly, he'd been content with near silence for millennia of a time yet eleven years as less than immortal and suddenly there is an inexplicable need to 'say things' in order to escape from what the humans call the phenomenon The Awkward Silence. To make even he bend his resolve and love for quiet, truly The Awkward Silence is a terrifying thing.

Despite that though. Harry didn't actually think the other boy was going to answer.

"I got lost." Was rumbled out. And Harry did not startle at the unexpected response. He was older than Fate and Magic and most gods would only ever dream of what he has seen for God's sake! It wasn't even a particularly loud sound too. Just an embarrassed mumble of a noise. " Tried to go back
to our rooms after lunch to get a spare chocolate frog and I think I went left instead of right."

"If you've been like that since lunchtime why didn't you just ask for directions?"

The boy looked at him in amazement and awe like Harry had apparently suddenly revealed his true all-powerful form and then proceeded to summon angels out of his arse instead of just pointing out a perfectly logical question that anyone with a sprinkle of sense would have asked. And now he has made up a terrible image in his head that can never be truly deleted. Joy. He got the idiot out of the two bodyguards. Or maybe they were both idiots. My god he didn't know if he should respect the Malfoy scion for putting up with the pair of cinder blocks or doubt the child's sanity and taste for sticking around so long.

The green eyed boy glanced again at the built, large-if slightly dimmed- lost eyes of the eleven year old child and softened slightly. Okay so maybe that was a bit mean. But hey, Harry never had to really deal with people who held mental facilities that just... lacked. Oh he dealt with idiots, Chaos and Magic were the leaders of idiots, but they were intelligent and crafty as anything. Gods could be stupid too, but that was more due to hubris and unhealthy amounts of alcohol. And when people died they gained clarity and perspective, any fogginess of their minds -such as forgetfulness, tunnel visions or general incomprehension when alive- were cleared and swept away.

Though Harry guessed the stupidity can be endearing. In a sad pathetic sort of way. Yeah, he can see that. Like an abandoned untrained puppy with unappealing features. And what would you do when faced with such a creature drenched in the rain?

"Okay, why don't you come with me then?"

Not that. Dammit. That wasn't, what he was going to, no,

"Really?" The boy brightened up, then his face turned slightly insecure, revealing the child underneath all that giant gruff guard facade. "I mean.. You sure?"

Bullocks.

Harry gave a small if slightly forced smile. "Of course." Stupid. Stupid. Stupid. "Why wouldn't I?" Why did he do that?

And Crabbe just looked so happy and it was just so obvious the kid did not have that many friends outside Goyle and Malfoy, God Harry was just such a pushover. Because now he felt bad and even if he didn't there was no way he was socially able to untangle the bind his large mouth set himself into.

"Well come on then. We've got other places to get lost in I guess."

The boy looked confused at the joke but happily complied anyway, walking at a close distance behind the smaller child. Harry could not stop thinking how appropriate the dog metaphor was.

It was surprisingly not as terrible as he thought. Crabbe was generally quite quiet but was willing to divulge things when asked and overall very obedient. They walked along twisting halls and explored alleys they swore weren't their before, conversing with some interesting paintings and hiding from an angry looking Filch with his cat. Harry didn't really understand why they had to hide at the pair but Crabbe was very adamant about it and it was the first time the smaller of the two had seen the other take charge so he went along with it.

After that the blocky boy seemed a bit more comfortable with himself as he began starting conversations instead of just answering in grunts and short worded mumbles. He was a very curious
child which was both surprising and not, he was eleven years old after all but with a demeanor like
his Harry found it difficult to imagine underneath that admittedly thick head was someone who was
actually interested in things. The green eyed boy guessed it's been a while since anyone's actually
asked how Crabbe was doing and that just made the whole situation so much sadder didn't it? So he
indulged the child, taking time to draw the boy out of the cement shell he molded for himself, asking
questions about Crabbe's life, about magic, little things.

Harry faltered mid stride at his own thoughts. Actually, he had been doing a lot of indulging lately
now that he thought about it.

That doesn't sound right. It felt wrong. Glowing green darkened to pitch black holes as familiar
endless roaring power crashed against his human body. For a moment Harry forgot he was Harry,
for a brief flickering inferno of shadow and darkness he was Death, powerful all-consuming Death
who was above any interaction with the living unless it was to steal them to his world. Their was
more feeling in this icy rush of black fires that swam through his crimson human veins, anger,
indignation, wrath, dominance. He was Death and now something more.

But then he blinked his black soulless abyss of eyes and they flickered back to vividly just too bright
 glowing green and then he was Harry again.

And Harry didn't understand what just happened. It was like he faltered, and something just... came
out. It felt like Death on his worst days, vindictive, enraged, terrifyingly pained and so lonely- but
every feeling, every senseless emotion usually so dulled down with his being had been pronounced
and highlighted in ways that you could only feel when human. What was that? Was he going to
condemn himself to that once he left this world? Where he goes back to an entity in the darkness and
shrouded in black with nothing but his reapers to keep him company?

The mere thought made his throat constrict and chest feel like it's crushing against itself, he felt
actually sick, cold but sweaty and the urge to expel the contents of his stomach noticeable in his
distressed mindset. This shouldn't be happening. Why was he feeling this way? He shouldn't care.
He couldn't. Not previously anyway. It never bothered him before. He wasn't capable of such
responses. Not this much. To this terrible, horrible, disgusting extent. He's lived like that for years,
centuries, eons the way he has. There was no reason to fear coming back to it. Back. Going back.

"Harry are you alright?" Crabbe asked, it was then he realized that he was leaning on the closest
wall, trembling, his breath ragged and the extremities of his fingers tingling and numb. Without
thinking he looked at his shaking hands with horror and slammed them at the wall with a satisfyingly
unpleasant crunch. Pain, crisp and so, so simple to focus on, throbbed around his now bruised fists,
distracting him mercifully from the storm of hurt and confusion and fear, so much fear for something
he didn't understand nor thought possible to ever comprehend.

"Harry!" The shocked large boy gasped, snatching pale weakly twitching fingers with his own
thicker ones. "What-

"I'm fine Crabbe." He reassured after a few deep breathes, relishing the ache as he steadfastly pushed
his turmoil down into the furthest shadow away from his mind. Crabbe didn't look like he believed
his words, which was sensible considering he had just bashed his hands on the wall after having a...
situation in which he behaved... Anyway Crabbe was now nudging his much smaller person- and
either this kid was exactly as strong as he looks or the sudden influx of unexplainable and
undesirable loss of control as well as its after effects sapped more strength than he cared to admit-
and pushing on despite Harry's protests with such a solid loyal determination that made the green
eyed child want to take nearly everything he'd said about the boy back.

"Prefect, adult, some sort of adult." Crabbe muttered as he half dragged, half pulled but fully
manhandling the small pale boy around the school.

"You don't really need to do this." Harry murmured, though his body seemed to have other ideas as they went near slack, leaning against the warmth of the big child. Still he was embarrassed enough at his outburst as it is, this just felt like the feeling of salt being rubbed into the wound. "Really Crabbe, I do appreciate it."

The Slytherin first year shushed him, and shook his head. "Something happened and Draco's not here so we go to an adult." He said simply.

"But we're out against curfew." Harry hissed. "We'll get in trouble!"

Crabbe faltered a step. Apparently not thought that far. But quickly shrugged it off and plowed onwards with resolve.

"It's better than you getting hurt."

And what on earth was he supposed to say to that?

It took another few minutes of aimless wondering in the halls before finally they spotted a bright light coming towards them.

"Is someone there?" A voice called out, probably gearing the heavy footfalls of Crabbe. The well built boy grunted in the affirmative and soon the light was upon them, revealing the older Weasley from before at Platform 9 3/4. His vision may be a bit fuzzy at the edges but really, there was no mistaking the bright fire truck red hair color. "What-"

"Harry got sick." Crabbe interrupted. "We got lost trying to find our House and then Harry got dizzy and he was shaking."

That caught the redhead's attention. Harry couldn't help but slightly admire that, in all honesty that was quite the Slytherin move in diverting focus, bringing up the injured child card before it fully registers how out of curfew they were was a smart move, now whether it was intentional or not he couldn't tell.

"Potter? Harry Potter?"

Crab nodded. Harry gave a rather weak smile. The Weasley prefect looked conflicted, probably his thoughts on telling them off about running around after hours and asking what's wrong with the Boy Saviour clashing magnificently. It seemed the latter won out eventually because the redhead knelt down and placed a warm hand on the cool scarred forehead of the smallest child. Harry didn't even realise how cold he was until then, sighing he leant into the touch as the Weasley frowned.

"He's freezing. I think we should stay calm and just wrap Potter up and rest for now. If anything changes inform your Head of House but I don't believe this should warrant the infirmary room." The prefect looked at the larger boy firmly, "Thank you for informing me, I'll escort you both to your dorms."

Both boys gave the older absolutely relieved looks. Thank the lord. They really just wanted to go to bed.

Thankfully they managed to get past Snape's personal room without any fuss. Apparently even the
Head Boy had enough sympathy to not throw two first years to the dreaded Potions master on the very first night here. Harry was definitely going to have to go thank Percy Weasley the next time he saw him. As much as he’d like to talk more with the dark haired professor, there wasn’t anything in this world he’d take to willingly see what the man would be like when rudely awakened at one damn o’clock in the morning.

Seriously, and that’s not even due to the fact he could hold this world in his hands with a snap of his fingers. He technically co-owned every version of heaven and hell in existence though so indirectly he already had, as some strange people like to say, 'his fingers in all the pies'.

As they tiptoed past the other sleeping first years the two boys looked at each other, both basking in the glow that most kids get when achieving some secret form of rebellion, successfully getting away with something probably considered stupid and Harry just knew that Crabbe was going to be his favorite out of the bodyguard duo now.

Harry gives the larger boy a tired smile before diving headfirst into his thousand thread count sheets with a satisfied soft moan of happiness. Pushing that strange lull in his temporary humanity aside, Harry was going to consider this a pretty good day well done.
Death's first week

The one where Death has his first week of magic school and it isn't completely terrible.

But then some people have the same opinion about the Second World War so really it was all a matter on who you're asking. Not that we're saying that WW2 isn’t terrible. It was. Um. Shit. Dammit. Oh my god if the author could think of a better title you would not be reading that- I am so sorry.

"So what do you have today?"

Harry looked up from his half-eaten jam smothered toast at Draco before swallowing. "First period Charms and second period Herbology with the Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs."

"Hah, I only have Herbology first. Really Potter, it must suck being in all four Houses. Now you'll miss three whole classes with me."

"Yes, a real pity that." Zabini drawled across from them with a dry smirk. "I think you could pay good money to see a Malfoy have to stoop to tending little twigs and trying not to touch the fertiliser." Harry pretended to look truly agonised at that.

"Dammit, you're right Draco I am honestly truly so sorry I'll have to miss your face when you're defiling your hands with soil and feacal matter."

The blonde boy looked like he was about to retort something truly witty and scathing when he paused. "Wait. What does faecal matter mean?"

"Dung, Draco." Harry informed, grinning at the whitening face of the already pale boy. "Didn't you know most fertilisers are composed of it."

"It does?!!" Zabini half shrieked, despite his teasing apparently the noble pureblood wasn't aware of that little fact either. The green eyed child sighed dramatically, shaking his head sadly.

"Okay now I'm really regretting not coming with you guys."

Harry can safely say, if those glares held any real heat- his meat suit would be roasted medium well done. Mmm. That actually sounded quite good. It is a pity the whole human sacrifice thing has lost it's appeal to the modern populace, back in it's prime the trend of human sacrifice never did hold much finesse in terms of seasoning and flavour. All charred grilled stuff. Nowadays the entity was sure they would make much tastier offerings.

"There he is."

"Where?"

Harry twitched annoyed at all the pointing and whispering and staring and oh my god do these people have no actual celebrities in this world they can obsess over? Because this was getting bloody ridiculous. There were people lining up outside classrooms, standing on the tips of their toes to get a good look at him.

"Over there."
"No way."

"He's shorter than I thought."

'Malnutrition will do that to you.' He thought sardonically.

"Did you see his face?"

"Did you see his scar?"

Bloody ridiculous the lot of them. Here he was struggling to find the Charms classroom because Hogwarts kept intentionally messing what little sense of direction he had and-

Wait a minute.

Harry sharply turned to the nearest group of gossipy students, "Excuse me you guys over there, yes you guys. Any chance one of you know how to get to Mr Flitwick's Hufflepuff-Ravenclaw class?"

He knew there was an upside to starstruck idiots somewhere.

Hogwarts, Harry had found pretty quickly, was exhausting.

There were a hundred and forty-two staircases at Hogwarts. A hundred and forty-two staircases. And in three days he had met every single one at least enough times to recognise each goddamn one. These were stairs. Harry didn't even remember his classmates as well as he apparently remembered staircases.

It was like some sort of sick and twisted show of teasing affection the castle was giving to him because he swore no one else got this sort of treatment. Bullying. That's right. This sort of interaction is called bullying.

"Potter? Where on Merlin's beard did you come from?" Nott asked surprised at the sudden appearance of a panting, disheveled Boy Who Lived.


"We're on the fourth floor."

"The castle won't let me down any lower than third." The paler boy replied resignedly.

"This is bullying this is." He muttered darkly. "Just pissy cause I took her four masters all to myself."

"What did you say?"

"Oh nothing, just watch this Nott." Harry snapped irritably, before without any hesitation leaping off the handrails and falling fast toward the ground floor-

"POTTER!?"

-before a staircase swept up to pick up the green eyed not-an-entity and drop him off at the fifth floor. The child sat up from where he fell and glared balefully at the offending steps before moving his gaze toward a stunned Theodore.

"Can you tell Professor Sprout I'm being delayed Nott?!" He shouted. "Or find a spare teacher or something! Because I will jump off the balcony if I'm desperate enough I swear to god!" The last
part sounded like it was more directed at the castle than the other but Nott just took that to run faster.

"Death Lord."

Harry blinked, before giving the unfamiliar spirit a bemused smile. "You must be the poltergeist Peeves then. I was wondering when I might run into you."

The short, black haired man with wickedly slanted, orange eyes was much more solid looking than his fellow spectres just gaped in an almost reverent nature. The child's eyes drifted from the poltergeist's face down to a brightly coloured balloon in the man's hands. "Is.. Is that for me?"

Peeves did a double take at the balloon he was holding before rapidly shoving the item in question behind his back and shook his head. Like somehow the action would make the incarnation of death forget the thing had been even in his sight. "N-n-no my Lord! That is, that was," He stuttered causing Harry to raise an eyebrow.

He stuck a small hand out, "May I see it?"

The ghost seemed extremely conflicted, a large part of him probably more than willing to please the entity to the best of his ability though Harry didn't really understand the spirit's reasoning for whatever reluctance is making him hesitate. However in the end the prospect of obeying and making Harry happy seemed to have won out as the man passed the small balloon gently into waiting hands. It was heavier than he'd expected.

"Is.. Is there water in this balloon?"

"Yes?"

Green eyes looked inquiringly at orange. Delicate child like face holding the expression of innocent confusion. "Why?"

Peeves appeared a little indecisive at what to say before finally settling on, "You throw it at people and they get wet."

"And you do this because?"

"It's fun?"

Harry stared contemplatively at the little water holding balloon. "Throwing this at others is fun?" He wondered out loud. Peeves nodded eagerly.

"Yes! See?"

The poltergeist pulled out another water balloon and winked at his Death Lord before throwing it at a pair of some unsuspecting older Ravenclaw students. The sheer expressions on their faces made Harry startle out a soft giggle of surprise. "Huh, that is amusing." He commented with a quirked smile.

Peeves grinned, visibly preening at the approval.

"Don't worry milord, you haven't seen anything yet."

Harry did not realise that he may have started something that could possibly stumble completely out of his control.
If there was one person Harry would say he viewed as almost a rival in this place, he would say with some contemplation, a Hufflepuff by the name of Zacharias Smith. Honestly the boy was *such a child.*

And it wasn't that he didn't *like* children. He did. Kind of. It just happened the general populace of them were annoying and loud and sometimes made Harry want to silence them all. Permanently. Insert innocent but creepy smiley face here.

That said, it wasn't that Harry didn't *like* Zacharias. It just happened that his mere presence and the action of him opening his mouth alone tends to implant in his mind the most tempting image of the Hufflepuff's violent and gory end. Usually by way of wringing that kid's skinny neck. And that is *before* he actually begins talking.

The first time he'd met the boy was on the first day in Charms. By some miracle the castle had decided to let him be early for his first day of class. Thirty minutes early. Harry didn't even know how that worked considering he had finished breakfast *twenty minutes* before the class was supposed to begin.

Fucking magic castles.

Zacharias was already there with a few gathered Puffs and what seemed to be the majority of the Ravenclaws. It did make the green eyed boy slightly more mollified to realise that he wasn't going to be standing awkwardly alone for the next half hour. Two minutes in, listening to the gangly boy that was Smith use his mouth more than Harry swore he used in all eleven years of mortal childhood, the entity of death was beginning to regret his previous relief.

"Again as you know, me being a descendent of Helga Hufflepuff herself and all, I have a very strong magical core that even my parents were very surprised by. So don't be too shocked if I'm a bit ahead of you all during our school year. Of course if y-" Only a scant few Hufflepuff's were actually listening and looking interested at the blonde bigmouth's boastings, the rest of the students present and within earshot looked like they shared Harry's regrets in arriving there so early.

"Dear lord my he have mercy on us all." Harry muttered, earning a snort from Padma Patil, a Chinese girl by the name of Su Li and another more timid pair of Hufflepuff girls. He turned to the unfamiliar females first with a raised brow, "How long has he been talking?" He whispered, the blonde one grinned and replied, "Way too long." The auburn haired girl next to her gave a small giggle.

"Harry Potter."

"Hannah Abbott."

"Susan Bones."

The green eyed child nodded, "Nice to meet you guys then. That over there is Padma Patil and Su Li. Terry Boot's the one coming up behind me along with Michael Corner and Anthony Goldstein."

The three boys as stated who had been previously creeping up toward the group all jumped. "Merlin Harry! How did you know?" Boot asked. "You didn't even look back I swear you didn't."

Harry smiled serenely before puffing up his chest and imitating the still boasting blonde boy a few feet away from them. "Well, as you know, me being the descendent of the Potter lineage myself and all, I have the ability to hear a teardrop of a baby caterpillar falling from three miles away and can turn into a mermaid at will." Everyone stared, slowly digesting the outrageously blatant lie then
Corner thumped Harry's tousled raven hair playfully as they all descended into peals of laughter.

"And what-" An arrogant voice broke in snottily, "-is just so funny?"

Harry turned to see the talkative blonde had stopped his self-centred tirade to face them all looking rather annoyed, probably at being interrupted from the sound of his own voice. "Nothing." The green eyed child responded with as much innocence as he could muster.

The boy didn't look like he believed him but if he did Harry would've been forced to lower his opinion of the blonde even further and that was always such a pain to do.

"Zaharias Smith," He introduced, "Descendent of Helga Hufflepuff." Smith added with no small amount of pride. Like it was a necessary thing to inform Harry of despite the fact Harry could probably care less. He's actually met Helga Hufflepuff and as nice a woman she is, she isn't exactly a person whom he would personally chose to tell everyone about with the same enthusiasm this Smith character was showing about her. I mean yes, she helped build a school but it cannot be this big a deal.

"Harry Potter." Harry politely replied, Smith's brown eyes lit up and gave a large awfully fake grin as he snatched the Boy Who Lived's hand and shook it without even asking. Harry was not pleased.

"So nice to meet you Potter, funny how you managed to get into all four Houses somehow, though that's to be expected given your status. I probably would've got the same treatment really if my ancestor wasn't Helga Hufflepuff, though to be fair it just wouldn't be right if someone of my bloodline was anywhere but Hufflepuff. Can you imagine? Helga Hufflepuff's descendent in a House other than Hufflepuff?"

Good Lord if this kid says the word 'Hufflepuff' again Harry was going to, going to.. Well he didn't know what he was going to do but it would not be very nice.

Plastering on a strained smile he just shook his head in the negative, hoping his lack of verbal response will subtly implicate the fact this conversation should start dying anytime around now. Unfortunately either Zaharias was even more conceited than he'd originally thought or his own social skills were that poor or maybe a mix of the two, nonetheless somehow it pushed the blonde to keep chattering on relentlessly about himself. Even when he used his best helpless 'puppy dog' eyes on his friends they could not save him from the drone of arrogance that had been set upon him like the plague.

By the time they were allowed into class Harry swore to hell and back that he was on the cusp of literally dying from boredom. And as the physical manifestation of death he was totally allowed to say that seriously.

His impression of Zacharias Smith did not get any better after that.

"Woah mate you okay?"

Frustrated fingers brushed through completely disheveled sweaty black hair, the owner of said hair did not look any better. "I," Harry groused between panting breaths, "Think Hogwarts is trying to kill me."

"Don't be mad Potter." Draco drawled as he strolled up to the slim lightening-scarred wizard leaning against the cold walls of the dungeons. Silver grey eyes eyeing the other's appearance dubiously. "At worst it's just some extra exercise."
"Exercise is the worst Malfoy." Harry muttered, "I mean it's good for you and whatever but God, at what cost?"

"Uh, energy. That's why we eat food." Ron answered more than a little entertained at his friend's plight. It seemed whatever classes the green eyed child seemed to take always started with Harry in some sort of similar condition and with a riveting tale on his lips ready to tell them all about how the castle was singling him out. It's still a little hard to believe, especially to the teachers but by the fourth day of classes the general consensus between the first years was Harry Potter was extremely unlucky and directionally challenged. Even Neville Longbottom was on time more than Harry, though only just though. "So what happened this time then?"

"Did the stairs knock you up again?" Draco drawled.

"Or maybe they turned into a giant slide so you slid all the way back to ground floor?" Seamus snickered.

"I like the time you leaned against a wall only to find it was a secret tunnel and you spent an hour in the dark looking for the right stone to get out." Zabini added with a shit-eating grin. Dean Thomas gave the Italian boy a high five for bringing up that particular incident.

"I'm so glad your infamous rivalry between you wankers have been put aside in favour of mocking my tribulations." Harry scowled. "Seriously."

"Sorry mate just think of it as your amazing charm." Ron offered. Draco, being the sarcastic little brat he is muttered, "More like amazing stupidity."

Harry decided to let that go after he pulled down the pale boy's tie to reach perfectly slicked back hair that just screamed to be ruffled and ruined much to the Malfoy scion's shrieking displeasure. "Potter!"

"I'm so glad Draco," he apologised not looking sorry at all, "but I am amazingly stupid according to you so I do tend to things that are also considered unwise."

"Yeah well I'd ruin your hair in retaliation but," Draco sniffed haughtily as he tried to put back his platinum blonde locks into their previous pristine place, "it's a little hard to do that when it already looks like a bird wouldn't even nest in it."

"Hey in Potter's defence I'm pretty sure that no amount of magical hair product in the world will be able to tame that unruly black mess."

"Thanks Nott."

"No problem Potter."

"But seriously what got you in such a state this time?" Parvati Patil, Padma's Gryffindor counterpart piped up curiously. Everyone leaned in to hear the response, even Granger who had been trying to steadfastly ignore them all by reading the Potions textbook was trying to move closer to the group. Harry flushed a slight pink and rubbed the back of his neck sheepishly as he murmured something.

"What did you say?"

"I said," The boy repeated louder, his pale skin a shade darker than before and his strikingly coloured eyes looking anywhere but at his fellow peers, "a painting fell on me."

"…You're pulling our legs." Ron decided after a heartbeat of silence.
"Shut up Ron it was a big painting." The Boy Who Lived snapped clearly unhappy at his confession, "I had to drag myself from under the thing and they're heavier than they look."

There was not a trace of sympathy in the hysterics that came after, even Longbottom was chuckling and Granger was trying to valiantly push down her visible amusement. Harry just glowered at them all. "Yes, yes, laugh it up why don't you."

"Well if you insist Potter."

"This... This is hell." Ron groaned as he thumped his head onto the desk. Harry did not agree but silently thought it should be.

He watched as Professor Binns, a ghost so dull and stuck in some sort of monotony he didn't even register the Death Lord walk into his own classroom, drone on endlessly about a war that really didn't seem to be of any importance in anything. And at least Zacharias Smith had some variety in how he used his voice, this spirit had little to no inflection or used any other such technique to capture the audience's attention. It was almost as if the man was doing this on purpose.

Forget hooked blades, brimstone and fire. This was true torture.

"History of Magic is officially the worst subject ever."

Transfiguration was actually really interesting.

First McGonagall surprised them all (Harry obviously not included but he played along anyway) by transforming from a cat to her human self at the beginning of class. Said some stuff, then turned her desk into a pig and back. Considering most other classes so far had been just basic lectures and scant little magical distractions to keep the children entertained. This at least was quite impressive.

There was a lot of complicated note taking after the demonstration, but much to the excitement of the others they were all each given a match with the assignment of turning it into a needle.

Whilst others struggled Harry found himself a natural at it. It was an easy task and he'd done harder things when showing off to Dudley and Piers but he'd always found feats like this easiest. It was probably considering that technically inanimate object by default fell under his realm of expertise.

After all you could say a match was definitely not 'alive' so therefore it can be considered dead which with that technicality makes manipulation with it so much easier than if Harry had to do this with a living hamster or something.

Professor McGonagall noticed near immediately his accomplishment, probably due to the afteraffects of her feline eyesight, and showed the rest of the class the perfect silver needle glinting under the lighting as she gave Harry a rare smile of pride.

"Very well done Mr Potter! I don't think I've had any student that's accomplished this task so quickly."

Harry couldn't help but feel a little shy at the compliment, he still wasn't very good at taking them even after all the praise his cousin liked to pile on him. What was he supposed to say anyway? Thank you? You're welcome? Damn social convention being so complicated. The boy after a bit of internal struggle decided to go with honesty in the end.

"It was nothing Professor." He replied in a bashfully soft voice, "I did stuff like this for my cousin most of the time back home." McGonagall at the mention of Harry's home life looked stricken for a
second before smoothing her expression to curious pride.

"Really? Maybe after class we can talk about what you can do and see whether we need to reevaluate your skill level."

"If you think that's necessary."

Professor McGonagall flashed another smile, it was a bit more mournful but it was still a rather nice smile nonetheless, "I do."

In the end only Hermione Granger had made her match look vaguely grey and pointy, and she glared at Harry the whole time as he bid goodbye to his friends to walk toward the waiting professor.

"Professor." He greeted.

"Mr Potter," McGonagall returned, moving to sit behind her desk and pulling out a few objects, "I just want to know what sort of things your capable of accomplishing with your magic and I wish to ask.." The woman hesitated, for a moment seeming doubtful at what she was about to ask, "Can you turn the match to a needle without the use of your wand."

Harry grinned, he knew this woman was sharp, most people when he casually admitted he did magic at home for some reason just assumed it was only after he got his wand for some strange reason. Professor McGonagall, despite his initial prejudice, was a teacher he can see getting along great with.

"Do you want to see? I usually make it a bit dramatic for my cousin, part of the act and all."

The female professor's lips twitched looking for all intents and purposes wanting to smile but had used up her daily quota of positive emotions allowed on her facial features. "I think just the simple match to needle trick would suffice."

The boy did not pout nor feel a sense of disappointment at the declination. Harry always did like adding a bit of flair despite his usual personality, a taste for the theatric was always something one gets when living for far too long. He obliged anyway.

Without a word he picked up a match and squeezed into his palm, making sure to look like he was at least straining his concentration at his fist before opening his hand to reveal a shiny new needle. The Transfiguration professor looked quite gobsmacked, as if she didn't really believe Harry could've done it until he did.

Unable to help himself- he blames overexposure to Draco, Blaise and maybe a bit of Ron for his increase in sarcastic dry remarks- he waves both hands, still holding the needle, and deadpans with a 'Taa daa.' The professor being who she was, did not react so it left Harry standing stupidly in front of her still doing doing jazz hands in awkward silence. Yes, this is what his life has come to.

"What else have you done?" She asks and grateful to just quietly move past his moment of idiocy Harry coughs and with a swish of his hand turns the silver needle into a shoelace.

"I'm good with changing objects to other objects. Inanimate things seem to be more my forte since I can turn a flower into glass but it's harder for me to turn it back." The boy explained easily, "I wasn't going to try anything with actual sentient things either, closer thing I've ever tried was turning a bunch of leaves into an apple." Harry gave a look of disgust at the recalled memory, "That was a disgusting mistake."

Professor McGonagall made a strange slightly strangled coughing sound behind her hand at that, if he didn't know better he would've suspected she was trying not to laugh. Today just seemed to be a
day where he's unintentionally witty or something. How unusual, he's never been much of a jokester when he was a godly entity, maybe it was mortality that has altered his perceptions of humor? Or maybe he always maintained the same amount of witticism but in this world it was enough to be considered generally funny. If that last theory was true than the moment Chaos steps one physical foot here everyone would literally be curled up in laughter.

"Yes, well," She coughed again, "If what you say is the truth than I think maybe we can provide you with some further extra tasks to your practical part of the class. In fact," McGonagall picked up a what seemed to be a black string of rubber and gave it to Harry, "I would like you to make something out of this. Think of it as extra credit."

Which meant it was not compulsory but highly recommended that he do so anyways.

"Is there some sort of guideline to what I'm meant to be doing or-?"

"Surprise me."

Great. He hated when teachers do that. It's probably why he wasn't good with art or English classes back in Surrey, tell him what to do and he'll do it but give him a pencil, some paper and nothing but the instruction to draw 'what you think autumn means to you' and he'll flounder worse than a literal flounder out of water. Really, what the hell. At least tell him if you liked the colour orange or something, Christ.

Defence Against the Dark Arts was pathetic.

It was no History of Magic but it was still pretty high up there in classes with terrible teachers that needed to take leave yesterday. Professor Quarrel stuttered, was probably a liar in that he apparently saved some African prince from a zombie, smelled horribly of garlic and was just overall twitchy enough to give Harry a headache looking at him.

There was also something off about the man's soul but for some reason he'd found himself almost repelled by the idea of looking further into it. He didn't like the headaches it brought.

"What have we got today?" Harry asked Ron as he poured sugar on his porridge.

"Double Potions with the Slytherins," said Ron between mouthfuls. "Snape's Head of Slytherin House. They say he always favours them- we'll be able to see if it's true."

Harry scoffed, "You mean you'll be able to see it's true. I'm Slytherin for his class remember?" The redhead widened his eyes and then narrowed them at his bacon like they were the reason he was wrong.

"Bullocks."

"Hey, we can still partner up for today so I don't see how it matters."

Before Ron could reply a soft hoot and a flutter of wings distracted them as the arrival of Hedwig made herself known. The snowy owl had visited every morning with the other mail deliveries without fail despite carrying a lack of message herself so it was surprising to the pale raven haired child when the bird lifted up a leg to reveal a small rolled up parchment.

Giving the owl some crust off his toast Harry unrolled the letter to read what it said,
Dear Harry,

I know you get Friday afternoons off, so would you like to come and have a cup of tea with me around three?

I want to hear all about your first week. Send us an answer back with Hedwig.

Hagrid

Ah, right. The half giant fellow. What a nice man, of course he will graciously accept.

Borrowing Ron's quill ("Oi! Could've least asked!") he responded in the affirmative and sent Hedwig off on her first reply journey. She seemed mighty pleased about actually doing some work finally. Maybe he'll send Mr Filch a note just to keep his pretty bird busy.

Once Hedwig was on her way Harry stuffed the rest of his chocolate covered toast into his mouth and began making his leave, tugging a reluctant Ron with him. "Mate what are you-

"Come on Ron! I don't want to be late and if I'm travelling with someone the castle stops at least trying to delay me too badly."

"You are so paranoid. The castle is not trying to kill-"

"It is so trying to kill me."

Potions was somewhere in one of the dungeons. It was colder there and damper and decorated with pickled animals floating in glass jars all around the walls. Most of the first years looked quite perturbed by that last bit but Harry was more upset about how cold and damp it was. Sure the cold wasn't too bad despite his many complaints, it was the humidity that annoyed him. While the others looked horrified at one jar with a baby pig fetus, he'd shuddered at the mold growing in every crack in the stones.

If he sees some sort of fungi cultivation in the corner of the room Harry swears he would scream. He tells this to Ron and a nearby Draco who just look at him strangely. Harry didn't understand why.

However their beginnings of a conversation were quickly diverted when Professor Snape, billowing black robes in the nonexistent wind and all, strode into the classroom ready to take roll call.

Slowly he went down the list of names until he reached Harry's pausing as he did so. "Ah, Yes," he said softly, "Harry Potter. Our new- celebrity."

The boy was beginning to feel a sinking realisation he was going to be treated as anything but in this class.

"You are here to learn the subtle science and exact art of potion making," he began speaking in barely more than a whisper, yet Harry was sure everyone caught every single word, the professor certainly had the gift of keeping a class silent without effort. An intimidating yet entrancing man indeed.

"As there is little foolish wand-waving here, many of you will hardly believe this is magic. I don't expect you will really understand the beauty of the softly simmering cauldron with its shimmering fumes, the delicate power of liquids that creep through human veins, bewitching the mind, ensnaring the senses..." Very dramatic though. Though the green eyed boy had to admit now he was getting quite hyped up for what was to come. Damn the man could probably make a killing if he turned to writing creatively or something. "I can teach you how to bottle fame, brew glory, even stopper death-
if you aren't as big a bunch of dunderheads as I usually have to teach."

Okay, well, that last sentence wasn't *exactly* ringing endorsement. Harry and Ron exchanged looks with raised eyebrows, he would've done the same to Malfoy but that required him completely turning around in his seat to face behind him and that was way too much effort. Hermione Granger though was on the edge of her seat looking near desperate to start proving that she wasn't a dunderhead.

"Potter!" said Snape suddenly. "What would I get if I added powdered root of asphodel to an infusion of wormwood?"

Hermione's hand shot up into the air like a bullet. Harry glanced at the sheer competitiveness coming off from her before facing the unnervingly intense black gaze of the potions professor. It was almost like the man he had first met weeks ago had never existed in the first place or something. How disappointing.

"I think it produces a sleeping potion known as Draught of.. the Living Death Professor?"

Snape stared at him with that unreadable look of his for a long enough time Harry was wondering if he should just take back his answer but then finally the older man nodded once sharply. "Correct. Perhaps you have more than just fame going for you after all."

The green eyed boy felt a little relieved at that yet looking at Ron next to him, the redhead seemed flushed with indignation. Did Snape do something to offend him?

Snape was still ignoring Granger's quivering hand.

"Again. Potter, where would you look if I told you to find me a bezoar?"

Ah, there was the shadow of the easy bantering from before. Snape was acknowledging their first meeting at last, it may still look grudging and the man still felt distantly arctic but it was something. Harry gave a faint crooked smile at the question. "It's a stone taken from the stomach of a goat Professor and it will generally serve to save you from most poisons."

"Correct. What is the difference, Potter, between monkshood and wolfsbane?"

At this, Granger actually stood up, her hand stretching toward the dungeon ceiling. She certainly was persistent, Harry'll give her that. It's a little aggravating but still.

He did faltered at that one though, "But.. there is no difference." Vivid green eyes looked confused as the black clad male smirked,

"Wrong, the two are the same thing. One point from Gryffindor for a wrong answer."

Harry reared his head back, "You can't do that, it doesn't even make sense! And I'm in Slytherin right now!" He blustered, the other Gryffindors were nodding their heads in equal affronted fervour.

"Ah, apologies then, two points to Slytherin for correct answers then. And for your information Potter, having no differences and being the same thing altogether are completely unrelated answers." Snape then turned his focus back to the rest of the students and snapped, "Well? Why aren't you all copying that down?"

At least Harry could clearly see why Snape was the Head of Slytherin now. It was quite amazing how he managed to twist things against the boy. His fellow classmates however were not as impressed strangely enough at the treatment he was being prescribed to, even the Slytherins were looking a little uncomfortable at it. The not-currently-an-entity couldn't see why, this class was going
to be quite entertaining personally.

After all, he did appreciate interesting things above all.

"Snape sucks." Ron groused as they were leaving Potions. "I can't believe he took a point off me just because Longbottom ruined the potion next to us!"

"If it helps Weasley, he'd probably have took the point from Potter if he was in Gryffindor." Draco drawled in what was probably the most comforting way Ron would ever get out of him voluntarily.

"You can say that because you're clearly Snape's favourite." The scowling redhead pointed out. "I mean none of you Slytherins can really complain about him considering he's biased as hell toward all you."

Draco shrugged, it was true after all. Goyle however grunted out a, " 'cept Potter." With Crabbe nodding in agreement.

"Right, except Harry, sorry mate."

Harry looked up at the sympathetic looks on his friends curiously. "Why are you sorry?" he asked, "I quite like the Professor. I think he's pretty okay with me too."

"Potter, I don't know which class you attended but even I know Professor Snape pretty much hates your guts." Zabini pointed out with a disbelieving expression.

"He chose me to answer the questions." Harry defended.

"He did it to humiliate you." Draco insisted. "I like Sev- I mean, Snape, I do but even I thought he was being unfairly harsh on you."

"No, I think we'll end up getting along marvellously." The green eyed boy replied flippantly, "Listen I gotta go and throw myself off a balcony now so see you later."

The group watched Harry leave, Ron was the first to speak. "He's delusional."

"I was going to say insane but sure Weasley, let's go with that."
Death's getting used to Hogwarts

The one where Death continues getting used to Hogwarts by- learning how to straddle hard sticks of wood to fly, gets detention, gets propositioned by a dog, hunt down a unicorn vampire person with said dog and Draco Malfoy, propositions a centaur and then calls it a night.

So apparently Harry has learnt a few more things since his first week at Hogwarts.

One. Hagrid cannot cook. His cakes taste like rocks and share the same solid structure of one too. And the only proper way to consume it is to burn it and offer it up to the heavens as a 'Screw You' offering to your fellow entities slash siblings.

Two. When Professor McGonagall says 'Surprise me.' it is a safe bet to butter her up with something shiny. The stereotype that the female gender enjoys such objects has so far served it's purpose well. So far an intricately carved golden bracelet shaped like to lions running toward each other has been responded in a generally pleasing manner. McGonagall has been seen wearing it the next day.

Three. His wand was way too hyped up to be useful. It gets so needy and lonely all the time that Harry always takes pity on it, uses it for one simple thing which it gets overexcited about that something happens- usually some sort of large hole in a place large holes aren't supposed to be in- and then Harry decides he's better off wandless until the black stick of wood just looks so sad and rejected they start the whole cycle over again.

Four. At some point Binns needs to be exorcised. It is for his own good, for Harry's own good and for the sake of education's own good.

Fiv- "Potter this does not look like a list of things you've learnt in Charms last week."

Green eyes blinked at an exasperated Blaise that had been looking over his shoulder. "We have to write a list for Charms?"

"Yes. And yours is due, unfortunately for you, tomorrow."

"..Bullocks."

Flying lessons were okay.

Actually it was pretty brilliant.

Scratch that, it was fantu**cking**fastic.

Flying never was a 'thing' in the lifestyle that was being Death. Apparently it was deemed in some sort of invisible legislation known as societal expectations that beings of death and Death himself do not fly. Dementors do, technically, but it's really more hovering than flying unless told otherwise. Much like how tortoises could run if their life really depended on it but their natural choice of locomotive was more along the lines of plodding along. The same goes for Lethifolds too, hovering,
floating, drifting, maybe a little gliding along with the winds in their cloud-like bodies but not really 'flying'.

So no, flying was just not something that happened in the under-realms, with the exception of those giant raven creatures they had but those were like a 'bunnies in Australia' type situation than anything. And if you failed biology and don't understand that reference then basically just imagine Death (the horseman not the entity) picking up a flock of black birds to bring home as pets only for them to mutate and spread all over his lands, annoying demons and making reapers just generally uncomfortable. But those were really the only things there that could fly- no, fallen angels didn't count either. Sudden teleportation however, or manifesting out of a mist of darkness or maybe even just the classic striding coolly out of the shadows were more his type of speed.

Right now though, after getting over the awkward and frankly just undignified stage of straddling a piece of wood, Harry could not see why he never tried such a method of movement. This was amazing.

Harry whooped with energy he didn't even know he had, buzzing all the way to the tips of his fingers as the wind hit his face and tugged playfully through his hair. He could hear the flying teacher lady shouting something about watching his form and grip but was too busy grinning wildly as he sharply dived downwards, much to the screams of his classmates, before giving his broom a strong tug letting his feet just skim the grass before flying back into the sky again. Damn, now this was finally turning out to be a proper vacation!

Later he made a mental note to figure out how to explain to his Reapers the wonders of air travel.

"Wonderful!" Madam Hooch exclaimed, she had this unnervingly bright gleam in her eyes, "Magnificent, amazing, fabulous!" If Harry didn't know better he was sure the woman would be just spewing out random adjectives, as he landed easily onto the ground he threw the older lady a bashful grin and shrug.

"That was fun. Is there some sort of game with flight or do we all just try fancy tricks in the air?"

And then he was eagerly explained what Quidditch actually is.

It still sounded incredibly stupid- the point system alone was just... Anyway, nonetheless after experiencing the wonder of swooping and gliding and rushing wind, Harry decided that maybe the game was a little less dumb than he thought. Though trying out for the game would be particularly tricky considering he was House-less.

Madam Hooch looked like she was about to cry when he told her that.

Apparently when he's not present the Houses revert back to their original state of aggressive rivalry. It's quite fascinating really, even if he's never seen the change himself. Ron and Draco were very good examples of this phenomenon. Sure they weren't best friends or anything but they had been amiable enough when Harry had left them to go to their flying class. And only a few short hours later-

"You guys got detention?"

"Yeah." Ron spat out, his freckled face covered in splotches of mud. It matched the rest of his body quite nicely. Though it clashed horribly with his hair.
"No." Draco said sulkily at the exact same moment causing the two to glare at each other with so much venom Harry could practically hear the vicious hissing sound emanating from them both. Harry just raised a bemusedly curious brow.

"I think you guys are the first in the year to ever get detention. Congratulations."

"It was all Malfoy's fault!" Ron accused, pointing fingers and all.

"Wha-no, no it bloody wasn't!" Draco spluttered.

"You took Neville's Remembrall!"

"I would've given it back!"

"You were threatening to drop it from the sky!"

"... I didn't say it'll come back in one piece." The blonde muttered defensively and turning the freckled boy's face an increasingly vibrant shade of anger. Sensing they were treading dangerously close to shouting territory the entity-on-hiatus decided now would be a nice time to intervene.

"So what does a detention in a school of magic entail exactly?" He asked, only half curious, "I mean you must assume it wouldn't be too bad but still."

"It depends on who you get to serve detention with." Draco responded quickly, seeing the out for what it was and maybe partly because the boy had this obvious enjoyment in teaching Harry things that he knew. "My father told me that Snape won't be too harsh on Slytherins-

Ron snorted and may have muttered that sounded suspiciously like "Biased git." But it was ignored.

"McGonagall will probably make you do some lines or something incredibly dull like that, and Flich, well,"

"He's a complete wanker." The redhead blurted out. Draco looked ready to argue, more on sheer reflex and principles alone but paused and shrugged halfheartedly in agreement. "Yeah."

Green eyes looked at them coolly. "I like Filch."

"Merlin Harry, Snape and Filch?" Ron moaned, shaking his head, "You have the like, worst taste in adults don't you?"

Harry looked at the Malfoy scion pleadingly, waiting for the inevitable rebuttal to Ron's opinion, instead all he got was a bored shrug. "He's not wrong Potter." Traitor.

"I hope you guys enjoy detention together." Harry sniffed haughtily.

"Oh hey, now that's just, wait up Potter!"

"Yeah wait up mate!"

"Don't you follow us-"

"I can bloody follow if I damn well-"

Harry shook his head fondly as he walked away from what was obviously another one of their arguments. It was almost painful how much they reminded him of two specific rather argumentative entities of order and chaos. Though Chaos would probably prefer the twins out of the red headed
Unsurprisingly Harry's first detention was given by one surly potions professor. Surprisingly the detention had not been the professor's idea.

"I think..." Harry began slowly, solemnly, drawing his friends attention from both Houses as they walked out of their potions lesson, "I think Professor Snape might not be very fond of me."

"No." Draco drawled with the verbal equivalent of a desert in the height of summer in his voice. "Say it isn't so."

Harry nodded seriously. Everyone groaned.

"And you seemed like such a normal kid when I first saw you." Seamus muttered.

"Who would've thought, Harry Potter, has terrible tastes in potion professors?"

"Hey," Harry protested, not completely sure what taste has got to do with it but felt offended at the tone alone, "I bet Snape tastes great."

An unfortunate passing by Hufflepuff choked and slammed into a wall. His friends looked nauseated. He watched their reactions confused and questioningly.

Really, no matter how many years he's experienced as a mortal they still baffled him. Was the question not some sort of suggestion toward cannibalistic tendencies? It might be frowned upon in this world's day and age but that's what he thought at the idea of turning rabbits into lamps so what did he really know?

"That. That is disgusting Harry." Ron proclaimed, Harry didn't see why it was but remained silent. This felt like one of the times where saying nothing and gathering context for future reference was the best point of action. His large green eyes however were not as easily restrained as his tongue though because Zabini gave him a withering look that said, 'You have no idea what's wrong with what you just said do you? God you are so socially inept but since I find you most tolerable I will explain this to you later when we are alone.' Yes Harry did read all of that on the Italian boy's features. In his defense though the child had like a thousand variations of sneers and expressions of disdain for apparently every reason. He didn’t know all of them obviously but he's had enough experience with this one to recognize it just from the crinkle of the nose alone.

"Why do you think Snape doesn't like you now out of all times?"

"Yeah, if anything, we really should be having this conversation last week when he verbally berated your incompetence because your potion was, 'too aqua and not turquoise enough,' like what does that even mean?"

Everyone made various sounds of agreement. "I'm pretty sure Longbottom almost cried that lesson
and he was on the other side of the classroom." Nott added thoughtfully. The other Slytherins snorted.

"Please, Longbottom's always about to cry in Potions." Draco rolled his eyes. The first year Gryffindors looked torn between indignation and reluctant agreement, though knowing the hotheaded house of the brave, they would probably argue just for the sake of disagreement with their rivals. Really, this House thing was *exhausting*. Hogwarts is many things but school unity isn't precisely one of them.

"Yeah but Snape *obviously* thinks Longbottom is incompetent." Harry pointed out, "I mean, don't mean to be rude to Neville but he isn't the most deft with his fingers in the art of potions. It would be rather hard to say nice things to someone who keeps melting all the cauldrons after a while."

With the conversation turned back to the green eyed boy the air of hostility cleared to more comfortable levels. Well mostly.

"Harry no offence but I'm pretty sure that greasy git would rather choke on his own hair than say a nice word to you." Ron replied heatedly, "And you do better than most of the chaps in our class!"

"Yeah, you even helped me when I was about to drop the pickled toad eyes before dicing them Potter. And you got reamed about sabotaging me!" Zabini agreed with just as much fervor though obviously with a much cooler composure. The raven haired wizard savior couldn't help but flush slightly at that and shrugged his shoulders, muttering something unintelligible about 'not being that big of a deal'. Of course, somehow, that only served to fuel the other children's protests even further.

Finally, tiring from protecting the dour professor Harry held up his hand in a gesture to silence his friends.

"Well I think there is only one solution to this." Harry announced resolutely.

"What?"

"I'm going to ask him." They stared. He stared back.

"You're going to *ask* him." Someone repeated slowly, he didn't know who it was that said that but from the incredulous condescension he was going to assume it was one of the Slytherins.

"Yes."

"You're going to walk up to that man's face and ask him point blank why he hates you." Definitely Slytherin. Probably Draco.

"Yes."

This was met by groans and sounds of hands meeting faces. Harry can not stress enough how annoying children were at this moment.

"No."

"Merlin Harry."

"Potter you moron."

"What?" Harry frowned. "Why not?"

"Oh my god Harry you can't *just-* you *don't-* oh my god Harry!" Again, can not stress enough.
"There is no need to bring God into this." He chided. Really, he should know. And if God did answer some prepubescent child's whines instead of millennia of an incarnation of death's pleas for guidance when he needed it then Harry was going to be severely pissed. "And I dislike the notion that you think my idea is unwise."

"Unwise!" Ron burst out, "Mate what you are thinking is the stup-mmph!"

"What I think the Weasel is saying," Draco hastily stepped in as Zabini, with visibly great disgust, was muffling the freckled Gryffindor's mouth with his bare hand. "Is that maybe a direct approach to the problem isn't always the best approach?"

"It is my approach." Harry retorted stubbornly, "I am unsure of Professor's opinion of me and if what you guys accuse is true then I am justifiably uncomfortable with being some sort of target in the classroom. Asking directly will ensure a quick conclusion and I think I'm more than capable of doing so."

"It's not that we don't think you can do it Harry. It's just."

"It's just that Snape can make grown men cry and we don't think it would be great if you come back traumatized and forever rendered mute from the experience."

"And you all think that?"

They nodded.

"Well I'm sorry but I'm going to prove you guys wrong." He huffed, and with that Harry turned around and walked away. Later on the immortal would probably grudgingly reflect that maybe he acted a tad too 'young' considering his vast age but in his defense, he was pretty sure childishness was contagious- especially with prolonged contact. So it wasn't his fault, it was his lack of immunity to children. Definitely.

"Professor?" The potions master looked up from his stack of grading in slight surprise which was easily covered up in a heartbeat, his features the chiseled representation of cool disdain.

"Potter? Classes are on Fridays you realise?"

"Really professor I didn't notice," Harry replied with a slight smile as he leaned his weight against the edge of the class doorway.

"10 points from Gryffindor for talking back to a teacher." And that wiped the smile off the boy's face. Correspondingly it seemed to give the older man a sharp light of gleeful petty vindication in the black pair of eyes.

"Professor Snape I'm not in Gryffindor currently, I don't believe you can just take house points. If anything I'm still technically a Slytherin."

"You were exclusively Slytherin in my classroom Potter, now that you're no longer in my classroom you can be any house I wish."
Harry was not entirely sure that, that was correct but decided against antagonising the teacher and technically 'adult' out of the two. Taking a shallow breath he asked, "Do you dislike me for some reason?"

He had quite taken to the mortal phrase 'in for a penny, in for a pound,' and really, Snape's surprised face from the sudden blunt change of subject was worth whatever answer would be given. "Excuse me Potter?"

"Well," The younger shuffled his feet, absentmindedly wishing he was wearing some muggle jeans just so he could find somewhere to shove his hands into. Like, what on this green earth was he supposed to do with them right now? "See it has come to my attention that you possibly seem to dislike my person professor. Also my friends said you may hate my guts and everything I could possibly stand for."

And everyone thought he had learnt no social skills. Hah.

Snape apparently was either stunned speechless for a reason Harry wasn't completely sure of or just being silently offended at such accusations. Either way the resulting lack of response was not a comfortable one. "Professor Snape?" Harry inquired, prompting in what he hoped was an answer.

"I," The dark robed man cleared his throat before looking back at the child. The emotion in his face was not unreadable per say, but it was something complicated and deep and if there were people with faces like open books then Snape's was like opening a dusty tome in a dimly lit room and finding the writing was the same color as the paper it was scrawled on as well as in Latin even though you expected it to be written in Italian or somehting. "I do not hate you Potter."

The boy frowned, "I didn't say hate professor, I said dislike." Harry paused a bit before frowning at the older man even harder, disapproval and disappointment radiating from him in a way that probably made the usually so intimidating potions master inwardly cringe. "Did you hate me?"

The lack of answer was an obvious answer in itself. And wow that was kind of hurtful to hear. Or not hear.

Pointedly dismissing the hollow pang in his chest cavity Harry pretended that previous question had not been spoken as he moved on to, "And now? What of your stance on me now?" The boy asked, voice border-lining to an outright demand. It sounded completely self-absorbed even to him, but Harry just did not have people who disliked him. Well as an individual being anyway, not what he represented. Not really. Sure Zacharias wasn't fond of him but the sentiment was more than reciprocated so that didn't count. However Harry actually liked the sarcastic harsh man in the black robes and the idea that Snape despised him erred the boy more than he'd rather admit. Seriously he was chess buddies with the Devil, how in Lucifer's name did the older man hate him?

"Now," Snape replied slowly, tasting the word with his mouth thoughtfully, drawing it out as his mind formulated his response. A response Harry was waiting with an almost eager anticipation for. With a shuddering sigh like his answer was some sort of big burden thrust upon him the older of the two said, "I have reluctantly taken back my first assumption and found you to be... Tolerable."

Tolerable. That probably meant something yes? From someone like Snape it might even be the equivalent of a standing ovation. Yes, he could work with tolerable. Tolerable was good. Harry gave Snape a heartfelt smile of approval. "I find you tolerable too Professor Snape." He cheekily replied.

They shared an easy quiet space between them, it felt so similar to when they first met in the shop,
and while Harry was intrigued in why that lighthearted bantering relationship took a sudden swerve to the underworld at the mention of his name, he was much more content in getting this feeling back. However the idea that something as flimsy and unimportant as a name of all things could break such a nice thing was unacceptable.

"I think you should give me a detention."

For a second time Harry had the pleasure of seeing Severus Snape flounder for words again. "Potter?"

"Because I'm not going to ask why you reacted so badly to when you heard my name, that's your business," the boy stiffly explained with a confidence he wasn't sure he actually had at the moment, it seemed like a good idea in his head. "But I do wish for an amiable rapport and so I will extended a symbolic branch of the olive tree if you will."

"And you thought me giving you detention would satisfy me?" Snape challenged derisively, in a way that would've make Longbottom's eyes filled with tears, but Harry could see the considering look in black calculating eyes.

"You liked to call me out for things which admittedly even I have had trouble figuring out why. It felt like some sort of vendetta if you don't mind me saying professor. So I just.." He uncertainly trailed off and made a vague hand gesture in feeble hopes it could convey what his mouth had failed to do.

Snape just stared at him with that complicated to the point of blank expression of his before giving a sharp nod and abruptly stood up and gestured Harry to leave.

The next day Harry got a detention for being a 'menace in the halls.' It was probably the nicest Snape had ever been in giving someone a detention. Longbottom who had been present during the whole thing actually did tear up a bit though so maybe that wasn't exactly true. Though Harry couldn't help but grin when the man subtly patted his shoulder as he left as quickly as he came.

Ron and Draco weren't exactly pleased to see Harry per say. To be fair they weren't exactly displeased either. In fact Harry would more accurately call their faces 'gobsmacked' when they saw him happily waving at them whilst he conversed with their most hated caretaker of Hogwarts.

"Harry?!

"Potter?!

"Good evening!" Harry called out cheerily. "Did I forget to mention I got detention too?"

Ron caught up to him first, smacking the green eyed boy's unruly raven head and grumbling, "Yeah mate, might've slipped slipped your mind a bit."

"Oops?"

Draco, not one to change pace for anyone finally joined the group with his signature sneer on his face. "Well, well, well, apparently Potter's gotten off his high horse and joined us on the ground huh?" It was teasingly good natured which Harry caught on well enough, his red headed friend
"What can I say Draco? I decided your usual view up on those large horses of yours was much too uncomfortable for my liking."

The two pale skinned boys traded grins at their exchange, Ron who while didn't quite get the humor was aware enough to no longer take offense to the Malfoy scion. Well, in this particular case anyway. Much. Harry honestly didn't think there was a time Ron was not offended by Draco. And that went both ways really.

"Actually," Harry was struck by a sudden realization, vivid green eyes glittered with well hidden mirth, "I thought you guys had your detention yesterday. You know, lines with Mcgonagall?"

Suddenly the two other boys looked distinctly uncomfortable.

"Yes," The blonde coughed, "Well, we may have uh," More embarrassed coughing. Harry raised an eyebrow. Well this was going to be interesting. Looking at Ron the freckled child was pointedly looking at the ceiling, face taking more of an embarrassed faint pink hue. Actually Draco had the same coloring. "We may have planned to sneak out of our dorms to commence a wizard's duel."

At seeing the small boy's confusion Draco's embarrassment twisted into a sneer, "You have no idea what that is. Typical." He snorted.

"Well I think I've got the basic idea down," Harry shot back dryly. "I just fail to understand why."

"Well it wasn't like I was actually going to go!" Draco burst out angrily, Ron spluttered. "What?! But you-"

"I lied." The blonde hissed. "It was going to be a magnificent plan, your Gryffindor brashness would've practically compelled you to accept the duel and while you got in trouble wandering the school after hours I would've been in bed playing innocent."

It was admittedly a very good if not incredibly sneaky plan. Would totally work too. Of course there was no way Harry was going to say that out loud in front of Ron. Ron who was doing a startlingly well done job at pretending to skin the Malfoy child with just his eyes. He may be socially inept but he was certainly not an idiot so instead Harry said, "Okay so how come you're both stuck here with me then?"

The two rivals turned to their one mutual friend with faces so sour lemons would cry. "Granger." Was growled and hissed out with equal intensity. Because if there's one thing that bonds two opposing sides any faster was a shared enemy. Now Harry wasn't the biggest fan of the bushy haired girl but he had to mentally wince for the target of whatever consequences that came from both a Malfoy and a Weasley's ire. Dudley and Pierce weren't exactly the sharpest tools in the proverbial shed and Harry had learnt the hard way that there was no barriers young boys will not pass to achieve their petty vengeance.

Ugh he still shuddered when he saw a full wheel of cheese in the shops.

"She was eavesdropping at us like she actually had any business in what we did." Draco sniffed. "Even worse she just barged in and told us off! Like she had any authority."

"Called us selfish she did!" Ron agreed angrily, "Then after what, five minutes?"
"At least a solid ten." The blonde corrected with a wry smirk. "Don't think she stopped for air."

"Yeah, ten minutes, so after ten bloody whole minutes of berating us, calling us childish and pretty much saying how much better she is, Granger went and snitched on us! What a chit!"

"Here here." Draco slapped the freckled boy's shoulder before the pair both froze and recoiled away from each other so fast Harry was wondering if they choreographed the whole interaction. Draco looked at his hand with disgust, wiping it on his ropes with emphasized motions while Ron blew furiously on his shoulder as if the 'Malfoy germs' implanted on his person would float away before they completely attached onto him. And wow that was a strange visual.

"Alright you brats." Filch groused, having apparently left sometime earlier to collect his beloved Mrs Norris and a lamp, "Follow me."

"Of course Argus." Harry answered winningly, Mrs Norris purred. The boys behind him just nodded, at the corner of his eyes the raven haired boy could see Draco mouthing 'Argus?' at Ron who just shrugged, looking just as befuddled as the other. "Do you know what's happening tonight?"

The cantankerous groundskeeper glanced at the youngest Weasley and Malfoy before turning his attentions to his favorite student in Hogwarts. "I ain't completely in the know but Hagrid's the one in charge tonight." He acquiesced. "Though I don't see how that oaf could enforce any proper punishment. You know Potter-"

"Harry." Filch gave a yellow toothed smile at the correction.

"Harry. Well back in my day Harry we would've string these little terrors up by their thumbs." The old squib gave a slightly manic cackle at that as his friends began looking increasingly worried at being such a close distance to the caretaker. If Harry had been 'a real boy' he probably would've been weirded out too, fortunately he was a physical manifestation of death and other associated things with it, so he had found the stories Filch offered fascinating. Why didn't they teach this in Binn's lesson?

"Their thumbs?" He prompted, "Wouldn't the string cut off circulation?" Ron and Draco was now looking at him horrified, like he was just casually discussing torture in front of- huh. Filch shook his head.

"No, no, see we used specially made cuffs. They were made so the only pain was centered in the arms, like being forced to keep a pail of water above their heads but taking away the ability to cheat their punishment."

"Wait, couldn't you have just put a temporary sticking charm on the bucket?"

Filch cocked his head, thoughtful, "Never thought of it like that Harry. Would've made it easier though."

The boy shook his head, "See that's the problem with your magic dependent society, everything is unnecessarily complicated for some reason."

"It is no-"

"Shut it brats!" Filch barked, effectively silencing Draco's protest. "Honestly, kids these days." The man grumbled under his breath. The pale blonde gaped, actually speechless at the blatant favoritism that wasn't aimed at him. Harry, catching on to the disbelief, looked Draco straight in the air and winked. Ron had to stifle his laughter with his fingers as his school rival made a furious choking sound.
The three boys stared out at dark cold blackness. The wind was biting, the trees in the distance were making the most ominous rustling noises and even the night sky looked like it was about to cry what with the looming clouds masking what was probably a gorgeous smattering of starlight. Then they all craned their heads to stare incredulously at Hagrid who was waiting impatiently for them to step out of the safe, dry, warm castle towards the forest.

"You can't be serious." Draco breathed in horror. "We can't go into the forest, they're all sort of things in there- like werewolves."

"Hagrid you are joking right?" Ron asked with a weak chuckle as he wrapped his clothes closer to his body. Harry cursed himself for not bringing his nice coat, or a scarf, or even just some of those hand jumpers would be nice.

"Nope." The half-giant replied with what honestly was way too much cheer for someone who essentially just told three eleven year olds they'll be spending their nighttime detention in the Forbidden Forest searching for something in the Forbidden Forest that apparently murders unicorns in its free time. In the Forbidden Forest. Did he mention that they were going into a forest? That was for all intents and purposes forbidden?

"Professor Dumbledore told us not to go in there you do realize Hagrid? It was pretty much the first coherent thing he told us about." Harry said very slowly like talking to a particularly slow rock.

"Yea don't worry bout that 'arry." Hagrid laughed, "It's all been cleared by the Headmaster it has."

Because apparently the Forbidden Forest was not forbidden and dangerous enough to warrant wondering around at night for punishment. And to think Harry had respected that old man's ruling and restrained himself from exploring the dense forestation temptation. Maybe Headmaster Dumbledore did have a few apples loose from the fruit basket. Eleven year olds being sent to the Forbidden Forest. At night.

Forget apples, that man has lost the whole goddamn basket. Theoretically fruit has just spilt everywhere.

"My father will hear of this," Draco muttered, Harry and Ron couldn't help but roll their eyes at what was practically the pale blonde's catchphrase, even if they did kind of agree with the sentiment this time round. But seriously, the Malfoy head of the family certainly seems to hear a lot of things, Harry half wondered if Draco actually goes through with those threats half the time he says them because Draco kind of complains. A lot. Though to be fair Harry did get quite the nicely written letter from the man a few weeks in to the term, politely thanking him for being Draco's friend in none too many words. It was definitely a little cold but Harry does appreciate the good manners the words were wrapped in.

Unfortunately not even a mumbled threat about the Malfoy Head was going to stop what was going to be a horrible detention.

Absently Harry noted that Hagrid was carrying this huge crossbow and a quiver of arrows. And that did not make him feel safe about this activity at all. Also a large black dog that had been at the half-giant's ankle was practically latching onto his hip.

"Right then," said Hagrid, "now, listen carefully, 'cause it's dangerous what we're gonna do tonight,
"an' I don' want no one takin' risks." Like going into a forest at night. "Follow me over here a moment." The man led them to the very edge of the forest. Holding his lamp up high, he pointed down a narrow, winding earth track that disappeared into the thick black trees. Because that wasn't ominous at all.

"Look there," the lantern was pointedly lighting a few spatters of some shimmery grey blue liquid, "see that stuff shinin' on the ground? The silvery stuff? That's unicorn blood. There's a unicorn in there bin hurt badly by summat. This is the second time in a week. I found one dead last Wednesday. We're gonna try an' find the poor thing. We might have ter put it out of its misery."

"And what if whatever hurt the unicorn finds us first?" said Malfoy, unable to keep the fear out of his voice. Good. That is the acceptable reaction to this incredibly harsh punishment.

"There's nothin' that lives in the forest that'll hurt yeh if yer with me or Fang," said Hagrid in what was probably supposed to be a reassuring manner. Ron and Draco seemed a bit calmer after that but they were eleven. What did they know? So maybe nothing had lived in the forest that isn't wary of the half giant and Fang the dog before, nothing had been killing the unicorns before either. But there was certainly something now. "An' keep ter the path. Right, now, we're gonna split inter two parties an' follow the trail in diff'rent directions." What. "There's blood all over the place, it must've bin staggerin' around since last night at least." Oh dear god. This was almost exactly like one of those movies Dudley smuggled to watch. There was no happy ending.

"I want Fang," Draco immediately spoke, looking at Fang's long teeth. Ron who had also been eyeing up the dog's claws glared at the blonde.

"All right, but I warn yeh, he's a coward," And just like that the redheaded boy's glare turned triumphant as Draco paled.

"I'll go with Draco," Harry volunteered. "That will make the teams more fair at least." The blonde looked relieved, even Fang looked much less like he was going to urinate himself. If anything the dog pressed closer to his leg, the big black beast looking up at him with adoration as he- oh Hell he hated when animals try to proposition him like that. And the other entities wondered why he barely bothered to get out of his comfort dimension without their prompting. Well it was mainly because he was a recluse with slight anti-social tendencies and hellish workloads. But the unwanted attentions of more sensitive mortal creatures (he's been lusted over from sphinxes to hamsters and even been asked out by some very prominent figures in mythology) can be a bit trying after a while. Extremely flattering don't get him wrong, Death has been around since near forever and it still genuinely surprises him how these strange, living, beautiful beings have wished for him as a viable mate.

"Oi, Fang!" Hagrid admonished, looking quite embarrassed for the dog that was not so subtly doing... things to Harry's leg. "I'm so sorry 'bout that 'arry, he's never done that before."

The green eyed boy shrugged and waved it off even though he was quite uncomfortable at the public display, "Don't worry Hagrid, I seem to have an.. Affinity with things like this for some reason."

Hagrid coughed, "Yes, well, I'll definitely have er word with him later. For now I'll set off around west of 'ere and you'll all can go east."

Harry nodded in agreement, to the direction not the plan. Draco still eyeing the dog dubiously (even more so after that inappropriate display of affection) and angrily, like it was somehow Fang's fault that he had chosen wrong, followed suit albeit much stiffer.

"Well a'right then!" Hagrid announced and really should anybody be that energetic about this? Ron and Draco at least shared his thoughts, though if Harry could read their minds (which he couldn't,
though he can get impressions of emotions if he bothered to focus hard enough) it'll probably be something like, "Holy shit I'm going to die." Or something equally as dramatic. Though the raven haired child guessed it wouldn't be that dramatic considering there was a very good chance of death.

And with that optimistic thought he headed into the forest.

"You know what bothers me?" Harry announced as they wandered through the dense foliage and forged through under the eerie night darkness.

"You mean other than us being protected by some cowardly mutt? Or do you mean the life choices we've made that somehow lead us to this miserable moment?" Draco grumbled. Harry ignored him.

"Why is there a giant squid in the lake?"

"What." The blonde aristocrat deadpanned.

"Like, it's not a magical creature," Harry continued, "it's not even some sort of normal squid with magical properties. It's just a larger than normal squid in what is supposed to be a very magical lake and no one seems to be questioning it at all. I mean what's wrong with you mort-guys?"

"I should be asking you that Potter. Really, how on earth do you always think up the weir-did you hear that?"

Both children paused mid-step. Fang whimpered and moved so close to Harry the raven haired boy thought the dog may just get absorbed into him through sheer force of will alone. In a gesture that silently ordered the Malfoy scion to move behind him, Harry silently moved closer to the just audible noises of... slurping. Urgh. That is disgusting, he's pretty sure in this universe vampires are supposed to have more tact than that. Vampires also don't drink unicorn blood in any universe he knows of either so maybe the creature they are looking for is some sort of chupacabra creature instead? He hopes not, those things were literally so last century.

Shifting silently Harry edges closer to the source of the noise, with his much better eyesight and the faint appearance of the moon, the boy could see the unicorn whose blood they've been tracking. It was a horrible sight as it was in the throes of dying whilst the creature, no, a human, the thing they were looking for was human, drank from the mystical horse's arteries. The poor creature was thrashing weakly, even from this angle the unicorn still held onto its beauty, long slender legs bent at disturbing obviously broken angles, it's moonlit body, bright and shining mane and that silver blue blood all too visible on the dark green forest floor. Harry wished he had a photograph of this scene, and yes it's a completely inappropriate thought even he recognized that but there isn't many things in the world that could have such a beautiful, hauntingly gorgeous death like a unicorn. So excuse him for being reminded that he had nice things. Okay so maybe nice isn't the word to describe it, but hey, Death's not exactly nice either.

The unicorn murderer man, and really there needs to be a better name to call him, must have heard something- did Draco make a sound? He might have made some sort aborted shriek because any noise Fang made could have been dismissed as background noises in this place- because he had gotten onto his feet and started moving swiftly toward him. Then, a pain like Harry had never felt in such intensity before, pierced his head; burning like his forehead had been set on fire, his scar getting the brunt of the startling sensation. Half blinded, Harry staggered backward, shocked,
confused and in pain.

For a split second the power, the darkness, the sheer nothingness that came so natural to him sprang forth from where it had previously been so well restrained, buzzing under the skin of his palm and scratching under the nails of his fingers eager to be unleashed. It would be so easy to let it go, let himself go, take out the danger, drag it down into his world, feel the warm pulse of soul in his hands and savour it in his mouth. He could feel the stark blackness urging to be used, creeping into the whites of his eyes and tainting the red blood in his human veins. A part of him, the more logical, practical, objective part of him was rather thankful the nighttime surroundings were masking what was obviously some very inhuman traits being exposed on his human body.

For a split second every single living being in England shivered, an unexplainable cold sensation brushing lightly against the hairs on the back of their spine. Some would say it felt like death was breathing down their necks. Those would never realise just how close they were to the truth.

One split second.

And then Harry was back. Green eyed, red blooded, physically human Harry. He didn't know if he was relieved about managing to controlling himself or feeling strangely strangled in his own body. His forehead still burned.

He could hear Draco inhale a deep shuddery breath beside, probably feeling something a bit harsher than a brush of cold air. Harry may not have much experience but the feeling at such close proximity may or may not be something similar to having shards of oily ice stuffed down forcefully into one's lungs. The dark cloaked man that had been slurping unicorn blood must have felt it to because he seemed to be doing some serious full body twitching, like his body was desperately trying to tear themselves into two but failing. He was muttering and hissing and occasionally shouting things too, maybe the person was a mad man? Made sense considering he was drinking blood from an unwilling and dying unicorn.

The raven haired boy's wandering thoughts focused on the small whimper that had escaped from the child next to him. Draco was white and shaken and frankly looked simply horrible. 'Oh,' Harry thought, 'Oh dear.' But he said instead, in a low, soft but solid voice, "Draco. I want you to go run back a few meters and then I want you to fire up the warning sparks from your wand. Can you do this for me?"

The words seem to shake Draco from his frozen horror, to tear his eyes away from the contorting madman and the bloody unicorn in the forest of the forbidden. For an eleven year old child this scene must be rather traumatizing, especially with the accidental exposure to Harry himself when he momentarily leaked his true self out, Harry would have to be more careful from now on not to inadvertently break these children.

The Malfoy scion turned out surprisingly resilient much to his surprise and pleasure. With only some hesitation at leaving Harry behind the blonde knew that it was the safest choice. Harry hadn't exactly hid that he was the more magically adept out of the two, so with a determined nod Draco ran toward the direction of Hagrid and Ron.

Not a few moments later Harry saw the faint glow of red sparks and the boy quirked up his lips. Good mortal child.

Unfortunately the unicorn vampire (nope, still a terrible title) must have noticed it too as he began pulling out his own wand, raising it up, raising it toward- suddenly there were hooves behind him,
galloping, and something jumped clean over Harry, charging at the figure.

The unusual pain centred around his scar was merciless enough that it made Harry's knees go embarrassingly weak. His only consolation was that at least he was still standing upright so he had a near perfect, if not a tad blurry, view to see who had rescued his person. He didn't need saving, like not at all really, even without using his own powers the magic he had been gifted was strong enough to rule America single-handedly if he so wished. But it was a very nice gesture nonetheless. And the boy isn't sure in all his time he's really experienced a gallant rescue before so this detention was actually turning out better than expected.

The man who had managed to cause such inexplicably real pain, pain that the Vernon lump could never really achieve because Harry wasn't Harry, but someone wearing the meat suit of Harry and the beatings, the bruises, the sensations of injury should be dulled, should not truly hurt, not like that, had vanished. In his place was a centaur standing over him with an intense gaze of scrutiny and wonder. His hair was pale as Draco's and wildly untamed, his facial hair in contrast was surprisingly well-groomed, for woodland creature standards Harry supposed. Even with the inhuman slant of the face and the obviously inhuman aspects of his lower body, the boy could not stop his eerie glowing eyes from looking appreciatively at the strong figure of the centaur. Harry was an eleven year old human boy in body and incarnation of death in soul but he wasn't blind. The whole 'saving' thing helped to. That was nice.

Sure he isn't much to act on any impulse attractions like some of his brothers and sisters, and it's been at least a century and a half since he even got anything remotely close to a date with something (blind date with a Valkyrie, don't ask) much less a relationship and don't even get him started on anything more intimate than a few heated kisses. Damn Chaos for spreading that rumor about certain organs.. Shriveling, if they entered any part of his-

"Are you alright Lord Pluto?"

Harry blinked, the centaur watched him with eyes that were astonishingly blue and filled with worry and respect and admiration. Giving a slight smile in reassurance he straightened his previously half-crumpled posture. "Yes, I thank you for your kindness-?"

The centaur didn't answer immediately, but when he did it was like snapping out of some sort of daze, centaurs weren't known much for blushing, stoic mysterious image and all that, but this one was doing so furiously. Harry thought it was very endearing. "Firenze, Lord Pluto." He replied in an embarrassed rush, "My name is Firenze."

"Call me Harry then, Firenze." Blue eyes zoomed onto the scar imprinted on his forehead, widening as he realized just exactly what identity he had taken on.

"You are the Potter boy, but how?"

Harry shrugged, "Call it a whim, my friend and rescuer." Firenze went pink at the titles bestowed on him, yeah it was probably the titles, the boy hadn't really brushed up on centaur etiquette recently but it was probably that.

"I do not deserve such praise from a being such as yourself my Lord Pluto." Firenze murmured, his head bowed respectfully. "If anything I should apologise for getting in your way."

The young child shook his head and stifled a sigh of annoyance. Placing a small hand on the shoulder blades of the centaur he spoke cordially, "Be that as it may, you have gallantly stepped in to help and have warded off my attacker who had managed to inflict pain onto my person. For that I am grateful my strong rescuer."
Firenze made a throaty guttural snort that showed his pleasure at the words despite his reserved demeanor, pressing upward into the cold hand of the child, he answered, "I am honoured Lord Pluto."

"I'm going to just request you call me Harry at least in front of the human mortals."

"Of course milord." They stayed like that for a few heartbeats, Harry's hand on the kneeling centaur's shoulder as they looked into each other's eyes, it was all very intimate. Very pleasant. The raven haired boy suddenly cursed mortal growth rate. He could always age himself of course, even change his physical body's species if he wished (though it would admittedly take some time and effort) but it would kind of go against the whole 'let Harry Potter grow up' thing that he had promised Fate. Still, everything went so slow and he's suddenly struck by exactly how long he's kissed something technically alive. Not that he would say no to an undead if he was charmed enough. Dullahan after all always have the most flattering courtings. And vampires come a close second what with their aristocratic natures- though those have been slipping quite a bit in these modern worlds. Something called 'Twi-nights' or something ruining them which was such a pity really.

Then out of nowhere Firenze started fidgeting, with a cough to hide his awkwardness the half-human stood back up and with an offered hand asked with a nervous anticipation, "Lord Pluto, would you do the honours and allow yourself to ride me?"

Almost as soon as the centaur's request left his lips Harry's eyebrows shot up, his pale skin pinking at the obvious innuendo. Apparently today was the day for bold propositioning then. "Excuse me?"

Firenze was just kind of gaping in this absolutely horrified way, obviously mortified at what he just said. Harry felt it would probably traumatise the poor man if he laughed at the expression of his face.

"I-I-I didn't mean it like that! Forgive me Lord Pluto I simply meant that your feet must be tired from your venture in the woods, not that I'm belittling your physical body, you have a very beautiful youthful body that I have found admiring despite myself, no, apologies, that's not what I mean, your power sings to my very soul and seems to draw me toward your presence. Of course it isn't just that either, I wasn't implying I only like you for your power milord, not that I like you, I mean, of course I do, respect, yes, I respect you…" The centaur stammered off, visibly embarrassed at himself. The young boy could understand, he could feel some second-hand embarrassment himself, it must be so much worse since centaurs were usually like to see themselves as such mysterious creatures.

With a soft giggle, he tilted his head, letting his eyes glow a bit brighter than humanly possible and patted the centaur's flank gently. "I would be more than pleased to ride you my young Firenze." The half man brightened at that, not wasting anytime to kneel elegantly down at the child's feet. As Harry pulled himself onto the horse-like body he couldn't stop himself from purring into the centaur's ear, "And once my mortal body grows older I wouldn't mind pursuing a bond that could possibly end up with me riding in another way as well."

Firenze made an uncouth spluttering whinny at that, and while he couldn't see his face at this angle, Harry could most certainly see how red the tips of the creature's ears were.

Suddenly sounds of galloping and the crunching of leaves under hoof was coming from the other side of the clearing. Two unfamiliar centaurs came bursting through the trees, heaving and sweaty.

"Firenze!" The black-haired, black bodied and rugged one of the two thundered as he saw his fellow centaur and child. "What are you doing? You have a human on your back! Have you no shame? Are you a common mu- oof!" The pair of galloping half man-half horses grunted as they collided with an unfortunate tree, apparently mid-way through the rant they had realised who exactly was on Firenze's
"L-lord Pluto?!" The red headed horse man with a chestnut coloured body exclaimed in a suspiciously shriek-y tone. "Mars did not foretell such an appearance as immense as this."

"Yes, well," Harry replied dryly, "My presence did hinder Fate's plan I admit but I'm sure the stars will quickly realign and adjust soon enough to fit me in their plans."

"Bane, Ronan." Firenze said lowly, clearly unhappy for some reason, "You should do well to introduce yourselves to Lord Pluto."

"Harry Potter, please."

"My name is Bane, milord." Introduced the dark haired warrior-like centaur with a low bow, clearly chastised in the presence of the incarnation of death.

"And I, Ronan." added the auburn haired one, with an equally low bow.

"Bane." Harry greeted with a nod, then turned to Ronan to do the same thing. "Ronan."

Both centaurs dropped their head down, abashed at being so directly talked to by such a powerful entity. Harry distantly mused what would've happened if Fate herself came down to greet the fortune-telling creatures. They would probably have wet themselves. Firenze would have a babbling seizure. Fate, Death, Life and maybe even Knowledge and Magic would be the entities that species like the centaurs would be the most sensitive to, and the most revered after all. If some entity else like Space for example strolled passed them they would naturally acknowledge the power emanating from the man but there was no such natural affinity they would recognize, or at least nothing as intense as what they would feel for the others.

"May I ask why you have graced this earth with your presence Lord Pluto?" Bane murmured with undisguised awe. Ronan and Firenze shot their fellow herd member a dirty look, how dare he question such an otherworldly being of their actions? It may be one thing to willingly wish to mingle with the humans like Firenze does but it was a whole different story to question something that they have worshiped and have long since considered inevitable, untouchable characters of pure power. The dark haired male had realized this too going by the way of his paling face. "F-forgive me, I didn't mean-"

Harry put up his hand, effectively silencing Bane's stutters, "I am not here to demand respect from the loyal hoofed followers of Fate. You may wish to question my presence and speak casually to me if you like."

The centaur nodded relieved at the reprieve but like the other two, was sharing an expression of conflicting emotions about being allowed such merits with the entity now boy. Honestly, Harry enjoyed displays of proper decorum but it does get awfully frustrating sometimes how formal individuals can be. It's probably why humans have gained so much more faor and interest by the gods and higher brings compared to other species. They were so.. delightfully refreshing.

Like the snarky interaction he had, had with Professor Snape. Flyting, was what the Norse called it, he thinks.

"Anyway, I am here to live out this mortal life of Harry James Potter. Merely a simple reprieve from my usual duties." More like an accidental but not unpleasant escape.

Again all eyes were on his scar. And really, if this fixation for such a rather uninteresting pattern of marred skin continues like this Harry was going to develop some sort of serious complex about it. He
didn't know if he should cover it up with his hair or slick his hair like Draco, leaving the scar for the world to see and hopefully desensitising their creepy obsession with it. Actually that sounded like a good idea. Except he would look way too similar to Draco for his liking, and probably the rest of the school's.

"What of the prophecy then Lord?" Ronan asked mildly. Harry looked confused.

"Prophecy? What prophecy- no, wait, I know how this works." The boy rubbed his thumbs in little circles into his temple, "I shouldn't try and mess around with Fate's already woven story as much as I already have, in fact-" He snapped his fingers twice, "There, last minute, gone, what were we talking about?"

The three centaurs glanced at each other before looking back at their Lord of Death. Firenze having a slightly harder time considering said Lord was riding on top of him, a place that made him puff up with pride, wait till the others of the herd hear about this. Bane and Ronan had somehow positioned themselves to cover each of his flanks as they trotted amiably toward the edges of the forest grounds.

"Lord Pluto, I'm sure you know what unicorn blood is for?"

Harry pulled a face, "Yes, it's honestly quite offensive to what I stand for. Literally." His child like porcelain face soured further, "Only a foolish mortal with nothing to lose, and everything to gain, would commit such a cruel crime. Drinking the blood of an unwilling unicorn will keep you alive, even if you are an inch from death. But by slaying something considered the epitome of pure and defencelessness to selfishly save yourself, they would only deserve a half-life, a cursed life, from the moment the blood touches their godforsaken lips."

The boy stared at the back of Firenze's head, shining with streaks of silver in the moonlight with unnerving focus. "But who'd be that desperate?" he wondered aloud. "If you're going to be cursed forever, my way is better, isn't it?" And if maybe he sounded a little hurt and a teensy bit genuinely distressed at the thought, well, no one dared to comment. Though a part of their very souls almost clenched at the sound. If souls could do that of course.

"It is," Firenze agreed solemnly and was rewarded by a gentle but firm caresses down his spine. The centaur grunted at the pleasure. His companions merely glared. "But my Lord, are you aware of what is hidden in this school at this very moment?"

"No but you've certainly peaked my interest now." Harry murmured thoughtfully. Certainly he recalled a few suspicious behaviours from the staff but he didn't really pay much to mind. Well until now anyway. "Something to do with this man's wish for extended life is a good presumption obviously. Something that could bring him back to both full strength and power. Maybe cancelling out the curse of unicorn's blood by- oh."

"The Philosopher's Stone." Bane announced gravely. "And the man who would vie for such an artefact would be none other than-"

"Harry! Harry! Are you alright?"

Draco and Ron were running towards them down the path. Hagrid closely following along just behind.

The raven haired child shot the centaurs an apologetic look before focusing back on his more human friends. "I am fine," He answered, "Hagrid there's a dead unicorn back in the clearing over there."

The half-giant quickly hurried toward the direction Harry pointed at with a worried nod.
"This is where we leave you," Firenze murmured reluctantly, "I wish we would have met under better circumstance."

The little Lord Pluto slid off the centaur's back gracefully, tugging Firenze's face close to him before giving a chaste peck on his scratchy cheek. "If I find the time I wouldn't mind meeting the rest of your village." He offered kindly, like he didn't just turn a full grown centaur red with embarrassment.

Bane and Ronan seemed unhappy with this exchange but nonetheless bowed slightly as their eyes met glowing green. "Good luck Harry James Potter." Bane intoned seriously. Ronan adding, "We will be honoured should you wish to visit our village at any time."

The two then turned and cantered back into the dense woodlands, Firenze had a visible skip in his gallop as he followed. After watching them go Harry turned back to face Ron and Draco. Both boys looking pale, tired, dirty and half afraid. Not that Harry could really blame them, even objectively tonight was a very traumatising experience. So as pleasantly as he could he gave each boy an one armed hug and laughed softly.

"Well I don't know about you guys but this night actually turned out quite lovely. Shall we head back to the castle?"

"Insane." Draco repeated, "You are insane." Ron nodded in agreement but at least the two were smiling as well now. Harry sighed.

*Children.* He doesn't think he would ever understand them.
Death's troll meeting

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the last chapter, it's been fixed! Uh, enjoy this one in advance I guess (btw I have more chapters on my fanfiction account for this story if you really wanted more). Thanks and enjoy~~

The one where Death does some more magic, plays with himself and then meets a troll.

Today was the day when Professor Flitwick was going to finally allow them to try the levitation spell. Everyone sans one certain boy was right excited about it. Most of the lessons so far consisted of more theory than anything, so the energy vibrating off the new wizards and witches were understandable. Still. Harry almost wanted to scream at the slow pace they were going if it wasn't so unbecoming of his person.

Levitation? Really? Ugh, how.. Minimal.

Zacharias true to his idiotic idiot form was blabbing on about how he'll probably ace this simple task perfectly. Well, he may have simplified what the blonde had said, but to be fair Smith made it sound like he was the next Merlin or something. If Merlin's story contained eighteen epic chapters filled with prose and exaggerated poetry, and fourteen of said chapters would be solely about the author's heritage and appearance. Because in this scenario the story would be an autobiography. Because Zacharias was a douche.

"Potter! I challenge you to see who can accomplish a better levitation charm!" Harry rolled his eyes. Really, people keep saying Draco is the mouthy one but clearly his friends from the other half of the school have not had the pleasure of being acquainted with the resident little shit of Hufflepuff. Unfortunately his patience of this acquaintanceship was starting to wear thin. Harry after all doesn't and never has appreciated rudeness. With the exception of his vessel's relatives and maybe Snape, he's never really been treated with such blatant boorish disrespectful impertinence as well. And this misguided child to top it all off actually believes he's somehow better than him all because of some diluted blood he probably shared with a Founder?

Hahaha- Unacceptable.

"I accept Smith if it'll get you to shut up for once." He snapped irritably, Smith reared his head back in shock and more than a few of his friends and fellow peers gaped. It wasn't exactly a secret Harry disliked the blonde between the two Houses but it was usually treated with a cool disdain that would've made the Slytherins proud. This was probably the first time the young wizarding celebrity had ever outright showed any hostility and aggression to Smith. To anyone really. Harry liked Filtch for wizarding god's sakes.

Good. Zacharias really needed to have 'his pegs taken down' as they say. Now Harry really didn't fully understand where he should take these metaphorical pegs that presumably represent a person's hubris but if this boastful boy kept pushing him like this he knew very well where he could shove it up.

"Fine." Smith spat, "Maybe me showing you your place will get you off your high and mighty
horse."

Harry glared, "I do not understand how that is an insult. Having a fine stead is a very valued trait in any household."

"The height of the horse symbolises arrogance because you're looking down on them." Terry whispered helpfully, he was one of the Ravenclaw's he was closer too who had realised Harry's poor grasp with modern slang and metaphors of the English language. Truth be told Harry did know this term but it was worth acting stupid to see that furious look on Smith's face.

The shorter raven-haired child gave a soft 'ah' of understanding before focusing his attention back to a sneering Smith. "Well your horse is practically Trojan compared to mine." Then his head turned slightly toward Terry's direction and murmured, "Was that an adequate enough rebuttal?" Boot gave two thumbs up, which is supposed to show support but for some reason Harry had a sneaking suspicion that the action was sarcastic in nature.

"What does that even mean?" Smith scowled and Harry just gave him a look of complete derision, an expression closely replicated by the other Ravenclaws, especially the ones with muggle backgrounds. Uncultured swine.

Before he could open his mouth to voice that particular insult Professor Flitwick stride in and it was time for classes to start.

"Wingardium leviosa!"

"Woah you got it on the third try Smith, that's so amazing!" One of Zacharias cronies and partner for the exercise gushed much to the blonde's smug delight and at least three quarters of the class' vexation. "Well I'm personally not surprised," Smith chuffed before turning to Harry with a smirk, "Beat that Potter."

"Now, now this isn't meant to be a contest kids," The part goblin professor chided cheerily, "But that was very well done Mr Smith!" Flitwick then looked expectedly toward his green eyed student as well, it seemed despite his words the short statured man was very curious to see how the famed first year will handle this charm. And if for some unfathomable reason he found himself personally quite taken to the bright, quiet Harry Potter as a student, well, no one needed to know really.

Of course that soft squeak of inexplicable glee and happiness and ohmygodtheresjustsomethingaboutthisboythatmakeshimwanttobowdownandsweareverythingtohim when the moment bright, vividly green eyes met his own was maybe a little telling though. Luckily most of the children were more focussed on Harry like him, instead of another slip up of the charms professor- really, it was bad enough he squealed so hard he fell off his stack of books the first time he did roll call. And it was strangely enough, nothing to do with the child's name.

"Do I have to do this spell with a wand professor?"

Flitwick blinked at the question, a little thrown off by it admittedly. "Mr Potter I think for your first time maybe you should use your wand. Swish and flick if you will. Swish and flick." The boy nodded, looking at his jet black wand a little unsure and the short man just wanted to take his words back for the mere justification of seeing Potter content again.
In fact he was just about to do that when the young enigmatic wizard lifted his wand with precise swishing and flicking gestures as he intoned, "Wingardium leviosa."

And the feather shot up in the air so fast and suddenly it cracked the ceiling. The magically strengthened ceiling.

There was just stunned silence and maybe the faint noise of dust from above falling onto an embarrassed green eyed boy. "Uh, sorry for your classroom professor." Potter apologised sheepishly, "My control in the strength of my stuff isn't very good, especially with my wand."

This time, Flitwick didn't even try stop the squeal.

Hogwarts was not pleased by the broken ceiling.

She apparently had decided to show said displeasure by making the armoured knights decorating the halls gesture various unflattering things at the raven haired physical embodiment of death every single time he passed them. And considering Hogwarts has been a school for centuries, the level of outright offensiveness that can be interpreted from the hand gestures alone was downright obscene at the best of times. Even Harry, with his stunted knowledge of most things involving social civility balked slightly at some of the more 'upfront' hand actions.

This lasted for a whole week and for the life of the rest of the school they could not figure out how it was done. The Weasley twins thought it was hilarious though. They ended up getting the blame. Harry would feel more guilty about that if they hadn't made it a habit to follow him around the past few days just so they could learn new obscenities without even using words. They didn't even try to help him, they just laughed and laughed. Serves them right it does.

"-so concluding this meeting does anyone have anything notable to say about our new batch of students for this year?" Dumbledore asked, smiling genially at his fellow professors.

"This years firsties have some upstanding students, Miss Granger has shown a marvellous enthusiasm for her school work for one." McGonagall began. The charms professor giggled, "Yes, yes, Miss Hermione Granger has shown a healthy interest in her work but I think I can speak for all that there's another student we are all excited to speak of."

Dumbledore's blue eyes shined with blatant interest. "Oh? Pray tell Filius, who is this star student you seem to think we all wish to gossip of?"

The short man clapped his hands, practically vibrating, "Why mister Harry Potter of course!"

Professor Sprout blurted out a "Finally!" Before immediately covering her hands over her mouth in a blush.

The potions professor didn't even scowl at the word 'Potter' which really told how eager he was to discuss the child.

McGonagall coughed but even that didn't mask the slight upturned edges of her mouth. "Yes, well, Mister Potter has shown to be an exemplary student in my classes. Outstanding actually. Far ahead of
any of the first years, any of the third years actually." She admitted. "I've been giving him extra tasks to measure his talent in transfiguration and so far he's not failed to complete one once. Not counting the one time he misunderstood my instructions." The usually stern looking woman idly touched a delicate heart shaped brooch pinned onto her robes, it was silvery and obviously hollow as a luminous pale pink liquid sloshed inside it. "He also has shown immense skill in jewelry making and buttering up to Transfiguration professors." She remarked with dry humor coloring and warming her voice.

The teachers all chuckled at the joke and then it was Professor Flitwick's turn to stand up, "Mister Potter has also shown incredible aptitude in Charms, he might not ask as many questions as Miss Granger during class but he's one of the few I've met that has actually requested to be allowed to be taught more spells. Spells which he has demonstrated an amazing ease in mimicking. Not only that he prefers doing his practical work wandless!"

A murmuring of agreement and surprise sprang forth from the various adults, agreement from professor's such as McGonagall who've actually uses wand based exercises constantly, and surprise from people like Snape, Sinistra and Pomphrey who's subjects haven't really required much use for the wand. "Wandless you say?"

"How is that possible?"

"Explain Filius."

Filius looked very gleeful in complying with the last order, "Mister Potter has suggested using something that focuses his already large amount of magic into a more concentrated point like how wands are supposed to results in him inadvertently overpowering even the simplest of spells. Why, just the other day you must have heard of the results of him trying out the levitation charm?"

"That was him?" Dumbledore questioned in fascination. "He's the student who accidentally broke the ceiling?"

"With a feather!" Flitwick repeated, his whole body lighting up at the memory. "I've never seen such raw pure use of magical strength in my life!"

The transfiguration professor nodded in agreement, "Yes, I've noticed Mr Potter's done his best work without use of his wand. He claims it's already hard enough time adjusting to transfigure delicate stuff with his magic without an amplifier to hinder him." Her fingers fiddled with a golden bracelet of two lions chasing each other.

"Just how many accessories have you told the poor child to make Minevra?" Professor Sprout chided playfully, earning a faint flush on the other woman's cheeks. The astronomy teacher snorted, "And here I was, like a fool, searching high and low for this mysterious trinket shop."

"Is that what you were doing wandering about at Hogsmeade yesterday Professor?"

Professor Sinistra scowled. "No." She replied sulkily. "But Minevra was being purposely obtuse on where she purchased those wonderful earrings that changed into different constellations she wore on Monday."

"I liked that beautiful glass bouquet you have decorated in your office." Admitted Professor Sprout.

"The floating crystal of seasonal colors is my personal favorite." Added Trelawney wistfully, apparently not one to not add in her opinion.

"Well back to the subject at hand?" Professor Snape interjected with a tone that did not bode any sort
of variation of humor. "Mr Potter has," the black clad man paused for dramatic effect, "been adequately doing sufficiently in my classes."

Somehow that garnered more surprised mutterings from the rest of the adults in the meeting than any other comment or praise spoken toward Harry Potter. Snape scowled, fully aware of the reason behind the reaction and was duly offended by it. "Is there a problem?" He was met with answers of varying negativity. All of which came from complete liars. If Snape was aware of this he had made no show of it.

"Word from the Hogwarts rumor mill though Severus, is that Harry's quite the fan of yours." Sinistra said casually as she inspected her nails. McGonagall raised a bemused eyebrow at the stone faced potions master.

"Me and Mr Potter have reached an.. Understanding. Of sorts." Snape said carefully.

"Severus, my boy!" Dumbledore beamed which in turn made the dour faced professor sour further. "I didn't know you have made friends with young Harry. I am incredibly proud for you."

"As am I Severus." The transfiguration professor intoned with only the faintest shadow of a smirk in her eyes. "Though I am curious to how that came to be."

Snape merely made a noncommittal unhappy noise in response. There was no way he was going to confess that the young Potter scion had been the bigger man, had been the one to insist on allowing Severus to satisfy his vindications without even asking what said vindications were and ultimately resulting in the child almost being attacked in the Forbidden forest at night. There was also no way that he could stubbornly maintain his admittedly superimposed hatred over the boy after all that. He may be a bit of an unreasonable bastard but not to the extent of complete irrationality despite what many may think.

"Well unfortunately while Mr Potter has shown some beautiful manners and a presented himself as a very good team player, there isn't much to say about his talent in a greenhouse." Professor Sprout divulged, "Actually he has a bit of a tendency to, uh, completely kill off most of his plants for some reason. Not that he did anything wrong, in fact he seemed quite upset when it happens, it's almost like his presence just invites the flowers to keel over and die."

"That's.. An interesting image." Sinistra replied, "Potter's also quite polite in my classes but seems to be very unenthusiastic about the whole subject."

"You mean he refuses to learn?" McGonagall asked, trying hard to visualize the interested green-eyed student she taught with an attitude like Goyle's. Or maybe even the youngest Weasley.

The dark skinned woman shook her head, "Oh no, apparently he seems to already know most of the basis for the First year curriculum. He can name all the stars and constellations as well as the context of them without even flipping through the textbook. I asked him how he could know so much but he just kind of murmured something about space and order and drifted off to sleep."

"Sounds to me like our Harry Potter doesn't do well with late nighters." Dumbledore chuckled, the majority of the staff following his lead. "I guess even the brightest children have their weaknesses then."

"I-I-I think its q-quite cute." Professor Quirrel stammered timidly, before wincing like he was in incredible pain for a second. "O-o-or n-not."

The teachers ignored him.
"Okay, then. Anything else to comment?"

"The boy is a spitfire on the Quidditch pitch Headmaster, if he doesn't join a House team I will cry right here and now." Madam Hooch suddenly declared, immediately garnering all the Head of Houses attention.

"Dibs!" McGonagall screeched very uncharacteristically, a competitive fire lighting up in her eyes. Snape sputtered.

"Minerva, you can't, that's not, you can't just call dibs on a student!"

Flitwick nodded serenely. "Exactly. Potter's still a first year, it's not like he can play this year despite whatever talent he holds in the air."

"Actually," Sprout started, "He's not allowed to bring a broom to school, if someone just supplied one to him he would be technically allowed to play."

"Also his style is most suited to the role of a seeker." Hooch chimed in, knowing full well how valued a position that was. There was a pause in the conversation as the four teachers digested that before,

"Dibs!" Flitwick screamed. And then the protests started all over again though now much louder and with language much more colourful.

"Good afternoon Professor Snape." Harry greeted as he tapped gently at the entrance of the teacher's classroom. The potions master looked up with a blank expression from whatever work he was grading.

"Potter. How unexpected to see you here." The younger of the two smiled amiably, rustling a couple of parchments in his hand.

"I've got some homework I need to finish and I thought you wouldn't mind some company." He explained easily. Snape looked less than impressed.

"Why would you assume I need the company?"

Harry shrugged. "I didn't. But I wanted company that wouldn't distract me with babble because I may have hypothetically forgotten a four foot Transfiguration essay on the basic theory of space displacement that is possibly due the day after I realized." The boy widened his eyes innocently and rustled his parchment a bit louder as if it would somehow further his point. It must have helped somewhat as Snape's lips curled ever so slightly upwards in a way that was mocking but at the same time not unpleasant. They weren't friends like Harry had hoped but there was a tentative banter and amiability that was enjoyable nonetheless.

"Minevra would weep if she heard you forgot her homework." The older male murmured wryly, taking that as the cue to enter the classroom, Harry happily made his way to the front row seat directly across the potions professor's desk.

"Oh?" Harry began rearranging his writing equipment to his satisfaction, two quills on the right of his parchment, ink on his left and textbook floating slightly below eye level on the side with the best light. "I didn't think Professor McGonagall thought so highly of me."
A scoffing noise was heard at the teacher's desk, "Please, even you cannot be so obtuse to see how much the woman adores you, she's been showing off your so-called 'extra assignments' to anyone who's unfortunate enough to notice. The only one who could possibly be more enthusiastic about you would be Professor Flitwick."

The green eyed child could feel his face heat at the indirect praise, "The extra assignments Professor McGonagall gives me is actually entertaining and requires thought and effort." He deflected feebly.

"Because essay writing needs no use of higher brain function whatsoever." Snape deadpanned as he continued his own work, and rudely ignoring the sour expression Harry was pointedly giving him.

"You know exactly what I mean sir." He muttered as he too began his own work. The conversation dwindled by then, the room filled with just the scritch and scratches of quills against paper. Most students in the school would probably think that such a situation awkward and frankly one of their biggest nightmares, but Harry had found the whole thing rather soothing. It reminded him of working in his office really, though less lonely. Which actually sounds rather sad putting that in words.

It takes a solid two hours before he's almost done with his essay. There's still the conclusion to do but no one honestly cares about that. Harry sighs and leans back on his seat dramatically and reviewed his work in a way that only people who cares about not failing but is also aware that he's half-arsed his work and is probably not willing to put in any extra effort in editing said work can do.

His handwriting is jagged, stern, more like hieroglyphics than actual English but it's readable and consistently neat at the very least so Harry decides to count that as a win. His writing stamina has increased an unnecessary amount from the school experience, though considering the most he's had to really write while he was an all power entity of death was just a signature and a few sentences of criticism or advice for most documents- never in the last six hundred millenniums had he ever had to write an essay about anything. His hands hurt. Harry, because he's a cheater, deadens the nerves in those limbs so they could stop pulsing with pain by the three foot mark.

Thank god he wasn't actually mortal because his vessel's hands were way too pretty to be damaged by essays of all things. Harry had decided when he goes back to being well, 'himself' again he was definitely going to retain some features from his human body. His eyes would definitely be one of them.

"Finally finished I see Mr Potter." A low drawl called out across the near empty classroom. The raven haired child looked up with a wry smile.

"Yes well, theory has never been much of a strong point with me." He answered a little self-depreciatingly. It was true. Each entity had inbuilt knowledge that naturally update over time, however unfortunately that information is only relevant to their given affinities so some individuals would be naturally much better versed in things than others. Love could probably recite all the most romantic, emotional poetry by heart and can tell you the sexiest clothes to impress someone with just a garbage bag. Chaos knows just the right sentence to utter to make even the most polite members of society descend into anarchy. Order instinctively knows how to undo Chaos' mess, usually with a few choice words himself. Magic is a bit self explanatory. Space can recognize any universe he steps foot in, Time really likes to recite random bits of history of said universe. Knowledge knows, well she literally knows everything annoyingly enough, with the exception of a scant few things which never ceases to annoy her. Life is probably a close second in terms of being on top of things in general while conversely Death was inbuilt with probably the least amount of ingrained information.

The things he instinctively knows are vague, morbid and if they were textbooks they would be along the lines of; 'Reapers and Dementors and other such ghouls', 'Spirits, souls and where they go' and 'One thousand and one billion ways to kill someone, something or everything'.
That was it. Everything else he had to learn by experience and external aids. The fact that compared to the others he barely visited the outside world did not help much either. It's always secretly been a sore point with him.

"Yes I do expect it is." Snape says and he does it in such a way that it's really hard to tell if it was a snide joke or an actual insult. The older male was difficult like that. "Though I guess I can't hope for anything more from a child who takes jumping into teacher's arms like a fish to water." Now that was teasing. Harry blushed and blustered.

"I- I- that happened once!" He snapped embarrassed. Harry had found a while ago that a less bruising option to his escapades from the bullying of the school was to yell out to anyone below him and hopefully get caught in their arms. It was also a horribly embarrassing option that he no longer did much anymore because he had made the dreadful mistake of accidentally jumping into the arms of a very surprised Professor Flitwick who had been expecting some Diggory boy's essay and not an armful of Wizarding Boy Savior shrieking bloody murder. The Hufflepuff student obviously thought the end result was hilarious because he burst out laughing at the groaning two splayed out on the flooring, he looked very sheepish about it all afterwards and helped them up as an apology for his outburst but Harry could still see the twitching corner of the older boy's mouth when he scowled at him.

Harry was not exactly proud of that moment. Which was understandable really as it was not his finest.

"Flitwick still tells that story when he has the chance."

Harry groaned, embarrassed.

"Hey guys!" The first year Gryffindors and Slytherins all turned to see Harry Potter waving as he strolled toward them just as they were leaving Charms class. All of them in some way acknowledged the greeting but the children better acquainted with the child and wizarding celebrity lingered back.

"Harry!"
"Potter!"
"Potter."
"Mate!"
"Potter."
"Potter."

And only now did Harry realize, with startlingly clarity, just how many of his friends address him with only his last name with a mix of cool dignity and disdain. Huh.

Dismissing that rather useless piece of knowledge the green eyed boy walked toward the waiting group. "So how was Charms class?" He asked interestedly. Slytherin-Gryffindor drama was pretty much the only drama you could get around here. Well, that wasn't entirely correct, it was the only drama Harry could get around here.
Ugh he does miss being the physical representation of a primordial force sometimes, he always got first row seats to all the good stuff. That world where Chaos thought it would be cool to see what happens if natural disasters like tornadoes somehow meshed to contain sharp toothed killer animals like sharks? Hilarious. Completely stupid. Irrational. But hilarious. Order actually had to go to a different more sane dimension and cry for a bit.

Though, being part of the story is pretty interesting too.

"-and I was all, Wingardium leviosa but then Granger was all, it's not Wingardium levIOsa, it's Wingardium levioSA, and I was all, what-"

Harry takes it back. With interest. Like enough interest that the metaphorical bank goes into debt.

"- in Merlin's name did I do to deserve getting partnered up with Granger?!!"

"Maybe you were a Dementor in your past life? Explain why you're stuck with the one student who can suck all the joy of magic." Seamus jibed, earning a scowl from the redhead and some snickers from the Draco and Blaise, the two Slytherins that decided to join them. Harry himself didn't laugh but admittedly enjoyed the wordplay immensely. He didn't care what the situation was, puns were funny.

"I hate her!" Ron declared, "She is such an annoying whiny Know It All! No wonder no one can even stand her, she's an absolute nightmare."

A soft gasp was heard behind them and the boys turned around to see Granger staring at them with a blotchy complexion. Harry immediately felt bad. "Granger, it's-" But whatever pitiful attempt at damage control that his mouth was about to try went unsaid as, with an audible choked sob the girl ran off in the other direction. "Well now I feel terrible." Harry sighed.

Looking at the other boys, they too seemed to be struggling with some sort of guilt. The Slytherins unsurprisingly less so than the other two Gryffs. Of course them being eleven year old boys also meant that they aren't the best when experienced with uncomfortable things such as guilt or apologies. "Well, it was true." Ron murmured defensively, proving his point.

"You guys should apologize anyway." Harry pointed out, because he couldn't exactly disagree outright with the redhead.

"Me and Blaise didn't say anything." Draco protests in faked guilelessness with Blaise looking at them all with smug agreement.

"But you guys can't stand her either!" Seamus growled. The Italian Slytherin shrugged, "Yeah but she didn't catch us saying that. Just that we were present when you Gryffindorks were mouthing off, in a public area I might add." Draco tutted condescendingly in the background.

"Harry!" Ron whined, turning to the green eyed child who did not look much sympathetic to the Gryffindor's plight.

"Ron I can't just make them apologize." Harry sighed exasperated. He totally could. He just didn't want to go through all that effort. "And technically, they are right. Granger probably didn't even notice those two."

"Excuse you-" Draco started heatedly before his fellow Slytherin stopped him with a whispered annoyed hiss of, "Do you really want to do this now?"

Harry knew this was why Blaise was one of his favorites.
"Come on Ron, you know we went too far," Actually, come to think of it, Harry didn't do anything either, "Come on, why don't we apologize together after the Halloween feast thing?" At the look on the redhead's freckled face everyone laughed and Harry amended with, "Okay the day after the Halloween feast."

"Thank Merlin."

He had forgotten Halloween was the day his vessel's birth parents were murdered.

To be fair though it wasn't as if Harry had actually met the two who birthed his physical body. They were dead when he arrived. So excuse him for being so callous about the whole thing.

Nevertheless after the fifth rendition of basically 'Hey Potter great job for murdering that one guy on Halloween, sorry about the no parents thing but I guess we can't have it all.' Harry was not happy at all. He couldn't even escape it from his friends who on one side made borderline insensitive comments or questions like 'Did you remember it?' (Ron) and on the other side of the equally annoying spectrum just communicated solely on uncomfortable and guilty stares (Draco).

So it was no surprise to himself at the very least did he find himself hidden in the darkest corner of the library (that wasn't forbidden) playing chess against himself- the only person in Hogwarts that hasn't been an annoyance to him today apparently. Even Snape was especially harsh and snappish. Unfortunately as refined and intelligent as a game chess was, the pieces were apparently magicked much like the talking hat but with a much lower intelligence so every figure was staring at the child like Harry was about to commit some sort of board game genocide on them. It was not helping his mood one bit.

The food at dinner time better be fantastic or Halloween this year officially sucks. Which is unfortunate because Death adored Halloween, or lesser known as Samhain. The day where nature takes a turn to slumber and the ground becomes deadened and hard, when the veils separating the dead from the living momentarily weaken and spirits are strong enough to cross over to mortal realms. This was totally his holiday.

So yes, that was how Percy Weasley, prefect of Gryffindor, found one Harry James Potter in a right sulk, terrorizing chess pieces.

"You know your skipping classes." Was all the older Weasley said after a small pause. Green eyes looked balefully at him.

"I am aware of my offenses. As is the professors who had suggested I take the day off due to the circumstances of today." Harry sniffed unhappily before turning back to glare at the frightened chess pieces like it was their fault he wasn't in class. The bishops at this point were looking heavenward and praying in various ways while the pawns just looked ready to wet themselves.

"Oh. Well I'm sorry for your loss." Percy offered halfheartedly, Harry continued staring down at the board to cover a smile.

"You know you're the first person to say that to me today."

"Really?" The surprise and indignation on the younger boy's behalf coloring his voice was so genuine Harry could feel some of his sour mood fade away a bit. "That seems rather..."
Harry nodded solemnly, "I know." He agreed before glancing back up to the Weasley prefect with a small smile. "So I appreciate the sentiment all the more. Thank you."

Percy flushed lightly apparently unsure what to do with the thanks. "Oh, uh,"

Taking pity on him, vivid green eyes shined amusedly as Harry asked, "Would you like to play a game with me? If you have time of course." He amended hastily, fully aware of Percy's rather uptight ways from various Weasley family stories he's heard plus complaints from some of the students.

The prefect looked painfully startled at the invitation. It seemed this Weasley didn't have many friends, or at least ones close enough to play games with. Harry could empathize with that. Being Death doesn't earn you many friends either. And Percy doesn't exactly have the privilege of making new friends either.

"Are you sure?" He asked and the younger of the two waved the uncertainties of the older airily away. "Does it look like I have any plans till dinner time?" The question was obvious in its answer so the red head cleared his throat awkwardly and tried to reassemble some semblance of his previous haughty look.

"I suppose one game shall suffice. But then I really must continue my prefect duties." Percy finally decided seriously.

Harry nodded as solemn as a grave, "I wouldn't dream of disrupting your tasks." That seemed to crack a smile out of the older boy who finally sat down on the opposite side of the board. "Just one game is all I ask."

"One game." Percy acquiesced.

They played till the evening.

"You cheated." Harry accused with a laugh, Percy gave an offended look so real Harry wondered if the usually uptight prefect had been pulling everyone's leg this whole time. When finally settled and relaxed, Percy was much funnier and adorably awkward than the other Weasley's described him as.

"I am a prefect." Was all he answered in an indignant huff. "Cheating is not in our ways."

"Of course," Harry replied dryly, "I'm sure all of you swear a blood oath with one hand across your chest and the other on the great book of Merlin to never play foul in the name of chess, board games and all that is sacred."

"Now that you know our secret you must either join us or die." Percy deadpanned, barely missing a beat in the banter. Harry cocked his head as if in genuine contemplation, "I don't think I could live with such a heavy weight over my head like that yet at the same time I rather enjoy having a head in the first place.." The first year paused for effect before finally deciding, "I would choose neither option and go on the run."

The Weasley prefect gave him a look that perfectly conveyed how he thought about Harry's chances.
of survival if he ever went on the run from a chihuahua. Which was completely rude though at the
same time perfectly fair, in retrospect it was probably pretty accurate if he actually was a mortal child
with arms skinnier than flower stems and skin softer than their petals. Honestly his body looks like a
willow fae child of the night, prettily pale and so delicate that even the faint morning light will burn
him to ashes. Even more honestly he kind of likes it. His usual look is a bit more intimidatingly
graceful and regally dark but there is always an appeal to stark contrasts between appearances and
natures like now.

"Speaking of having to run I do think we must get along before the feast starts tonight." Harry added
on thoughtfully as he finally looked away from Percy and the chessboard, and noticed how empty
the library was. Well, emptier. Ms Pince hadn't even deigned to warn them about the time either
which meant she's just really rude or she trusts them alone with her precious library. Harry does not
believe in the latter option much. Percy too must have reached a similar conclusion as he looked
around surprised at the silence. Then he cursed, jumping out of his seat, face red, looking a mixture
of annoyed, frazzled and embarrassed as the prefect fully absorbed how much time has actually
passed.

"Bloody buggering bludgers! I didn't even notice it's near evening!"

Harry motioned the pieces on the board to pack themselves up much to their little ceramic
indignation before getting up from his seat. "Did you have anything you had to finish before tonight
that I could assist you on?" He tried helpfully, "I mean it was my fault that you got so distracted
Weasley."

Percy was wearing that surprised expression on his face again, maybe his friends don't offer to help
with his duties? That must be terribly irritating. "Really? Uh, no, other than patrolling and overseeing
the festivities I don't have anything that needs any immediate attention."

Harry nodded, "You must be really good at being a prefect despite it being your first year being one
though. The Slytherin fifth year prefect Masonfield constantly complains about the sudden
workload." Percy spluttered, his face pinked but unable to hide the pleased expression at the
compliment. "That's hardly fair," the older boy finally said with a shy crooked smile, "Masonfield
would have trouble even if his only job is to sit there and look, well, adequate."

"Petty insults Percy Weasley? How very deplorable of you." Harry snarked with a faint grin, Percy
reciprocated the action before he remembered exactly how late it was. The redhead looked torn
between running out to make a head start on making sure his assigned tasks are perfectly completed
or chatting a bit more with the boy saviour. Luckily Harry choose to pick for him.

"Well, this has been a surprisingly enjoyable day. We should do this again sometime." The younger
child said, giving the prefect a perfectly good and polite pass to excuse himself. Percy took it
gratefully as well as reluctantly and power walked quickly out with many glances backwards. Harry
patiently smiled and waved every time the redhead looked back at him like he somehow expected the
green eyed child to have faded into nothingness or something, and said redhead would flush slightly
each time he was caught. After Percy finally was out of sight Harry too decided to head to the great
hall, though at a much more sedate pace.

The tables were literally staggering with the sheer amount of food placed on it. As both an entity
whose own dining tables were barely ever made use of and a child with a history of malnutrition the
sight was awe-inspiring and incredibly impressive. Another ingenuity of mortals was again made known through the wondrous smells of the culinary delights.

Harry's pretty sure he can hear Ron drooling across the hall at the table of the Red and Gold at this point. Draco beside him was trying to subtly wipe his mouth with the back of his hand. Even some of the teachers are completely ignoring the raucous sounds of the feast in favor of mooning at the golden crusts of pie and the slick juices oozing from the roasted chicken whilst all on golden plating.

Clearly gluttony is going to be the biggest vice of the night.

Harry and everyone else happily helped themselves to the gorgeous food, the sound of chewing louder than the usual chatter of the students for once. In fact, he was just about to snatch up the last fat overstuffed jacket potato right from Goyle's meaty paws when Professor Quirrel came barreling into the halls, sweaty and terrified. The turbaned teacher ran toward Dumbledore's seat, slumping against the table, elbow un-sanitarily in the gravy bowl as he heaved out, "Troll.. In.. Dungeons... Thought you ought to know.." Then he promptly fainted- which was very nice of him to at least wait till he warned everyone but at the same time it was awfully annoying as it also meant Quirrell effectively left a whole school in a state of panic he caused.

There was a huge uproar obviously. There would've been something wrong if there wasn't. Harry totally understood that. It was very understandable. What Harry didn't understand was why this uproar was so. damn. loud? He just wanted to finish his potato in relative peace. Or at least in quiet panic. Was that too much to ask?

It took some fireworks from Professor Dumbledore's wand to settle everyone enough to hold some form of attention. "Prefects," The headmaster addressed slightly strained, it was probably because of the whole troll in school situation but Harry's pretty sure the sheer shrieking volume played a good part of it as well. Really, how was Quirrell still out cold? "Lead your Houses immediately back to the dormitories!"

Percy was one of the first to move, he was in his element. "Follow me! Stick together, first years! No need to fear the troll if you follow my orders! Stay close behind me, now. Make way, first years coming through! Excuse me, I'm a prefect!"

The redhead prefect whilst rounding up the chattering Gryffindor first year managed to catch eye contact with Harry and sent him a look that so visibly communicated how the boy should be careful. The green eyed child quirked the ends of his mouth upwards in bemusement at the worry, however it turned into a small frown as he noticed a certain bushy haired first year was missing from the group. Turning to a rather distressed Draco he asked, "Do you know where Granger is?"

Clearly that was not an appropriate question for the situation because Draco responded with a loud, increasingly hysterical, "Potter who cares where Granger is, last I heard she's off crying in the girls bathrooms on the third floor and hasn't left since, anyway don't you realise we dorm in the dungeons?! The one where the blooming troll is supposed to be?! Potter my father is going to hear about this if we end up attacked or eaten by the troll!"

And of course the nearby Slytherins overhearing that little revelation lost their collective shit. Apparently possible death is enough for these young aristocrats to throw away most of their dignity and enthusiastically join in with the escalating chaos. Masonfield, Gemma Farley and the other Slytherin prefects were looking increasingly frantic and frustrated with them all, shooting glares especially toward the Malfoy scion as they tried to calm their House down.

Harry would take some entertainment out of the whole thing if he wasn't being so busy fretting about what to do with the information about Granger. If she had been in the bathroom this whole time there
would've been no way for her to know about the troll. And while it was mostly Ron's fault, Harry
did feel a bit responsible for being the reason why she isolated herself like that in the first place. Not
a whole lot but enough to feel guilty if she died by troll of all things.

The disturbing image of smushed, tenderised bloody flesh staining bathroom tile was enough for
Harry to slip from the frenzy of the Slytherins and out the hall. Just as he was about to make a break
for it with his tiny little limbs a hand gripped his shoulder so tightly the boy yelped in surprise and
pain.

"Potter, where in sweet Merlin's name are you going?" Percy was radiating disapproval like heat off
a furnace.

"I was going to warn Granger about the troll because she has been in the third floor bathroom crying
and doesn't know about it." Harry explained as calmly and as succinctly as he could. Percy was a
stickler for the rules but he wasn't completely illogical about them. The older redhead paused and
released his grip on the smaller boy's shoulder much to Harry's relief, Percy surprisingly had some
insanely strong strength in his hands.

"And you're sure Granger is in the third floor bathrooms?"

No. "Yes."

Percy narrowed his eyes but after a beat of silence reached some sort of conclusion in his mind
because he nodded and announced, "The other prefects are already guiding the students to their
respective dorms and the professors will be too busy either assisting or looking for the troll. I will
accompany you to look for Granger."

It was more than Harry hoped for so he agreed and the pair ran off.

They managed about a good six feet before once again they were interrupted with the arrival of Ron.

"Mate where ya going with Percy?"

"Ron go back to the group." Percy ordered immediately causing his younger sibling to scowl.

"Harry's my best mate, I'm coming with." He declared stubbornly. The two brothers stared each
other down until Harry coughed pointedly and Percy finally relented with a hissed, "You better listen
to everything I say as prefect." Which to that Ron rolled his eyes in a distinctly unimpressed manner
before agreeing with obvious fake sincerity. The older Weasley's face, pinkening at the blatant
disrespect and disregard of his sibling was about to open his mouth no doubt to start some sort of
tirade on the rudeness of it all before Ron whispered, "Is that Snape? What's he doing skulking 'round here?"

It was. Quiet but quick footsteps were heard passing by as the potions professor walked past them,
the trio had been conveniently hidden from view by a griffin statue and so was luckily unnoticed. As
the man crossed the corridor and turned out of sight the three boys finally let out a breath that they
didn't know they were even holding till then.

"Professor Snape should be with the other teachers searching for the troll." Percy murmured,
"There's no reason for him to be on the third floor."

Ron, in true eleven year old fashion said, "We should totally follow him."

Harry looked up at the ceiling and wondered if Hermione would have graduated by the time they
finally arrived to rescue her.
"We are not going to stalk Professor Snape." Percy insisted.

"But that slimy snake- no offence Harry,"

Harry held up his hands, "None was taken until just now. Thanks Ron."

"No worries mate. Anyway that slimy snake is definitely up to something! He's on the third floor, you know, with the forbidden corridor? We have to check it out."

"I don't know if you realize but we're also suspiciously on the third floor as well. And we don't have to do anything Ron. Especially if it's stalking a teacher."

"Actually," Harry coughed awkwardly, "we do kind of need to follow him a bit Percy, the directions to the girl's bathrooms are in that direction."

Percy sighed as Ron gave a silent but no less enthusiastic fist punch to the air.

"Guys I think we've got company." Harry whispered as they neared their destination.

Ron scrunched up his nose. "What is that awful smell?" He asked while Percy took one drawn out sniff and paled.

"Troll." The prefect hoarsely whispered, causing his brother to adopt a similar whitened coloring on his own freckled face. Harry secretly rolled his eyes at the unneeded dramatics. He had literally just implied that.

Hearing grunting and a shuffling of what could be either really giant feet or the sound of a tree learning to walk for the first time, the boys wasted no time in pressing themselves against the wall and sheltering underneath the shadows as they watched the troll lumber past.

Harry had seen a lot of trolls as Death. Mainly because he was Death and therefore has seen a lot of everything really but also because trolls in general tended to be ugly, slow and stupid- traits that generally get most individuals killed often. Anyway, the point he's trying to get is, that this specimen of the species was probably one of the most physically unappealing individuals he's ever seen.

It looked already like a particularly ugly troll but this one happened to be made of grey dirty play doh that had been just played with by some unruly toddling mortal child. Squished and deformed. The smell did not help in the troll's favour either. Harry was going to soak himself in warm rose soap for an hour after all this ridiculous nonsense. He may be 'slumming' it with the mortals right now but he was a being greater than any god and refused to smell like the excrement of a dumpster truck.

All three watched as the troll slowly passed them and entered one of the nearby rooms. Which was all well and good except, "Bollocks. I think that's the girls bathroom." Harry swore.

"Maybe Granger has left?" Ron tried weakly. Which was of course when a high pitched scream of terror echoed in the room the troll had wandered in. "Never mind."

"I'll go in and distract the troll." Percy said, ignoring his brother, "Both of you get the girl then get out of here."

It was a very simplistic plan and the things that could go wrong was virtually endless but there wasn't enough time to argue or delegate so the first years nodded and bolted into the bathroom. Harry ran in
wondering if the owner of his human body would have got into this mess or it was just him, while Ron ran in swearing various words in a rather creative fashion. Well, at least the freckled boy would have one hell of a Halloween story to tell for his first year at Hogwarts.

Though while he hasn't personally met the woman yet, that horribly embarrassing shouting magic letter thing of Ron's the morning after their detention would heavily suggest the Weasley matriarch would be less than entertained by this story. Hermione Granger was against the wall opposite them, terrified tears running down her cheeks and just generally looking as if she was about to faint. The troll was advancing on her, knocking the sinks off the walls as it went. Seriously, Hogwarts was a aesthetically pleasing school to look at but if Harry was a parent he doesn't think he would want to put his child in here. It's kind of a shitty school if you value things like student safety, a concept that seems to be lost here.

"Percy, any time now!" Ron shouted.

Percy, in his brillance and fifth year knowledge of magic, threw a rock at it. It wasn't even a particularly big rock either. Neither first year was very impressed but took the distraction for what it was and ran around the troll, toward the frightened girl.

"What are you waiting for Granger? We have to go!" Harry demanded as he and Ron pulled her frozen body up from the tiled floor. Percy, finally getting his act together was shooting off various latin words along with rainbow coloured sparks that didn't seem to be damaging anything but the troll's patience. There is a suspiciously strong implication there about what to expect for future Defense classes. To be completely fair though, trolls do have notoriously high defences what with iron-like skin, a decent resistance to magical attacks, and being composed of mostly muscles, mud and dirt. Nonetheless, it does not inspire much confidence anyway. "Come on woman, run!" He screamed as the entity noticed the prefect being pushed back toward them and the troll looking at Harry in hunger. Whether carnally or digestively the answer anyway was a very strong hell to the no.

Stupid trolls and their stupid tiny, idiot brains that can't even recognise death if it slapped them in the face. And that's completely literal.

The prefect then must have cast a particularly nasty hex or something then because a very blue fizzle of what seemed to be lightening caused the creature to roar and bring it's full undivided and furious attention to the older redhead who looked distinctly regretful at casting the spell right now. With another roar the troll lifted one of it's giant meaty arms- the one holding a club which Harry didn't even want to know where it got, seriously this school- ready to swing at Percy, Granger had meanwhile sunk to the floor useless in her fear and Ron beside her whipped out his wand. "Wingardium Leviosa!" He screamed, causing the club in the grey creature's hands to jerk in the creature's hand. The troll hesitated for a moment giving the prefect time to try to escape out of it's arms length.

Seeing this though resulted in the arm being raised to strike again and Harry knew that if that hit connected the best outcome in that situation would be that Percy breaks all his ribs, he's lucky enough for one of them to hit his heart and dies a swift death.

Told you he was a morbid son of a female dog.

"Ron, do that again." He demanded frantically in which his friend looked at him, scared and unsure. "Trust me." Harry said in what he hoped was in a very inspiring manner. It must work because a determined steel enters blue eyes and Ron points his wand out again, this time with Harry joining in with his own wand. He doesn't really need the wand but the thing promised to be good and the image is much more dramatic than if he just shouted the words.
"Wingardium leviosa!" They shout. Immediately the club is yanked out of grey thick fingers much to the troll's obvious confusion, it rose high in the air, higher and higher upward until the thing just hovers unsteadily and drops. There's a sickening crack and then the troll was swaying, teetering like an unstable ball on a tightrope, and it too began to fall to the ground. The impact between troll and bathroom floor made Harry momentarily lose his footing. Everyone stared. There didn't seem much else to do.

"Is, is it dead?" Hermione asked softly. Percy walked up closer to it, still looking very shaken from the whole ordeal.

"I don't think so. Someone needs to go report this to a profes-"

There's the sound of footsteps incoming fast and with what can only be described as incredibly awful timing, Professor McGonagall burst into the room, closely followed by Professor Snape and Professor Quirrell coming up from behind. Quirrel, who already looked sick from the running, took one double take at the unconscious troll and whimpered, dangerously close to fainting again. The troll roared like five times and the whole breaking off sinks bit in the beginning was incredibly noisy and yet only now the cavalry arrives.

While Snape went over to where Percy was to examine the creature's state, Percy went to join the three first years shifting uncomfortably under Professor McGonagall's stare. Harry felt compelled to apologise for everything he's ever done wrong in his life while simultaneously wanting to hire her because of that. Hell could use someone like her. Order would probably love her. It will be an amazing, terrifying romance and Chaos would probably cry.

"Professor McGonagall," Percy started warily, his face fearful, actually he looked more afraid of her than the troll. He couldn't blame the prefect of course. Harry had never seen the woman look so angry. Her lips were so thinned they were near nonexistent.

"What on earth were you thinking?" Her voice was doused with a cold icy fire that was her fury. Ron was still holding his wand out in the air like an idiot which wasn't helping their case at all. "You're lucky you weren't killed. Why aren't you in your dorms?"

At this she stared down at Percy who shrunk under her glare. Snape at the same time gave Harry a look that could pierce a glacier and the boy cast his green eyes to the floor, hoping he could somehow ignore the painful needle like sensation that was undeserved guilt welling up inside him. Which was stupid and illogical because he shouldn't be feeling terrible at all, he literally just saved a little girl. Apparently no one told his body that because it involuntarily closed in on itself, adopting a guilt ridden pose.

Then Hermione spoke up in a small, weak voice, "It was me Professors." she said, slowly getting up onto her feet, "I- I was looking for the troll because I, uh, thought I could deal with them because there was this book I read you know, on trolls and I just thought.." Finally Ron dropped his wand, though more out of shock than anything else. Hermione 'Goody Two Shoes' Granger lying outright to teachers? Plural? "If they hadn't found me, I'd be dead now. It was about to finish me off when they arrived, I'm sure if they waited any longer to fetch someone else I-" She trembled and wasn't able to finish her sentence. She didn't need to. McGonagall's face softened at the shaking young girl, after Harry, Hermione was a close second among her favourite students.

"Oh Miss Granger, you foolish foolish girl," The transfigurations teacher said as she gave the younger girl a hug, Hermione hung her head. "How could you possibly even think this was a smart idea?"

Harry finally decided to glance back at the still glaring Snape, the intensity of it having dissipated
enough to have become bearable during Hermione's explanation. Ron was still gaping at Hermione, apparently trying to comprehend her lying to help them get out of trouble. Percy just looked relieved this whole thing could finally be pushed behind them.

"I'm sorry Miss Granger but I'm going to have to deduct five points from Gryffindor for this," Snape now just looked infuriated now, Harry couldn't say that he thought such a level of anger was appropriate considering the girl was obviously traumatised now but he had to admit that it was a very light punishment for someone who admitted to going troll hunting. Ron and Draco just talked about going out of the dorms after hours to duel and they had to spend their night searching for unicorn murderers in the Forbidden forest. It all seemed incredibly unbalanced. "I'm very disappointed in you. If you're not hurt at all, you'd better get off to Gryffindor tower. Students are finishing the feast in their houses."

Once Hermione left, the female professor turned to the three boys. She wasn't smiling but she didn't look like she was going to verbally rip their throats a new one now either. "You boys were lucky, not many children can go up against a full grown mountain and get away relatively unscathed. You each earned Gryffindor five points, Dumbledore will be informed of this. Now you may go."

If anything Snape looked like the one who was going to verbally rip their throats a new one, Harry however was the only one who had noticed. As the Weasleys were turning to leave, the raven haired boy made no such move. Professor McGonagall raised a brow, "Mr Potter? I distinctly remember dismissing all of you." She said shortly and oh, so she is still quite upset with them.

"Well, I was waiting for my reward professor." He explained innocently.

"I've already given your reward Mr Potter."

Harry stood strong, "No offence Professor McGonagall but it isn't much of a reward when I'm currently in Slytherin."

The professor had the decency to look ashamed at that, "Oh my apologies, I just,"

"She just had forgotten considering how foolhardy and brash you acted, much like a Gryffindor." The deep rumbling voice of Professor Snape spoke as the man walked toward them. McGonagall bristled a bit at the insult of her House but she was still a bit too chagrined to retort. The dark clad professor put a hand on the raven haired boy's shoulder and gave him a look that if Harry didn't know better would have been classified as proud. "However as I'm sure that it was probably that Slytherin side of you that allowed the rest of those children to inevitably survive the confrontation I judge you earned your House a good twenty points. Let's go Potter."

And with that the potions professor swivelled toward the exit dramatically, billowing robes and all and strode out, leaving both Harry and McGonagall staring. A few seconds later, the much more annoyed face of Snape reappeared, "Potter," he barked, "Are you accompanying me back or not?"

Harry couldn't help but laugh softly, bidding his transfigurations professor a good night, he ran toward Snape.
Death's first filler chapter

The one where Death doesn't really have much happening to be very honest. Though Snape does get injured twice. Which, is like, I don't know. This feels like a 6000 words of filler to be perfectly honest.

Harry decided to go flying on one of the school's brooms. He quickly regretted it. Okay, more like he didn't regret the flying in so much as he regretted landing back on the ground where a small crowd had gathered.

And that wouldn't have been so bad if the small crowd hadn't consisted of one extremely enthusiastic Oliver Wood. Oliver Wood who looked close to hyperventilating. "You," He pointed at Harry like it wasn't completely obvious who he was talking to. "You have to join the Gryffindor Quidditch team."

"Now hold on!" A larger brunette boy bustled out of the crowd, "If Potter's joining any team it's going to be the Ravenclaws!"

"Davies." Oliver Wood hissed like he'd been burned. Then he hissed again as a tanned Slytherin that Harry recognised as Marcus Flint shoved the Ravenclaw aside.

"Please, Harry is a Slytherin, he's joining our team." He sneered.

"Only for the rest of the term!" Wood protested shrilly, Davis after regaining his balance nodded fiercely. To make things even worse and more awkwardly embarrassing, a teenager that could really only be the Hufflepuff Quidditch captain came bursting through with a panting even shriller holler of, "Well in that case Potter should join us!"

The Hufflepuffs in the crowd cheered at that. Which surprisingly resulted in them being the House that instigated the coming riot. Funny, Harry would've thought it would have been the Gryffindors what with their huge bonfires of passion and minimum mouth filter.

Soon enough students from every year were arguing with anyone with a different colored tie. Harry wasn't even sure they were fighting about him anymore.

"I don't think."

"you can shove your thoughts up your."

"well there's no need fo-"

Slytherins, Gryfindors, Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs, were going at it like shouting was suddenly a competitive sport.

Harry was no longer there to witness it.

He had better things to do.

That was a lie. Harry really didn't have anything better to do. He's done his homework, extra assignments and all. He's done... Huh, that's it actually.

Boarding school kind of sucks.
After putting back the broom and mentally wondering why on earth these people's first reaction upon gaining the knowledge and magic to create flying objects was to imbue said bequeathed gifts into an object obviously made for the intention of cleaning floors, Harry wandered aimlessly around the courtyard. He didn't feel like surrounding himself with pre-adolescents right now and the older students like the Weasley twins, Percy and Diggory had classes at the moment. Which is unfortunate because Diggory was more of a last resort than anything. Not that the boy wasn't pleasant despite their first meeting, it was just that they barely make any actually conversation due to their unfamiliarity and general lack of shared interests.

Filch's company would be nice enough to have but unfortunately that meant spending a lot of time having to search for the caretaker, which meant spending a lot of time skulking around Hogwarts. The castle that lives to try trap entities of death in its various elaborate and frankly just plain stupidly, unnecessary, secret rooms.

Harry didn't even want to know why there was what looked like a underground shop for collars and dog training in the school. And yes, that is what it was and he refuses to believe otherwise. So yeah Harry is not going to willing go through another reluctant round of 'Lets fuck over the Death Lord by trapping him in forgotten kink rooms,' for another afternoon if he could possibly help it for the rest of his mortal and immortal life.

"Harry!" Harry looked up to see Ron and Granger running up to him. Ron, all smiles and freckles while Granger looked shy and nervous. Apparently after the whole troll incident the two Gryffindors have managed to become something akin to friendship. Children tend to be quite simple like that. However since Harry was not some child and tended to be made of more complicated stuff. He hadn't felt the same strong bond being forged with the girl, just a mild appreciation for her sticking up for them.

"Ron, Granger." The brunette cringed slightly at the formality of using her last name but still stubbornly smiled. "Hermione is fine thanks."

Harry tilted his head and coolly looked at her before cracking a small smile and accepted with a succinct, "Hermione then." Turning to Ron, because the green eyed boy still remembered how rude and hostile Granger had been for no good reason other than petty jealousies and how uncomfortable it all was, he then asked, "What are you doing here then?"

Ron's grin quickly turned into a scowl. "Snape, that greasy bat, took points from us just for bringing a library book out of school grounds- and he confiscated my book!"

"But you are on school grounds." Harry pointed out obviously. "Exactly!"

"I know right!" Granger blurted out then blushed at the sudden attention. "And uh, he looked hurt too." She added awkwardly.

That though got Harry's interest, "Snape looked hurt?"

Relieved to be holding a conversation with the Boy Savior of the Wizarding world, the girl nodded, "Yeah, he was limping."

"What's wrong with his leg?"
"I dunno but I hope it's hurting him real bad." Ron muttered, earning a glare from the other two children.

"I'm going to check to see if he's okay." Harry huffed before leaving. Though he walked away just slow enough to hear Granger give the freckled boy a good whack on the shoulder and a hissed, "Ron! You can't just disrespect professors like that!"

The green eyed child covered his mouth to hide his laugh. Maybe he and Hermione would get on okay after all.

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After a minutes hesitation Harry changed direction from the staff room to the infirmary.

It took a while and maybe two or five ghosts trying to help give directions before he finally found the medical wing of the school. He tentatively knocked and entered, observing avidly around the unusual, sterile room. Being Death, he's visited many hospitals, emergency rooms, heck even the occasional GP, though it's quite the refreshing twist that for once he's here for healing purposes instead of uh, non-healing purposes.

It was more spacious than the 'modern' medical facility he's been to in other worlds. Old and traditional springs to mind, the almost church like interior only emphasizing it. There's too many windows to be practical in his opinion but it's all very aesthetically pleasing. He wouldn't particularly feel very safe in here but at least he would feel like he was in a romantic movie about doctors in the 1800s.

"Hello? Is anyone in?" The boy asked tentatively. A matronly dressed, grey haired woman bustled out of a doorway toward him as a response.

"Yes, how may I help you?" She asked nicely, "I'm Madam Pomfrey, the matron around here."

"Harry Potter." He greeted just as politely, "And I'm not here for myself but I wondered if I could get something for a friend?"

"A friend you say?" The older woman frowned. "I'm sorry Mr Potter but if your friend is ill I think it would be best if you bring him or her here."

Harry flushed and shook his head bashful, "No, I mean, he's not my friend per say and he's not sick." He tried explaining. "I noticed he's scrapped his knee or something and I just, well, I thought it would be nice if I-"

Madam Pomfrey was looking at him like she's suddenly figured out the secrets of this universe and was damned amused by it. "Ah, I see. Well I normally don't do this Mr Potter but I'm sure we can find something to help impress your 'friend'." The boy can practically hear the quotation marks around the word friend, he has no idea what she's implying but if it'll get him the stuff he wants he'll contemplate it later.

He beams brightly at the matron and gives his thanks as courteously as possible. She seems to melt under the appreciation and bustles quickly to get some sort of magical equivalent of numbing anti-bacterial cream. When Madam Pomfrey hands over the small cream container she's still grinning at something obviously, adorably, hilarious that Harry just couldn't for the life (or death) of him see.

"Well, I hope you tell me how it goes with that 'friend' of yours." She says before going back into her infirmary office, chuckling all the way.

Seriously, what was so funny?
It didn't take as long as he thought to find Snape in the castle deathtrap that is Hogwarts Witchcraft and Wizardry. Harry doesn't know what to feel about the lack of twists and turns and petty attempts at murder. Suspicious is a good start. As is unease, apprehensiveness and disturbed.

Like that one time he saw Chaos give Order a hug for no reason. A goodness to honest loving hug and a *Despite everything I do respect you as my equal and you're a pretty okay guy,*' speech, which sounded terrifyingly genuine. It's been a good ten thousand years since then but Order still occasionally shudders and swerves his head around like a spooked owl out of nowhere. Everyone pities the poor guy every time he does that. Well, obviously *almost* everyone.

Harry made his way down to the staffroom and knocked quietly. There was no answer. He knocked again, a little louder. Nothing. The child frowned. Well, it was a stretch to think that the professor would be there but at the very least he thought *someone* in the staffroom would be able to point him in the right direction.

Finding the door unlocked, Harry pushed it open and quietly scuttled into the room. Turns out, it wasn't as empty as first thought.

Snape and surprisingly, Filch were inside. Harry kind of felt bad about that last thought, obviously Filch being part of the staff, would be seen in the staffroom. That was terrible of him to assume otherwise. The potions master was holding his robes above his knees, revealing a terribly bloody and mangled leg which Filch was providing bandages to. The entity-on-hiatus looked down at his palm sized jar of magic cream which now seemed very inadequate in comparison to the injury.

"Blasted thing," Snape was muttering grumpily. "How are you supposed to keep your eyes on all three heads at once?"

Three heads? So they have a Cerberus guarding the Philosopher's Stone. *Interesting.* Maybe he can go give the beast a little talking to about going easy on the professor. Harry's sure that would be much nicer than some useless cream. With that decision made, the raven haired boy began backtracking out of the room. Unfortunately the doors this time round had decided to become fairly uncooperative and gave out a audible creak. Fucking Hogwarts.

"POTTER!" Snape's face was contorted and twisted in red furious anger, immediately dropping the robes to hide his blood-soaked disfiguration. Harry winced at the rage and embarrassment rolling off the tell hook nosed man.

"I'm sorry for intruding, I just-"

"GET OUT! OUT!"

Harry did not need much more encouragement to obey.

He closes the door firmly shut and presses his head on the opposite wall as the child tries to still his beating heart. He doesn't think he's been yelled out like that to the point of fleeing in ever. It feels bitter and nauseating in ways Harry knows he doesn't want to experience again. He feels like an actual *child* right now and he loathes the sensation this time.

There's a soft swishing sound of the door behind him opening and Harry turns to see Filch looking worried for him. It's strange how easily that comforts him. Human emotions are so fickle and interchangeable in ways that make Harry almost dizzy experiencing it. The comfort though, he finds welcoming with outstretched arms.

"Hullo Mr Filch." He greets and is absolutely horrified to hear his voice waver and throat wet and
shaking like a little baby bird shivering in the rain. Harry doesn't understand how his body has just given up on him like this, against Vernon's meaty paws the human vessel of his understandably would exhibit signs of stress and pain but this was just words. Not even a lot of words. And he was tearing up. Harry wonders if he can just will himself to die of the shame growing inside him.

He probably could but that would be a mortification in itself.

"Potter are you alright?" The squib caretaker asked gruffly in what must have been an obvious failed attempt in sounding soothing. "What were you even doing snooping around the staffroom?" Filch then chastised, more because he was better used to scolding children than for any real malice.

"I, uh, I heard Professor Snape was hurt." Harry explained feebly, now feeling incredibly silly. What was he thinking, trying to, to what exactly? Impress Snape? In a whispered voice he added, "I wanted to give him this."

Small pale hands clutching at the little glass jar with the cream lifted to show the older man. "It's some sort of healing cream for open wounds. I think. Madam Pomfrey gave me it when I said I needed some for a friend."

Filch's eyes seem to soften as the explanation goes on, by the end of it he actually cracks this smile that seems to completely transform him from bitter hated caretaker of Hogwarts to something much more 'grandfatherly'. Harry thinks it suits him. "You're a good kid Harry." Filch praises with such warmth that the green eyed child felt his own skin tingle at the heat.

"Thanks Mr Filch. I appreciate that." He answers bashful.

"Here, why don't I pass on your very thoughtful gift to Severus." Harry hesitated, unsure of his gift, especially after Snape's.. reaction.

"I don't think that I should."

"Nonsense Potter," Filch snapped, "You did good and don't let anything tell you otherwise. If Severus won't value your good will then I'll keep it for myself. Kids as decent as you are rare and I refuse to let you turn into some, some delinquent brat because you were disparaged."

The raven haired child giggled at the caretaker's defensiveness. "Sir I think one disappointment would hardly turn me into a Weasley twin." He teased, causing the usually cantankerous caretaker to huff indignantly.

"I rather hope not. It's bad enough you hang out with those felons. Now hand over the cream Potter."

With an annoyed, resigned sigh that's only half faked, Harry acquiesces his jar to Filch. The man nods, seemingly pleased at that and he tells Harry to go do whatever and beat it in a surly but fond manner that Harry has decided he loves. He doesn't care what the student population of England thinks, Filch is going to go to a very, very nice place when he goes to his realm.

He might not objectively deserve it but Harry was the boss. He can make the Devil eat mint chocolate chip ice cream and force him to admit he likes it, even though he obviously doesn't. Ironically the heavenly Michael doesn't like chocolate mint chip ice cream. Apparently there's a difference. It's kind of weird.


Dear Death,

I have researched appropriate ways to write a letter because apparently our fellow brothers and
sisters said I'm 'boring' and 'dull'. You never called me that.

I miss you.

Anyway I have heard it's customary to write things like asking how you've been and if you're enjoying yourself however since there is no way you could reply back sans shouting your message to the sky for a few hours, that advice was pretty much redundant. We've been watching you obviously though the gaps between observations are getting a bit longer now that we've ascertained you have pretty much got the human thing down all right. It's not that we don't care, I mean we were all ready to jump down there when we felt you, the real you, threatening to burst your mortal seams but as much as we like to forget, you are one of the most powerful of us entities meaning that there's literally no real danger at all.

For the world your in is a different story altogether. But we have infinite copies anyway so it's not a huge deal.

It's terrifying being one of the only coolheaded mature ones left. Space is one of them but he's never there. Surveying alternative universes and trying to minimise all the apocalypses which is fair but still.

It's a nightmare is what it is. Life is doing whatever she pleases, Chaos is encouraging her, Order obviously is tagging along trying but overall failing to stop it. Love just says adventure is a men's romance and Knowledge isn't stopping them because she wants to observe for research purposes. Also Space had been conveniently absent trying to prevent some sort of superhero civil war. Which I grudgingly believe is true because that sounds that ridiculous.

So I do hope your first time at mortality is treating you well. As you know I spent my first time as an esteemed mathematician who eventually succumbed to the addiction of gambling and drugs so I do advise you be careful. Just because we are above humanity doesn't stop us still from being human.

Everything is somehow more real and it's one of the closest things to frightening for entities like us who belong on a much more intangible scale to the others. Space ended up as a reclusive shaman in the jungle because he couldn't stand all the stimulation of everything in such a concentrated form so I'm sure he'll give some good, if vague, advice.

Time

Snape watches the old squib come back into the staffroom and greets him with a scowl and a harsh, "What were you even doing with the boy?"

The professor's usual pallor was, and had been for a while now, blotchy and pinkening unattractively with his anger tinged mortification at being caught by a student in such a position. Somehow it was even worse because it's not just any student, but Harry Potter. And even then Snape wasn't completely sure if it's the Potter part or the Harry part of the name that bothers him the most.

Filch uncharacteristically didn't seem too angered at the intrusion of the child, in fact he seemed quite aggravated toward Snape of all people. While the potions master wouldn't call them friends, Filch and he had an... understanding of sorts built on many mutual dislikes, including children in general. They get along well enough, or at least don't particularly argue with each other so it surprised Snape to see the caretaker look right about the cusp of doing so.

"Mr Potter looked shaken at your display Severus," Filch growled, "I was comforting him."

Snape sneered, "He's hardly a delicate flower Argus." And the hook nosed male stubbornly ignored
any discomfort or niggling sense of guilt he felt at the memory of the child with the brightest green eyes look at him the way he did, surprise and shock and maybe even some fear.

"He may be no flower but he's a good kid." Filch scowled, passing some small jar to the professor. "He was here to give you this."

Snape took it with a cool disdain he wasn't really feeling, inspecting the cream suspiciously from all angles of the jar and finally opened it, taking a short perfunctory sniff. "This is a wound cleaning paste with numbing properties." He commented, surprised. "Potter gave me this?"

The caretaker's scowl turned triumphantly smug, like some incredibly grumpy father who just proved their child could be the key to world peace or something ridiculously sweet like that. Personally Snape found himself preferring the scowl. That sort of expression on Filch was just unnerving. Irritatingly so actually.

They didn't speak while they bandaged his leg. They didn't speak as they parted ways. He didn't speak as he stared at the little jar in his hand. He didn't speak as he slowly applied the paste inside.

There was no words, because none were really needed.

The next day was a Quidditch game between the Gryffindors and the Slytherins. Harry went to watch because everyone else pretty much did and he was, to be completely honest, vying for some company right now. He wasn't going to go originally, flying was fun, but watching others fly? Not so much.

It was curious, the contrasting needs to be alone in solitary silence and the urge to go to nearest familiar face and wrap his limbs around their body like a koala bear. Human mortals were so weird.

Harry was sitting in the Slytherin area, mainly because he had more friends there and also they tend not to be as nosy as his friends in the other houses. Okay that wasn't true. They were just as nosy as those other children, they just tend to be a lot more subtle and a lot easier to play the oblivious card with.

There was a lot of cheering and booing around him that he may have tuned out in favor of snuggling himself into his clothes. Harry was kind of regretting going outside now, he should've totally just made a Harry blanket burrito and lay there. This sucked. He's got it on good account from Dudley that blanket burritos were amazing.

Suddenly there's this collective gasp across the student body and that, that gets Harry to look back up to the sky.

It's one of the Gryffindor players, the new seeker actually, whose broom also seems to be rather taken with the concept of those mechanical bull rides. The seeker was pretty much screaming at the top of his lungs and dangling on to his broom like it was a lifeline- which it technically was. Now this was entertainment. Harry was so glad he wasn't playing right now.

"Did someone push the broom too hard or something?" He asked the captivated first years.

Draco shook his head, eyes never leaving the poor seeker. "My father told me nothing can interfere with a broomstick except if one used some power Dark magic. No student should be able to do that here."

Harry stared at the platinum blonde and his explanation incredulously. How much effort did these fucking magical wand-waving losers put in flying brooms? Are they serious? That's like spending
time overpowering a skateboard when they totally had the skills and resources to build a car, or at least a goddamn motorcycle.

"Oh bloody hell, what's that Granger girl doing?" Blaise muttered, garnering the attention of Harry, Draco and Not. Crabbe and Goyle was still staring upwards but it looked like they were more invested in the floating clouds than the seeker about to possibly die. Classic Crabbe and Goyle.

Anyway, the Gryffindor first year in question was doing something that Harry wants to call sneaking, but was more on the lines of quietly fighting her way across the stands toward them. She even knocked over Professor Quirrell in her slightly violent quest to reach them.

Except it turns out she wasn't heading for them, but instead has crouched down, wand in her hand next to-

"What's she doing to Professor Snape?" Harry whispered in the horror one would usually feel when they watch a train wreck inevitably happen in slow motion. It didn't take long for the question to be answered however as the hems of the potions master's black robes quickly caught on fire.

"Oh my god, remind me to avoid that psycho later." Not said faintly as they alternated between watching Snape put out the flames inflicted onto his clothing and Hermione returning back to Gryffindor where she high fived Ron.

Gryffindor ended up losing by ten points by the end of the game but after some enthusiastic rioting it was decided that the match would be repeated next week due to suspicion of sabotage. There was some very strong implications in that announcement by Lee Jordan that Harry was going to be very seriously bribed in the next six days by one seriously insane Quidditch captain. Harry's heard about the Gryffindor's training regime from the Weasley twins and he wants no part of it so he immediately bolts from the stands.

"You think Snape was cursing the seeker's broomstick."

Ron and Hermione nodded vigorously, "He was muttering a lot and his eyes were practically glued onto the bloke!" Ron explained.

Harry rubbed the bridge of his nose. "Guys I don't know how to break it to you, but everyone was looking at the seeker. He was a little hard to miss, what with all the turning and dropping and incredibly shrill screams."

"But Snape was also muttering nonstop!" Hermione argued, "I know about jinxes, you need to keep eye contact at all times. Snape didn't look away at all, he could've been jinxing that broom." Once again the green eyed entity in mortal skin leveled an incredulous stare against his friends.

"Could've." The raven haired boy deadpanned. "Could've been doing something to the broom and your first reaction was to set him on fire? You could've just shoved him like you did Quirrell."

"But that's way less funny." Ron muttered under his breath, earning two dirty looks. "Look mate, I know you've got this weird Snape thing going on and right now I'm kind of really hoping this is a Slytherin thing rather than a Harry thing, but we are almost absolutely positive Snape was up to no good."

"And I'm absolutely positive that Snape is not 'up to no good.'" Harry countered, then with a pause, "And I do not have a weird Snape thing."

"We will agree to disagree." Hermione placated.
"About the Snape up to no good thing?"

"Or the weird Snape thing? That again, I do not have."

The bushy haired girl sighed. "Both... Idiots."

Both boys looked at each other and grinned.

"Professor Snape, are you there?"

"Come in."

Harry opened the door to Snape's office and slowly entered. Snape didn't seem to be particularly surprised at who he had invited in or if he did the man certainly was very good at not showing it. "Potter," the older male intoned, "What are you doing here?"

Green eyes looked down at the floor, averted from Snape's person. The memory of the last time they met still ringing in his ears. Because apparently Harry had some sort of issue with people he respected shouting at him.

Oh god, does he have some sort of problem with confrontation of authority figures that he hadn't noticed?

"I came to see if you were alright. Considering you were set on fire and all."

There's a pause as Harry continues looking down at the flooring and Snape, well Harry doesn't really know what Snape was doing in the silence because he was too busy admiring the carpeting. It's uneasy and uncomfortable and Harry, whose never been good at complicated social interactions in the first place, is at a loss at how to fix this.

"I'm sorry, this was.. Doltish of me. I should go." The child mutters, pale skin no longer so pale at the moment. As he turned to leave, embarrassed and unhappy all over again, a hand larger than his on suddenly made it's presence known on his shoulder.

"Thank you."

Then just as quickly the warmth of the hand was lifted, along with the cold curling weight wedged in Harry's throat. The boy didn't reply and the professor didn't say anything more but both left the room with a small smile on their faces.

Dearest Death, my brother of darkness, of souls and all things macabre,

There are thousands upon millions upon billions, to the point of infinity and beyond, of universes out there and it so does amuse me how you've decided to partake in an adventure in this particular one. Sometimes I wonder if there are more worlds that even I am unaware of, or if we are in itself an alternative universe. Maybe there is one where you are still comfortably living in your domain, one where you enjoy these travels with the undying enthusiasm of a child or even a world where you still haven't grown out of your 'Dark' phase, unable to break out of your powers control from your mind.

It truly is nourishment for the mind to think such things. Makes even us feel small and our actions worth nothing. Like we are mere words in a story.

So many skies, so many clouds and many more stars. Are we just like a sky? Holding our worlds so
possessively like how the night grasps its stars, yet we are so busy looking at those tiny balls of fire that decorate the dark that we cannot see that there is something beyond the clouds and stars.

But for now forget my rambles of skies and worlds and stars. For now we talk of you dear brother. To experience the world not as a god nor a beast but of a human mortal must be as captivating as is terrifying. For someone so intangible, representing the intangible, it's so hard to feel that sudden rush of strong sensory input that comes from tangibility. Even emotions you've experienced previously is like a halfhearted shade under a rainbow.

Everyone has problems the first time, and the second, and the hundredth time. For me, the entity that embodies one of the most incorporeal of things, becoming mortal in itself didn't hurt as much as feeling the sensations around me for the first time. I could feel each time my veins were pumped with the blood of my vessel, rain was like shards of jagged glass and the sun felt like it was frying me from the inside out. My problem relating with mortality was my intangibility, my powers to so easily move through thousands of worlds, never touching and always watching was my weakness. All of us siblings on some level have similar problems like I, but you and I more so than them.

However where my failures tend to be rooted from touch, yours lies in living.

I hope you think hard on my words. And I bid you the best hopes and memories for your first mortality.

Regards,

Space

It took one night. About twelve hours. Sometime around the middle of December. The whole of Hogwarts had woken to the usual rolling hills outside to be covered in several feet of snow. Christmas was coming.

And Harry, who had literally no plans, is staying in Hogwarts.

Oh he could probably go off somewhere. Japan would be nice. Afghanistan not so much but he's always wanted to play a soldier's game. Actually Harry could probably go off to a whole other universe, he hears his dear reaper Death is having frustrations in one particular one- maybe a little father-son cooperation might be the best way to spend his time.

But the idea felt weird, almost wrong in his head. Like he was meant to stay here. Like it was Fate.

Harry scrunched up his nose in annoyance. Fate's always been very adamant about certain things, things may change in various timelines and worlds divergent from the original story but there would always be constants. A place, a person, an event. Constants that allow the story to still be in the hands of Fate's.

And apparently staying for the winter holiday was one of them. Urgh. Why.

"I do feel so sorry," Draco began haughtily as he sauntered towards Harry staring at the signage sheet for students staying back. "For all those people who have to stay at Hogwarts for Christmas because they're not wanted at home. What do you think Potter?"

Harry, without breaking any eye contact, pulled out a quill and wrote his name on the end of the list
with a flourish. "I don't know." He said smoothly, his expression showing none of the absolute glee he feels at Draco's face. "Ask me that again after the holidays."

He wasn't the only one staying back in Hogwarts. Turned out Ron and his brothers were staying too, because Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were going to Romania to visit Charlie. Harry was too polite to ask out loud who the hell was this Charlie character. Percy, after quite a lot of laughing- something that Harry had tried to avoid by asking Percy in the first place- had to explain his family tree and woah, there are way too many kids in the Weasley equation to share the same mother. Harry's never had the unfortunate opportunity to experience childbirth himself but he knows enough to know that you should never cross a woman whose experienced it seven times.

Jesus Christ. Ron and the others must've been the cutest babies under the sun or something. Because hamster babies were adorable- and those occasionally get eaten by their parents.

As he and Percy walked through the corridors, the prefect telling Harry various family stories and Harry listening with bemusement, they ended up being interrupted by a giant fir tree blocking the way and a half giant pulling it toward them.

Suddenly a little familiar freckled face popped out of the greenery. "Hey Hagrid, need a little help?"

Hagrid, still haven't noticed the two observers watching the whole scene just shook his head. "Nah I'm all right, thanks Ron."

"Hi Ron!" Harry called out, Percy gave a half hearted wave as both Hagrid and Ron locked eyes with them. The red headed first year was about to reply when something seemed to pull him back out of the tree. There was some muffled conversation and Harry was pretty sure he heard the Malfoy heir and then a proceeding war cry from Ron.

"Should we stop them?" he whispered to the older Weasley who shrugged, a gesture very uncharacteristic of him when it comes to the rules of the school. "We can't get to the other side in time," Percy explained, "It would be best to wait until another prefect or professor-"

"WEASLEY!" Came the booming deep voice of one very angry potions professor that caused all three individuals on the other side of the three to wince. "-see?"

Hagrid was already poking his own head through the fir, defending Ron for whatever conflict that had occurred. There was some more talking that Harry and Percy this time heard more clearly, points from Gryffindor were taken, Ron complaining about Malfoy and Snape, Hagrid inviting all of them somewhere. Before they knew it, all four (five if you include the tree) of them were in the Great Hall where Professor McGonagall and Professor Flitwick were busy with the Christmas decorations.

The hall looked stupendous. Trims of holly and mistletoe hung all around the walls, and there were towering Christmas trees decorated around the room, some shining with small icicles, some sparkling with many candles. Professor Flitwick had golden bubbles blossoming out of his wand and was trailing them over the branches of the new tree. Harry was incredibly impressed. "I am incredibly impressed." He says, because yes, that needed vocalising.

"So how many days until your holidays again?" Hagrid asked.

"Just one," answered Hermione, then tearing her eyes away from the beautiful christmas scene she added. "And that reminds me -Ron, we've got half an hour before lunch, we should be in the library."

The redheaded first year scoffed, "Uh. No."
"Ron." Hermione hissed, pointedly elbowing him so hard that Harry's pretty sure Ron choked on his on spit.

"Oh, yeah, you're right," He groaned.

The Potter heir and the Weasley prefect shared a long suffering and suspicious look.

"Holy crap guys." Ron stared, rubbing the spot where Hermione jabbed him. "You too look way to scarily similar right now for me to deal."

"The library? Just before the holidays too?" Harry sighed, "Hermione I totally understand but Ron, and I mean this with love, wouldn't voluntarily step in the library unless under explicit threat of death."

"Not even threat." Percy remarked. "There would actually have to have been a wand pointed at his back before he would even think of studying."

"Oh my god." Ron breathed in horror, "You two have been bonding." He accuses with the sort of tone one would use when they find out someone's secret hobby was hunting people for sport, or kicking bunnies, or cockblocking. Needless to say, it's incredibly amusing.

"And we really need to get going." Hermione hurries, pulling away the youngest Weasley who looked ready to hyperventilate. "Things to do, stuff to research, not like anything bad of course, just research, you know how it is. Bye!

"BONDING!" Ron shouted right as they turned the corner and went out of sight.

Harry and Percy stared out at where the two had made their escape. "That was strange." Harry commented. Percy just shrugged again, he seems to do that a lot now that they've established a friendship. "Honestly, it doesn't even make the top thirty weirdest things I've seen one of my younger brothers and their friends do."

"Well that isn't fair, I'm pretty sure top thirty consists of only Fred, George and Lee Jordan's exploit. Ron probably doesn't even make top fifty."

The prefect grinned as he put his hands up playfully, "Guilty."

"Mr Potter, Mr Weasley," The usually fond but stern voice of the transfiguration professor called out with almost childish enthusiasm. "If you're done chitchatting maybe you would like to help with the decorations?"

Professor Flitwick, with his usual childish enthusiasm squealed out an excited, "Yes, yes, Mr Potter why don't I teach you how to make some coloured bubbles to help speed up embellishing the trees?"

"Mr Weasley can help me place the stasis charms on the snow and ice." McGonagall added with a smile, both boys returned it with an equally large grin.

"That sounds great Professor." The prefect agreed honestly with Harry nodding.

By the way, the life-sized ice reindeers? Totally Harry's work. Though Percy did a great job at the sleigh and Flitwick spelled the whole thing to move but Harry is still pretty stoked at how great his reindeers. Maybe this holiday won't be as boring as he thought.
Death's first Christmas

The one where Death has his first Christmas in Hogwarts and a ton of gift wrap was harmed in the writing of this chapter. Also there's a mirror, but it isn't used to admire anyone's stunning good looks.

Christmas break was pretty good. Harry actually found himself quite busy the days coming up to Christmas Day. It was nice. There was afternoon tea with Filch and Mrs Norris. He read new books in the library while Ron tried valiantly to study... something, the kid refused to show Harry what he was researching but it was obvious he wasn't very good at it. Sometimes Harry would throw out random dry comments on the redhead's frustration that would've made Malfoy proud, until Ron inevitably gives up and they go outside to fly. Percy, being one of the few prefects still there had nightly rounds almost every other day, which the boy would tend to gallantly volunteer his company to, spending the hours around the castle talking about their day and their families.

Fred and George and Peeves had this 'war' going on for a solid week that subsided entirely of very embarrassing but admittedly creative pranks that went from classic magicked water balloons that held more potions than innocent water in them to more complex hijinks which resulted in dog-sized spiders covered in goose feathers and the second floor halls being covered with lime flavoured jelly. And somehow Harry had ended up as their official 'judge' in all of this nonsense because apparently it was his fault. Which, let it be stated for the record, was completely false. He did not start that mess. And whoever says otherwise are dirty liars.

It didn't matter though because as a judge Harry finds himself always present during these 'events', so he's pretty much been in the middle of every metaphorical and literal train wreck to happen in the castle since the beginning, much to the child's chagrin. Most of the students still in school have managed to catch on to the pattern and pretty much would flee if Harry's so much as in the same room as them. Cowards. Ron, bless him, still hasn't connected the dots and just complains when he gets pelted with rubber ducks or painted orange. Though the green eyed entity isn't completely sure the redhead even realises there are any dots to connect in the first place.

Of course after a week filled with mayhem it was Harry's civic duty to put his foot down. And if that happened to be the day that those morons covered him in salted maple syrup when he had just gotten out of the shower minutes ago, well, who was going to argue?

His hair smelt like cheap candy for two whole days despite all the cleaning charms and showers. Neither the twins nor the poltergeist was seen during that time. Which was smart of the trio. Because if they met Harry will be pretty sure they'll be never seen again.

Sometimes, when he was bored of playing with the children, the boy would go out to the Forbidden Forest to greet the centaurs. Firenze happily showed him to their village and he was greeted with a reverent welcome. Their were a small population and a dying one if the lack of females were any indication but Christmas was coming and Harry chose not to comment on their dilemma for now. Instead he distracted them by regaling everyone with stories of the stars and of the gods that no constellation alone can tell.

And when he didn't feel like going outside to converse with the centaurs, Harry would actively seek out a teacher to chat to. Maybe even learn a few things. Like transfiguring and moulding stuff with glass, or charming stuff to move. He's absolutely terrible at those things but the child enjoys the feeling of being challenged.
So yeah, it wasn't exactly what his fellow entities would have called a particularly fun holiday but Harry was pretty content all things considered. He had hot chocolate in his hands that always filled up, a variety of mortals to entertain him as he pleases and the satisfaction of watching snow outside whilst he was warm and snuggled cozily in thick blankets. And that's good enough for him.

Hi brother,

It's Life, your favourite counterpart? It's my turn to write and just gotta say bro you are doing like okay at the whole living thing.

B+ for creativity. Your Life points were lowered because you didn't do anything that interesting for the first decade of your life. I mean really? You are literally wasting your life. Go visit some other worlds, go visit a different universe, heck go to Las Vegas I am not joking do it first chance you get.

Honestly I don't even understand why you're even in school, granted it's a magic school with some seriously cool stuff but it's still a school. Like ugh. How could you even stay still in those walls, I would absolutely die by now.

Of course that's why we're opposites I guess, anyway I'm keeping this brief little brother but I am missing you and so's everyone else blah, blah, blah. Your paperwork is so cramping my style but I'm doing okay with the delegating bit. I only made six of your reapers cry today so it's a huge improvement.

See ya,

Life

Actual Christmas was admittedly not that exciting. Oh it was Harry's first proper Chirsmassy Christmas, fitted with greens and reds and.. Things. Harry was not much of a Christmas person. That was more of a Time or Space holiday than anything, because whatever the universe, this particular holiday always seemed to be 'timeless'. Chaos just liked the holiday for watching disorganised people shop for gifts the day before. Actually, Chaos likes a lot of holidays for that reason. And to screw with people. But that's just standard of a good time in general when it comes to the representation of all things chaotic anyway.

It was quite flattering to receive his own gifts though. Ones that have been gift wrapped too. That's a pretty new concept. As Harry, he didn't get gifts that weren't food or borrowed items from his cousins. As Death, well, he got gifts, obviously, but they weren't exactly gift wrapped optional-unless you count when Love sent over that inhumanely, insanely good looking dark elf prince that had a bow on his… No that probably didn't count.

It was quite the Thanksgiving treat though. He both got a lot and did a lot of giving and said numerous thanks to various things if you know what he means. Ah yes. That was a good day.

But again, not gift wrapped.

Harry looked down at his various colourful presents and something akin to absolute delight seem to tingle in his chest as the boy saw that they were all addressed to him. It wasn't like the distantly pleased buzz he would get as an entity, this was vivid and intense and so simplistically human. The Slytherin dorms were empty so Harry wasted no time to satisfy his twitching fingers and carefully began unwrapping the closest gift, which quickly became a brightly coloured paper massacre.

"Well... I see you've got your gifts."
Harry's head snapped up to see his highly amused House Head leaning at the entrance of the dorm bedrooms, then back at the ripped up patterning in his hands before looking back up bashfully. "I.. Uh.. Merry Christmas?" He offered to the smirking professor, failing absolutely terribly in trying to subtly brush off the tattered remains of paper on his lap. How on this earth did he manage to make such a mess with only one box already?

Snape made a soft huffing sound that the green eyed boy had quickly acquainted with as the closest thing the older man had at laughter so far. He's adamant he'll make the potions master laugh properly one of these days. Preferably not at his expense though. Like currently so. Once again pale hands try and brush the paper off his black cotton pajama bottoms. Alas the gift wrap stubbornly clung on. This must be its revenge. Cruel, embarrassing revenge.

The professor made the huffing sound again. "Merry Christmas Potter." He said, walking towards the smaller male and sitting on the bed opposite as easily as if he owns it. He's in black robes this early morning, Harry's almost tempted to say it's his usual teaching robes but no, he's pretty sure that's just what the man's sleeping wear looks like. Jesus. Even he didn't wear that much black.

Okay no he did but that wasn't the point here.

Not completely sure what to do in this social situation Harry glanced at the professor sitting perfectly upright on the bed before opening the box. "I've never had a real present before." He confessed quietly. The older man made a thoughtful noise and when he flicked his eyes upward for a second the raven haired child thought he saw a pained expression on the other's face, but that was quickly shoved away in favour of greedily soaking up the image of the first in many gifts to come.

There were assortments of candy and chocolate from his not as close friends and upperclassmen he's chatted with occasionally. Snape ended up accepting a sugar quill, two cauldron cakes and some sort of disturbingly bright green lollipop under Harry's ceaseless insistence. He got a copy of Frankenstein from Hermione, something which amused him to no end. He's always been quite fond of the work for obvious reasons. There was even an emerald green hand-knitted jumper from the Weasely matriarch which Harry immediately put on, which resulted in a few snide comments from the older man. Ron himself had, according to the card, piggybacked on the Weasley twins' gift of experimental pranks, a gift which was half confiscated the moment the dour professor realized what the present was exactly and who gave them away. Harry managed to snatch away a good amount of the strange assortment of trinkets (which he really hoped didn't activate upon contact or anything like that) but he's going to have to definitely apologise to the two red headed pranksters if any future pranks in the potions room don't work.

With a sheepish smile the boy pushed back the already opened gifts away from them, slipping the items in his arms into an empty box, something that wasn't lost on the potions master if the narrowing of his eyes were anything to go by. "Give it to me Potter." He demanded softly but no less stern.

"But professor, it's my gift." Harry did not whine.

"It's a menace to education."

"Well, that's a little harsh.."

Snape lifted up one of the twins' assortment of pranks, it looked like a really small lava lamp to be perfectly honest. "This-" long fingers shook the thing gently to emphasize what he was talking about like it wasn't already obvious, "Was used last year to cover the classroom with sticky paint. In every corner and crevice."

Harry winced, he should probably never open any presents from his redheaded friends in front of a
Head of House again. Except for Percy. Who got him a perfectly respectable if slightly tattered scarf of dark red. It was very kind, particularly as it was obviously out of his own pocket, hopefully the brand new self-inking quill and 'muggle' wristwatch he sent back was just as well received.

"Well it's not like I'm the type of student to actually use them." And okay, maybe Harry was whining a little bit and making little grabby motions at Snape, "Come on Professor, please?"

Snape looked amused again at the pleading expression on the child's face but shifted the various prank gifts behind his back nonetheless. "While that may be true Potter, your friends are less likely to strike any sort of trust in my heart." Then with a pause, Snape eyed Harry with mock suspicion, "Not to mention your ability to stand your ground against them."

Harry huffed, "One, rude. And two, my friends aren't all unruly like you imply. Hermione's good."

"She set me on fire." Snape deadpanned. Harry winced again.

"You knew?"

"She wasn't exactly secretive with her intentions Potter. Even if I didn't see it coming, half the school did."

"What about Draco then? He's your godson."

"And as my godson, know full well how the boy can make trouble when he wants to."

"Well how about-"

"Don't even get me started on the youngest Weasley."

Harry gave the older man a look. "I was going to say Percy." The child finished. "Honestly even I know Ron would be the first person to use them given the chance."

Snape looked thoughtful before shaking his head and smirking. "Doesn't count, the Weasley prefect's not even in your year."

"You never said that!"

"The point still stands. And I'm letting you keep the ones you've managed to snatch aren't I?" The professor raised a challenging brow. Harry grumbled but reluctantly moved on to the next colourfully wrapped presents. He knew a useless effort when he saw one.

Draco's gift was unsurprisingly elaborate, all the way down to the wrapping which was pale blue covered in silver snowflakes that actually moved depending on how you shook the box. "Do you have a gift from Draco?" Harry asked curiously. He was feeling a bit guilty right now at opening all these gifts in front of the professor while the man just sat there and watched. Logically the entity-child knew that Snape had at least one present from him but it's kind of like trying to eat at a restaurant while ignoring the homeless man staring at you through the window. Like he wasn't feeling that much guilt over it, but that didn't stop him feeling uncomfortable.

Snape didn't answer the question but instead just took out his own present from the Malfoy's, unshrinking it from an unseen pocket in his night robes. Either the man thrived on the growing uncomfortableness of the situation or he really did forget to bring his own gifts out and partake in the festivities. Yeah. Obviously the first option, the bastard.

"It's from Lucius and his wife Narcissa." The professor explained as Harry took in the smaller, less
brightly coloured gift in Snape's lap. "From the note attached, my godson had been too busy trying to find the perfect gift for you." Snape said with a wry smile, "Apparently Lucius ended up helping midway through because Draco wished to one-up all the Weasley's gifts combined."

Harry laughed. "That does sound like Draco." He looked down at the large box and began opening it whilst Snape did the same. "Huh, now I'm worried what he's going to think of the gift I gave him now."

"Unlike your ability to say no, I do have faith in your gift picking skills." The professor drawled as he unveiled a glittering golden engraved set of measuring scales. Now Harry was actually seriously worrying about how his homemade gift to the Malfoy heir would be received.

"I don't think you should say that when you haven't even looked at my gift to you yet." He pointed out.

Snape paused in his careful examination of the scales to look up at Harry with something akin to fondness. "That's true, but I'm inclined to believe it anyway."

Harry makes a soft 'oh' sound and ducks his head to try and hide the pale pink flush rising up from his cheeks. Instead of trying to answer that head on the boy deflects by picking up his blonde friend's gift and admiring it in the soft morning light. "Well I hope your not expecting anything like this or you're going to be sorely disappointed."

The small unmelting carving of Hogwarts castle fitted with it's own little patch of Forbidden forest and a molten silver Black Lake glittered.

"I don't enjoy useless trinkets." The potions master snorted as he looked derisively at the shining, shimmering statue. A icy tentacle from the sliver depths came up to wave at the boy. Obviously Snape had no idea what he was talking about, this is a brilliant present.

"You know if my gift to you ends up being jewelry or whatever else you define as a 'useless trinket' we are both going to be very embarrassed now aren't we?"

"I think I can get by." Snape replied with a raised brow.

They continued opening presents after that, well, it was more Harry opening presents and Snape commenting and criticizing them as they went along, but it was still a very enjoyable time for both parties. The Diggory boy sent him a pillow with bright yellow flowers which was not as entertaining to Harry as it was to Snape. Nott gave him a book on basic Wizarding history. Blaise's gift consisted of coloured pencils that changed shade at will and a simple sketchbook. There was even a present from the wretched child Zacharias Smith, some gaudy ugly golden badger that was charmed to shine brightly like a disco ball. Harry took one look at and dropped it like garbage. Snape must've agreed with the action because he pointed his wand at it, muttered something under his breath and turned it into a mouse.

"I am not feeding Hedwig that." The green eyed boy declared. "She is a beautiful bird and I refuse to taint her with the trash that comes from Smith's spoilt grubby little hands."

"Your hands are smaller than his." Snape commented because he could, earning the older man a squawk of indignation. "You're relationship with the Smith boy is surprising."

"Why would you say that? I despise self entitled untalented brats who think they're better because of some ancestor they're probably not even that directly related to." Harry scowled as he nudged the rather clingy transfigured rodent away from his pyjama pants. "Is it so wrong that there are people I
dislike?"

"Not... wrong." Snape said slowly, "Just unusual." Which, fair, Harry has been pretty amiable to most of the student population of Hogwarts sans Zacharias and his idiot groupies, but it wasn't like he's declared a full out family war with them like the Weasleys and Malfoys apparently had.

"Yes, well, you try talking to Smith on a semi-regular basis and you'll want to strangle his neck too." He sniffed, not missing the twist of a smile on the professor's face.

"If he's anything like in Potions then I'm inclined to have to agree with you there." Snape acquiesced easily, "Now hurry up Potter, you've still got a few more gifts to unwrap and breakfast will start in an hour."

Some of the presents were just plain predictable, books from the Ravenclaws, more edible treats and generalized gifts from people who just wanted to send something to the Boy Who Lived, an occult book from Piers and Dudley which was always a good laugh, and the Dursley's themselves-

"Is.. Is that a wrinkled £5 note?" Snape asks, unable to hide his surprise and disdain at the poor excuse for a gift. Harry grinned sardonically, "Would you believe that this is the nicest thing I've gotten from them? I should keep this for posterity honestly." He muses right as he begins smouldering the crunched up money with a small flame he sprouted from his fingertips.

"But," The professor for once seemed to be at a loss for words, like his whole worldview had shifted a little bit and he didn't know what to do with the new scenery, "They're your guardians."

"Well they aren't very good ones," Green eyes rolled, it wasn't like he was hiding what was happening to him in Surrey, people always liked to assume. "There was no bending over backwards to accommodate my needs or anything, not that Uncle Vernon could if he wanted to."

Snape didn't say anything to that so Harry continued opening his Christmas gifts. Even the professors and staff seemed to have given him a few, he's rather glad he got presents for literally everyone he knew. Obvious upsides to having a body that had a rich heritage and the 'soul' of someone who can woo goblins with its presence is that you barely need to worry about the cost of an island much less a few nice items. Flitwick's gift was an enchanted dreamcatcher that made dreams much more vivid and ensured less chances of any nightmares. Filch had made some sort of good luck charm that smelt like lavender. Sprout's present, true to her name, was a small pot of seedlings and a note about how excited she was that he'll be moving into her house next. And McGonagall had given him a Nimbus 2000 which made Harry grin and Snape scowl simultaneously.

"You will not join the Gryffindor Quidditch team Potter." The professor ordered in a manner that was only half serious.

"But professor," Harry teased, "They bought me a broom, I am pretty sure I'm obligated now to repay them with my body."

Snape coughed, a faint dusting of red on the tips of his ears before looking at Harry straight in the eyes and replying, "And if my gift ends up to be better? What would you obligated to do for me?"

The younger boy flushed at the undertones of the potions master's joke but gave a wry confident smirk either way. "Well it depends professor, but I think I could be convinced."

"It's the one wrapped in dark green." Snape pointed out. There were two gifts left, the green one that Harry now knew was Snape's and a plain brown parcel. With a jittery anticipation the boy reached out to claim and unwrap the present. Midway through he couldn't help but glance up to see black
eyes watching him intently.

"Why don't we open presents at the same time?" He offers, the older of the pair nods in agreement and un-shrinks a light grey box with a light green ribboning.

"Fine."

It doesn't take long for both of them to take out their respected items, even with Snape's penchant for delicately opening paper like it was made of crushed diamonds or something. Harry looked at the small bottle of see through but sludgy liquid with more than a little confusion, there seemed to be a handwritten manual accompanied by the filled glass container but looked toward the potions master for clarity anyway.

"It's a work in progress but I thought you would appreciate it." The professor coughed and gave a tentative smile which looked very nice on the man but still explained nothing. Inwardly sighing at the fact he had to read a manual so early in the morning, Harry picked it up and began skimming through the first page. He got four sentences in before it clicked.

Harry gazed up at Snape with awe and a healthy dose of pleasing warmth, "You made a potion for me."

"It's more of a liquid coating." Snape tried to dismiss, "Theoretically your muggle machinations should work in moderate magical densities when essentially covered."

"You didn't have to though," Childlike fingers held the bottle with much more delicacy now, the professor may skim over the details but Harry's not naive enough to not know how much work that must've gone through the whole process. He was extremely flattered. "This, it's, now I'm truly nervous in how you'll take my gift to you." The boy sputtered.

"Don't be obtuse boy. It's called a gift for a reason," Snape sneered, lifting the lid of the unopened box in his hands. "Honestly, you would think I've brought you the moon."

Harry's already owned a few hundred thousand moons, hell, he's hung a few of them himself and honestly he felt those were way less interesting than what the humans implied. Nothing like this. This thought and effort and time and sheer creativity all mixed in one tiny bottle and a few inked characters. Snape can have his moons. This was much better.

Before he can tell the professor this, there's a soft noise of surprise which took precedence of the boy's attention. Snape held up a pair of sleek white gloves which had faint black markings of scales circling the edges but other than that it was a simple design. Feeling the need to both preen and explain at the curious expression holding Snape's face captive Harry gently put down his present and shifted himself to a more comfortable position.

"They're for potion making. It's thin and soft enough so your sense of touch isn't compromised but I requested cooling charms so you can handle hot cauldrons and resistance to other various things." Snape easily slipped the gloves on his long, slim fingers and Harry tried very hard not to think about the image, especially in reversed.

So he has a thing. You don't live as long as he without a few surprising self-discoveries. Sue him.

Snape looked a little surprised as he surveyed the fit of the piece of clothing. "It's perfect." He murmured and Harry grinned, stupidly proud at the compliment.

"Honestly, you would think I brought the moon." The boy mimicked playfully getting himself a rough ruffling on his head.
"Insolent boy." Snape chided but there was no heat to it, "Now come on, you've got one more to unwrap and then you can go skip off to talk with those redheaded menaces about food or pranks or mocking the Malfoys or something equally incessant."

"You have a very specific image of the Weasleys Professor."

"Tell me I'm wrong."

Harry paused. "Fair enough." He shrugged before giving a pointed look. "But it's still rude."

Snape raised a brow as one corner of his lips curled. "Just open it Potter."

"Sure thing Professor Snape." The boy grinned. Taking the parcel in his hands the raven haired child turned it around to see if he could discern the identity of the gift giver. He furrowed his brows a bit when he couldn't find any note. Maybe it was just inside the wrapping?

Slowly ripping the brown paper away, something silvery grey fell almost fluidly like water onto the ground, lying in an elegant heap of shimmering folds. Harry had to give a double take at the fallen item. He recognised that fabric.

He used to own that fabric.

"It can't be.." Harry snapped his head up, eyes glowing brightly with shock and for once, suspicion.

"You know what this is?" The child asked, not able to fully prevent his voice going a little high pitched and funny at the end. Snape didn't seem to notice, too busy staring at the light silver cloth. Harry didn't blame him. He was having trouble not keeping his eyes on it either. Though the displeasure aimed at it from the professor was a little unwarranted.

"It's your father's." Snape answered through gritted teeth, like admitting it took actual physical pain. And wait.

"Father's?"

"Yes, it was quite the- favoured item of James Potter." Oh. Right. Harry had a sire. Obviously. He'd almost forgotten about that. "It's a-"

"-Invisibility Cloak." Harry finished for the potions master as he picked up the cloth and draped it over him in one quick, graceful movement, hiding his body in the process. The boy had to say, it was felt good to have something of his own back in his hands again.

Though he quickly realised his slip up when the Head of Slytherin looked him strangely and slowly said, "Yes. But how did you know that?"

"I read it in one of my readings?" Harry tried. And then, "Oh look at the time, we should head down like right now professor. I would so hate to be late for Christmas."

Snape still didn't look wholly convinced with what he was selling, but thankfully let it go. Harry was getting way better at this whole social thing now that he was human. The boy looked mournfully at the Deathly Hallow hugging his body, he wished being invisible was an acceptable norm at the dining table but alas, it was not to be.

With a soft sigh he pulled off the Invisibility cloak, trying to ignore the way the fabric instinctively clung to his person and gently folded it, tucking it under his pillow. He'll put it back on tonight.
It turns out they still ended up a good forty minutes early to breakfast, Harry had unfortunately just
didn't need much sleep and Snape was either a naturally very early morning person or he had trouble
sleeping too. They ended up parting ways when they saw the empty hall, the boy deciding to go
toward the Gryffindor tower to see how his redheaded friends were doing and the professor, well,
Harry wasn't sure where he went but he went somewhere.

"Merry Christmas!" Was the first thing shouted in the green eyed first year's face once he entered the
Gryffindor dorms. As well as a couple of streamers and- never mind that, how on earth do the
Weasley twins always know where he is?!

"Oi! Ron c'mon Harry's here!" George shouted behind his shoulder whilst Fred leaned on his other
with a sly smirk.

"And look, Harry's got a Weasley sweater too!"

Now that he'd mentioned it, both twins were wearing bright blue sweaters, each with a giant yellow
letter corresponding to the beginning of their name knitted on them. Fred slunk over to Harry's side,
over exaggeratingly inspecting his green sweater like an art critic checking out a new post-modernist
sculpture. "Harry's is better than ours though," He mused, stroking a non-existent beard as he did so.
"She obviously made much more of an effort even if you're not family." Fred pouts.

George, never one to be far behind Fred, too had found his way past Harry's personal space bubble
and was grinning like a loon. "Fred says that but you know he was the one to insist to mum that you
should get a sweater in the first place." The twin cackled as his counterpart turned red and slapped
George upside the head possibly a little harder than necessary causing said twin to burst into a string
of muffled chuckles.

"Well I wasn't the one to tell her to make it green so it could match his eyes." Fred hissed, turning his
brother's face into a similar shade as his own.

"I did not, Percy did!"

"Well I didn't see you exactly disagreeing. In fact, your exact words dear brother of mine-"

There was a lot of hushed mutterings and heavily worded facial expressions that Harry had kind of
zoned out of by then. He's not really sure what they were talking about but he's managed to figure
out that the twins also helped with the jumper which was very nice of them. And Percy too. Very
nice of them indeed. Though the murmurings and such right now were a little less so.

"Mate!" Harry smiled a little gratefully when Ron finally showed up with half a chocolate bar in his
mouth and a half opened gift in his arms. "I just opened your gift Harry and I gotta say oh my Merlin,
you are the best." He gushed gleefully.

The raven haired boy laughed and the twins had finally stopped whatever teasing they had been
doing beforehand to watch on curiously. "Ron it's just a bag of muggle candy bars, it's not a big
deal."

"The. Best." Ron stressed. "I've had that Milky way one and I'm pretty sure I didn't see any stars but
it was delicious."

Chewing on his chocolates Ron finally noticed what Harry was wearing. "Oh mate, your wearing a
Weasley sweater." He pointed out rather obviously.

"And where's yours by the way?" George asked, leaning on Fred's shoulder who was leaning on
Harry's head like some strange unstable tower. "Yeah Ron," Fred added, their grins back on their
faces again, "Come on and get it, they're so cozy and warm."

"But I hate maroon." Ron moaned half heartedly but went to go get it anyway. Harry didn't really blame the reluctance, maroon didn't seem to be a very good colour for any of the Weasley's really.

"What's all this noise then?"

The curly haired Weasley prefect peered his head into the room disapprovingly before looking surprised at seeing Harry there with the rest of them. Percy had clearly been in the middle of opening presents as well because he too was carrying a similar lumpy orange sweater in his arms. It seems all the Weasleys were late sleepers no exceptions then.

"C'mon Percy, get it on, we're all wearing our jumpers!" Fred beckoned, George cackled, "Yeah, you've even got the 'P' for prefect on it! Perfect prefect Percy."

The oldest Weasley brother began spluttering out various disagreements but it was too late, like snakes the twins had already found their prey and before Harry even knew it, Percy was practically pinned side by side by two identical cheeky smirks as they wrestled their older brother into the offending item of clothing. The resulting scuffle was enough to draw out Ron, wearing an admittedly abhorrent coloured sweater.

"Does this happen often?" Harry asked, unsure whether he should keep watching or take pity on the prefect and step in. Ron snorted and rolled his eyes.

"Are you kidding? This is nothing."

After breakfast Harry and the Weasleys spent most of the afternoon in the midst of a furious snowball fight which even Percy had joined, not to mention most of the other students still left behind on the school grounds. Making snowballs turned out much harder than the boy had originally thought, throwing them even harder. Ron was in near hysterics the first few times Harry had finally gotten a decent looking ball of snow, only for it to disintegrate upon itself the moment it was flung into the air.

His redheaded friend practically asked for a handful of snow shoved down his shirt. So, it really was all on Ron really.

Obviously the child howled at the icy cold while Harry giggled at the look of shock on the other's face and it was probably around then when the snowball fight turned into a snowball war.

At some point some cheating sixth year pulled out his wand and started magically pelting snowballs at anyone wishing five feet of his person. The twins had begun colouring snow to confuse people and Percy looked like he was deeply regretting most of his life's decisions. Ron and Harry had decided to overcome their previous differences and team up, Ron with his impressive aiming and Harry with his wandless magic made them pretty amazing. The green eyed child wasn't sure how one could possibly win in such an activity but he was pretty sure that they were pretty darn close to it.

Though luckily, before the whole afternoon could escalate into anything too violent, the call for dinner was made and hunger on christmas was apparently not something to be ignored for everyone was soon rushing inside, faces pink from the cold and frost in their hair. Harry did not blame them at all once he saw the banquet spread out on the tables at dinner time.

Fat roasted turkeys that were practically sweating in meat juices, platters of buttery potatoes cooked in various ways, freshly cooked bread rolls every few feet along the tables… Let's just say Harry was
immensely grateful that human senses like taste are so much more enhanced compared to his usual body.

Then there was the dessert. Lord almighty, Harry was never the biggest fan of Christmas puddings but he thinks he could make many exceptions to the rule as he takes his first bite and practically melts at the sweet silken texture. Ron who had been eating like a starving man had not even slowed down when the puddings arrived, despite the redheaded boy still holding a turkey leg in one hand. It was almost enough to put someone off their appetite. Almost.

Harry looked up at the teacher's table and observed that the professors have been drinking an awful lot going by the reddened face of Hagrid. At one point he's pretty sure the half-giant landed a quick kiss on Professor McGonagall's cheek, who also seemed to be quite drunk because she just giggled and blushed like a teen. Snape was taking a long gulp of whatever alcoholic concoction was in his goblet and just generally nursing his drink while scowling, dare he say, sulking at the edge of the table. The Headmaster didn't seem to have had much alcohol at least, which was good considering that it would've been a pretty terrible school if every adult tonight got smashed on school grounds. However, the old wizard did have on a flowered bonnet which struck respect and awe in absolutely no-one.

By the time dinner was finished every witch, wizard and entity felt too full and sleepy to do much of anything but get ready to fall asleep. Well, except for maybe Percy who last he heard was chasing Fred and George around the castle because the twins took his prefect badge. Harry had trudged back to the dungeons, ready to go have a well deserved nap in his room for one of the last few times before moving to Hufflepuff.

God, that's going to suck. Zacharias Smith's going to be there. Harry's going to be forced to commit painful, painful murder on the boy's face.

Okay not 'forced', he's not into victim blaming but he's definitely not going to feel great about the homicide. Afterwards anyway. Probably. Oh my god he is so going to end up killing the Hufflepuff isn't he?

As soon as he reached his bed, the green eyed entity pulled out his cloak from under the pillows, letting his fingers slip between the delicately fluid texture lovingly. It's strange how he's been reunited with it all these centuries. The child wondered if he'll see his other Hallows, it's not like he was particularly emotionally attached to the items to be perfectly truthful. With the exception of the cloak in his hands which was just a shred of his own favourite travelling cape back then- something designed by Space who had been a little obsessive in dimension altering fashion at the time- the Hallows were essentially some mundane object he picked up by that riverside and imbeded some powers in it.

It's a tad hard to feel connected to something you've literally only owned for less than a minute really. And since the only reason he even made them was to piss off (kill) those brothers of Peverall and find himself a possible master they were kind of useless to him right now other than a simple connection to his original existence. Even then it wasn't worth much.

Thinking about it a bit further, does that mean if he ends up with all three Hallows he'll be his own master? Is Fate trying to say something? Because despite what most people may think, he is not exactly a strong, independent woman that don't need no master to function. No. Uh. Well that didn't make much sense. The point is, a master would anchor him theoretically and that would help quite a bit with his minor 'control issues'.

Pale hands tightened their grip on the invisibility cloak.
So a master would be very preferable, but if he has all three in his possession at the same time then… But wait. The child shaped entity scrunched up his face,- if in this world Harry Potter gained possession of this Hallow, wouldn't that mean there's a chance a Harry Potter in another parallel universe could possibly earn all three of the Hallows? Oh dear, did he just kill off his potential master? But then there should be other Harrys out there. Does he get multiple masters or is there just one Harry James Potter out there who could've been and he'd just took over his body? Shit. He's just going to leave all the details be ironed out by Space and Fate. This was getting way too complicated and meta.

It took a while before Harry finally pulled his attention away from his Deathly Hallow existential crisis to notice the small note that had fallen conveniently by his feet. Picking it up, he could see it was written in a narrow looping handwriting he didn't recognise;

*Your father left this in my possession before he died. It is time it was returned to you. Use it well.*

**A Very Merry Christmas to You.**

The letter was left unsigned. But whoever sent it had definitely put some sort of charm on it because Harry could feel the magic urge him to explore with the cloak. He felt more awake, more aware, and an intense rush at the thought of being to go anywhere again without being seen by anyone. The boy wondered if he should go to Snape and report this, he's pretty sure this is the magical equivalent of drugged candy yet the spell was holding him back, enhancing his possessiveness to the object so Harry would only want to use the cloak by himself.

The boy probably could have just shrugged the compulsion off, it was actually quite a strong bit of spellwork he had to admit but nothing that he would actually struggle too hard with. But Harry had to admit he was curious to this person's end game. So instead of doing the normal thing one should do when realising they've been put under some sort of charm like a sane person, Harry chose to let the spell carry out it's purpose and crept out of the dorms with his cloak on his shoulders. Wandering through the darkened halls, the child noted that he was walking up toward the higher floors of the castle. The fact Hogwarts wasn't doing anything to hinder him meant either she too had some Christmas in her spirit or someone explicitly warned her not to.

Harry had a vague suspicion on who wrote that note.

He finally arrived in what seemed to be an empty classroom. Empty with the exception of one giant mirror standing right in the middle of it. A giant, ornate mirror. With a golden frame and clawed feet. Yeah, he was totally going to miss that if it wasn't in the middle of the room. Good thinking creepy note writer.

There was an inscription carved around the top which, being of an annoyingly petite stature, Harry had to get on tip toes to properly read. It took a few moments before the boy realised it wasn't written in any language he'd known but instead was just written backwards in english.

Harry hummed thoughtfully at the etchings, a mirror that showed your heart's desire was a dangerous sort of thing. Not even he would really want going against him. But the boy had come this far, and it seemed only he should be the one to see what he truly desires so at least there would be no confused voyeurs wondering why his reflection would show like world destruction or something.

It's not something he particularly desires but he is Death, maybe subconsciously that's all he wants, he doesn't truly know. That's what makes the mirror so terrifying.

With a slow, deep breath, Harry takes a step back from the mirror and looks straight at where his reflection should be. But as expected, there was no reflection of his physical self. Instead, there was
his original form or at least what he'd first thought to be his previous appearance. He was still tall, lithe to the point of skinny but in a handsome almost prettily ethereal way and his hair was still an untamed mass of shadowy curls that moved like the waves of the sea in the darkest hour of the night. But there were differences when he looked closer; he seemed softer, less bones and angles and fear. The entity before him looked confident and secure and stable. His eyes were glowing green as they are now but even brighter, shining with something that Harry couldn't even understand and he was smiling, such an easy wide, bright smile that looked both awkward and fitting on his face.

And there were people behind him, beside him, all around him. It made Harry's mortal heart speed up and his 'soul' clench at how comfortable that person he had always desired to be fit in like that. There were his fellow entities, laughing and joking like a family, a proper real one and not the makeshift thing they had going on for them where sometimes they had their moments but most other times they stuck with their own domains, loathing their counterparts. And with immortality flowing through their nonexistent veins, most of the time was a very, very long time indeed.

Then there were the mortals he's met and adored, still alive and not just simple souls in his collection or lost in the cycles of reincarnation. From a talking pig he'd once met in ancient Greece to Yzesye, an alien conqueror of nine planets, they were all there conversing like inside the mirror was just one giant party. The most prominent of the mortals he could see at the forefront of the reflection were the people that were still alive now, Ron and Malfoy were arguing about something, Percy and Order seemed to be getting along splendidly while the twins and Chaos were snickering ominously in the corner. Filch and Mrs Norris were giving the stink eye to a sassy red haired orphan child, McGonagall was chatting politely to a faerie queen and Firenze was in the midst of some sort of heart attack in front of Fate.

Snape was surprisingly, right by his side, looking for all intents and purposes rather irritated by such a sheer amount of individuals. His mouth was moving in what Harry imagined to be for snarkily commenting about his displeasure and the person that was meant to be him just threw his head back and laughed. Those green eyes glowed eerily, obviously inhuman but they looked at the potions master with this emotion, emotion he shouldn't have and-

And Harry didn't realise he was trembling, hand on the mirror like if he pushed hard enough he could be that person.

"Shite." He laughed hoarsely, his voice shaking ever so slightly, "This was a bad idea."

He ended up coming back the next night. It was hard not to when your desire was just a few floors away and Harry was so weak. He knew the thing was dangerous.

"Back again Harry?"

Harry pivoted around, darkness inadvertently seeping from his nails before it was quickly pulled back at the sight of the Headmaster of Hogwarts sitting on one of the desks shoved to the wall. Luckily it was dim enough for the old wizard not to have noticed his slip up but still he cursed himself for his carelessness.

"..I didn't see you sir."

Dumbledore smiled. "It is funny how even the invisible can be so nearsighted is it not?"

"Just because no one can see you doesn't mean you couldn't trip over a rock and fall." Harry retorted, the older man's smile grew wider.
"Indeed." He agreed amiably before hopping off the desk and walking toward the boy, "And I see you have discovered the delights of the Mirror of Erised."

"I show not your face but your heart's desire." The child murmured, Dumbledore seemed almost surprised that he'd cracked the relatively simple code but nodded anyway.

"Yes, men have wasted away looking at what they found here. Nothing but your deepest most desperate desires filled out before you."

"A family." Harry whispered and the headmaster shot him a sad look before continuing on.

"The Mirror will be moved to a new home tomorrow." Dumbledore looked at the child solemnly, "Harry, you should not go seeking out it anymore. After all it does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live."

Which, yeah, was all well and good if it wasn't insanely obvious that the man had effectively led him here to the mirror in the first place. Harry's pretty sure it wasn't for anything particularly malevolent but it wasn't going to win the Headmaster any points in his favour anytime soon either.

"Now why don't you put that admirable cloak on and head back to bed Mr Potter?"

Harry cocked his head but complied. "Professor, what do you see in the mirror then?"

Dumbledore gave him a small smile, "Me? While I see myself holding a pair of thick woollen socks." It was an obvious lie, the look Dumbledore gave the artefact was much to sad for just plain old socks but Harry kept quiet anyway. "One can never have too many good socks after all, another Christmas gone by without getting a single pair too." The headmaster sighed. "People always insist on giving me books."

The green eyed child gave an obligatory chuckle at the obvious deflection before shrugging on his cloak and turning to leave. But of course, not without a last, "Oh? And thank you for this admirable cloak professor!"
Death's end of first year

The one where Death finishes off the year by getting roped in to some heroic rescue for a magic rock and then accidentally killing a professor. Really, this school is truly the epitome of the word 'Safety'.

School came quickly after Christmas was over. Empty halls got, well, less empty and Harry moved into the House of the Loyal.

It was a very nice dorm, certainly a little tacky compared to the elegant finery covering Slytherin's but it was filled with sunlight and plants and soft cushioning that gave it a distinctly comfortable warmth that the house of green and silver just couldn't replicate with sleek ivory carvings.

Taking his trunk, Harry placed it under the bed opposite the door. While he wasn't exactly sure of the internal dynamics of the Hufflepuff first years, it was easy to give a good guess in which bed would least likely to have been taken. His new sleeping arrangement was the only one in the shadowy corner, every other part seemed to be absolutely soaked in sunlight. It was truthfully a little unnerving.

Soon enough though Harry got used to it. He got used to classes starting up again. He got used to remembering not to go to the dungeons at the end of the day. And impressively enough, he got used to ignoring Zacharias Smith for extended periods of time.

Well he transfigured himself some earplugs. But still.

He still hung out a lot in either Gryffindor tower or the Slytherin dungeons with his friends but now he made a bit more time for his Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw acquaintances he's been friendly with like Susan Bones, Hannah Abbott, Terry Boot and Padma Patil. Unfortunately with the exception of Anthony Goldstein, Harry wasn't exactly on good terms with the rest of the Hufflepuff boys once he'd made his feelings on Zacharias very clear. Truly the downside of being loyal- it always seems to blind people to the point of mule-headed stubbornness and a sort of sheep mentality.

Unfortunately the shepherd in this metaphor was 'I am a descendant of Helga Hufflepuff, hear me roar' Zacharias Smith which meant Harry had to deal with mini Smiths in the dorm who were all rude, brash and loud. The only saving grace so far was the other more sane students in the house also didn't appreciate the boastful child's personality. Plus the sheer comfortableness of the furniture. Because seriously those pillows were soft enough to make one forgive murder. Harry definitely needed some of that sort of thing in his life. Or Afterlife at least.

The first year Ravenclaws all in all were more annoyingly curious than outright rude, which was a refreshing change of pace considering his new roommates. The green eyed boy had taken to answering their incessant questions with a patience and an equally irritating vagueness that may have been inspired by a certain physical manifestation of space.

It was quite the game for the knowledge loving students to try and wrangle out a straight answer from the Boy Who Lived. Harry had a few sneaking suspicions that there was some sort of competition going on there that he wasn't aware of because the questions he'd been asked have been something as simple and irrelevant as favourite colours to more complex opinions on the political weighting that Muggles have. Which is to say none at all. But the point was, there were much too many queries to not be skeptical about it. And Terry Boot as well as the other Ravenclaws were all suspiciously tight-lipped on the subject too.
Not that Harry really cared.

Overall, despite his new House placement not much had changed since the boy had quickly found preference with his Gryffindor and Slytherin friends and therefore spent the majority of his free time with them. Though ever since the school term had started up again the youngest Weasley and Granger had been much more reserved, taking their time up in the library researching some big project or whatever. Harry was curious to say the least, especially when they refused to tell him about it.

That, Harry admittedly cared about.

Nevertheless he didn't want to push the subject since Hermione would get all huffy and Ron would look all conflicted and constipated whenever he tried to bring it up. Instead for the most part Harry let it slide, only giving a few choice remarks when the lies got especially terrible. Someone's got to teach them some better excuses because the green eyed first year knew for a fact that Ron hates spiders and in no way was he skipping lunch of all things to go hunt them with Hermione. It was more embarrassing being forced to listen to such things than infuriating.

Of course even research took a backseat when Harry finally figured out where the kitchens were. Ron looked like Christmas had come again when he had invited the gluttonous redhead up to visit for the first time. Though it was nothing compared to the expression of utter bliss and wonder when they took one step into the place and all the house elves had turned to run toward them, whatever delectable concoctions still in their hands.

He's pretty sure Ron almost cried when they told them to come back anytime. Well cried as much could with their mouth stuffed with pie. The freckled boy had a serious problem with food in the entity's opinion. In fact he had promptly told Ron so as they left earning a half eaten blueberry to the face. And no matter what Ron said, Harry certainly did not scream like a banshee. He had just protested the lack of hygiene of the the mushy blueberry. Loudly. In a banshee like fashion.

Hermione and he still were awkward, this period of separation not helping much either. In classes the girl still seemed to be incredibly competitive in vying for the best marks, especially against Harry and maybe Draco because apparently he called her blood muddy or some childish nonsense, their relationship was definitely more friendly at least but the frustration was real.

The Slytherins were more or less unaffected by the change. Zabini said he would forgive him for moving if the green eyed child gave him his treacle tart. Harry didn't but the Italian first year forgave him anyway. It helped that he had been casually wondering out loud how many knives one could possibly stick inside a human eye socket before they eventually bled to death with excruciating detail. The few perks of having the knowledge of all things dead was that you can whip up the best horror camp stories. Also no one wants your treacle tart.

Draco whined for weeks about being abandoned for the lesser House of Hufflepuff. It was funny the first few days of course. Various complaints were made by the young Malfoy from how far away they were now, to listing the many reasons why badges were stupid animals. Harry's pretty sure Draco doesn't exactly know what badgers were.

"-and they eat uh, capsicum! That's like the worst vegetable ever Harry! I know you hate it-"

It was sweet really. In what was possibly the most annoying way possible.

And Crabbe and Goyle, well, Harry isn't completely clear on how they're taking it but the boy had a feeling that the two hadn't even realized that he's no longer dorm-ing with them anymore. Absentmindedly he wondered what it must be like to be them, it would be oddly serene being able to
ignore everything for the simpler pleasures the world had to offer.

Professor Snape the first time he saw the Boy Who Lived's new House colors had given him some obscure expression on his face that could've translated to 'I totally forgot about Potter not being in Slytherin oops' all the way to 'May rains of fire descend upon your yellow-tied person for deceiving me.' Neville, who he had been chatting to at the time about herbs, nearly had a small stroke. It is really so hard to see the painfully timid boy as Gryffindor, even for Harry.

On the bright side, the boy had gotten to properly know Cedric Diggory. They had a teasing banter going on based on friendly insults and jibes, something that caused much double takes from their fellow 'puffs who had always seen the handsome teen as the kind of the 'cool, nice, pretty boy' type character. Honestly the only reason that their friendship bloomed like that was because the Quidditch player walked into the first year dorms to politely ask Smith to keep the noise down when he saw his bright yellow Christmas gift sitting idly on Harry's bed and promptly burst into laughter. Harry of course swiftly retaliated by throwing said Christmas gift in the older teen's face. Really, it was the start of a beautiful friendship.

Cue Malfoy complaints here of course.

Harry almost missed the classic renditions of 'My father will hear of this.'

It took longer than expected for the inevitable confrontation with Ron and Hermione. For children these two held some surprising restraint for people who'd been boring holes at the back of his head constantly the last two weeks. Ron especially so. It looked like whatever secret he was trying to keep from his best mate was eating him alive sometimes. Harry had to say he was impressed with Ron for sticking out for so long. Annoyed. But impressed.

They ended up cornering the wizard saviour in a secluded classroom somewhere on what he thinks was the second floor. Harry wasn't completely sure. He just grabbed any hand railing on the way down from his fall and hoisted himself onto solid ground before being whisked away by the Gryffindor pair.

"Oh thank god," Harry groaned when they practically manhandled him into the room. "Finally. I've been waiting for weeks to know what the hell you guys have been doing."

Ron looked just as relieved as him about this and Hermione just seemed bashful. "It's a long story.." The freckled boy started but Hermione interrupted, "Have you ever heard of the Philosopher's Stone?" she demanded in a rather condescending manner. If Harry didn't know better he would think her slightly smug at knowing something he didn't.

Granger was a nice girl. But she was also quite the petty one. Ron seemed to have got fairly used to her because he didn't seem to be so irritated at the interruption. Which, good for him. The youngest male Weasley needed another close friend. Harry wasn't particularly fond of his choice of course but the redheaded child could do worse.

"Oh, you mean the one locked up in Hogwarts right now?" Harry asked with a overly sweet smile. He can be just as petty as the bushy haired girl if that's what she wants. Hermione gaped at him, stunned to speechlessness as Ron burst out a, "Blimey mate you knew?! See I told you we should've gone to Harry!"

"Snape's planning to steal it!" The girl rushed out as if her words were running out of her mouth, ready to prove their worth. Harry raised an eyebrow.
"No." He said slowly, "No I don't think Professor Snape is."

"We saw him heading to the forbidden third floor corridor." Hermione hissed.

"And you know that injury of his before? Apparently it was a giant dog bite!" Ron added in a much more excited attitude, evidently not fully comprehending how serious his partner in crime was taking this. "A Cerberus guards up there, me and Neville saw it ourselves when we were running from Filch."

"Not to mention we overheard Snape threatening Professor Quirrell into telling him how to break anti-Dark Force spell." The girl pointed out with Ron nodding in agreement before bringing up another thing Snape had done.

"To be fair though," Harry began once the barrage of accusations started slowing down, "Snape sounds threatening at least forty percent of the time. Also I'm not sure if you've been to Defense class recently but Neville made Quirrel cry five minutes in because he accidentally.. I'm not exactly sure what Neville did but the fact is Neville made Quirrell cry. So seeing the man tremble at Snape's presence isn't really shocking."

"Yes but-"

"Do you have any proof?" The raven haired child stopped Hermione before her protests were formed. "Is there some sort of recording where Professor Snape admits he's been planning to rob an extremely powerful artefact?"

"Well no." Ron muttered sheepishly, "But Harry, I know you have a weird Snape thing-"

"For the last time. I do not ha-"

"But you gotta admit mate its suspicious." He finished stubbornly. The other boy tilted his head before nodding.

"Fine Ron. I admit the amount of coincidental evidence is quite suspicious." Before the two Gryffindors could butt in again Harry gave a stern look which easily shut their mouths temporarily shut. "However, as your friend I need to stress that its still not exactly damming. If you went up to the other professors right now with that sort of accusation, all it takes is Snape himself saying otherwise and he's in the clear. Which I still think he is by the way. It's kind of obvious you guys don't like him."

Hermione looked convinced at the logic of his argument, visibly mulling over it while Ron, who's always been the more emotional out of the three, still looked ready to argue. "Then we can just poke around a bit more, I'm sure-"

"No." Harry said firmly, wanting to put this subject up for a swift and painless execution. The Philosopher Stone was an object that attracted danger like Chaos dipped in honey. Okay, well maybe not to that extent but he still wasn't going to let these eleven year olds go after it. "You've done enough poking around." He insisted admonishingly, fully aware of how old he sounded right now, "Exams are around the corner and I bet you two have barely studied despite the fact you've been hanging out constantly at the library."

Fully, painfully aware. Jesus Christ he was so old.

God he's not even capable of producing actual children and now he's apparently stuck with two. They are so lucky he's had experience with unruly kids considering what his Reapers get up to when unsupervised. And his Grim Reaper 'son' with his three horse riding friends. And Magic. And Fate.
And Space. And that one interesting time with Order. And Life. And Chaos. Oh god how could he almost forget Chaos.

Hermione appeared to be taking his words to heart because her face was a scrunched up mixture of shock, bashfulness and worry. "I totally forgot exams were so close!" She wailed, "I haven't even rewritten my notes!"

Even Ron looked kind of anxious. Taking pity on the both of them Harry graciously offered to help them study, an offer Ron left up to like a dying man who'd just gained salvation and Hermione reluctantly agreeing too.

"Mate can we get some sandwiches too?" The redheaded boy asked, flinging an arm around the skinnier boy's shoulder with friendly ease as the three made their way up to the library, "You know for uh, study snacks."

"Ron you can't eat in the library!"

Harry laughed before fake whispering in the pouting freckled child's ear, "I'll see what I can do yeah?"

"You're the best Harry."

"Professor Snape?"

"Potter it's ten minutes near curfew and your new dorms are a good fifteen minutes away, normal sized human beings or not. Shall I just deduct the thirty points now and spare us all the trouble?" The tall potions master asked dryly. The small entity just shrugged.

"Do what you must but I did come down here for a reason sir."

"And what," Snape drawled, "Is this so-called important reason that you couldn't have waited tomorrow morning somewhere other than in front of my personal rooms to inform me of?"

"Well I want to know how well protected the Philosopher's Sto-" He didn't even get to finish his sentence before the professor whisked him into his quarters with a harsh tag of his arm. Harry, surprised at the sudden action and unused to being so roughly manhandled since the Dursley's, naturally ended up stumbling from the force and crashing onto the ground in an undignified, unhappy tangle. The boy looked up at the professor disgruntled and unamused. "Ow." He deadpanned.

"How do you know about the Stone?" Snape demanded with a face like an oncoming storm, you can hear the thunder rolling in the distance. Still, it seemed they were on amiable terms at least because the older man still went over to help Harry back up on his feet. Dusting himself off Harry couldn't stop himself from looking around the professor's living room curiously. It was unsurprisingly quite empty and full of books. If he craned his head slightly to the left he could just make out a picture frame on the-

"Potter." Snape growled. Harry turned to look at him, oh yeah lightening and thunder and hail was definitely in the forecast if he didn't get his mouth moving soon.

"I knew about the Philosopher's Stone since after that first detention you gave me." He answered honestly, Snape seemed somehow even angrier and paler at the same time. Is this what the humans mean when they say 'white fury'? Harry hoped not. "It's not like I particularly cared about it so I ignored the fact the staff of this school saw fit to bring that thing here until now."
Looking a bit less furious with that backhanded reassurance Snape relaxed ever so slightly. The man was still as taut as a high strung violin but at least now Harry was somewhat positive he wasn't going to suddenly break that composure of the professor's. "You're telling me you weren't even remotely interested in one of the most powerful artefacts made by man? And I'm expected to believe that?"

Snape's eyes bore down into his own and the boy inexplicably felt the strangest sensation, as if his brain was being lightly stroked by a fine haired paint brush. It was.. odd. Not too unpleasant, any deeper maybe, but this almost tickled. Harry refrained from giggling like the child his body was though. He's pretty sure that wouldn't go well with the severe professor.

Instead he maintained the eye contact, vivid green glimmering with the mirth he couldn't fully suppress at the unusual caresses and replied with nothing but the truth on his lips. "Not even a bit."

Also the most powerful artefact? Please. That stone is junior league at best.

The professor looked surprised at that, like he actually believed him. Harry certainly wouldn't have if the tables were turned, humans always did have a thirst for many things that this alchemic rock could provide them. Riches. Power. Knowledge. Immortality.

Maybe Snape trusted him more than he thought? That would be.. more pleasing than he really understood.

At that musing the feather light touches seemed to recede from his mind and Snape looked like he had swallowed something sour, or had just admitted the house of the brave was a shoo-in for that year end cup they're always talking about. The professor appeared to have begun reaching out to Harry's person before aborting the movement like he had been shaken awake from a dream. With an awkward clearing of the throat Snape gave him an unreadable look.

"I, believe you." He stated. Harry gave the older man a small smile.

"Thank you."

There was silence after that. It didn't feel as short as it must've been. But there was some unnamable presence in that silence that made it seem feel like Time himself was literally dragging his body through the room with nothing but his arms. Except for obviously less funny or sad. The atmosphere was less distinct and yet at the same time suffocating.

"So if you haven't found any reason to bring this up before why now?" Snape asked and Harry sighed in relief as the moment passed.

"Oh right." The child snapped his fingers repeatedly as he recalled why he was here in the first place. "Yeah, Ron and Hermione know."

"What."

"Also they think you're the one whose going to steal the Stone."

"Excuse me?"

Harry looked at the potions professor's reaction, sure he sounded understandably offended but there was an underlying resignation there that Harry wasn't much of a fan of. "Of course I didn't believe them." He declared firmly, hoping that Snape would understand that the boy was aware that the man wasn't the cruel snake in the dungeons so many thought him as.

Snape was a proud, strong man, it unnerved Harry a bit to see the man so accepting of such a
horrible implication. Harry himself wouldn't have stood for it if that happened to him personally.

The taller potions master cracked a crooked grin at the smaller child's stubborn belief in him, misguided as it is. He refused to admit it out loud but Snape could at least confess to himself that it was rather warming for someone to trust him as much as Dumbledore without even an Unbreakable Vow to bind him to his word.

"The problem is," Harry continued on, unaware of the half smile on the Head of Slytherin's face. "Knowing those two, after exams are gone they're going to go back to trying to play detective in this half baked mystery they've made. And normally I would just let them have their fun but," The soft features of the boy's face twisted slightly with worry and a maturity that had no right to be on someone so young. It made Harry look infinitely older than his years and Snape couldn't help but stare.

"But I can't in good conscience let them get hurt. Especially when I'm fully aware of what sort of attention the Philosopher's stone tends to bring in."

"That's very.. good of you Potter." The older of the two finally responded a bit lamely.

Harry looked up at the man, his gaze a green glow like a light at the end of a dark tunnel Snape felt his own be drawn to it. "So will you at least tell me what sort of protections are guarding the artefact? At the very least so I can be reassured that my friends will be okay."

Snape stiffened. "Don't you think you should be asking someone else then Potter? Reassurance isn't my strong point after all and I'm sure Professor Mcgonagall would be taken in by your sob story."

The child gave a soft growl of frustration as small hands pushed back his hair, "That's not what I meant and you know it professor."

"Then what is it that you mean? Because Potter, it sounds suspiciously like you're trying to wrangle up details of something expressly forbidden to you." The older man said coldly. Harry's eyes widened, half a manipulative action to make the professor feel bad and half because he genuinely didn't even think of that and he wanted the other to be fully aware of how much that accusation stung. Okay so maybe it was all manipulative but he was still a bit hurt.

"I'm not, I'm not using you for information. Honest." He whispered, letting his arms fold around his skinny chest in a defensive and at the same time pathetically adorable posture. And yes the child was fully aware of what that sort of thing does to people with souls. Pathetically adorable is a look he had practically mastered. Silent judgement and Obliviously attractive are also some 'looks' he's also been told work wonders for him.

As expected it worked and Harry could practically hear the soft but oh so satisfying crack in the potions master's demeanour. "This information doesn't leave the room." Snape relented, the man walking toward a dark green couch situated in what Harry figured was the living room. With a careless gesture toward the furniture in question the older of the two summoned up a tumbler of some sort of whisky, examined it speculatively, before downing a good portion of it in one swift motion.

Taking it as his cue, Harry sat down on the sofa as quietly as he humanly could and waited. He didn't have to wait long because Snape, after another swallow of the beverage- though this time from a proper glass, presumably conjured- sat down in a rather cushy looking chair in front of the boy. A part of Harry kind of wished that he took that spot but let the thought slide away, Snape looked ruffled enough. The whole feathers flying saying? Not something the entity-child wanted to witness firsthand.
"Unless an emergency calls for it." Harry tried to reason.

"If an emergency called for it you go straight to me or another professor you foolhardy buffoon." Snape snapped irritably, pouring himself another glass. Truly a role model for all teachers to stand up to.

The first year rolled his eyes agreed with a sulky, "Fine."

"Good. Now the Philosopher's Stone is very well protected, there are seven various trials provided by seven of the professors themselves including me."

Snape began listing the different barriers securing the stone to the child who listened quietly and with a growing feeling that at the moment he found hard pressed to name. It made his stomach bubble and his head feel light, his heart pound and the boy felt a prickling nuzzle at the back of his neck. Harry knew what the feeling was. It was on the very tip of his tongue.

"- and that's why you have no need to fret like some mother hen Potter." The potions professor and Head of Slytherin ended, looking at the Boy who Lived expectedly. He'd probably thought he was reassuring or comforting or giving Harry some relief but no, that wasn't what he was feeling at all. What he was feeling was more on the lines of,

"I think I'm horrified." Harry replied faintly. "Can I have some of what your drinking please?"

"Absolutely not Potter." Was the immediate and devastating reply. As a primordial force of death and darkness he's never been one for taking up alcohol like some of his other siblings but right now he's pretty sure his child meat suit would soak up the drink like a sponge. And damn does he need to be liquored up right now.

"Can you at least, I don't know, alter your security choices? Or even your definition of security." The boy groaned, sinking his face into his hands. "Because I'm severely disappointed in you Professor Snape, the other six professors, especially Headmaster Dumbledore and generally the foundation of all Wizarding education."

"You are over exaggerating."

Harry stared at the older man. "Am I Professor?"

Snape stared back. "Yes. We took every precaution."

"Every- there's only seven security measures."

"Yes but-"

"Any half competent first year can get past all of them except for obviously the last one which you refused to tell me but I am putting what little optimism I have on the Headmaster left into it. Actually..." Green eyes narrowed, "You guys are doing this on purpose." He accused.

The silence was short but telling. Now that he was actually looking instead of mourning the death of logic in wizards, Harry realised that the older male had been hiding his amusement beforehand this whole time, in the faint creases of mirth in his eyes and the pursing of his lips. The child could tell what he had missed now that all the traces of humour were gone and a very different appearance graced the potions master. Serious and piercing, no where were any of his edges softened like before.

"I think it's time to leave Potter."
Harry stared, his own lightheartedness fading fast. "Yes." He agreed frostily. "I think so too."

Standing abruptly up, hands clenched to the sides of his robes the boy let himself be led out of Snape's quarters. As he stepped out of into the halls Harry heard the other murmur a quiet, "I am regretful at how things ended but I do not regret what I won't divulge."

Harry made no show of if he heard the man and walked away.

He had some things to think about.

And a Headmaster to vent his frustrations on.

"Password?"

The whites of Harry's eyes seeped black, emphasising even more the unearthly glow of furious green. "I suggest you move away creature of stone before I do it myself." He snarled.

With a gulp the gargoyle immediately obeyed. If Harry was in a slightly better mood he would've thanked the statue, if a little sarcastically. Unfortunately Harry was not in a better mood, he was in foul ugly mood that he had slowly worked up to during the walk from the dungeons to the Headmaster's office. If the stone gargoyle had a working bladder it would've emptied itself. The paintings certainly looked like they had if the lack of people in there were any indication.

Stomping into the office the first thing he noticed was the Phoenix looking at him curiously. It was probably a good thing that was what he laid eyes on as just seeing the beautifully fiery bird was enough to let the darkness shifting out of him to calm enough to recede back. As if recognising it's duty done the creature of fire settled back down on it's perch lazily, much like a person getting ready to watch a movie.

"Mr Potter." Dumbledore who had turned to face the unexpected intruder looked quite surprised when he'd realised who exactly was it. "How did you get in here? Not that this isn't a pleasant surprise."

"You're trying to bait me." Harry said lowly. The elderly wizard raised a brow and looking genuinely confused.

"Excuse me?"

"The Philosopher Stone, the unicorn attacks, the really halfhearted traps." Harry listed off his fingers while he tried to burn through the headmaster's head with his eyes alone. "I think you are being purposely obtuse on purpose professor. And if you think I wouldn't see the big picture then you obviously should've made an effort to get to know me better."

"And what.." Dumbledore paused, giving the young child a considering stare as he sat down behind his large mahogany desk and steepled his fingers together, "Do you think is the big picture my boy?"

Harry looked at the older man annoyed before purposely walking to the edge of the man's desk and picked up a glass bowl filled with circular yellow sweets. "Ah, how rude I've been. Mr Potter would you like a- MY LEMON DROPS!"

The sound of glass shattering was accompanied by small childish hands slamming on to the desk between the two. "The perpetrator responsible for slaughtering the unicorns is obsessed with prolonging life, hence the fact only blood has been taken from the creatures. But as everyone knows, drinking unicorn's blood without consent is a stupid thing to do unless," Harry picked up a bunch of
lemon flavoured candies and melted them down in his hand until they hardened into one large yellow rock. "Unless the criminal had his eye on something far greater in the first place."

With just a little pressure Harry let the sweet crumple in his hands, watching the older wizard’s whimper at the damage. "You would've known this and logically set traps accordingly, but to capture, not to kill. Yet all your so-called safety precautions, even if we assume that maybe the end game was to catch this person in the act itself, are disgustingly easy to get past."

"Now that's not very nice, the professors-"

"If you tell me the professors did their very best in ensuring no-one could get to the stone I will cry Headmaster." The boy warned. "I will actually cry. Real tears. Because most of the things you need to get past those trials is a good grasp of the first year, and I'm going to repeat this again, first year curriculum, the ability to sing the alphabet well and maybe a fairly intermediate skill in logic."

"Professor McGonagall's protection was quite clever actually." Dumbledore countered weakly. "Also, how do you know about all of the levels?"

"That's neither here nor there." Harry casually dismissed. "And Professor McGonagall's chess set doesn't even need to be played. It can pretty much be ignored, it only feels like your obligated to play. Like when someone asks how your feeling you immediately say you're okay, even when you're obviously not." The boy dramatically inhaled some more air into his lungs, truly the problem with having such limited breath span, "And to be brutally honest, it's got nothing to do with her subject of Transfiguration."

"What's that got to do with anything?" The Headmaster asked, apparently he's gone from shocked, confused straight onto just plain embarrassed with a good dash of distantly amused. At least the crazy old wizard was having some fun over this. Admittedly ranting on all the flaws of Dumbledore's plan had quite the soothing effect and now even Harry was feeling better enough to see the humour in this situation.

Harry shrugged, "Not much except everyone else kept to their respective subjects and character. It just kind of annoyed me."

Dumbledore chuckled at that before his face turned more serious. "Mr Potter, your deductions are quite accurate, scarily so I admit but why would you think I was, to put it in your terms, baiting you?"

The first year cocked his head to the side, "Well it's more of a hypothesis of mine really. The fact you ensured first year students could overcome these obstacles either means your expecting this person you're trying to catch to be incompetent," That earned another chuckle from the elderly wizard, "Or maybe you want someone else to confront this criminal. Someone who has just joined the Hogwarts cohort and is expected to uphold the title of Wizard Saviour?"

"That… may or may not be the case." Dumbledore said warily, the headmaster watching the child like it was the first time he really saw Harry Potter. "You truly are a remarkable young boy aren't you?"

"I am what I am professor." Harry replied with a wry grin as he gestured to himself, "Nothing more, nothing less."

"So you may or may not be correct in your assumptions of me may or may not have been doing what you may have thought. What would you do now Mr Potter if I may ask?"
"Well I may or may not be particularly pleased with the steps you may or may not have taken to this point of time but my friends may or may not have gotten mixed up in this mess, resulting in me may or may not going and ending up following what you may or may not have wanted me to do in possible the first place."

Dumbledore blinked, "I.. may or may not have fully understood what you have said Mr Potter." He confessed and this time Harry actually giggled.

"That's okay Professor. You may or may not want to know anyway." And with that, the Boy who Lived sauntered casually out of the office, the doors opening before the child like he owned the place.

The Headmaster of Hogwarts watched the boy go with a wistful smile and a twinkle in his eyes. When the doors finally closed the elderly wizard looked at Fawkes fondly and stroked his beard. "Well. I certainly didn't expect that."

Fawkes gave a quiet squawk.

"Yes, yes, this is turning out to be a much more interesting new era than I first thought." Then, looking forlornly at the glass shards and cracked pieces of the lemon flavoured hard candy he added, "I just wish people would stop doing that."

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Now Harry didn't want to be brag. But he totally, as the young people say, 'bombed' the exams. Which is to say, he did very well. Not that he released some sort of explosion midway through the tests.

Transfiguration, Charms, Astronomy and Defence against the Dark Arts were easier than learning to breathe, both in the written and practical aspects. In fact, with the exception of History of Magic (which he might've have instead detailed a four foot essay on the various ways a ghost could be exorcised from the living world instead of some old Goblin war treaty), the child was fairly confident that all his written papers were quite perfect if he did say so himself. The Defence paper was a little bit more challenging mainly due to this excruciating headache he had somehow built up during that time though, it was strange. Maybe his human body is allergic to concentrated garlic smells?

Herbology as expected in the practical element didn't go so well, what with there always seeming to be a good fifty-fifty chance of whatever plant in front of Harry shrivelling up at his touch. The boy had contented himself to a perfect zero in that portion of the exam. That really couldn't be helped.

In Potions the colours were slightly off to what they should have been but Professor Snape had been unusually silent when he examined his Forgetfulness potion. Actually the dour faced man had been unusually silent since their last meeting. Harry wondered to himself why he found himself wanting to be friends with such a complicated sourpuss.

As said before Transfiguration and Charms was a breeze. Professor Flitwick called them one by one into his class to see if they could make a pineapple tap dance across a desk and wandlessly the boy had made the pineapple tap and jive and samba to the rhythm of some music he conjured himself. Professor McGonagall asked them all to turn a mouse into a snuffbox. Harry, who had spent a large chunk of this year creating special 'assignments' for the woman knew exactly the sort of aesthetic appeal that she most admired. And he pulled all the stops, from ornate gold carvings of frolicking lions to the intricate crimson edging and smatters of rubies.

Now he could have had easily not shown off to such a condescending extent but Zacharias, the night before exams started might have proclaimed that his parents would get him a whole number of gifts if
he got first place in any subject and, well, that just wouldn't do. Also Hermione's face when he showed off that snuffbox was worth its weight in gold.

Speaking of which, the exams were exactly the sort of thing that managed to get Ron and Hermione's mind off the Stone and their insistence that Snape was the culprit. Even when it was finally over the trio along with Harry's Slytherin friends flocked toward the sunny grounds outside to relax and revel in the lack of academia.

"That was far easier than I thought it would be," Hermione commented as they all settled comfortably in the grass. "I needn't have learned about the 1637 Werewolf Code of Conduct or the uprising of Elfric the Eager."

"The what of the what?" Harry asked sleepily.

"Something about potions I think." Ron tried helpfully.

"Well at least there's no more studying." Blaise offered tentatively to the Gryffindor boy who groaned appreciatively at the idea.

"Yeah," Draco grinned, he had the faintest smudge of ink on his pale skin which no one wanted to point out least they incur the vanity of a scorned Malfoy. "And we've got a week before we find out how badly Weasley's done, there's no need to worry yet Granger."

"Oi!"

Everyone laughed and for once the two Houses almost seemed to get along, bantering and trading friendly enough insults, though Hermione looked a little distant not that anyone but Harry really noticed. She looked like she was nearing some sort of epiphany. Or heart attack.

Suddenly her eyes lit up and Harry could hear the little 'ding' of her brain as she grabbed Ron's arm and stood up. "Ron! I just realised something, we have to go right now!"

The redhead looked reluctant but all it took was another sharp tug and a hissed "Ron." and the two were off toward the castle like a shot. The freckled boy did give an apologetic glance at Harry and waved goodbye but Hermione didn't even look back, too engrossed in her earlier realisations.

"Well that was rude." Nott huffed with Crabbe and Goyle nodding their heads as they mushed on a chocolate frog.

Blaise frowned like the two leaving was a personal offence to him. Considering it was one of the first time's he'd ever tried passing the metaphorical olive branch to the two, it probably was.

"Wonder what that was all about?" Draco sniffed.

Harry watched them go with a growing suspicion. "Who knows."

"It's tonight," whispered Ron, once Harry managed to corner the two in the halls just when Professor McGonogall was leaving. "Snape's going through the trapdoor tonight. He's found out everything he needs, and now he's got Dumbledore out of the way. He sent him an urgent owl from the Ministry of Magic and I bet the Ministry will get a real shock when Dumbledore turns up."

"Guys it is not Snape, I cannot-"

Hermione gasped. Harry and Ron twisted around. Only to see Snape standing there right behind
"Good afternoon," The professor greeted smoothly with an odd, almost sinister smile. "You really shouldn't be inside on a day as nice as this- people will think you're up to something won't day?"

And wow, it was almost like the man wanted to freak people out into believing he was killing unicorns and stealing magic stones. That was just disturbing. Hermione and Ron seemed to agree if their rapidly paling faces were anything to go by.

Beetle black eyes slid toward the smallest boy of the trio, lingering on Harry while his smile dropped from his face. With a small nod of acknowledgement Snape then strode toward the staffroom.

As soon as the black robed professor left their sight, the two Gryffindors immediately huddled around Harry looking twice as determined now. Whatever intimidation tactic that had been was obviously ineffective.

"Right then, here's what we've got to do-" So, so ineffective. "One of us has got to keep an eye on Snape, wait outside the staff room and follow him if he leaves it. Hermione, you'd better do that." Ron whispered.

"What?" Hermione asked a little put out. "Why me?"

Ron rolled his eyes, for once the positions felt rather reversed and Harry had to stifle an inelegant snort. "Obviously because your the only person here that would have a proper excuse to hang around a teacher's lounge." Then in a fake falsetto voice Ron fluttered his eyelashes, "Oh Professor Sprout, I think there was a spelling error on question six."

"Oh shut up," Hermione huffed before it turned into a round of giggles that Harry happily joined in with. "And Harry could have just as much reason to be there than me."

"Yeah but I'm useful in a fight." Harry pointed out smugly, laughing when the bushy haired girl playfully slapped the top of his head huffily.

"Also Harry has a weird Snape thing so he can't be fully trusted." Now it was Hermione's turn to be laughing while Harry huffed.

"Honestly there is no Snape thi-"

"Yeah, yeah, whatever you say mate, come on lets go." The Boy who Lived grumbled but went along anyways.

Though Ron's plan just wasn't meant to be because as soon as they began loitering around the forbidden third floor corridor they met face to face with Professor McGonagall. And she was storming mad. "Fifty points from Gryffindor! So you think you can just get past our enchantments, well I have had enough of this foolish nonsense! If I even hear you've comeback around here again I'll take another fifty, no, eighty points from Gryffindor! And you Mr Potter," Harry winced, *that right there* is the sort of intimidation that Snape should have used. Harry was *certainly* very afraid. "I don't know if this was something Mr Weasley dragged you along with or not but I am severely disappointed with you. Forty points from Hufflepuff!!"

The two boys just nodded and scampered off before the second wave of rage came down, the green eyed first year followed his friend to the Gryffindor tower and patted his back consolingly. "At least Hermione's watching out for Snape." He reassured.

And of course that was the moment Hermione came out of the Fat Lady's portrait. "I lost Snape."
"Well he is rather thin, lanky and dressed all in black— you sure he's just not in a shadowy corner?" Hermione cracked a grin at Harry's attempt at a joke but Ron uncharacteristically looked quite grave.

"Guys this can't be the end." He said defiant and determined. "We can't let Snape win. Not this."

And oh did Harry so want to defend Snape but the situation was much too movie-esque to ruin at this point. Also he might be still a tad miffed at the man. He looked at the bushy haired girl a bit resignedly, knowing at least she will know how he stands in this before turning his head back to Ron and nodding. "Fine. But I refused to be caught and expelled so we are using my Invisibility Cloak."

Ron's face instantly brightened, "I knew you would come through for me mate! Now le-wait you have an Invisibility Cloak?"

The green eyed child scratched the back of his head bashfully. "Did I not tell you guys?" Ron groaned.

"See 'mione? We should've totally talked to Harry about this ages ago."

"Yes." She admitted sheepishly, "We should've."

Harry decided it would just be easier if he hung out at the Gryffindor Tower till nightfall, he didn't want to go back to his dorms when it was dark since it tended to freak out the paintings whenever he passed. Instead, the child popped down to get his cloak during dinnertime and then joined his friends back in the tower. The other two restless and pacing whilst Harry cuddled his cloak to his chest.

Unexpectedly Harry was the first one to crack.

"Okay this is killing me, let's just go now." Ron and Hermione jumped onto that suggestion faster than hungry hyenas on a freshly slaughtered gazelle.

"We'd better put the cloak on here, and make sure it covers all three of us. If Filch spots one of our feet wandering along on its own.." Ron trailed off, blue eyes having spotted something.

"What are you doing?" said a voice from the corner of the room. Neville appeared from behind an armchair, clutching Trevor the toad, who looked as though he'd been making another bid for freedom.

"It's nothing Neville." The redhead tried to persuade while Harry wondered what he should do with the obvious cloak in his hands. He didn't have to decide in the end because Hermione grabbed it and stuffed it behind her back. Rude.

Neville obviously did not look too persuaded. It did not help that his Gryffindor friends couldn't have looked any more guilty unless they painted their faces with the words GUILTY on them in bright red. "You're going out again." He accused.

Harry glared at his friends. How many times have these kids been caught? "Oi, how many times have you guys gotten caught?"

"No, no, no," Said Hermione, like repeating the word would make it somehow less false. "No, we're not. Uh, maybe you should go to bed, Neville?"

Neville shook his head. "You guys can't go out, Gryffindor is already in too much trouble thanks to you guys." Then to Harry, "Not you of course." He said apologetically.
"No, seriously, how many times have you guys gotten caught?" Harry repeated.

"Neville it's really important you don't understand." Ron pleaded by the chubby boy wasn't swayed. If anything he looked even more determined.

"I-I can't let you do this." Oh boy. "I'll f-fight you if I have to!"

"Neville, don't be an idiot!" Ron whisper shouted.

"Don't call me an idiot! And I won't let you make us lose anymore points for our House! Besides you told me that I should stand up for myself."

"Yeah but not to us." Ron tried explaining frustrated.

The temporary Hufflepuff slapped his hand to his face.

"Go on, just try to hit me." Neville demanded, apparently now getting into it, his fists up in the air ready to fight.

"Do something." Ron hissed desperately to Hermione. She looked at the freckled boy before stepping forward toward Neville who took a small step back. "I'm really sorry about this Neville." The girl raised her wand and-

"Woah, woah, woah." Harry said, practically throwing himself between the his friends and the terrified Neville. "What the freck Hermione?"

"I- it was a full Body Bind hex." She whispered, looking quite regretful at what she had been about to do.

Neville was staring at Hermione horrified. Well, those two were probably not going to be friends anytime in the near future.

"Look." Harry began firmly. "I get we have stuff to do and a time limit not to miss but that's not okay. You may be one of the best students right now but we're also first years, can you imagine if you got the incantation wrong? Something like that could have paralysed him!"

Hermione looked suitably alarmed, though not as alarmed as Neville who looked torn between being ready to faint or to try inching away from the girl as subtly as possible. The entity-turned-child turned to the scared boy and gave an awkward smile. "Neville, I am really so sorry for what Hermione did. It was inexcusable and I hope you can forgive us for it."

The two behind him nodded their heads vigorously but Neville shot them a surprisingly hard stare that made them stop. "Y-you didn't do anything Harry." He stuttered, deftly avoiding having to forgive his fellow housemates. Neville even gave a shy smile, maybe the boy was braver than he looks all things considering, "I guess I can pretend I didn't see you guys tonight though."

"Thanks Neville I'd appreciate it a lot." He said genuinely, he did not have the time nor inclination to deal with anymore drama this year. "And if we do get caught I'll see what I can do to make sure Gryffindor doesn't get punished again."

The brunette first year blushed, "No n-need, you already did enough by saving me."

Harry winked cheekily, "Anytime."

With one last guilt-inducing expression that made both Ron and Hermione squirm, Neville went
back to his rooms. When he was gone from sight Harry clasped his hands together satisfied at the social bomb he’d managed to diffuse. He was getting much better at these situations.

"So, let's go. We have a rock to rescue right?"

When they got to the third floor corridor, the door was already slightly ajar. Obviously their mystery person was kind of stupid.

"Well, last chance guys if you want to leave," Ron murmured under the cloak. Hermione shook her head, "We're coming with you."

"And I don't like the idea of you two going in alone." Harry drawled. "Especially now that I know how terrible you guys are at not getting caught."

They pushed the door slowly open, all internally cringing at the inevitable sounds of the old hinges squeaking and the following rumbling sounds of what sounded like three very grumpy giant dogs. Even though the Cerberus can't see them under the cloak, the hound could still smell something amiss. Though it didn't look that ready to maul anyone anymore, in fact it seemed happy, eager, almost...

Oh dear.

Yeah Harry really didn't want to confront the three-headed beast if he could avoid it. Hagrid's cowardly dog was bad enough. He doesn't think with this petite mortal body of his could handle that sort of trauma.

"Does anyone have some sort of musical instrument? Or just a really decent singing voice?" Harry hissed.

"Looks like Snape brought a harp." Hermione pointlessly pointed out, the instrument lying innocently in the corner. "It was probably charmed to play till he got past Fluffy."

"Great. So he's a fan of the classics." Harry rolled his eyes, "Now if you do excuse me but I want to know if you have the ability to produce music whether from a procured item or the holes in your head so we do not, in fact, get mauled." In more ways than one.

"I.. can't sing." The bushy haired girl blushed.

"I.. forgot to bring the flute Hagrid got me." Ron admitted.

Harry turned around to face his fellow partners in crime under the cloak and glared disbelieving. "When this is over you are going to owe me. So hard."

"Yes." The redhead fervently nodded along with Hermione who added with an eager, "So hard."

With one last narrowing of his eyes he turned back to face the slightly distorted room through the cloak and sighed. He suspected this, but right now it couldn't be anymore obvious. Despite everything, he's still a complete pushover.

"Uhh, what should I sing?" He muttered half to himself.

"What about Waltzing Matilda? That always got me to bed when I was small." Hermione suggested.

"I've never heard of that one." Ron said a little baffled.
"It's a muggle song." The girl explained.

"Waltzing Matilda? Yeah okay, I think I know that one." Harry agreed, then with a small breath he began to sing. Considering his childlike state his voice was still quite nice, he'd like to think, despite it being quite feminine.

"Waltzing Matilda, she'll come and kill ya, Waltzing Matilda, Matilda said she.

And she'll sing as she watches and waits till your feet will boil, cause you'll come a' waltzing with Matilda that's she."

"Wait that's not-"

"Down came a passerby, helpless and all alone. Up jumped Matilda and grabbed him with glee. And she sang as she shoved his body through her sharpened claws, 'You'll come a Waltzing Matilda with me.'"

"Merlin."

"Waltzing Matilda, she'll come and kill ya, She's Waltzing Matilda, Matilda said she. And she'll come over yonder to ask you for your final dance, You'll come Waltzing Matilda with she."

"Harry."

"Up went the body, mounted on his own-"

"HARRY!" The boy looked at the two annoyed, for some reason they were looking quite ill. "What is it? I'm trying to- oh huh, Fluffy's already sleeping. I must be better at this singing thing than I thought."

Ron and Hermione stared at the unconscious three-headed dog, all it's mouths frothing as it lay uncomfortably on it's back.

"Mate, you could make skeletons shiver with that song." Ron said slowly, Harry was touched. What a sweet thing to say.

"Thank you." He said genuinely. The redhead looked confused, "No I meant- mph!"

Hermione's hand covered Ron's mouth as she hastily answered with, "Let's not waste anymore time shall we?" Harry nodded, still feeling quite pleased at his friends praise. He's secretly quite proud of his voice, many of his subjects always told him it was 'beautifully chilling', 'painfully haunting' and 'shook them to the literal core' but it's very flattering to get that sort of critique from people not obligated to tell him so.

The Devil's Snare trapdoor was fairly easy to get past, they didn't even realise what it was because the moment Harry accidentally leaned on it when he fell the whole thing just shrivelled up and died. It was quite embarrassing to be honest. "Cheer up Harry." The girl tried as Harry walked with his face in his hands. "I mean, plants are quite, the Devil's Snare is,"

"Mate you could totally work as a magical weed repellent."

Harry blushed and tried to bury his face in his hands even further. It did not work.

"Hey, can you guys hear something?"

"Yeah like rushing water or-"
"A ton of tiny wings." Harry finished.

They reached the end of the passageway and before them was a chamber filled with small shiny keys with wings, fluttering and tumbling all around the room. On the opposite side of them, distanced by the keys, was a heavy wooden door.

"Okay so we're probably going to have to find a key to fit the door." Hermione mused.

"Are you serious?" The youngest Weasley bemoaned, "There must be hundred of these things."

"Key with broken wing. *Come.*" Harry intoned, immediately summoning said key. When he showed his prize triumphantly the other two looked a little dumbstruck. "What? It was the only one that's obviously been used. And you guys seem to keep forgetting, I'm like your overpowered mascot character here."

The next room was McGonagall's giant chess board. He wondered how much money went into this sort of thing instead of for proper expenses. Like better quality teachers and security. Despite knowing they could just bypass it completely, Harry allowed Ron's moment to shine. The boy needed some proper confidence for himself after all.

In the end proper confidence was gained but the consciousness of Ron himself was gone, knocked out cold when he sacrificed the chess piece he was riding. Not wanting to leave him alone in the room like some kind of bastard, Harry wandlessly and wordlessly lifted the redhead's prone form into the air and with Hermione, moved to the next door.

Which had a troll lying unconscious as well.

It's nice to know that unicorns this man would happily murder but a troll was just too much for the man's delicate sensibilities.

Finally the second last door, Snape's room, was opened and it was bare except for the table contains seven different bottles and a riddle. Once they stepped in, both the exit behind them and the entrance to the final room flared purple fire and black fire respectively, trapping them in place. Harry once again let his friend have a go at playing the hero and it wasn't very long before Hermione picked up the smallest vial and announced it to be the answer.

"But there's only enough for one person." She said worriedly. Harry closed his eyes and withheld a sigh. Damn Fate was so obvious.

"You take that potion that get's you and Ron back through the other rooms and get a teacher, hell, scream bloody murder if you have to. And use the brooms back in the key room to get there."

"But what about you Harry?"

Harry quirked a crooked smile. "Ain't it obvious?" Hermione gasped,

"But what if.. You-Know-Who is there?" The boy cocked his head, curiously. So that's what got those two children so hyped up. It wasn't just the possibility of Snape but also the so-called Dark Lord. Made sense. Not much logic but made sense.

"Well I was pretty lucky the first time yeah?" Harry waggled his brows, purposely pulling attention toward the scar on his forehead.

Hermione's lips wobbled, and suddenly she threw herself at Harry and constricted her arms around him.
"Hermione?" He asked slightly strangled and a tad confused.

"Harry - you're a great wizard, you know. I am sorry for being such a, a git to you." The raven haired boy chuckled and awkwardly patted her back.

"Hey, it's a little trying at times I admit but that's what friends who are rivals are yes?"

She looked up at him with wide teary brown eyes. "Y-you consider me as a rival?" She said in awe. Harry nodded. "Of course, there's no way I would look down at you."

She hugged him tighter and the scrawny child could feel his bones grinding at the pressure. "You better not get hurt out there then, because I am going to best you next year and I need you to be in top shape for that." Hermione demanded.

"Then you should really let go." He said with a harsh wheeze.

So turned out the person who murdered unicorns for their blood, who Mars had foretold to the centaurs, who had planned to steal the Philosopher's stone was not Snape. Which, Harry wanted to point out, he never doubted for a second. Turned out though the culprit was none other than Professor Quirrell. Which admittedly never even crossed his mind.

To be honest he still kind of thinks someone shapeshifted into Quirrell and the usually quivering man is sleeping soundly in his garlic infused bedroom.

"I bet you thought it would be Severus didn't you?" The man mocked, looking nothing like how he'd portrayed himself the past year.

"No. Not at all." Harry deadpanned. "But I am surprised it was you through sir."

Quirrell laughed, "Potter, still so polite. But of course you didn't think it was me, after all, who would suspect p-p-poor, st-stuttering P-Professor Quirrell?"

"It was very smart, I am actually incredibly impressed." The boy admitted easily and honestly. The turbaned man seemed surprise at the praise, even a bit forlorn.

"You were always one of the nicer brats here, it is a pity that I'm going to kill you."

And with that Quirrell snapped his fingers ropes sprung out of nothing but the air as they wrapped themselves snugly around Harry. The first year Hufflepuff once again was impressed. Not only could the man act but do some magic wandlessly and wordlessly, apparently a feat of strength in this world. Maybe his stories weren't as false as everyone first thought. Harry wished to continue seeing what more the Defense professor could do so he laid back to watch.

Turned out there wasn't that much after. Quirrell said more of his piece, literally explaining everything he had done like some egotistical fool and then muttering his annoyance at the Mirror of Erised that was apparently the last thing between the Philosopher's stone and them.

"What does this mirror do? How does it work? Help me, Master!"

Yeah this was disappointing. Harry wondered if Quirrell's soul tastes like cheese, surprisingly complex for it's bland appearance but ultimately only good in it's first bite.

"Use the boy... Use the boy..."

And holy shite, was there a second soul in the older man's body? That can't be right, unless there was
some very special circumstances, forcing two souls to coexist in one body takes an incredible amount of strain and deformation on both parties.

Whilst pondering on this, Quirrell had dragged him in front of the mirror, ordering the child to tell him what he saw. Harry rolled his eyes but complied anyway. He forced himself to imagine the Philosopher's Stone in his pocket and easily enough it was there. The mirror was pretty much charmed to make sure whoever takes the ugly thing wouldn't want to use it for himself.

There was literally no need for any of the other crap. Dammit Dumbledore.

"What do you see?"

"I see me smashing Dumbledore's stupid bowl filled with candy." Harry lied. It was less his greatest desire and more of a very accurate premonition.

The professor looked completely thrown with the answer and the child used it to move away, quietly loosening the ropes as he did. Then, on the back of the taller male's head, a raspy chuckle was heard.

"Interesting.. Let me speak to him.. Face to face."

Quirrell balked. "Master, you are not strong enough!"

"I have... enough strength for this."

"If you have to pause between sentences you probably don't." Harry internally commented. He was getting irritated now. Close quarters with the Defense professor was taking its toll and his head was starting to ache like he'd been punched there.

Quirrell shakily began unwrapping his turban, the pain in his forehead was absolutely blinding and when the Defense professor turned around it took a few seconds to recollect himself to see-

"Oh Mr Riddle." Harry breathed forlornly as he realised who exactly was on the back of the man's face. "What have you done to yourself?"

It was... Unnerving. There really wasn't much he could say about it. Where the back of Quirrell's head should've been was instead the twisted, scarred face that the entity could only recognize because of the all too familiarly colored crimson that bore into his eyes. What was even more horrific than that was when Harry forced himself to look deeper, he had to cringe at the absolute blatant disfiguration of the already tiny remains of the soul inside. He's surprised he hadn't just shattered.

Sure he'd always had a morbid fascination in the dark and twisted and oh so interesting, even when it came to his previous souls, especially his souls. But this was beyond that. This was pathetic and ugly and heartbreakingly tragic. Maybe it was a by product of being so human the last few years but Harry didn't feel the same curiosity and intrigue he knew he would've felt before all this. He just felt sick and sad.

"Harry Potter." The face whispered, apparently he hadn't heard him, nor recognised him. The child faced entity wasn't much surprised after such an amount mutilation self inflicted on the being. It'll take time, ages for the shard to repair even half the damage if he manages to free himself from the already occupied meat suit.

"See what I have become?" The face said. And oh, Harry saw, the thing was if Mr Riddle saw. Mr Riddle had been smart and sarcastic and quite charismatic even as a dilapidated wraith. This self proclaimed Lord Voldemort, for that's who he must be, was a weak, pathetic shard clinging and afraid as it acted like an inelegant parasite on the unsuspecting Quirrell who probably wasn't even
fully aware of how this would really affect him in the long term.

The boy moved closer, rope bindings slipping off him as easily as water would have, and looked up at the two faced man sadly. "Yes, I think I do."

And then he reached up on the tips of his toes, both hands ready to touch each face to separate the souls from slowly destroying each other more than they already had. However who he made contact with skin, something surprising happened.

"AAGGHHHHH!" Quirrell screamed, immediately dropping to his knees, "KILL HIM, KILL HIM!" came the frantic tortured cry of Voldemort, their faces blistering and what seemed to be melting.

Harry, surprised at the unexpected reaction startled quite violently, tightening his grip and inducing even more howls of pain.

"Fuck!" He jumped back, unsure of what just happened. Harry knew he didn't do anything, he was absolutely sure of it so then why-?

It was too late for the men though, the sight of them was not aesthetically pleasing in the slightest. Burnt skin and blisters and open bloody wounds. Definitely not something easily described. Once again Harry couldn't help but be glad the real Harry Potter wasn't there to see this.

In the end he let Mr Riddle go. Quirrell's soul was drained nearly dry for all the good it did and wasn't very salvageable. That saddened him in a way the loss of life would have saddened his fellow counterpart. He ended up untangling and sometimes even ripping the twisted tendrils of Mr Riddle and Professor Quirrell's two souls to get them apart, it was messy work and there was probably some more damage from it as well but finally what little left of crimson red was recovered and set free. Once again it turned into a wraith like form but now so much less distinct, unrecognisable.

Mr Riddle didn't even look back, so lost in the madness he incurred on himself.

Harry felt quite glum as he sat there, deformed carcass by his side as he swallowed the pale yellow soul down his throat. The soul will be recycled in him, broken down and remade with other bits he's feasted on until it becomes something new entirely. It was a hollow victory.

"So in the end what did you do with the Stone?" Harry asked as he sipped a cup of herbal tea. Dumbledore's eyes twinkled as he sucked on his favoured candy in a suspiciously familiar glass bowl. It had been three days since and while everyone's been fretting over Harry- who thought that one whole day in the infirmary to recover from the 'shock' was a bit much- the commotion has more or less been settling down.

"It's been destroyed."

"What about Flamel?"

"Ah yes, we had a little discussion and Nicholas and I thought it to be the best."

"Won't him and his wife die then?"

"They have enough Elixir stored to set their affairs in order and then, yes, they will die." Dumbledore smiled like he wasn't just talking about the death of an old friend. Harry wondered if he could get his reapers to pro-order those souls for his private collection. Original Flamels were so hard to get these days.
"Wait." The child paused. "So you spent money on all those stupid traps which I had to pass, willingly endangered students and I ended up killing a man for absolutely nothing?"

The old wizard looked down at his hands. "Yes well, when you say it like that it does sound quite awful doesn't it?"

The sound of glass shattering and the door slamming was all he got as an answer.

"I... Should have seen that coming."

Harry sat next to Cedric at the End-of-Year Feast, something which the older boy had insisted after hearing a (very dramatic) retelling of what the Boy-Who-Lived had faced. The rumour mill surprisingly was more or less correct except for the last part which was something only Harry and Harry alone would truly know. The edited version was still Quirrell being the surprise culprit but in no way or form was Voldemort mentioned. The boy wasn't sure if that was the best idea but he knew that the man would take at least two years to recover enough mental and spiritual power to do something as significant again, there was no point fussing right at this moment at the very least.

Green and silver decorated the halls to celebrate Slytherin winning House cup for apparently seven times in a row. Good for them.

Less good was when Harry had walked into the hall and it was like silence was a plague that descended upon the people like the locusts on well, anything really. Same people were actually trying to stand up from their seats to look at him. It was like the beginning of the year all over again.

Thank god Cedric was still his usual friendly self or Harry would've moved tables to some House less annoying.

Dumbledore arrived a minute or so later, the chattering slowly drying away once he stood up to speak. There was a lot of the usual nonsense that Harry had learned now to tune out and then came the thing almost everyone was waiting for. "So, without further ado the House points thus far are- in fourth place, Gryffindor, with three hundred and twelve points; in third, Hufflepuff, with three hundred and fifty-two; Ravenclaw has four hundred and twenty-six and Slytherin, four hundred and seventy-two."

A storm of cheers came from the House of the Cunning and it was probably the most raucous he'd ever seen from the usually so dignified Slytherins bar the troll incident on Halloween. Harry clapped cheerily along with them, considering he was all and none of the Houses, the boy was quite exempt from any real feelings of House pride.

"Yes, Yes, well done, Slytherin," said Dumbledore. "However, recent events must be taken into account."

The room went very still. The Slytherins' smiles turned into looks of confusion and everyone was looking at each other similarly baffled. Drama much?

"Ahem," said Dumbledore. "I have a few last-minute points to dish out. Let me see. First to Mr. Ronald Weasley..."

Ron went absolutely red, almost purple in the face. Harry didn't even know you could do that without getting angry. Truly he still had much to learn.

"...for the best-played game of chess Hogwarts has seen in many years, I award Gryffindor house sixty points."
Gryffindor's shouts made the Slytherin's beforehand seem like mere whispers they were so excited and loud. Percy could be heard telling the other prefects with the pride only an older brother could posses, "My brother, you know! My youngest brother! Got past McGonagall's giant chess set!" The Weasley twins didn't look much better, thumping their younger brother on the back and screaming various things.

"Second -to Miss Hermione Granger... for the use of cool logic in the face of fire, I award Gryffindor house sixty points."

Harry's sure Hermione just burst into tears at that point. The first years and other members of her House seemed to be looking at her with pride for probably the first time. Gryffindor themselves were rather beside themselves, in just a few moments they were one hundred and twenty points up and in second place.

"There are all kinds of courage," said Dumbledore, smiling. "It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends. I therefore award thirty points to Mr. Neville Longbottom."

Well that seemed a little unfair at this point. Neville at least looked shocked and was hugged by a good dozen people. Slytherin had almost completely lost their bright eyes and childish grins. It was more than a little pitiful.

"And finally," Dumbledore began putting them all into a state of silence. "To Mr. Harry Potter, for his courage, for his cunning, his intellect and his loyalty to his friends… I give each house one hundred points."

There was a pause as every mind in the room viciously tried to work out the math and realise yes, Slytherin was still ahead by roughly ten points. Once again the Slytherin's cheered their victory relief and annoyance a common enough theme in their faces. The Gryffindors looked downhearted that they didn't get the sudden win that they hoped but they seemed pretty proud of the almost turnaround that had occurred.

That night Harry followed the Slytherin's down to the dungeons and congratulated them for a well earned victory. He had been responsible for quite a bit of points as well and would have been miffed if that had been ignored in favour of some quest for the apparently destroyed Philosopher's stone. They talked and chatted, Draco seemed to be quite interested in what Harry was doing after school was over. And also about his mansion.

"You know my room is big enough that it can fit in another bed if it's needed." The Malfoy heir boasted, giving Harry some serious side eye. "And we have peacocks that live in the courtyard, giant white ones!"

"That's really cool Draco." Harry praised.

"Also my family dining ro-"

"Oh my GOD." Blaise suddenly shouted, cutting himself off from a conversation he was having with Nott to face the pair. "Harry, Draco is trying to ask you over for the holidays."

"Blaise!" Draco shouted, his pale face pink with embarrassment.

Harry blinked. Well, it wasn't like Privet Drive would be much exciting to satisfy him the whole time back. "Yeah sure."

"See Blaise you fool, you've ruined my carefully constructed p- Really?" The platinum blonde
wizard turned to look at the other hopefully. Harry nodded amused.

"Yeah, I've got to go back home for a week but I'll be more than happy to stay with you the rest of the hols."

Draco looked absolutely giddy with delight.

"And yet again I am bereft of the gratitude I deserve." Blaise muttered.
Death's holiday in a holiday

The one where Death has a holiday in his holiday.

Or, the one where Death meets the Malfoys, Dobby and Snowflake the stalker peacock

"That is so cool! Do me next!" Dudley squealed excitedly whilst Piers shrieked with glee as he began whizzing through the air like a homicidal plane. Harry smiled and waved his other hand in an upwards motion, levitating the larger boy off the ground much to his absolute delight.

They did flips and swirls and generally just recreated that Peter Pan scene with Harry as Wendy. Which, he would like to point out was unfair and so not cool considering he was the one who got them up in the air in the first place. But then Piers pointed out Tinkerbell was the one with the magic fairy dust and Harry quickly shut up after that.

Petunia had gone out to town to get groceries and generally gossip with the other housewives this afternoon and Vernon was having his post-lunch Sunday nap so today was a good day to freely show off the wonders of magic to his cousin and friend. Harry recounted his year in boarding school to the excitable children, patiently answering their questions and possibly, maybe embellishing a few details and facts.

"You really saved your friend Ron from a cursed mirror?"

"Yes, but to be fair, he also defeated the black army using his strategic skills and the help of the white army."

"Wicked!"

Not exactly his proudest moment but it felt awfully fun exaggerating his tale and watching his captivated audience gape and 'oh' and 'ah' at his words. ":-and as I struggled against Professor Quirrell and Voldemort I accidentally touched their bare skin, which began burning their flesh! It was actually quite gruesome as they practically shriveled and blackened under my touch. Of course poor Professor Quirrell didn't make it but Voldemort? Well, who knows."

Dudley blinked before his mouth curled into a wide grin. "Holy cow Harry, and I thought boarding school would be a lot more boring. Even a magic one."

"Though isn't it strange you immediately burned them just by touching? How does that work?" Piers queried curiously. Harry shrugged, "To be honest even I don't comprehend what had happened that night. It was.. Odd."

"Maybe it's foreshadowing," Dudley put out there with a laugh, "We learnt bout that in school. But that sort of stuff only happens in stories." He added.

"Yeah, maybe it's like you and Voldemort's souls are magically linked." Piers joked. All three boys laughed at that but Harry's was unnoticeably strained. Children's intuition was terrifying sometimes.

So turned out he had a piece of Mr Riddle's soul embedded into him.

It was more than a little embarrassing that some prepubescent boys figured it out before the fucking entity of death. Actually, it was kind of absolutely, stick your head in the hole, mortifying.
Harry spent a few hours that night, literally soul searching before he found the telltale crimson shard of another soul amidst the cloying black shadows of his own. He had to admit it was quite a lovely image. The red glow of the jaded fragment, wrapped tenderly by loose strands of the inevitable ocean of darkness, gently trying to coerce the single light of color into its depths. The struggle of the broken soul against the inevitable was beautiful in its tragedy.

He watched for a while. In the swirls of shadows and death that were the inner layers of his being, he watched Mr Riddle's small soul desperately staying above the surface, determined not drown as it fought against the natural flow.

They are usually three types of people, Death mused contemplative. People who accept death as easily as they accept the sky is blue, people who laugh in the face of it as they run headlong into danger and people who fear it and run the opposite direction as fast as their little legs can carry them. Eventually, they all succumb to his touch, no matter how reluctant.

So maybe there's really one type of people in the big picture, the people who die.

And yet there is Tom Marvolo Riddle. The Man Who Escapes From Death. Even now, just a fragment of him, surrounded by his end and yet still somehow keeping afloat after all these years. Stronger souls have lasted only mere minutes when consumed by him yet this little spark of life is still going strong, shining it's red glow dimly but no less determinedly.

Such a feat was both offending as it was awe inspiring to be perfectly honest. Luckily for Mr Riddle, Death had fond enough memories of him when they went on an impromptu camp together so the awe-inspiring component of what he was feeling soon won out. Death mentally scooped out the little shattered soul of crimson red with a gentleness that mother's held their newborns, and lightly pressed his lips on the shard, letting it glow a little brighter as its own shade dimmed darker, a deeper red with the faint swirling shadows of darkness now filled with it.

'It would be such a pity, after all, to let even one part of his soul disappear,' Death mused idly whilst he placed the little piece of soul back into the never ending darkness of his own being, this time his vibrantly green eyes which stood out all the more in this near colorless world, observed with a faint sense of pleasure as Mr Riddle's soul now casually floated on top of the tendrils of black. The shadows that had once tried to submerge the vivid color now flicked at it curiously. Death smiled at that, it had been a long time since he loosened the hold of something so clearly meant to be his. Yet at the same time, he had marked it, tethered it onto his own self in a way that's not ever been done before.

Nothing too permanent, it was more of a hitchhiker situation than anything really. 'After all,' Death thought idly, the little crimson piece now bobbing quite contentedly floating in a sea of lifeless expanse, 'I've got to collect all the pieces to get the real prize.'

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**Dear Death,**

*It's Fate.*

*Um. I just want to apologise for being the reason you left in the first place. I didn't mean to pressure you, though I really should've known better to not take advantage of your nice-ness.*

*But you're gone now and I see you are having a pretty good time despite everything. I'm currently trying to archive and do a soul count of the dead in Universe #78204, World #344185 where some sort of freak shark whirlwind happened?*
Again I am so sorry for what I've done. I don't think I've ever repented as hard as I'm doing now. So. Sorry.

Also uh, sorry for making the Dursley's so shite. If it helps at all, I've toned down the mistreatment in my new original Harry Potter story, worked out most of the plot holes and such like getting the baby to survive without resorting to asking my big brother for help. Though the real Harry kind of ends up a bit dumber than I considered, which isn't really fair considering I'm comparing him to you.

But he just got his Hogwarts letter and oh my god it's actually so obvious he'll never be a Ravenclaw you know? Well, of course you don't. You'll see later I guess.

Hope you have a good second year!

...Also maybe you should bring a rooster to school? Just a fun suggestion heh.

"POTTER WHERE ARE YOU, YOU DAMN MONKEY!"

Harry giggled maniacally to himself as he watched another group of determined children ran past his tree. The Harry Hunting game had gotten bigger than ever before now that Dudley had the forethought to make everyone pay up two dollars and the winners get all the money as a prize. There was at least four whole neighbourhoods worth of kids searching for him, probably more since the two had taken to spreading it across the school. Harry's pretty sure he's seen more than a few older teenagers trying to look like they weren't playing the game.

"COME OUT COME OUT HARRY!" Piers shouted with what looked like a lasso in his hands. "YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO!" One of Dudley's friends added with an excited edge, he was holding a skateboard. The pale raven haired boy grinned wildly at the promise of a good chase, putting his head out so it appeared through the branches he called,

"YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT I DO."

Jumping out of the tree Harry then dashed away like a madman, delighting in the startled screams and shocked yells.

"Uncle Vernon." A swine like grunt was his answer and the wet mulching sounds of potatoes and steak bits, "This Sunday in the evening one of my friends will be coming over to take me to their place for the rest of the holidays."

The older man's eyes narrowed, "Nnugh mizaming nemends?" Harry sighed.

"Yes uncle, one of my wizarding friends. His name is Draco and his parents are considered nobility in that world if that helps at all."

"Vernon, dear," Petunia simpered, having already been won over ten minutes beforehand when Harry pointed out the logic that he wouldn't be tainting her perfect household for long and that the Malfoy's were filthy rich. "I think it's a rather fabulous idea that the brat should be gone as soon as possible dearest."

Vernon scowled. Obviously unhappy about having to give his nephew any form of happiness. Bastard.

"Fine. But I expect every summer holiday to be like this." He groused.
"Wait, but what if I'm not invited anywhere that year?" Harry protested. "I can't just impose."

"What? Freak afraid his few friends get tired of him by then?" Vernon guffawed at his own joke, his wife giggling along with him. Then he stopped abruptly, beady eyes laser focused on the thin green eyed child as he hissed- "I don't care boy. A week in my house is the most you're getting now that you've asked for it and showed how ungrateful you really are. If you can't find somewhere then I hear the homeless shelter has some new blankets."

Harry could not believe this man had the gall to say such a thing. To kick a boy from his only home. Even Petunia looked uncomfortable at his sneers, excusing herself from the room with a torn expression on her face. Not that the boy could bring himself to care.

"Well thank you for your support then uncle." He spat out, immediately earning himself a heavy handed slap to the face. It stung enough to bring tears to his eyes but the worst part of it was the fact there was still potato and gravy on that hand. Instinctively he gingerly touched his cheek, screwing his face up at the grease splattered on it than the actual act of physical violence.

Disgusting blob of fat. Harry wouldn't even feed the man to the lowest of hellhounds lest they keel over from indigestion.

"Don't you ever talk that way to me again freak!" He hollered, the obese male pushing his chair away to stand up just to slap the boy again. This time, Harry crumpled down onto the kitchen tiles, his eyes glowing a furious green up at his vessel's uncle.

"If anyone's a freak here it's you." He sneered at the man. "Hell is too good a place for a man such as yourself." Vernon went an absolutely startling shade of purple, Harry was pretty sure he's never seen that colour on a human's face before at all which really didn't bode well for him at all.

Of course, he was right. The younger of the two grunted at the impact of the foot hitting his stomach, swearing under his breath as the kicks descended on him in waves, his saving grace was that Vernon was good enough to hit in various places on the body instead of focusing on just his abdomen but was still dumb enough not to think of doing anything truly creative to Harry at the moment. "You dare speak of hell boy?!" He screamed, "I'll give you hell. You wouldn't know hell if it kicked you in the back!"

Harry probably would have laughed if not for the terrible ache in his back. Oh yeah, he may not know Hell inside out as much as others may have but Vernon sure as, well, hell will do so soon enough. The fat man is going to be very well acquainted to the fiery pits. And a stake. A very sharp stake.

He's not sure when but his control must have loosened during the beating because the boy could hear his aunt's shrill shriek and a clatter of something hard falling onto the floor. "Demon!" Petunia hysterically screamed and Vernon in some mix of horror and absolute fright punched Harry's face hard enough that the boy had to throw his head to the side and retch.

"Freak!" Was all Vernon shouted, practically kicking the heaving, coughing boy into the cupboard under the stairs. Harry was glad Dudley was at some camping thing with his school friends right now, he didn't think a young child should witness what monsters his parents were. "You'll stay there till Sunday and then I better not see your sorry face for another year."

The door slammed shut and the sounds of multiple locks echoed in the small darkened room. Along with Harry's groans of agony as his human body felt like it had been lightly sizzled under the cool air and then drizzled in garlic salt. Oh god, he would taste so good covered in butter and thyme right now. So he was hungry too. Sue him.
"Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck." He muttered under his breath as he wiggled out of his ill-fitting clothes, only to lay on the floor in an undignified near naked heap with a relieved sigh. This is probably the lowest point of his immortal existence. It was both humbling and humiliating. "Fuck."

"This is where the great Harry Potter resides?" Lucius Malfoy sneered as he surveyed the similar looking rows of bland houses with their similar looking gardens, though admittedly the garden in front of them was a bit nicer than the others. His wife was pressing a silken handkerchief to her nose, glancing at the mundane magic-less neighbourhood warily.

"It is rather.. lacking."

"Come Narcissa, let's fetch the boy and leave as quickly as possible." The Malfoy Head murmured, brushing a reassuring hand against hers. Narcissa smiled, brushing back lovingly. "Yes let's." She agreed. "Though from the stories our little Dragon tells us about him, I admit I imagined some sort of gold-plated mansion."

"I thought it would be a diamond encrusted castle." Narcissa laughed softly at her husband's dry dramatics.

"Of course you would dear, and people think Draco's personality come from my side of the family."

Lucius didn't answer, but the faint curling upward of his lips was enough to know he heard and was deeply amused as he knocked on the door with exaggerated disgust that made her curl her lips up in turn. She always did adore the man's humorous side to his personality, she's never said it out loud but she was glad the Dark Lord was gone. With their name back on as one of the most prestigious, the old Lucius she'd fell in love with had finally reemerged from that icy cruel countenance that he had molded for himself. It was still ice and sharp edges but it no longer was the harsh, unforgiving way it once was.

The pureblooded wizard barely knocked twice before a woman with the unfortunate physical appearance of a giraffe opened the door. Lucius raised a surprised brow, "Good evening miss," He greeted cordially, the horse like female took one glance at his face and blushed.

"Oh my," She giggled, "And you are?" She batted her eyelashes in some misguided belief that it made her any less unappealing than she already was. The platinum blonde could hear his wife snickering a few feet behind him.

Valiantly ignoring the urge to give a much less than polite response to the mud-blood, the man just gave a strained smile, "My name is Lucius Malfoy, me and my wife Narcissa are here to pick up Harry Potter?"

At the name of the Boy Who Lived, the woman immediately paled, "But you guys aren't supposed to be here until tomorrow evening." She whispered.

"Yes but we did send an owl yesterday informing an early arrival." Lucius pointed out, Narcissa who had grown tired of waiting was now also next to her husband explained, "Lucius and I have a formal gathering with a few important dignitaries that evening, and our son was very much looking forward to his friend coming over so we couldn't possibly delay Mr Potter coming over."

She gave a sweet smile to the muggle, condescending and confident with the belief of being infinitely better than this magic-less middle-class household. "Where is Mr Potter anyway?"

When there was no answer coming from the strangely speechless woman, just a gaping mouth and darting eyes Narcissa felt a strange nigglng feeling that something was terribly wrong with the
situation. Lucius must have felt something was off too because he took one step closer to the woman, enough to be intimidatingly close without having to touch her, narrowing his eyes. "Yes, where is Mr Potter? My son is eagerly awaiting his arrival and I would loathe to disappoint."

"Uh, yes. Just wait right here and I'll get the lazy boy up." She huffed, seemingly putting herself together again. The blonde couple looked at each other before facing the matriarch of the house.

"Thank you but would you mind so terribly if we came in to see him?" Lucius purred in that way that proved how good of a politician he was. The brunette paled only further, obviously due to the etiquette-induced corner she'd been put into.

"The boy's room is a mess." The muggle answered stiffly, "I'll get you all some tea before fetching him." She faked a smile which the two Malfoys returned in kind as they were led into the house.

Narcissa looked around in wondrous horror at the.. decor. "It's a lovely home." She complimented half-heartedly. The muggle, for they still don't know her name, beamed and began animatedly boasting about her meagre lifestyle like she was the lucky one out of the three whilst she made tea. At least the tea was admittedly quite lovely.

Once they all sat down for some obligatory chit chat, an enormous whale of a man came bumbling into the room. "Oh this is my darling husband Vernon," the woman introduced brightly, apparently against all odds looking like she was having a pleasant time. Narcissa couldn't even tell if she was pretending, which if she was, kudos because the blonde Slytherins were certainly having trouble. And they've had luncheons with Fudge of all people. "Vernon, this is the Malfoys."

The obese male, Vernon, took one look at the fine furs adorning Narcissa and the general nobility of their looks before giving the pair what Lucius thought was some sort of attempt at a charming smile. He couldn't really tell, all the sneering jealousy in those eyes were making it hard to even think the word charming in their presence. "Good evening, I trust Petunia has been a delightful host as usual."

"Yes, Petunia has." The head of Malfoy agreed reluctantly, it wouldn't do to antagonize Potter's guardians after all. Even if Draco wasn't frighteningly obsessed with his newfound friend, it was just plain good sense to make connections with the mascot of the Light side, even better for him if he forged some sort of bond with the child. "But we really must pick up your child and take our leave soon."

Vernon made a confused noise. "Dudley's away at summer camp."

Lucius glanced at his wife which she accurately interpreted as, 'What in Merlin's name is a Dudley?' before subtly rolling his eyes back to the walrus-shaped muggle.

"No dear," Petunia giggled nervously, "They're here for the boy."

"Potter." Lucius clarified getting annoyed, not once had they even said Potter's name, were they even in the right place? "We're here for Harry Potter."

The response was immediate, Vernon's countenance went from friendly enough to down right loathing. "Figures you freaks can't even follow a proper schedule. Does your kind not know what a fucking calendar is?" He actually spat out at the shocked Malfoys.

"Excuse me?" The Malfoy patriarch said disbelievingly at the sheer outright crass of it all.

"I'll just get some more tea shall I?" Petunia offered, already sliding away to the kitchen, Narcissa also stood up as well. "Can you please show me to the bathroom as well?" She asked sweetly, Petunia readily agreed.
"Vernon didn't mean to be so.. Rude. He's just had a rough day." The muggle woman explained hastily as they walked through the hall. Narcissa didn't buy the excuse for a second but made a sympathetic noise anyway, "Such a shame that," she lied, "I would ha- what was that?"

"What was what?" Came the slightly panicked answer. Obviously you didn't need half a drop of sense to know how suspicious that sort of response was.

"I heard a knocking sound," The pureblood looked meaningfully in the direction she thought it came from, the lady found her gaze directed at the staircase.

Petunia gave a strangled laugh, "Oh my silly Duddikins must have dropped a ball or something. You know how kids are."

"I thought you said your son was away on a camping trip."

A soft thumping noise was heard again and quiet curses which Narcissa followed with a growing sense of dread. "Why is the cupboard door locked?" They couldn't possibly have, it was unthinkable, "Is there someone in there?" She asked loudly, half toward the locked door and half directed at the horse faced mud-blood. The other woman looking like she was about to have a stroke.

"Cissa, darling?" Lucius who had heard his wife, walked into the halls followed by an enraged but white faced Vernon Dursley. If the sheathing of his wand was any indication, the Malfoy head had given the larger male quite a thorough introduction to what adult wizards unhindered by underage laws could do. "What's wrong?"

"If what I think is true," Narcissa began, glaring poisonously at the mudbloods, "Then the answer is absolutely everything here. Alohamora!"

The locks on the cupboard door under the stairs clicked open much to the cries of dismay from Petunia and the angry shouts from Vernon. Tentatively Narcissa Malfoy knelt down and opened the small door, Lucius quickly by her side both in support and curiosity. It was dark inside and smelt musty, like old mothballs and rust. The tiny room wasn't fit for one of their house elves much less an eleven-year-old wizarding saviour.

Because that's exactly who was residing under the staircase, green eyes eerily glowing in the shadows as they blinked owlishly while his undernourished, thin frame was all too visible under the darkening bruising and ratty pyjama bottoms.

"Merlin." Lucius breathed in horror. Children getting harmed by their families happened, even in the Wizarding world, but usually it came from overly strict training than anything in order to help the child succeed. Goodness knows that Longbottom child is a good example of it. But this was just sickening.

"Y-You FILTHY MUDBLOODS!" His wife screamed, doing an amazing impression of Walburga Black, she was so clearly upset at seeing a child her son's age in such a state but the head of Malfoy was too busy still trying to comprehend the sight before him still. He's done some pretty cruel things in his life as a Death Eater he must admit, not out loud of course but still. This wasn't training, there wasn't any reason for such behaviour inflicted on a boy. This was just abuse.

As Narcissa began tearing the Dursley's a new one with just her words alone, Lucius bent down lower to poke his head into the dusty cupboard. "Mr Potter?"

The Potter boy surprisingly looked quite amused at the whole thing now that the platinum blonde could make out the child's expression with what little light was there. "Please Mr Malfoy," He said in
a very polite voice, like he wasn't half naked with bruises all over his body whilst in a previously locked cupboard. The rasp at the end the only vocal indication Potter was feeling any sort of strain or pain. "Call me Harry, I think we've kind of reached that point."

Harry gestured at his barely clothed form as emphasis to his point with a wry smile, the older man let out an involuntary chuckle before quickly covering up his mouth. How uncharacteristic of him to act in such an inconsiderate manner considering the very serious context. The boy, however, didn't look offended at all, instead he looked almost pleased with making the blonde male laugh.

"You look very nice when you laugh, it's a lot like Draco's." Harry praised, stretching his arms as far as the space allowed him to. "I've already packed my belongings and Hedwig should be waiting outside for us." The child informed Lucius cheerily, "I just need to get changed so if you'll be so kind to close the door?"

The boy trailed off, looking at Lucius expectedly. The Malfoy head just looked down at the boy, "And what of your injuries, Potter? Your priorities are sorely lacking if the first thing you request is for a change of clothing."

"My injuries will heal," Harry dismissed easily, "I'm eager to meet with Draco though so if you don't mind-?"

It was almost admirable how the green eyed boy was being so flippant about his current state of self, well if it wasn't so very saddening. Whoever decided to put the Boy Who Lived in this abusive hellhole was either a very sadistic Death Eater with a grudge or some incompetent dunderhead that couldn't tell a wand from his finger. Reluctantly the older man shuffled out of the cramped room and shut the door, turning around to see with more than smug satisfaction as his wife had reduced the muggle woman to hysterical tears and the fat swine of a man into a bloated piglet.

"-DISGRACEFUL BOTH OF YOU, AND YOU CALL YOURSELVES PARENTS?! I CAN'T EVEN CALL YOU MUDBLOODS, YOU TARNISH THEIR ALREADY FILTHY NAME!"

Ah, it's times like these you can really see the Black side of her family showing. He's always loved how cool, calm and collected the woman could be much like him but it's that controlled fire which rarely comes out that really sealed the deal.

"Now, now Mrs Malfoy, while I thank you for your good will- I think the name calling and, uh, pig-turning, very humorous really, is but a bit extreme," Harry said jovially as he stretched his limbs since he was now freed from his room. He sighed contentedly at the popping noise of his cramped joints.

Lucius and Narcissa had to give a double take at the child. No longer was he the malnourished beaten victim of a child they had seen before, now Harry looked completely different. His skin, while an almost bone white, was unblemished by any marks and Harry himself looked healthy, if a little on the gaunt side. Hell, the boy was pulling off the skeletal look in a way that was somehow darkly elegant.

As they gawked in a very undignified manner Harry surveyed the scene bemused and interested. The Malfoy matriarch was quite the lady indeed, McGonagall and her would probably make a simply terrifying duo if they became friends. Mr Malfoy seemed nice enough as well, yes, he thinks he would enjoy staying at Draco's place for the next few weeks.

Clapping his hands, the eleven-year-old looked at the Malfoy's with a soft smile and said, "Shall we head off? Once we turn my dear old uncle back into a more humanoid form of course."
"Mr Potter," Narcissa began uncertainly, "You look.. Well."

Harry tilted his head slightly, letting his green eyes widen to immeasurably adorable lengths. "I am as well as I'd always been Mrs Malfoy, though I thank you for the kind compliment."

"No I mean, what-"

"JUST LEAVE!" Petunia screamed, clutching the fat pig in her arms, "LEAVE YOU FREAKS!"

"Oh do shut up," Lucius frowned, with a muttered spell and a wave of his wand the hysterical woman was silenced. Then turning to the intriguing boy he asked, "Are you sure about these muggles?"

"My cousin Dudley's a good kid," Harry stated firmly. "I loathe my uncle and aunt but I would prefer my cousin to still have his parents intact that you very much sir."

"That's.. Selfless of you." The boy giggled, "Please sir, no need for such formalities. I'm fully aware I'm being, like Draco says 'Awfully Gryffindor.'"

Lucius gave a quietly relieved sigh, "Well thank Merlin for my son's good sense. Cissa dear?"

"I heard Mr Potter," The Malfoy matriarch gave the small child a gentle smile, "My curses will only last a day at best and I think my husband's will last for about-" "A week." "-a week."

Harry shrugged, "Good enough for me."

"Harry!"

Harry gave an easy going grin at his obviously delighted friend. "Draco it's great to see you."

The Slytherin looked tempted to actually throw himself into a hug with the other boy but one glance at his parents stopped him mid-way, instead opting for a friendly pat on the back instead. Harry winced a bit but kept smiling nonetheless. The two older Malfoys, who had not stopped inconspicuously staring at him the whole time must have noticed because now they were just blatantly staring at him. Like if a weighted gaze was a less metaphorical saying, Harry would be on his knees under the pressure.

"Draco, dear, why don't we go make sure Harry's bed is ready? Your father will show your friend to the.. bathrooms." The elegant lady of Malfoy house tried, Draco did not look much too impressed with the idea but with a meaningful look from his father he complied. Though from the faint grumblings in the distance, it was far from quietly.

Once the two was gone Lucius turned to the small black haired boy, hands crossed across his chest whilst he put on one of his most disproving interrogation face that Harry had probably seen. It was right up there with Order's and Time's. Snape's is pretty good too but there was this fatherly disappointment in the blonde's expression that gave it that extra sharp edge that made you want to curl into a ball and confess.

Honestly, if Harry wasn't older than the earth he was standing on and if Lucius wasn't well, someone who used to call themselves a Death Eater of all things than Harry was sure that he too would want actually admire the man. No wonder Draco respected his father so, what with that carrot stick thing the man had going on.

"Now Mr Potter, I hope you don't think you can just get away without explaining yourself yes?"
Harry sighed and snapped his fingers, the moment he did it was like his healthy looking appearance just slid off him like oil, leaving ugly yellow-brown bruising all over his body. While Lucius vaguely expected this, it still didn't stop the involuntary hiss of displeasure and sympathy to the obviously painful looking appearance. The man is sure people run over by those giant, ugly muggle smoke vehicles would be less bruised than this boy.

"We need to go to the Ministry about this at once." Lucius decided near immediately, "I will not condone such disgraceful, disgusting behaviour." Then with another considering once-over at the beaten child he amended, "But to St Mungos' first of course."

The green eyed young wizard frowned. Yes what those flesh lumps did was terribly wrong and Harry did want them to suffer, but those two days of being coddled after accidentally killing Quirrell had been practically suffocating. Also, Dudley does need his parents, he's only twelve years old after all and Aunt Marge was a frightful person to vacation with much less live with. No, he certainly didn't want that for the poor child, even for the satisfaction of seeing those rotten souls suffer.

They had eternity for that sort of thing later after all.

"Sir if I may, I rather you didn't." The older male looked at him incredulously.

"You rather I let you rot in that revolting household." He said slowly, as if the speed of his words was the one thing confounding him about this conversation.

"Rot is a very negative word." Harry purred, "I'd like to think of it as a.. dose of reality?" The boy winced at his choice of words. Maybe the blonde wouldn't pick it up and throw it right back in his face.

"A does of reality? For what Potter, battered wife syndrome?"

Trying to defend people you really hate kind of sucks. "I just don't want to lose contact with my cousin." He replied honestly, "And while my aunt and uncle treat me worse than a rabid mutt, Dudley has done no such thing and doesn't deserve to be an orphan like me because of me."

"So you're just going to take such treatment?" Lucius challenged with a sneer, "I expected more from the so-called Golden boy and even more from a friend of my son's."

"Then what would you have me do then?" Harry asked heatedly, disliking what the older of the two was implying. "Would you have me stand up and admit what has happened to my person? I'm a very important figure in the Wizarding world Mr Malfoy and you know very well there will be far-reaching consequences to this. I don't want to be pitied and I don't want my aunt and uncle to be sent away. Things that would most definitely happen if we told the Ministry."

Grey eyes narrowed, "Those are just excuses, you don't wish to be pitied? You don't want this cousin of yours to be raised without parentage? And for that, you'll let yourself be starved and bruised and bloodied?"

"It's one week in a year." Harry defended weakly, to explain how this sort of physical inflictions don't truly bother him would be near impossible. But his arguments did sound rather flimsy if said like that.. "Uncle Vernon told me if I wanted to come here I might as well do so every summer holiday."

"You are aware my family and I aren't going to be always here as your private bed and breakfast." Mr Malfoy pointed out.

Harry scoffed at that causing the blonde to look slightly offended and a little taken aback by it, "Of
course I'm aware sir. Even if I wasn't, while this is a lovely house and all, I wasn't exactly planning
on staying every holiday."

"Then what are you planning to do?"

The boy shrugged nonchalantly, "I don't know- traveling sounds good." He wondered
absentmindedly if his favourite horse rider, the closest being to a biological son he had, the Grim
Reaper, was still in that strange outcasted world of his. Apparently the fast food was of a much
higher quality than the mortals there. Harry definitely planned on visiting sometime in the future now
that he had the time.

Mr Malfoy was looking at him with a condescending, 'aw how cute is this child with its naive
stupidity' expression. Obviously the expression much like everything else about this man was much
more dignified than the average person but Harry could still tell. "You want to travel."

"Germany sounds pretty nice, nothing bad happens in Germany after all." Harry joked airily. "Or the
Middle East, I hear the food is simply explosive."

"Mr Potter I don't think you are fully comprehending the sheer wrongness dealt to you." The man
said soft and insistent.

"Mr Malfoy I don't think you understand that I very much don't give a damn." He retorted, the child
was getting annoyed at the older male's apparent morality to this context. It seemed the Malfoys
weren't as Dark and cold-blooded as they like to make themselves out to be. "I do not want my
childhood to be judged by the Ministry."

"Well since you are just a child your wants do not hold much sway when the health of your person is
called into question." Mr Malfoy sneered, "If it makes you comply I will see what I can do to prevent
incarceration for those muggles and only take away their rights as guardians."

The Malfoy head sounded like such a suggestion was poison-forming in his mouth with the way he
spat it out, like it was the foulest thing ever tasted. But maybe because of this, Harry felt his mouth
stretch painfully through the bruising into a bright grin.

"Really? Oh thank you Mr Malfoy! I would've loathed for Dudley to hate me for getting rid of his
family." The child beamed, bright green eyes so intense as they shined happily under the lighting.
"Though if I may have another request sir?"

Lucius was ready to just agree and get it over with. Most people usually compromised in his favor,
crumpling like wet parchment under his tone. But Draco's friend, Draco's abused wizarding savior of
a friend, of course had to be not most people. The blonde just had the most redundant argument with
an eleven year old and lost, maybe if he pushed on a bit harder he could have got the permission to
give those mudblood scum a little taste under the darker spells of his wand, but Lucius also knew that
he needed to be in this stubborn boy's good graces.

And that won't happen unless he reluctantly lets those foul people live, unfortunately.

"What is it now Mr Potter. You may be the Boy Who Lived and my son's friend but I do think
you're pushing the envelope a little too hard."

The delicate features of Harry and his admittedly adorable smile then turned positively Slytherin.
Lucius shivered at the sight. He may certainly think of the Potter scion as nothing but an interesting,
confusing, useful little pawn of a thing right now but he thinks he could certainly learn to like the
child soon enough.
Draco truly had good taste in companions, Crabbe and Goyle withstanding.

Harry Potter wasn't just good taste Lucius soon realised. Harry Potter was delicious ambrosia that no wizard nor witch couldn't eventually succumb to.

Said boy sniffled cutely, rubbing a particularly ugly looking bruise on his thin pale arms. The entire Wizengamont was practically melting in the face of... that face. The head of Malfoy had his doubts in letting Potter take charge of everything but things couldn't have gone smoother if it had been slathered in lemon scented body oil.

What would have taken an annoying prolonged few weeks just to get an appointment for something like this turned into a mere fifteen minutes once people realized who exactly was waltzing up to the Ministry. Things got down even faster if that was possible when Harry dropped his glamor once the secretary witch asked for the reason the great Boy Who Lived was here. Lucius had honestly never even knew the ministry could be so efficient.

Fudge was there in a heartbeat, the overweight man smelling a public relations opportunity like a blood hound, cooing at Harry with only slightly exaggerated sympathy while simultaneously loudly ranting about the injustices of it all. After that a court was quickly compiled, Dumbledore looking shaken and nauseated when he caught sight of Harry, the other Wizengamont members were of a similar opinion when they saw the fragile-looking child.

Even with Dumbledore's weak protests, they managed to lift guardianship from the Dursley's before dinnertime. Harry was currently in a limbo status as for the next few months the child will be subjected to various custody battles and debates and bribes. There wasn't one family in the Wizarding world that didn't want to have the great Harry Potter as an honorary member of their bloodline.

"Narcissa dear?" The sly blonde Malfoy murmured to his sleepy wife as they got ready for bed.

"Mm?" She hummed, still smiling fondly at the recent memory of Draco chiding his friend for being so late and the following excited babble of her son as he haughtily insisted of a spooky late night tour of the mansion to make up for it. If the witch listened hard enough, she's sure she could hear the faint noises of excited children and soft padding footsteps.

"I hear the Weasleys are vying for custody for Mr Potter."

Narcissa smirked, knowing full well what her husband was asking and fully approving.

"Well, we can't have that can we?"

It came to the surprise of absolutely no one that someone from the Ministry blabbed about Harry's home life.

That they had to do this on his birthday was completely fucking inappropriate though. Whoever this Skeeter woman was, she is both a coldhearted bitch and extremely good at what she does. Since what she does is spin magnificent tales that exploit people's trauma and secrets, the two statements aren't entirely unrelated.

Draco, sweet naive child that he was wrapped up in spoilt ignorance didn't fully understand the extent of the abuse Harry suffered but still gave him a very big hug anyway. Then helped Harry ignore the sudden influx of mail related to his tragic childhood by aiding his friend in opening up his various gifts and talking about who might end up adopting Harry.
"Look, they've even got a running poll betting on who gets you!" Draco waved the newspaper in his face, the graph and what's written in it stark in its black ink against the paper.

"I'm so flattered." Harry said dryly as he gently pushed the paper away from his face. "Not objectified at all."

Draco frowned as he continued reading the poll. "Us Malfoys are tied with the Weasleys?" The blonde sniffed haughtily, "Well that's just unacceptable."

Harry hummed vaguely in acknowledgement as he opened another present. Chocolate frogs again. Great. He'll put it aside next to the other ten boxes. Harry kind of gets why Dumbledore wanted socks for Christmas.

In the midst of opening another generic gift from some stranger he's never heard of, a house elf popped into the room. "Young Master Draco, Young Master De- Harry, Master Malfoy is coming here with a guest."

"Thank you." Harry said politely, with a soft nudge to the blonde boy, Draco also mumbled his thanks, making the elf sob before disappearing.

"See Harry, this is why you don't say thanks." Draco grumbled.

"Oh shush and eat a chocolate frog."

More grumbles and then the faint sound of something being unwrapped and eaten. The green eyed boy smiled. Adorable.

"Happy birthday Mr Potter." Mr Malfoy greeted as he strode elegantly into the room. "I see you've seen the papers so wishing you a good morning would be rather redundant."

"Thank you sir," Harry said politely, craning his head up to show off his good mood via smile. "And I-" The boy trailed off as his gaze wandered off to the side of the Malfoy Head as he noticed just exactly who Lucius' guest was. "Professor." He nodded a little stiffly, remembering their last encounter and the dimmed flickers of anger associated with the memory.

He wasn't angry anymore. Harry has existed far too long to get hung up over such small things but that certainly did not mean he was just going to let it slide and be the one to take the first step in giving the proverbial olive branch.

It seemed his cold manner vexed the older man as the professor's jaw clenched in response. "Potter, do you mind if we talk alone for a moment?"

Harry purposely took a few drawn out seconds of pondering before pushing himself off the wrapping laden floor with a put upon sigh. Snape eyed him strangely before giving a sweeping turn with his robes and walking out from where he came. Harry gingerly followed him.

They ended up somewhere in one of the many random lavish guest rooms, far away from snooping Malfoys and spying portraits. Not that any portrait would dare defy Harry since they were all as afraid of him as the Sorting Hat was. Unlike the Sorting Hat unfortunately, they weren't weaved by some of the most powerful wizards in this world and therefore are not as aware of the existence of entities such as himself. Honestly Harry isn't sure what exactly they must see when they look at him but it's certainly not attractive.

"Is there a problem Professor?" Harry asked, arching his neck to the side in indirect defiance. He may be a push over, but among the entities he was definitely one of the most passive aggressive.
Well.. Second most. When Time gets ticked, you can always count on him to slowly but inevitably wind you up.

And *ooh*, there's that twitch in the older man's jaw again. That was oddly satisfying.

"Potter.." Snape started slowly, Harry would almost think it was hesitant if it wasn't so disapproving. Though maybe it was just the boy not being exposed to the snarky professor for a while, Snape always sounded on some level disapproving.

"Happy birthday." He said, handing over a palm sized green present to the physically younger of the two.

Harry waited expectedly for more. He was severely disappointed as all he got was a blank stare and a small parcel in his hand.

"Oh." The child said, trying but probably failing to hide what he was feeling right now. "Well.. Thank you sir."

He felt a large hand softly brush his hair before the sounds of footsteps left the room leaving Harry alone with his tiny box. Not completely sure what to do, but knows enough to be aware that arson is not the correct response to this situation, Harry just unwrapped the little present with growing bitterness.

Harry wanted to throw it in Snape's big nosed face.

How the fuck *dare he* dismiss him in that manner? He did not emotionally invest himself to building some relationship only for this stubborn man to break it down because of his pride. The fact he was pretty much doing the same thing by refusing to bring the topic up was not the point here. Harry was an eleven year old child for goodness sake, well he wasn't, but he should be treated as such dammit.

Actually no he shouldn't be treated like a child. Except for in these situations. Because.. Damn Snape for making him feel this confusing convoluted way!

Ripping the wrapping harshly, Harry paused as he caught sight of words written on the box underneath.

*I'm sorry.^

With much less anger than before, the boy slowly lifted up the lid. Inside, cozy and snug against soft fabric was a beautiful twisted thin vial with golden brown liquid, it was connected to a short simple black ribbon. On the ribbon was the silver scrawl of 'For when you feel horrified.'

Unscrewing the lid, Harry took a small whiff to determine yes, inside was indeed whisky, not just any whisky, the child was fairly sure it was the same whisky Snape had been drinking during their last conversation. Something light and static fluttered inside the base of his neck as he giggled.

Stupid emotionally stunted human mortal. How dare he? *How dare he even?*

Harry demurely wrapped the ribbon around his neck, enjoying the feel of the fabric and weight much more than he expected, before tucking it under his robes as he made his way back to where the Malfoys were waiting. Knowing Snape, he'd probably left the manor once he handed him the gift. *How dare he?*

How dare the man make Harry forgive him through thoughtful sweet gifts?
Harry's smile hasn't faltered once since he put on the vial. It was *infuriating*.

Staying at the Malfoy mansion was very enjoyable. The food was fantastic, Draco was amazingly willing to please him- it was almost depressingly obvious that this was the first time the blonde heir had brought a friend home for the summer, and the pillows were made of literal clouds. Also Mr Malfoy's hair was like spun gold and Harry was maybe a tad bit obsessed with it.

He accidentally brushed against the man's hair once and it was like silken spider webs. Harry wants to pull on it as the man kisses his neck an- okay so maybe the infatuation was partly with the man himself as well. Who could blame the child? The Malfoy head had literally scooped him out of the cupboard and saved him from the wicked Dursleys, how could you *not* swoon. He would have played around with the same thoughts about Mrs Malfoy as well but her hair is honestly not as nice. But seriously Lucius Malfoy's hair was like gossamer threads spun by the heavenly choir and when sunlight touches it, it sparkles like fairy dust.

Needless to say, Draco must never know.

Anyway, it was a rather lovely holiday. Except for maybe one thing.

Actually, two things.

Harry frowned as once again the shadows at the edge of his gaze disappeared as he turned around.

"Harry?" Draco asked, "What are you looking at? Never mind, come on it's a beautiful day to beat you on the broom." The blonde heir teased, Draco had been a bit stiff in the beginning, adorably nervous really. But soon enough they managed to resume their playful banter- just not in front of the other's parents.

"Pssh," Harry rolled his eyes, "In your dreams, the snitch totally flew into your hands the last time on purpose out of pity."

"Harry Potter, the Sore Loser who Lived."

"You should really stop looking at a mirror so much Draco, you're seeing yourself in everything."

It started with meeting the peacocks.

Well actually it also started during breakfast the first morning at the manor.

There's two different things. Obviously they started at different times. This was not the best start to a story. It wasn't the best start to anything actually.

Breakfast happened first, because it's the most important meal of the day. Sitting at the table Harry could not help but openly stare at his plate. The Malfoys couldn't help either as they took one glance at what was on Harry's plate and it was like their eyes were locked onto the absolute mountain of food in front of the tiny boy. Harry didn't even like breakfast food that much. Sure pancakes were nice occasionally and crunchy bacon is delicious anytime of the day but he was picky with eggs and just a few bites of cereal is enough for him. Give him a juicy cheeseburger any day. A breakfast wrap or something equally breakfast themed is more a 'will eat if given to him but otherwise given the option refuse to order' kind of thing.

So seeing the heaping piles of scrambled eggs, glistening sausages, roasted tomatoes, enough bacon
strips to recreate a baby pig and what Harry thinks is the actual loaf of bread toasted in front of him was vaguely sickening.

"No offense Mr and Mrs Malfoy but I feel like you are trying to tell me something." He joked weakly as he looked at his meal warily. Goodness, you couldn't even see the plate.

Mrs Malfoy pursed her lips, "I assure you Mr Potter we've done no such thing." Then, calling one of the house elves, she ordered a good three quarters of it gone. It still left way too much breakfast goodness for him but at least he can make malnutrition an excuse for his lack of hunger.

It got worse though.

After that Draco insisted on showing off the prized Malfoy peacocks that wandered the courtyards. Harry, naive fool he was back then, readily agreed. He really should've known better when he agreed.

He really should've known better when Draco introduced him to their favourite prized peacock. Smaller than it's brothers and sisters, this one's beauty was unmatched- feathers as paler than Harry's own skin, tinged with an icy blue that made him look like it was some sort of delicate carving of ice instead of a living breathing creature of flesh and blood and bone. His size certainly didn't match it's large personality either, the larger birds seem to step away when it practically swaggered toward them confident in his beauty and Harry could see the Malfoy pride brimming in the avian creature.

Truth be told, even he was immediately taken with the elegant magnificence of this bird that seemed to be made from snow and ice. Harry had knelt down and cooed his greetings at the bird, praising his appearance and loveliness.

That too he should've known better.

Snowflake the peacock cooed.

_Dobby_, Harry thinks he could've handled. After managing to corner the elf who had somehow thought it was his blood bound duty to do everything he could to keep Harry Potter safe and happy, Harry had explained bluntly how he was freaking Death and therefore that while the help was nice, it was not necessarily needed. That resulted in a lot of tears and head banging on the elf's part but soon enough the message sunk in. Kind of. At least that weird tirade about how 'Harry Potter shouldn't be going back to Hogwarts,' thing was forgotten so the child will take this as a win.

House elves he has learnt, while incredibly enthusiastic to the point of intense masochism, just want their masters to be happy and to know they are doing good work. A lot of good work. Just politely giving an order or sixteen to the enthusiastic elf and a 'thank you' is enough to satisfy the creature for a solid morning.

Of course indulging in these servantile beings' masochism encouraged the other elves to ask to do work from him. It was getting a little hard to think up some orders on the fly but Draco helped well enough. They even made a nice little game of most creative demand, which Harry was currently winning because he asked for Dobby to take a Monopoly game from the Dursleys.

Okay it wasn't really that creative but to the purebloods they were absolutely fascinated with the thing. Once Harry explained the rules the Malfoys took to the muggle game like sharks in fish infested waters. By the end of the night Mr Malfoy, who had managed to put his wife in debt and fool his son into some sort of Ponzi scheme and somehow lawsuited the hell out of Harry, admitted that maybe muggle games weren't too bad after all. It definitely was much more intellectually
stimulating than those exploding gobstones.

So no Dobby, with his pure innocent desire to help, along with the rest of the house elves, we're not too bad.

Snowflake on the other hand however was terrifying in ways that Harry never ceased to believe. Like he's the physical representation of an unstoppable primordial force and yet he's pretty sure Snowflakes the bloody peacock was one too in a far different sense. A perverted sense for all those who are too obtuse to understand.

Now to clarify, Death has had suitors. Female, male and those in between. It's one of the few carnal pleasures he gets and while he doesn't do it as often as his fellow entities, Death has had a fair share. He doesn't make love either, the entity wasn't even sure if he was capable of that sort of thing in this sort of context. He's fucked and gotten fucked. Rough, fast and filthy. Slow, gentle and precious. He's done things with three out of the four Horseman at once. Death the Horseman was not at all pleased. Didn't even top his top ten carnal exploits.

The point is, Death, and therefore Harry (spiritually at least) has gotten a lot of intercourse. From mortal animals to magical beings to deities to that one purple alien who may or may not be dead set on killing a bunch of planets and calling himself Death's champion. He's not a blushing virgin. Okay no, he's just not a virgin.

So there should be no excuse for him being sexually intimidated by a snow white peacock called Snowflake.

But he is.

He totally, totally is.

"Oh look, Snowflake's back again." Draco pointed out, unaware of his friend's full body flinch. "Funny, usually he hates everyone. Father is pretty much the only one he deigns to interact with. I'm pretty sure I've only seen Snowflake like three times a year."

Harry wished he had that problem. He's seen that persistent bird everywhere. Usually when he was in some sort of state of undress. It was like overtime he began stripping, the white peacock was. just. there.

Like now, just as he was mid-way through taking his shirt off after a particular hot day of catching snitches. His pale eleven year old torso slightly toned and very sweaty are half exposed to the world, and more importantly Snowflake. Peacocks aren't well known for being predators but with the look in this one's eyes, it's hard to imagine them as anything but right now.

"Yeah.. Funny that."

Snowflake coos.

The boy wonders if Snowflake was a magical peacock. That can be the only explanation how the bird has managed to get past all the magical barriers he's tried constructing whenever he has a bath.

Also he did not shriek when the feathery elegant bird jumped into the bath while he was happily soaking in rose scented bath oils.

He also did not almost drown himself in mortification when Dobby popped into the bath too,
apparently having sensed his distress.

When he came back into reality, the entity now mortal child realised that reality has a peacock that has taken his undergarments. Harry has never been harassed in this manner in his life. He wants to both cry and laugh till he cries. Either way there will be tears. And lost clothing.

"DRACO YOUR PEACOCK'S IS STALKING ME." Harry screamed as he hastily wrapped a fluffy towel around his waist.

The only sounds from his friend was muffled laughter. What a prat.

"So Potter," Blaise drawled as he skimmed through some book as they waited for Draco to get ready. They were supposed to go shopping for their school books today and the Italian wizard's mother apparently had an impromptu date, hence his presence at the Malfoy manor. "I hear from Draco you're afraid of peacocks?"

"I'm not afraid of peacocks." Harry scowled.

"No, he's just afraid of Snowflake!" Draco shouted from the bathroom like the prat he is. Blaise raised a judgemental brow at the Boy Who Lived.

"Snowflake? The small one who thinks he's better than literally everyone else?" There was a suspicious coughing sound from the olive skinned boy and Harry narrowed his green eyes at him as he studiously ignored the heat on his cheeks.

"You don't understand," Draco said coming out of the bathroom, steam visible from the room as the blonde grinned madly. "Snowflake for some reason loves Harry. Harry show him the trick." He egged on, apparently having found the whole Snowflake situation hilarious once he finally caught on.

"What thing?"

"I'm not showing him the thing."

"Oh come on Harry, show Blaise the thing."

"What thing?"

Harry huffed but did so anyway. Slowly, ever so slowly, he began unbuttoning his robes much to the italian boy's befuddlement. Once the green eyed child started lifting his shirt, then Blaise began to voice his confusion, "What are you-"

He stopped midway through when an innocent coo of a peacock was heard. Looking down, Blaise almost jumped when a small white peacock who was now ruffling open his tail feathers, suddenly appeared in the middle of the room. Harry gave both Blaise and the flaunting bird a long suffering look before redressing himself.

"Now that you two have essentially pimped me out to Snowflake for your amusement, you guys are buying me ice cream."

Snowflake cooed.

"No you can't come."

Snowflake cooed sadly.
Diagon Alley was seriously crowded. Like seriously packed, especially around the bookstore. Which is a pity considering that was where the trio plus Mr Malfoy, was heading.

"What's all this about?" Harry wondered aloud. "Some sort of sale?"

"It's a book signing." Zabini answered annoyed. "Gilderoy Lockhart."

The green eyed boy brightened at the name. "Oh my god really? I enjoy his books immensely!" He said excitedly earning various disgusted looks from his friends and Mr Malfoy. Clearly they weren't fans. "What?"

"Lockhart is a buffoon." Stated Mr Malfoy in no uncertain terms. "While I find it's prudent not to show distaste of him publicly, especially considering his.. high regard from our kind, he is, in no uncertain terms, a buffoon."

Harry shrugged, "So? His stories are very riveting, even if his characterization feels a bit weak."

"Harry.. I know this sounds ridiculous but.." Draco laughed awkwardly, "Do you happen to think Lockhart's stories are fiction?"

Harry looked confused, "Of course, they are children adventure books yes? It's all very dramatic and interesting but clearly unrealistic." The disgusted expressions surrounding him turned highly amused. Even the Malfoy Head was hiding a smile behind his mouth. "What?"

"Potter," Lucius began before he couldn't continue any further for fear of losing his composure in public. Luckily his son had no such conniptions. The older blonde will talk to his son about acting in such a manner but for now he will leave it be.

"For such a smart person you can be bloody dense about things." Draco snickered, "Lockhart's books are our textbooks for this year, Harry."

"We have a creative writing course?" Blaise slapped him on the head.

"Now you're being deliberately obtuse. It's our Defense textbooks. As in, those stories you've read? Are non-fiction texts."

Harry stared at all of them. Waiting for the punchline. It didn't come.

"Oh." He said.

Which was of course when Gilderoy Lockhart hugged him. "See! My eyes have never deceived me, Harry Potter is right here!" He declared and suddenly it was like the horde had descended upon them like ants on maple syrup pancakes.

Ugh, breakfast food. He's so sick of breakfast food and damn Dobby with his wide expectant elf eyes watching him the whole time.

There's a lot of clamoring and noise going on, Gilderoy Lockhart's clear and loud as it went on and on. "-and I thought to myself, 'It can't be Harry Potter?' and I just had to have a closer look to see you see, and lo and behold-"

Harry blinked hard at the sudden flashes and smoke coming from the old fashioned camera aimed at the pair. If he had the ability to lift up his arms, he would be happily rubbing away the dancing white spots in his vision. But alas, the blonde wizard physically restraining him was preventing him this
"Nice big smile, Harry," said Lockhart, through his own gleaming teeth. "Together, you and I are worth the front page."

Harry smiled. Maybe if he did so he could earn the privilege of breathing.

It seemed to work well enough since Lockhart finally let go after the final flash. The green eyed boy quickly tried to make his way over to the smirking Malfoys and Blaise, his gaze also catching sight of red hair and freckles but for now he had to focus on escape. However again the smiling wizard caught him, arm over his shoulders like they were somehow friends or something, announcing how yes, the great Gilderoy Lockhart will indeed be teaching Defense Against the Dark Arts in Hogwarts this year.

And to think Harry thought he liked the man as an author.

He still did, but now that he was aware of the obnoxious personality behind the quill the general reading experience is tainted.

"Bet you loved that, Harry?" Draco drawled teasingly once Harry managed to crawl out of Lockhart's grasp. "Not enough that the whole Malfoy house elves and peacocks served as your personal fan club for the holiday, now you can't even go into the bookstore without making it to the front page."

Harry was just about to retort with a cutting and absolutely devastating comeback, he was, really, but then an unfamiliar voice interrupted him.

"Leave him alone, he didn't want all that!" A small redheaded girl with freckles said, glaring at the platinum blonde boy. A Weasley? Ron did mention a sister come to think of it.

"And a girlfriend Harry?" Draco crowed, because clearly Mr Malfoy has not taught his son well enough to not get carried away in antagonising to the point of pulling in random strangers into the conversation. Despite the Malfoy head's usual hot-cold demeanour with an extra side of frosty, the man clearly liked coddling his child. "My my, Snowflake will be positively murderous." The redheaded girl, angry and confused went a positively scarlet colour.

Suddenly, Ron and Hermione burst in through the mass of people.

"Oh, it's you," said Ron, looking at Draco as if he were something unpleasant on the sole of his shoe. Draco sneered in response. It seemed absence does not make the heart grow fonder. Internally the raven haired boy sighed, it seemed he's going to have to make the two renew their reluctant truce again this year.

"Ron!" said an older red headed man who must be Mr. Weasley, struggling through the crowd with Fred and George. "What are you doing? It's too crowded in here, let's go outside."

"Well, well, well - Arthur Weasley."

It was Mr. Malfoy. He stood with his hand on Draco's shoulder, sneering in the exact same way. It would have been amusing if Harry wasn't in the middle of this mess of a family feud. He wasn't a Weasley nor a Malfoy, so why the fuck was he literally in the middle of this? He just got harassed by a B-class writer, he should be having ice cream and hot chocolate.

"Lucius," said Mr. Weasley, cold and curt.
"Busy time at the Ministry, I hear," said Mr. Malfoy. "All those raids. I hope they're paying you overtime?"

He reached into Ginny's cauldron and extracted, from amid the glossy Lockhart books, a very old, very battered copy of *A Beginner's Guide to Transfiguration*.

"Obviously not," Mr. Malfoy said with exaggerated disdain. Mrs Malfoy was right, the older blonde loved to dramatise. "Dear me, what is the use of being such a disgrace to the name of all wizard kind if they don't even pay you well for it?"

Mr. Weasley flushed darker than either Ron or Ginny. The resemblance in the two pureblooded families was absolutely startlingly. Harry is pretty sure genetics is not supposed to work this way.

"We have a very different idea of what disgraces the name of wizards, Malfoy," Mr Weasley said.

"Obviously," Mr Malfoy sneered harder if possible, "We also seem to have a different idea on parenthood. After all, it seems you aren't aware of the term, quality over quantity."

There was a thud of books falling to the ground as Mr. Weasley threw himself at Mr. Malfoy, knocking him backward into a bookshelf. Dozens of heavy spell books and texts fell down under the ensuing tumble. There was screaming and hair pulling and pushing and everything. Admittedly it was pretty hot.

Draco, Ron, the twins, the girl and Blaise were shouting encouragement as a woman who might have been Mrs Weasley shouted for the fight to stop, aided by a pleading shop assistant.

Percy was suddenly by his side, face red and embarrassed. To be fair, Harry probably would be too in the teenage boy's position. He'd always thought Percy might find himself a bit out of place with his family sometimes, part of it being the usual phase of a teen obviously but this certainly wasn't going to help much. With a soft nudge at the older redhead, Harry gave him a reassuring crooked smile when Percy looked down.

"Well at least your dad's defending your honour like the princesses you are," Harry said lightly, Percy still looked plenty embarrassed at the scene his family was making but at least the other saw enough humour to smile slightly at the joke.

Sometime during the exchange Hagrid had wondered into the bookstore and separated the two family patriarchs apart. Mr Weasley's lip was split and Mr Malfoy looked like a book hit him in the face what with the faint pinning on his pale cheek.

When Mr Malfoy looked at him though, Harry could see the older man look slightly abashed at how he must look in the Wizarding Saviour's eyes, it quickly faded as he shook himself out of the half giant's grip. Eyes glittering with malice Mr Malfoy summoned the battered transfiguration textbook from before, shoving it into Ron's sister's book filled cauldron. "Take the book girl, after all it's probably all the best your father could give you," He spat. "Come on Draco, Harry, Blaise."

Shrugging helplessly Harry followed, though not before mouthing to Ron an apologetic *I'll write you?* in which, with pursed lips, Ron nodded. They had been exchanging letters the past few weeks and it'll be a shame to cut it off so soon before school started up again. Giving his freckled friend a thumbs up, Harry hurried to catch up with the fuming Malfoy.

He couldn't help the feeling that this felt slightly ominous to the year ahead.
The one where Death decides he hates Lockhart

"I am so getting onto the Quidditch team this year, just you guys wait." Draco announced, his finger pointing accusingly at his sprawling friend. Harry flopped his arm over his head as he lay on the train's comfortable compartment seats.

"Draco I never said you couldn't." He groaned. "In fact I distinctly don't remember saying anything actually." The boy just. wanted. to. sleep. He had woken up at two in the damn morning with a peacock in his arms crooning happily. He did not have the patience for this train ride.

The sliding doors slid open to bring in a red faced Ron. Because of course, that was exactly what Harry needed.

"Malfoy." Ron growled.

"Weasley." Draco sneered.

"Potter." Harry muttered just to be contrary. He wasn't even looking at the two boys, just up at the ceiling as he felt his body try to become one with the train. "Now for the love of all things holy and magic can you guys just not?"

"His dad insulted my family!" Ron protested.

"His dad insulted mine!" Draco defended.

"All I'm hearing is that your dads did it." Harry pointed out, still unmoving. "I don't see why we have to revert back to the beginning of last year."

"Harry it may surprise you to hear this but the only time we are remotely civil is when you're around. There is no reversion." The Malfoy heir said dryly.

The arm covering his face slid off to lie limply off the edge of the seats so bright green eyes blinked at the two boys bleary and annoyed. "Then do that then." He hissed, "If you two are going to act like the children you are then do it away from me or do it here so then I will take great pleasure in pushing you two out of the window where your bodies would tear and splinter into horrifying bloody carcasses and your faces will be so mangled your own fathers' won't be able to recognize you from a raw meatball."

Both boys stared at the irritated child with equally sickened expressions. Coincidentally enough Ron made a similar face when he sang his rendition of Waltzing Matilda. "Yeah okay Harry." Draco whispered, his hand lightly pressing his lips in a scandalized fashion. "Merlin."

"What's up with Harry, Malfoy?" The redhead side murmured.

"He didn't sleep well last night because Snowflake found his way into his bed." Draco explained quietly, grey eyes watching warily as Harry slowly settled back in his previous position. "Apparently he ended up hiding in my sock drawer at five am."

Ron stared at his unfriendly rival. "There are so many questions. I don't know where to begin." He confessed.
"Well luckily for you Weasley I do." Draco said gleefully. And then launched into the epic unrequited love story of Snowflake the peacock and the Boy Who Lived.

When Harry woke up two hours later, still groggy but feeling infinitely much more human than before, he was greeted to the sight of a large stack of assorted candies and his friends, both Gryffindor and Slytherin, giggling as Draco Malfoy regaled them once again about the time Harry almost had to go to St Mungos because somehow Snowflake had made his way onto his broom and the boy was so shocked he fell off just as he was about to take off. Luckily his arm was just bruised and not fractured or that would've been a much more mortifying story than it already was.

Harry groaned and silently cursed the Malfoy scion before going back to sleep again. He did not want to be awake for this.

The Gryffindor table, much like every other House table, was filled with noise and chatter and 'Oh my god, how have you've been doing's.' Hermione apparently went somewhere with her parents. Ron groused about Harry not being over at his place that holiday. The boy was fairly sure he's going to be guilted over to the Weasleys come Christmas break. No he was completely sure. And already ready to crumble dammit.

"So I didn't know your sister was coming to Hogwarts this year- from the impression in your letters I thought she was like.. Six."

Ron guffawed, "Naw mate, though she certainly can act like a six year old sometimes."

"Like you can talk Ronnikins!" One of the twins shouted somewhere on the other side of the table. Harry didn't even want to know how.

"Shut it Fred!" The freckled redhead turned his head and shouted. "Or I'll tell Harry what you said in your sleep that one time that you insisted was an accident!"

"It was an accid-DON'T TELL HARRY!" A bunch of girls shrieked as the Weasley twin practically slid on the table in an attempt to reach his annoying youngest brother. The freckled teen flailed a bit as he pulled his body closer to the pair. Then, mustering up the shreds of today's pride and dignity, Fred turned to a highly amused Ron and a wide eyed Harry Potter, his arm holding up his head as he lay on the table. "Hey.. Harry, how are you doing?"

Harry pressed the back of his hand to his lips as he tried not to giggle. "Definitely better now that you're here Fred."

Fred beamed brightly, his pale freckled face pink, probably still from the embarrassment. His brother, doing the less spastic thing, had walked around the table to stand behind Harry and Ron, giving a faked put-upon sigh. "Children these days." He tutted.

Ron, high from the knowledge that for once he had the upper hand against his prankster brothers grinned madly and added, "You know someone else also says things in his slee-" The redhead's smiling mouth was muffled by a blushing George's hands. Fred tutted mockingly, still on the table and had visibly gotten used to lying on it.

"Children these days."

"I think I should be the one saying that." Every turned to look up and there Professor McGonagall was in all her stern and disapproving glory. Fred slid off the table to slink between his brother and the Boy Who Lived. "The Sorting is starting and I very much hope for your sakes that I won't have to come back here again."
All the Gryffindors in ear shot nodded as one, it didn't matter if they had no part in it, one look from their head of House and they were just compelled to agree. Harry liked Professor Snape, he did, but hell, the human child in him respects the hell out of McGonagall. Even the entity of him is admittedly a bit intimidated by her.

Hermione on the other side of the table might have whimpered a little. Harry only judged her a little for that.

Ginny Weasley, Ron's sister, was a little weird in Harry's opinion. Ron told him she was always weird but usually in a much louder manner. The redheaded Weasley girl flushed at that, punched her brother on the shoulder and ran off to the front of the group walking toward their dorms. Even Hermione, who had been engrossed with Gilderoy's 'A Voyage with Vampires' book commented offhandedly about that.

The green eyed boy didn't have the heart to tell Hermione that Gilderoy's books weren't products of fiction. She'll find out soon enough.

Fred and George too were acting a little different too, not in a terribly odd way or anything. They were still joking and grinning and generally just being a right laugh, but Harry couldn't help but notice they seemed to be sticking to him closer than usual. Lee Jordan was there too, he was a funny guy as well but the boy couldn't help but feel the teen was aware of something he wasn't because every single time one of the twins accidentally brushed against him, jostled by the crowd, Jordan would get the slyest grin and would wink at Harry. Harry does not know what to do with that.

Even Percy, who as prefect was up there in the front of the Gryffindor group, kept sneaking glances at Harry. The boy was pretty sure he knew what this was all about but he couldn't help but be curious nonetheless.

"Hey, Fred, George?" Two near identical faces turned to look down on him.

"Yeah Harry?"

"What can-

"-we do for you?"

Harry blushed slightly, the faint dusting of pink decorating his pale features. His idea sounded silly now that he was about to say it out loud. Silly and very self-centred, but what else could it be to warrant such strange behaviour other than them wanting him?

"Um," He began nervously, "Do you really want me so badly?"

There was a sudden 'oof' as the twins collided with each other and arms and legs fell together in a messy heap. "What?" George croaked.

The green eyed child blushed harder, now he felt even worse. Ron was staring at the whole thing confused. "Why are you so surprised?" Ron asked. "It was bloody obvious even to me that you two and Percy want Harry badly."

There was another crash as Percy stumbled over nothing but the floor, from their angle they could only see that the tips of the prefect's ears were practically burning. "Percy wants me too?" Harry said surprised, Ron nodded vigorously while his older brothers tried to untangle themselves from the flooring.
"Yeah, you should've seen them this Summer Harry. I mean, they practically took my right as best mate to complain about you not visiting. And over the time we exchanged letters it was all, 'How's Harry doing?', 'Does he need rescuing from the Malfoy's?', 'I read the Prophet, is he doing okay?', 'Can I write to him?' Honestly, it was so annoying."

"Oh," Harry said, immensely flattered. Then shyly he looked at his friend and asked, "Do you want me as well?"

By then they were holding tightly the captive attentions of literally everyone there. Oblivious to it Ron scoffed, "Of course I want you mate! I've literally wanted you since Christmas last year."

"I've wanted you before that!" Percy blurted out, earning everyone's interested gaze as he tried to hide his mouth with his hands like it would somehow convince everyone that he hadn't just said that.

"Well we've wanted you since that time on Platform 9 and 3/4's!" The twins chorused determinedly. Harry looked down bashfully, his cool hands pressing against his very warm face. "Oh." He repeated softly. "I didn't really think, I mean, if I knew I wouldn't have said yes to Malfoy for my first time."

George made a soft choking sound as Fred and Percy went suspiciously crimson. All three, plus the older Gryffindors of the group were staring wide eyed at the child, the latter looking like their favourite soap opera drama had just revealed a last minute plot twist to the season finale. Ron gave a decisive nod, crossing his arms smugly as he did so.

"I told ya Harry, me and my brothers would have shown you a much better time!" More choking sounds were heard across the House of the brave and the bold. By then everyone had given up any pretenses of actually walking to the dorms in order to watch the scene. McGonagall certainly won't be pleased with any of them but apparently her wrath was something that failed to register with everyone currently. Harry had no idea why these people are so obviously eavesdropping on what was clearly a personal conversation. House of Courage? More like House of the bloody Curious.

"I don't know, I had a pretty fun time with the Malfoys. You know that game we played last time, yeah, we were up the whole night doing it- Mr Malfoy practically screwed me over their dining table!"

Someone legitimately sounded like they were dying. Harry is vaguely sure it was Percy. He hoped there wasn't some sort of magical virus or anything hanging around. The boy hasn't experienced illness before but it wasn't exactly something on his bucket list or anything. Especially magical illness, ick.

Ron grinned, apparently being the only healthy one here, plus Hermione but she was still reading her book so she didn't count. "Yeah well I betcha that once my family learns the rules we'll have a hell of a time as well- though the twins will probably be at you on both sides so you gotta be careful and all," Yup, that noise definitely was from Percy.

Harry laughed, "Oh I'm sure they'll love it, but I've got more than a few tricks up my sleeve so they can't strip me down so easily. Plus I've got my best friend to help me out in a pinch yeah?" Ron laughed too, bumping his shoulder teasingly.

"Of course mate, we'll scratch each other's back yeah?"

"Duh."

"So you really will?" The redhead boy said hopefully.
Harry sighed fondly, "Of course I will, I want all you guys as well."

"Wait what?" Fred asked officially lost, verbalising what the rest of the older children's own thoughts.

Ron rolled his eyes at the hopeless confusion painted on the majority of the students' faces. "I hope I'm not like this when I'm that age. Honestly you guys are making such a big deal over Harry going to our place over the hols."

"What."

"You guys wanted me to join you all for Christmas at your place didn't you?" Harry asked nodding, to himself at his rather astute conclusion. "I mean if I had known all of you wanted me over I would have told Draco I would visit his place another time, I just didn't think you guys wanted me to impose.."

The older Weasleys stared at the nodding boy with a mixture of disbelief and embarrassment. Their fellow housemates were not exactly stunning examples of understanding either what with their gawking open mouths and visible incomprehension painted on their faces.

"Yeah." Percy finally muttered.

"That's totally-" George began in an awkward murmur.

"-what we meant." Fred finished weakly.

"My family is actually so weird." Ron whispered to Harry. Harry couldn't help but silently agree.

There had been a lot of staring and pointing during the feast. Harry kind of expected that considering how many papers dedicated to his home life had managed to be printed in such a short time. There were pictures of his uncle, his aunt, his hospital photos which were certainly not supposed to have been given to the public and even a slightly blurry photo of his medical records.

Whoever this Skeeter lady was, was fucking good at what she does. And is so getting sued once Harry figures out if there such a thing as a magical lawyer in this convoluted world.

McGonagall took him aside after she finished introducing the first years to Gryffindor, her lips pursed and every so slightly trembling. The boy actually thought she was going to cry. He really hoped she wouldn't. Because while he has grown socially and emotionally during his time as a human, he was not ready to deal with crying in any form. Especially from a woman he had come to kind of respect and fear.

Wordlessly the woman pulled the thin child into a tight hug. "I-" She began hoarsely, "I have failed as a teacher and I am so sorry."

'Fuck. Okay. Uh.' Harry looked up at the ceiling hoping for maybe a sign, some help from a deity, Lucifer would be good in this situation funnily enough, he's always had a knack with people in vulnerable situations. Unfortunately it seemed the Devil was busy because nothing but a well decorated ceiling answered him. Figures. "That's not true." Harry tried, hesitantly half wrapping his arms around the professor and awkwardly patting her back. "You're a great professor."

McGonagall tightened her embrace and said nothing. Which was fine. He could sense she needed the silent reassurance, and that, was something he could give.
They were starting on the more 'magical' type plants apparently. The green eyed boy had to stare warily at the tufty little plants of a purple green colour that Harry had a sinking suspicion to what exactly it was.

Professor Sprout was standing behind a trestle bench in the middle of the greenhouse. About twenty pairs of different-colored ear- muffs were lying on the bench. "We'll be repotting Mandrakes today."

Fuck.

Harry did not do great with plants, human form acting as a buffer or otherwise his skill was mediocre at best. Harry also did not like loud noises or babies. So, it may come as a bit of surprise but seeing that Mandrakes were wailing plant babies from the stereos of hell, Harry also were not exactly fond of Mandrakes either.

Professor Sprout explained some things and Hermione, true to form answered every question asked. The Boy Who Lived didn't notice, much too busy wondering if he could make Ron do his share of the potting. Probably not. Maybe Hermione?

It turned out that there was no chance to even ask as the moment they put on their earmuffs that pretty much blocked all sound in the immediate area the first Mandrake was uprooted and it just went down from there. They squirmed, they kicked, they flailed their sharp little fists, and gnashed their equally as sharp and unnecessary little teeth. These things lived in the ground for god's sakes. What on earth do they need limbs and teeth for?

It was obvious they were extremely disgruntled at being taken out from the earth but for some infuriating reason they seemed stubbornly adamant not to go back in either. Harry had spent six whole minutes trying to push a particularly large one into a pot before deciding that, since no-one could hear him, he could whisper various methods of torture to the magical foliage in cruel, excruciating detail. That seemed to do it as just a few sentences in explaining what exactly flaying was in plant terms, his Mandrake just went limp and easily was shoved back into it's new pot.

Still, by the end of the class, Harry was sweaty and covered in dirt and just generally feeling disgusting. Trudging quickly back with the rest of his class back to the dorms for a quick shower, Harry groaned at having to tear himself away from the hot water to go to Transfiguration class. It took a lot of shouting from the other boys before Seamus and Ron had to literally drag him away from his beloved steaming water.

"You and your showers, it's absolutely ridiculous." Ron muttered.

"You're ridiculous." Harry muttered. "Seamus, tell Ron he's ridiculous."

Seamus laughed. "Sorry mate, but I think it's you whose ridiculous."

"Prats the both of you."

Transfiguration, as usual, was incredibly easy. As his fellow second years struggled to turn their beetle into a button- something that he had managed before Professor McGonagall had even finished her instructions- Harry had idly transfigured his insect into a jewel encrusted scarab out of sheer boredom.

The young Weasley, in contrast, was not doing well. Somehow he had summoned up a small foul-smelling puff of smoke and accidentally squashed his bug in the process. McGonagall was not pleased. Harry tried to help but even he wasn't exactly sure what was wrong with Ron's spell casting.

Handing in what they had done by the end of class certainly did not improve Ron's mood any,
especially since even Neville managed to get his beetle to show some sort of button like change.

"What've we got this afternoon?" asked Harry, in an attempt to change the subject as they walked to the hall for lunch.

"Defense Against the Dark Arts," answered Hermione immediately.

"Why," demanded Ron, seizing her schedule, "is it that you've outlined all Lockhart's lessons in little pink hearts?" The bushy haired girl snatched her schedule back, blushing furiously.

"Oh don't be like that Ron," Harry said with a tired smile, "She's just a fan of the books yeah? I like how descriptive the narrative is in my opinion, what about you Hermione?"

The girl gave a grateful smile before launching into an excited rant about 'A Voyage with Vampires' that she currently had in her arms at the moment. Personally Harry hadn't liked it, even when he did think Lockhart's books had been children's fiction, but he listened along and commented occasionally when appropriate either way. Ron just kind of grunted and made sulky insults in the background, really, Harry didn't understand why Draco and the redhead didn't get along more.

About five minutes in through lunch and about fifteen minutes in Hermione's tirade, Harry felt a pricking sensation at the back of his neck. Looking behind him he saw a very small, mousy-haired boy clutching what looked like an ordinary Muggle camera in his hands.

When the smaller boy finally realised green eyes was on him he went a bright red, clutching his camera to his chest.

I'm- I'm Colin Creevey," Colin introduced, taking a hesitant step to the raven haired boy. "I'm in Gryffindor, too. D'you think- would it be all right if, maybe, I, can I have a picture?" he said, raising the camera hopefully.

"Really?" Harry blinked.

"So I can prove I've met you," the boy breathlessly said, edging further forward. "I know all about you. Everyone's told me, about how you survived when You-Know-Who tried to kill you and how he disappeared and everything and how you've still got a lightning scar on your forehead," And of course eyes went to his scar on his forehead. Harry wondered if getting a tattoo would take the attention away. Though unless the tattoo was earned by murdering the next dictator he highly doubted it would work.

"A boy in my dormitory said if I develop the film in the right potion, the pictures will actually move." Colin continued excited, "It's amazing here, isn't it? I never knew all the odd stuff I could do was magic till I got the letter from Hogwarts. My dad's a milkman, he couldn't believe it either. So I'm taking loads of pictures to send home to him. And it'd be really good if I had one of you?" The boy looked up at Harry with wide imploring eyes, "And uh, could you sign it as well?"

Harry just melted under that hopeful gaze. How on earth could he reject that? "Of course Colin, I would love to be in your picture." He said kindly, moving out of his seat to stand next to the awed looking child. "Hermione could you please take a photo with me and Colin?"

"Oi why didn't you ask me?" Ron protested as Hermione readily agreed.

"Because Ron you've never handled a muggle camera before in your life and I've seen you grind chicken leg bones with your teeth like the animal you are." Harry said happily as he wrapped an arm around the blushing boy.
The redheaded boy made a face and purposely opened his mouth revealing a half chewed up., Something gross. "Such an animal." Harry repeated through his smiling teeth. Colin giggled.

"Harry, a word please?"

Harry bid his friends a quick 'see you,' before making his way to the front of the class where Gilderoy Lockhart was waiting for him. "Yes professor, is there something wrong?" He said politely. The blonde teacher leaned down on him and smiled, Harry could literally feel the light coming off the man's teeth touching his skin.

"Let me just say that handing out signed pictures at this stage of your career isn't sensible," The man said like he was imparting secret words of wisdom. But in that over acting way like some invisible camera was watching them and Gilderoy was making very sure the audience could hear every wise word that comes from his shiny mouth. Every wise, stupid, word. "A tad bigheaded to be frank. Very arrogant of you." Every. Stupid. Word. "There may well come a time when, like me, you'll need to keep a stack handy wherever you go, but I don't think you're quite there yet."

The Defense professor gave a low chuckle and Harry felt any sort of respect for the man plummet like a plane crash. As the man took a step back, Harry wasted no time tugging his robes in a huff and walking to seat himself next to Draco and his bodyguards.

"You're father's right Draco," Harry scowled, his face pink with humiliation at Gilderoy's insinuations. "Lockhart is an idiot."

The platinum blonde let out an amused breath before glaring at all seven of Lockhart's books that he'd piled onto his desk. "Told you so."

Before Harry could say something else the whole class quieted down as Lockhart cleared his throat. The self centered blonde man then gestured to one of his many winking portraits of himself on the wall.

"Me," he introduced, "Gilderoy Lockhart, Order of Merlin, Third Class, Honorary Member of the Dark Force Defense League, and five-time winner of Witch Weekly's Most-Charming-Smile Award-but of course I won't talk about that. I didn't get rid of the Bandon Banshee by smiling at her!"

Few people smiled at the joke. Hermione had giggled. Harry had not ever been so ashamed at the girl till now.

Lockhart said a few more things before then presenting everyone with a surprise pop quiz. Honestly Harry was pretty sure he was going to do pretty well in it, what with being a former fan before meeting the author essentially soured his experience, well, he thought so until he actually read the questions.

1. What is Gilderoy Lockhart's favorite color?

2. What is Gilderoy Lockhart's secret ambition? 3. What, in your opinion, is Gilderoy Lockhart's greatest achievement to date?

It went on for two whole pages, both sides.

54. When is Gilderoy Lockhart's birthday, and what would his ideal gift be?

"This is bullshit." Harry hissed to his friend. "This man is so awful he's ruined every book he's ever written for me."
"Ugh, I know, like number 36. List three things you find to be Gilderoy Lockhart's best feature, Merlin I don't know. What about his gaudy sense of fashion?" Harry smiled at that.

"Or the fact his teeth are so well charmed to blind his opponents at a distance?" Draco cackled quietly.

"Ooh very nice Potter, don't forget his blond hair implants."

"Writing it down as we speak."

"Good, I'm doing that too."

In the end only Hermione got the full points to the quiz, she blushed under the man's praise as Ron scowled next to her.

Unfortunately the class was still not over. Harry missed the showers. So much.

Gilderoy with an elaborate flourish, lifted a large, covered cage onto his desk.

"Now be warned!" The man said with a spooky low voice, Harry may hate the blonde's guts now but he had to admit the professor had the skills to tell a story, "It is my job to arm you against the foulest creatures known to wizardkind! You may find yourselves facing your worst fears in this room. Know only that no harm can befall you whilst I am here. All I ask is that you remain calm."

In spite of himself, Harry felt intrigue at what was hidden under in the cage. Even Dean and Seamus had stopped snickering at the man now. Neville was cowering in his front row seat. Draco was leaning subtly in his seat.

"I must ask you not to scream," said Lockhart in his low voice. "It might provoke them."

The whole class stilled waiting, Lockhart revealed what was in the cage with one fell swipe of the cover.

"Yes," he said dramatically. "Freshly caught Cornish pixies."

Seamus involuntarily let out a snort of laughter that even Lockhart couldn't mistake for a scream of terror. The Slytherin's snickered and the Gryffindors giggled. Even Hermione with all her hero worship of the man didn't look much impressed, though it seemed she was trying very hard to be.

"They're not- they're not very- well, dangerous, are they?" Seamus choked back another laugh.

The pixies, electric blue and shrieking their heads off like rabid budgies on stereo, were batting against the cage bars, tiny hands reaching out to the students. Lockhart tutted at Seamus, "Don't be so quick to judge, these creatures are devilish and tricky."

When he noticed that the class was still far from believing the man said loudly, "Well then, let's see what you make of them up close and personal!"

Harry's head shot up at that. "Wait what?"

It was too late, the cage was opened. The tiny blue creatures shot out, pouring out like a flying vindictive waterfall. Two were lifting poor Neville by the ears. The more intelligent ones went straight through the window to spread terror somewhere else. The rest preferred to stay and bring chaos and havoc.

Chaos would love the tiny blue bastards.
"Peskipiksi Pesteromi!" Lockhart shouted, wand pointed at the general midst of the blue swirling storm. Of course it had no effect, if anything it sent the pixies in an even bigger frenzy. The blonde celebrity's wand was stolen and thrown out the window, leaving the man running to go dash out of the room. "I'll uh, leave you all to gather the rest of them up and back into the cage okay?" He yelled before leaving with a slam of the door.

"Wait till my father hears ab-OW OW OW!" Draco screamed as the pixies began tugging on his slicked back hair.

"I cannot believe him!" Ron roared as he batted a pixie aiming at his nose with a book. "The bloody git just left us here!"

"He just wants to give us some hands-on experience," defended Hermione, freezing two pixies at once with a stupefy and stuffed them back into their cage.

Harry scoffed, "Hands on? Are you actually serious? That man obviously knows no- don't you fucking dare." He looked at the pixie zooming to his person and fixed a glowing green look at the blue creature's direction. The pixie shuddered, stopping mid-flight to hover around the wizarding saviour uncertainly. The pixies closer to the hovering one, too stopped their actions mid-way to see what the fuss was all about. They then all began fluttering around Harry, chittering excited and fearful at once.

Soon enough all the pixies were circling around an annoyed entity dressed up as a child.

"Woah mate," Ron breathed, the rest of the class looked similarly amazed. Harry just rolled his eyes. Took those blue buggers long enough to notice him. If they even tried to do what they did to Neville on him though.. Well, Harry doesn't think there would be any cornish pixies alive in this world and any subsequent worlds anymore.

With a sharp almost military movement, Harry pointed sternly to the cage and barked out a loud, "IN," which, the creatures immediately complied.

"Dude," Dean said, "That was awesome." The rest of the class nodded and Harry just waved them off. Too busy mentally maiming a certain blonde, blindingly white teeth narcissist of a wizard.

"Oi," Draco suddenly piped up with a frown, "Why didn't you do that sooner if you could just get them to do whatever you wanted?"

"Well that's a very easy explanation Draco." Harry said, "Obviously it never occurred to me at the time."

The class was much less enthusiastic about him now.

The first Saturday was probably the worst Saturday he's had in Hogwarts since he's enrolled.

"Whhhyyyy." Harry whined, rubbing his eyes tired and teary.

"Come on Potter!" Oliver Wood, Gryffindor Quidditch captain said with an energy that one should never have when the sun has barely even started to rise. "Gryffindor is going to get a head start with training!"

"But I'm not on the Gryffindor team." Harry groused.

"Yes Potter but you are one of the best flyer I've seen." Oliver said happily, "And your technically in
Gryffindor currently. So I at least can make you fly as our temporary seeker, you know, since our last one graduated and all."

"And my permission was not even a factor in this?" The boy said resigned. "Also I'm pretty sure you're current seeker would take offence to that."

"Psh Lee Jordan's only doing it as a favour, he rather sit back and snark than do any real training." Despite his protestations, the older teen must have sensed his weakening resolve because he gave him a pat on the back.

"Good man. Here're your robes and get ready to fly some laps. Let's start with something small- fifty sounds good." Oliver winked and then left to give out more hellish training to the actual members of the team. Harry looked down at crimson red robes in his arms.

"Dammit."

Mate are you not finished yet?!" Harry lowered his broomstick closer to the stands where Ron and Hermione had been sitting. His hair was a windswept mess, pale face pink with exertion and expression jealous as he gazed at the toast in his friends' hands.

"We've barely even started." The boy complained. "I just finished my warm up laps and Oliver had been talking to the others about their strategies."

Hermione cocked her head curious, "I don't understand why you were doing laps if everyone else wasn't."

Harry shrugged, "Since I'm not actually a 'real' Gryffindor and Seeker position doesn't necessarily require much strategy I think Wood thought it to be safer if I didn't eavesdrop. Honestly I'm pretty sure the only reason I'm here is to somehow convince me to join the team or this is a long term plan where Wood wants me to end up training his new seeker. I dunno."

"Quidditch is stupid." The girl finally said after a short pause, much to the redheaded second year's squawk of indignation.

"It is a little dumb isn't it?" Harry agreed, enjoying the annoyance on his friend's features.

"You're a little dumb." Ron groused getting Harry to smile amused. That's when he noticed a soft clicking noise somewhere off the side of his vision. Turning to glance to his right, the boy saw Colin and his camera taking a multitude of pictures of his person. It would be cute if it wasn't a little creepy. "Hey why are there Slytherins here?"

"What?" The Boy Who Lived's gaze followed his freckled friend's, and true to form there was a group of royal green robed students holding broomsticks heading towards the Gryffindor team. "Oh dear I should go see what's up."

Doing just that, the child took up his magic cleaning tool and floated gracefully down to the pitch, Wood and Flint, the two captains, were facing off against each other like a bad cowboy film.

"Flint." Wood scowled.

"Wood." Flint sneered.

Deja vu much?
Their teams had gathered around their respective captains for support. Harry was wrong. This wasn't a bad cowboy film. This was a terrible mafia movie.

"What are you doing here?" The Gryffindor captain asked in a very impolite manner.

"What are you doing here?" Flint had shot back, "We booked the pitch beforehand, see?" The larger, mean looking teen unfolded a piece of parchment that held permission for just that, signed by Severus Snape. A little unfair considering Snape was their Head of House or whatever but legitimate all the same.

Still both groups began bickering like the children they are about who gets the quidditch field.

"But I booked the field!" Wood positively screamed. "I booked it!"

"And the note I've got says otherwise," Flint tutted smugly, "Shall I read it to you? 'I, Professor S. Snape, give the Slytherin team permission to practice today on the Quidditch field owing to the need to train their new Seeker.'"

"You've got a new Seeker?"

Harry watched as the quidditch captain of Slytherin smirked before stepping back to reveal an equally smug Draco Malfoy. The boy was so very sure that a flair for the dramatics just came with being a Slytherin.

"Draco I told you, you could do it!" Harry cheered, walking over to the platinum blonde with open arms. Upon seeing his raven haired friend, the arrogant facade slid off the other and the excited, eager proud child was revealed underneath. The Malfoy scion accepted the offered congratulatory hug with as much silent modesty as he had.

Which was nearly none by the way. So Harry really did appreciate the gesture. Even if it last three seconds before the bragging began.

Harry also deeply appreciated that the platinum blonde child hadn't noticed he was not at all listening to said bragging. In fact, he was far more interested in the increasingly heated exchanges between the two rival House teams. Honestly Hogwarts should introduce a new sport to this school, this obsession was bordering on ridiculous in how seriously its taken. Like competitive knitting. They can make the patterns magically move and stuff. There's probably some sort of gender feminist controversy there but the trash talk would be absolutely hilarious.

The shouting began to really escalate and some teenagers were starting to take out there wands. Hermione and Ron by then had joined in at the sidelines. It was getting so loud that Draco had stopped talking.

Then someone called Hermione a mudblood and it somehow devolved even further.

Tears, screaming, weird protective hugging over the bushy haired muggleborn witch. Who by the way, while upset, was far from crying openly like that Angelina girl hysterically yelling 'How dare you's at the House of the ambitious. Ron had tried to curse the offender but like most of his recent spell casting that didn't work and he ended up with slugs in his mouth.

"Holy shite Ron!" Harry said as he shrugged off Draco's one handed hug and knelt down next to his fallen redheaded friend, now puking slugs. Ugh. That is not a pleasant fate for anyone. The green eyed boy was feeling very nauseous just looking at him.

Draco surprisingly also went to Ron, grabbing his arm in an attempt to lift him up. Looking at Harry
he snapped, "Don't just stand there we need to head to the infirmary."

"That's ways away!" Hermione moaned also looking quite sick.

"Hermione, help Draco with Ron and head toward the castle." The Boy Who Lived ordered quickly, making no room to argue, "I'll fly and get the closest professor since they'll hopefully know how to... Reverse that."

Not even looking to see if they nodded their agreement, Harry grabbed his broom and swiftly zoomed up high to survey the grounds. Unfortunately the only people he saw was windless, half-giant, Hagrid in his hut which was located a reasonable distance from the field, and Professor Lockhart.

"Nope." Was all he said before diving nose down at a breakneck speed, easily reaching the hobbling trio that had made not much distance since he left them. "Change of plans guys, I'm levitating Ron and flying him to the infirmary, meet you there."

The Malfoy scion spluttered as Harry with a flick of his hand lifted the ill looking freckled child like it was nothing. "Then why the bloody hell did I even have to do this in the first place? What the hell Harry?"

"Well I didn't know Lockhart was my only professor option at the time did I?" Harry shot before flying toward the castle with Ron by his side and a trail of slugs in their wake.

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So good news, they had a potion to help Ron's tragic ailment immediately so the poor child didn't have to 'wait it out' like Hermione suggested. Bad news was since Ron was the one who attempted to cast the spell in the first place and Harry had flown at an alarmingly impressive speed inside the castle walls, they were getting detention. Ron polishing silverware with Mr Filch and Harry-

"Oh please professor," He pleaded, vivid green eyes widening as unshed tears made them shine, adorably pathetic under the lights. "Can't I have Filch watch me polish trophies too?"

"I'm afraid not Mr Potter," Professor McGonagall said sternly, "I suspect Mr Filch would go far too easy on you, plus Professor Lockhart requested you particularly. Eight o'clock sharp, both of you."

"But I was doing so well avoiding that man." Harry whined softly, not soft enough apparently because the older woman's mouth pursed into a thin line showing her displeasure.

"Mr Potter as good intentioned you were before, you know I will not condone disrespect to another professor." She scolded, but the effect was rather lost in the glimmering mirth in her eyes.

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"Maybe I should be punished much more severely?" The boy said hopefully, "I hear Professor Snape is in need of an unruly student, uh, slicing bat wings?"

"Good try Mr Potter," The transfiguration professor deadpanned dryly, Harry slumped in defeat.

Ron patted his shoulder empathetically. "If it helps at all I would trade with you in a heartbeat."

"Well if it makes you feel any better, same goes for me."

The redhead cocked his head to the side thoughtfully before replying, "It doesn't actually."

Hermione sighed, "Well I guess technically you two did break the rules." Ron rolled his eyes.

"Oh shush 'mione."
"She's not wrong Ron."

"Don't put salt in the wound Harry."

For the first time in his life, Harry prayed for death to take him. It was a rather odd and confusing experience when he realised what exactly he was wishing for. Did this count as an existential crisis? Either way, all the boy could do was let his hand guide the quill to write the next insipid fan's address, tune out Lockhart's weirdly intimate knowledge of said fan, look at the clock over head and hope that his big brother Time would take pity on him and free him from this dull hellhole.

People says you can't die from boredom, which is technically true, however as Death, he knew that people can die because of boredom. His eyes fluttered close for a bit as he let the sharp tip of the inked quill ever so lightly trace a vein on his neck, shivering at it's touch. Oh yes he was half seriously contemplating that sort of option if detention doesn't finish in the next ten minutes. Or if his defence professor launches into another self-centred story about him and his super fan of the week.

Then again, his eyes flashed open to glare annoyed at the blonde smiling man sitting in front of him, maybe killing himself wasn't necessarily the correct solution to this. Emphasis on the word himself.

"Come . . . come to me. . . . Let me rip you. . . . Let me tear you. . . . Let me kill you. . . ."

Harry jerked startled. While very in tune with his current thoughts of murder, that certainly was not his own thoughts.

"I know, surprising isn't it?" Lockhart continued on, mistaking the child's surprised movement as something else, " Top of the charts for a whole year, even I was quite shocked!"

"Uh, professor, did you by any chance hear something?" Harry asked. The older man just looked at the boy blankly, Harry expected as much. Insipid fucking moron. He hoped the professor aged really, really badly.

Harry paused, Nearly Headless Nick was at the other end of the corridor looking troubled and frustrated and angry, obviously muttering under his breath as he floated around. Now a good person would go up to the ghost and ask what was wrong. Harry would go so far to say he did not qualify as either good nor a person but he sighed and went up to the spirit anyway. Not because he wanted to be good or anything. He was much too tired and annoyed from his detention to muster any sort of genuine kindness.

No, he was doing this because he is, as stated so many times before, a goddamn pushover and awkwardly uncomfortable enough to feel morally obligated to ask the brooding ghost what's wrong. Also Nick was kind of blocking the way to the dorms.

"...don't fulfill their requirements... half an inch, if that... So unfair..."

"Is something wrong Nicholas?"

Nearly Headless Nick spun around so fast in his surprise his barely connected head almost disconnected from his body completely. "Death Lord!" He gasped, "I, uh, I-"

Harry rolled his eyes, "Oh come now Nicholas, you are my House ghost right now, it isn't wrong for me to listen to any of your woes either way."

"I think that's supposed to be my job as House ghost milord." The spirit pointed out, his translucent
lips faintly twitching in amusement despite his nervousness. The boy can appreciate the good humour in the undead man.

"Yes, well, nonetheless I would like to hear the reason for your woe. After all, if it's in my admittedly extremely wide jurisdiction I could possibly help."

"Well," The ghost said shyly, "It's not really that important to be honest, it's just I thought I could apply for this hunt thing except apparently I didn't meet the requirements…” In spite of trying to sound lighthearted there was an audible note of bitterness in the spirit's voice.

Harry raised an eyebrow. "You mean the Headless Hunt?"

Nearly Headless Nick nodded furiously. The raven haired boy gave a thoughtful huff. "I can see how you're particular lack of.. complete decapitation could be a problem for you."

"I mean, nobody wishes more than I do that it had all been quick and clean, and my head had come off properly, I mean, it would have saved me a great deal of pain and ridicule but this is just discrimination at this point. It's barely half an inch of skin after all." Nick burst out, frustration and disappointment colouring his words as he gestured wildly to his neck. To be honest Harry kind of understood why the ghost wouldn't be accepted into such a 'club', after all from what he hears, they actually use their bodiless heads for many of their activities. He's pretty sure the poor nearly headless spirit would've felt much worse if he was accepted and then forced to the sidelines to watch them head-juggle or something.

"Well do you want me to sever your head completely then?" Harry offered kindly. Nearly Headless Nick stiffened.

"Y-you can do that?" He asked both disbelieving and hopeful.

The entity-on-vacation scoffed, "Of course I can Nicholas. I just need something sharp, like scissors or a blade."

"Just give me a moment!" The ghost squeaked before melting into the walls. Harry barely had to wait a minute before Soon to Be Headless Nick flew back, his face concentrated as he mentally floated a small but wickedly sharp looking dagger. Dark and blackened with age, small hands gingerly felt the intricately carved handle of the blade- some sort of bone from a magical creature, unicorn most likely. "It's one of the few personal heirlooms I have.” Nick explained softly.

"It's beautiful." Harry complimented.

Then he tilted back his head, opened his mouth and slowly dipped the dagger into his throat, blade first.

The spirit almost screamed at the action but no sound came from his mouth as smokey tendrils, the colours of the darkest shadows on a moonless night, seemed to reach out and curl around his offered weapon. It was like black flames, clawing at the blade, licking around the edges as it darkened the dagger even more. The entity's eyes had rolled back but instead of showing the whites of them, there was only endless, unfathomable black.

It was horrifying and so unworldly, the ghost numbly traced the cut of his neck subconsciously as he watched the whole thing unfold. He felt scared, and humbled, and awed as the feelings of death emanating from such a small far-like child washed over him, making him ironically feel more alive than he has in centuries.

Bright glowing green irises rolled back into the boy, his Lord's, head to stare at the spirit, the whites
of his eyes still blacker than a midnight of empty nothingness. Wordlessly the dagger was raised out and upwards, completely pointing up into the air as moonlight failed to shine on the sheer black it was now coloured as. There was a heavy pause, it felt ceremonial and so Nick waited and watched. He watched. And he watched.

But somehow he must've blinked, never mind that ghosts have no need for such things, because one moment the blade was high, rising to meet the moon, and the next it was no longer there, limply held at his Lord's side. Nick looked up curiously at his dagger, it no longer was the colour of void, instead it shone dangerous and pride in the faint light of the night as it matched the sky in colour. Wait. He looked up?

The spirit's eyes gazed downwards to see familiar floating feet that shouldn't be on his eye level unless… With a gasp he willed his body in front of him to pick him up and it did easily, if a little clumsily. "I.. I.." The ghost was simply speechless as the fact he too was headless slowly sunk in.

Harry offered the dagger back, his eyes still black darkness and unearthly green light. There was even still wisps of smoke coming from pale lips, like translucent ash coloured snakes struggling to seep out. "Take your blade back. Show these Headless Hunt-ers that I have personally beheaded you, I'm sure that will get them to welcome you with open arms."

With a wave the entity left. Watching the Lord of Death walk away, it was so hard to connect the delicate small figure of a child with such immense, overwhelming power sometimes. Now, as Headless Nick hovered, eyes respectfully never drawing away from the fragile boy's presence until he was completely out of range, now he would never have that sort of problem again.
Death's Death Day Party

Chapter Notes

So, there is going to be some underage slash in this fic. Mainly because as the author I have no patience to wait for so long, but also because of... Well actually that's pretty much it. It won't be too explicit. Maximum some medium to heavy making out really.

Well, uh, you've been warned but hope you enjoy nonetheless.

The one where Death goes to a Deathday party, which is not a day that celebrates the greatness of his self but the day that Newly Headless Nick died. Just in case you didn't know.

The Gryffindor house sticks up for each other through thick and thin. Something they take great pride in as one of the 'Lighter' houses in the school. And something the older Weasley boys found to be quite thankful for after their embarrassing outbursts and confessions. It helped a lot that near everyone in the school admits to the Boy Who Lived's number of charms. Even Zacharias Smith, who has proclaimed very loudly his hatred over the green eyed second year, is always suspiciously lurking around at every corner the Potter heir turns.

Sure there's gossip, it wouldn't be a school without it. But in a society where you can live up to 300 if you're careful enough, and arranged marriages are still common enough not to be considered barbaric- well, there wasn't any actual problems with two consenting individuals of any sex in a relationship like that. Well, that's not true. The ones with a muggle background were mildly disturbed at best. And if Harry had any parents alive they were sure to worry about the lack of a heir.

But it was plain to see how infatuated the older boys seemed to be now that the Gryffs knew what to look for. The glances. The thoughtfulness. It's in the way they would shyly shuffle around an invitation for a simple chess game (Percy), the way they seemed to practically beg for attention as pranks seemed to rain down around the Boy Who Lived yet barely even doing so much as grazing the child (the twins), or the way they all seem to perk up and puff out their chests a little bigger when the young Potter boy was around. It was obvious and adorable and the general consensus was they were actually kind of annoyingly sweet.

Well Percy was being annoyingly sweet. The twins, with their weird peacocking prank mating ritual, was just annoyingly annoying.

So overall the House of the brave as one had decided to keep the Weasleys' little outbursts to themselves. Well, the older ones who actually understood, did at least. Third years and below generally had the innuendoes go above and beyond their little heads and had pretty much forgotten the whole thing by then. But not the upper years, they had decided to do the mature thing...

"Six sickles that the twins and Potter get together a month before Christmas next year!"

..And bet on them like racehorses...

"Nine that Percy confesses by the end of this year and their relationship will only consist of handholding and cheek kisses until Potter reaches sixteen!"
"A galleon for George- and ONLY George dating Potter by next Halloween!"

"Twelve knuts that it's NO WEASLEY and MALFOY wins Harry over by their fourth year."

"Uh, have you seen Diggory with Potter?! A galleon on them having at least a summer fling!"

"That centaur Potter hangs out with is literally a dark horse- three knuts!"

"Okay, who's the sick fucks who put down only one twin?! Obviously they'll share!" Lee Jordan screamed, as he jumped up from the couch. Then turning down to look at the two obviously embarrassed twins, whose skin tone was currently matching very well to the colour theme of their House, he grinned, "Am I right or am I RIGHT guys?!"

"Merlin, shut UP Jordan!"

...Also teasing them like no tomorrow. That is also a very mature thing they are doing.

"No way! It's so obvious George is more heterosexual!"

"You better bloody take that back."

"Make me."

"Also, which one of you put Snape and Harry as their bet for two knuts? Honestly guys take this seriously."

Harry wondered if he killed another Defense teacher this year, would that give him a reputation? Like, one is an unfortunate accident. Two is just plain suspicious. It'll look like Harry has a weird agenda with DADA professors, which is so not true. If anything, it's the DADA professors that have an agenda with him.

"Hey Mr Filch, hypothetically, if I murder Professor Lockhart-"

"I've already got an empty graveyard with the engraved tombstone of a cousin I don't have on it." The old squib said immediately before taking another sip of his tea. It was some flowery indian blend Harry had bought for the caretaker. Filch loves it.

Harry grinned into his tea. "You're the best Filch. It's a wonder more people don't like you like I do."

Filch snorted. Mrs Norris purred between Harry's legs.

"You got invited to a death day party?" Hermione asked with keen interest, "How fascinating! I bet not many people who are alive get to go to one before."

"Sounds dead depressing to me.." Ron muttered as he frantically tried to bullshit through another foot of the properties of certain types of soil. "Heh, get it?"

The bushy haired girl rolled her eyes, "Yes Ron, very funny." She said in a way that exactly conveyed how unfunny it was. "But seriously Harry, this is so exciting! You have to tell me everything!"
"Weeeell.." Harry drawed out with a sly smile, "Headless Nick did say I could bring a date."

"Headless Nick?" Ron asked, "You mean Nearly-Headless Nick right?"

The raven haired boy coughed awkwardly, "Yes, right."

"Oh can I be your date Harry?" Hermione asked eagerly.

"NO POTTER NO!" Some older Gryffindor girl sitting next to them suddenly burst out before her friends clasped their hands on her mouth. When they finally released her, she turned to the trio acting as casually as her embarrassed red colouring would allow her to be. "I mean, Potter! Potter. I think, maybe, as a proud prefect of Gryffindor House you should be accompanied by another prefect- who is not me. Maybe a redheaded Weasley with a badge and a love for yo- adhering to the rules?"

Percy Weasley who had been pretending to read in the corner of the common room blushed. Fred and George weren't even trying to pretend not to listen, they were however, valiantly trying to ignore the whispered teasings of their housemates around them. The dark skinned comedian Lee Jordan looked like he was about to go up to the three first years to say something but George shoved what seemed to be a chocolate frog into his mouth. A rather foul tasting one if the sour expression was any indication.

Unfortunately for the two red headed tricksters, there was only so many gross chocolate frogs in the world and Alicia Spinnet had already bounded up to jump into the space between the young wizard saviour and the female 'Parry' supporter. "Actually Potter," She purred, "While I agree you should be accompanied by an older male, Percy and the other prefects will be busy surveying the Halloween Feast."

Harry frowned, unsure how things had escalated so quickly. "Uh. Okay. I guess that makes sense."

"Actually maybe instead of one Weasley, why not bring two?" Spinnet suggested mildly, like she hasn't been plotting ways to get the twins and Harry together since she bet seven sickles on them. "After all we wouldn't want something like last Halloween to happen to you."

The green eyed boy thinks that if anything like last year happened again, he's pretty sure he can take it. The whole date thing he said was a joke in the first place. Headless Nick had literally given the go ahead to invite a flock of Dementors if Harry wished it to be. Originally he planned to go alone since, considering how any person he invites to this party would end up sticking by him the whole time. Pretending to be anything but human Harry Potter would be a trial in itself. Hermione would be far more interested in ghost history to really pay attention to himself at the very least.

"Well I don't want anyone to skip out on the Halloween feast," Harry demurred, "However I wouldn't say no if someone saved me some food for afterwords? I mean, I don't think a deathday party filled with dead people will have the most.. solid of cuisine. I would deeply appreciate it if someone could maybe snag me a sandwich? Or a chocolate cake or something?"

"I could do that." Percy piped up, earning at least three of the most unsubtle thumbs up Harry has ever seen. Gosh, Gryffindor really does love helping a fellow student out. It's funny, he's never seen any one this enthusiastic about helping Ron with the homework he's currently struggling in. Maybe it was just a really weird camaraderie all the Gryffindors have with food? Because that actually explained so much.

"No need, dear brother of ours," Fred spoke out, with George adding in smoothly, "We will kindly provide our dear Harrykins the sustenance for tonight, I'm sure you'll be very busy with your prefecting duties."
"I hear the Hufflepuff table has much better desse-

"Shut it Bell." Alicia snapped.

"Make me Spinet."

"Draco would totally know what Harry likes to eat."

"So would Blaise."

"Don't you da-

As the whole room descended into arguments and general shouting, Harry and his friends slunk back to their dorms as quietly as they could. "Any idea what that was all about?" The green eyed wizard saviour asked a little baffled. He doesn't mean to stereotype but it seemed hotheadedness was a common factor in these people. As well as a weird obsession to feed people apparently.

Ron and Hermione shook their heads. "Not a bloody idea mate." The redhead replied, "I feel like it was something to do with my brothers but I heard Malfoy's name in there?"

"Really? I heard, 'Diggory is straighter than a ruler dammit, go brain yourself on an acorn and bleed out.'" Hermione said. Then, in response to the boys' stares she shrugged. "I have a good memory, don't be so surprised." The girl defended.

Ron rolled his eyes at her sensitivities. "That was not what we were surprised about 'mione but okay. Sure."

"By the way, the offer's still up for Nick's Deathday party Hermione if you still are interested to go?" Hermione looked tentatively pleased.

"Wow Harry! Are you sure?"

"Positive." Harry said, "And before you protest Ron about being left out- it's going to be old dead people and probably no food."

The freckled child clicked his mouth shut, making a scandalised judging expression like it was just that disturbing that someone would choose listening to some century old kook instead of have a slice of pumpkin pie. Which, saying that out loud, Harry found himself kind of agreeing with that sort of logic. Damn, now he wants to skip.

"Well have fun at that." Ron said dryly, "I'll save you some chips and stuff. If my brothers end up actually getting you food- super weird by the way- we can do the whole midnight snack thing. It'll be way fun."

"I'm sure it will be." Harry agreed.

Ron grinned back.

"A promise is a promise," Hermione reminded Harry bossily. "You said you'd go to the deathday party."

He sighed, looking forlornly at the colourful decorations that celebrated his holiday. "Yeah, yeah Hermione I know." It's not like he's regretting his decision to go to Nick's Deathday, Harry has been
admittedly feeling a little homesick in all this surrounding life, and spending time with some of the 
undead will certainly remind him of his domain. However the human child inside him (and yes, he's 
found it a little unnerving that he's developed a childlike mindset over these years, its a mature child 
but a child nonetheless) was sulking about how there would be an obvious lack of colourful 
decorations, adornments, lavish foods and just all around 'fun'.

Essentially he was torn, on one hand the entity in him wanted a good proper Samhain- offerings, 
ghosts and darkness, and a small but now no less important part of him wanted a satisfying 
Halloween- candy and music and costumes galore.

Either way, Hermione was right. A promise was a promise. And there was no way Harry was going 
to skip out on Nick's Deathday. It's been a while since he's gone to a deathday after all.

The way leading to Headless Nick's party was lined with candles but unlike the ones surrounding the 
Great Hall, the effect was far from bright and cheery. These were tall, thin, black tapers, all burning 
an eerie blue. The candles are dim, ghostly lights that cast intimidating shadows that flitted around 
the two children. With every step they took, the temperature dropped, and Harry couldn't help but 
shiver in part delight at the gothic atmosphere of the place and part because it was actually getting 
pretty damn chilly. There was the faint whisper sounds of screaming wails and nails scratching in 
despair.

"Music to the ears yes?" Harry sighed happily as a particularly terrified howl echoed through the 
hall, his friend who was looking at him incredulously, hugged her robe closer to herself.

"This actually explains so much." She muttered under her breath, shuddering as a plaintive wail cut 
through the air.

"Did you say something?"


Harry raised a skeptical eyebrow but said nothing. He won't judge like his young friend is doing. 
Children will never grasp the classics of music. Beethoven, Mozart, the screams of the damned, 
Destiny's Child… You know, the classics.

When they finally arrived, they were greeted by the sight of Not so Headless Nick in front of a 
doorway hung with black velvet drapes.

"My dear friends," The headless spirit said mournfully, looking like the epitome of a scorned, grief-
stricken ghost. "Welcome, welcome . . . so pleased you could come. . . ."

Then with a sweep off his plumed hat, Headless Nick bowed low, ushering the two children inside. 
The dungeon was already full of translucent people, mostly drifting around a crowded dance floor. 
The quavering sound of thirty musical saws, played by an orchestra on a raised, black-draped 
platform echoed hauntingly. A chandelier overhead blazed midnight-blue with hundreds of the same 
wicked looking candles that had lead them to the party.

"Careful not to walk through anyone," Harry advised, Hermione nodded and was checking out a 
group of scholarly-looking spirits in a corner speculatively. Turning shyly to her friend, the bushy 
girl gave him a pleading apologising expression.

"Uh, I know this is really rude considering you did invite me and everyth-"

"Go, have fun." The Boy Who Lived dismissed with a smile. This was perfect. "I wanted to do a 
little solo exploring myself. Why don't we meet by the- and she's gone."
Shrugging, Harry turned to the mass of bodiless partygoers, his glowing green eyes sliding to the nearest gaping ghost as he smiled, elegant but wide. Almost like switching on a light, the spirits that had been impatiently hovering nearby surrounded the child. Some were respectful and maintained a distance, others were not so much, as icy air from their translucent figures caressed pale flesh in awe.

"Death Lord."

"What Nick said really was true."

"I can feel your skin milord." One murmured with wonderment, while the others who were also taking the chance at touching the entity muttered in agreement.

"So soft."

"Our Lord."

"So warm."

"Thank you for allowing us this great pleasure."

"Death Lord."

"Milord did you really sever our host's head?"

With all the exposure to beings so close to his element, Death felt the whites of his eyes begin bleeding black and something in his small human frame settle down in a way that he hadn't realised needed settling down before. Glancing back to make sure Hermione was still otherwise preoccupied, the raven haired entity began making chit chat with his subjects, allowing them to soak in the sensation of touch on his twelve year old body.

Wow that sounded way worse than he thought.

As Harry conversed and listened to the undead practically showering him with either compliments or exaggerated exploits of themselves, Now Headless Nick drifted toward him. His head was purposely situated under his arm to show off the fact that, yes, it was completely disconnected from his body, thank you very much.

"Enjoying yourselves?"

"Oh, yes," Harry drawled as he basked in the cold but no less appreciative gazes of the ghosts. Said ghosts were making loud enthusiastic noises of agreement.

"This is truly the best turnout in years," mused Headless Nick with no small amount of pride. "The Wailing Widow, the Cruel Chieftain, the Groaning Guard, even Drowned Diane from the end of south America! I don't even think I invited her!"

"Well it has been a pleasure talking to so many of your friends." The boy smiled and all the intangible beings around him practically swooned. Headless Nick beamed.

"Well then, I think it's a good time for my speech!" He said excitedly, "Let me just go warn the orchestra and-"

The orchestra, however, stopped playing at that very moment. They, and everyone else in the dungeon, fell silent, looking around in excitement, as a hunting horn sounded. Harry raised a brow. The ghostly host of the party looked both irritated at him being interrupted and cautiously, gleefully
vindictive. For reasons Harry didn't know, but felt like he was going to find out soon enough, the man put his head back on his neck, adjusting it so it looked like it was still just as attached as it was before.

Through the walls of the dungeon where this party was being held, a dozen translucent horses burst out like a wave, on each horse was a headless man riding them. Dramatically, they galloped to the middle of the dance floor, whinnying and rearing back as applause at the entrances greeted them. Leading the pack, on the most magnificent undead steed, was a large muscular ghost whose head was held under his arm. Hoisting himself down, the headless man made a beeline toward the Gryffindor ghost, throwing his head up in the air and catching it with his neck much to the crowd's delight.

"Nick!" He greeted loud and boisterous as he slapped his palm onto the other's shoulder. "How have you been hanging? Head still on your shoulders?"

"Welcome Patrick," For a moment the ghost looked annoyed but quickly the expression smoothed into a 'I know something you don't,' smirk of triumph. "And for your information, I've found very recently that there are times when I've just.. lost my head."

Then, with an equal amount of dramatic flair, Newly Headless Nick tilted his neck so his head rolled down his arm, into his waiting hand. The ghosts watching went wild. Harry wondered how long it took the spirit to perfect that trick. From the smugness radiating off him, whatever hours long put into it had been certainly worth those fifteen seconds of fame apparently.

The Headless Sir Patrick and his fellow horsemen were quite speechless.

"Now if you excuse me," Headless Nick grinned in his own hands, "I have a speech to say."

And with that, the ghost that represents the house of Gryffindor did just that. No one interrupted him. And everyone applauded and cheered afterwards. Headless Nick even got invited to Sir Patrick's little club, especially after Harry introduced himself, and got a rather fine steed that had apparently perished in civil war times. Harry thinks that this whole thing was probably the highlight of the man's death so far.

It certainly was the happiest Deathday Harry had ever gone to.

"I didn't know Nick finally lost his head!" Hermione exclaimed excitedly as they walked out of the party. Harry would have stayed longer in the celebrations but he had an eleven, possibly twelve, year old girl to take care of and a curfew to adhere to. Unfortunately. Sir Patrick and his fellows were very entertaining once they'd gotten off their high horses, pun intended. It had been very amusing to listen to all the pick up lines they had involving heads or lack there of.

"Nick seems pretty sane to me." Harry shot back with a crooked grin because he can.

The girl rolled her eyes. "You know what I mean Harry. But aren't you even curious how the man even managed to fully disconnect his his head and his neck? I thought ghosts were completely intangible!"

"Yes, well," Harry cleared his throat, "We do live in a magical sentient castle Hermione, I'm sure there's exceptions to every rule if you look hard enough or find the right artefact."

Hermione didn't look much convinced, "So you think it's some sort of magic knife?" She asked
doubtfully.

"Because having the actual Philosopher's Stone here is plausible but god forbid we have a ghost knife." The boy sarcastically retorted.

The girl gave a pause before making a tilting neck movement in acquiescence. "Okay, fair point."

"And no I refuse to help you look for said ghost knife."

She flushed in a manner that told the boy that was exactly what she was thinking about doing. Really, this girl was far more adventurous than he thought she would be considering her rule abiding manner. As she opened her mouth to protest, Harry beat her to it.

"Yes, yes you totally were."

"Stop reading my mind." Hermione sulked, Harry winked.

"I don't even need to read your mind when your face might as well be an open bo- did you hear that?"

"Hear what."

The green eyed child frowned as he focused on the faint voice in the walls.

"… soo hungry… so long… kill…"

As the voice moved upwards Harry knew instinctively that it came from no ghost or poltergeist. Whoever it was, is alive, is traveling somehow through the walls of Hogwarts, and was murderously hungry. Those are usually not a good combination.

"There's something in the walls," He informed Hermione quickly, much to her bewilderment, "I can hear it, follow me."

With quick footsteps, Harry earnestly went after the voice behind the walls. He's not the biggest fan of the castle but the boy was fairly certain that Hogwarts hasn't suddenly developed any homicidal tendencies, meaning that the ominous voice was probably going to lead up to something very important that will happen in the future. And while he's only been a student for one year here, Harry's fairly sure important is synonymous with Not Good.

The voice was getting increasingly frenzied and yet Hermione still couldn't hear anything. "Seriously? Nothing?"

The bushy haired girl glared as she tried to keep up with Harry's hurried pace. "For the last time Harry I have no clue what you're talking about!" She panted. Clearly the brunette had been hitting the books more than hitting a gym. At least she hadn't been hitting a person. That was a strange tangent to go to.

"If I'm wrong then I'll make it up to you." Harry promised as he practically hurtled around another corner. A part of him is wondering why Hogwarts hasn't tripped him up or pushed him down the stairs yet. The boy guesses the castle doesn't appreciate whoever or whatever is roaming around either. Though he doesn't think that this mysterious individual has been hindered by the building walls either so it probably means that the dumb overrated giant hut of rock rated them both on the same level.

Seriously, fuck Hogwarts.
They finally arrived at a deserted passageway, from the faint sounds of merriment Harry realised they were quite nearby the Great Hall. On the wall at the end, foot high words shining due to being freshly written were ominously visible under the dim torchlight.

THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS HAS BEEN OPENED. ENEMIES OF THE HEIR, BEWARE.

"There's something hanging underneath." Hermione whispered horrified. "What is it?"

"Stay back Hermione," Harry demanded firmly as he walked cautiously closer to get a better view, "When I tell you to, run to the Great Hall and get someone. Anyone."

Pale faced, the girl silently nodded her head. Satisfied with her compliance, Harry went up to the graffitied wall and then promptly took a step back as he realised what, or who exactly was hanging on the wall. "Hermione go get someone!" He shouted, genuinely distressed. "Someone strung up Mrs Norris."

The poor feline was hanging by her tail from the torch bracket, stiff as a board and her eyes were wide and glazed as she stared blankly at Harry. Tentatively, the boy brushed her fur and sighed in relief as he felt the pulse of the cat's soul. Still alive. It was a testament to how shocked he was that he couldn't even immediately recognise whether Mrs Norris was among the living or not.

What sort of sick individual just does that to such a lovely cat?

In the background he can hear Hermione screaming for help in the halls and the loud commotion that followed. Harry is going to have to teach her to better conduct herself because hysteria is never a good move when trying to get help whilst not bringing about possible mass panic. The boy closed his eyes and prayed silently to Order for strength as the clamor of hundreds of students rushed out into the halls. Whatever noise the crowd made was quickly shushed as the first of the students caught sight of exactly what was the cause of the Gryffindor second year's loud dismay.

Then, when Harry thought that maybe, maybe, a professor would swoop in just in time to prevent the bubbling tension in the passageway from exploding- Zacharias freaking Smith sauntered out of the crowd. "Enemies of the heir, beware?" He read, then with an even louder voice than usual, the boy scoffed, "Well it's a good thing I'm not a mudblood, or I would be pissin myself right about now!"

Goddammit Smith.

What's going on here!?" Mr Filch screamed as he shouldered his way through the mass of students. Harry shut his eyes harder. There a whole staff of broom riding wizards that had been in the same Great Hall as everyone else and yet the one magic-less caretaker managed to get here before them. How.

"Mr Filch I don't think you should look." Harry whispered.

But it was too late. "My cat! My cat! What's happened to Mrs. Norris?" Filch shrieked in horror as he laid sight on the rather grisly scene. The green-eyed boy quickly went to the older man's side and steadfastly held onto his shaking arms, stopping the caretaker from throwing himself at his beloved pet.

"Mr Filch, Argus, she's not dead! Mrs Norris' isn't dead!" He shouted, his thin scrawny limbs following the thrashing movement of the man. Whoa, the aging caretaker was surprisingly strong. Mr Filch paused as Harry's words finally settled through his frantic mind.
"What?"

Zacharias, being of sound mind and annoying body, decided now was a good time to open his mouth again. "How do you know Potter didn't kill Mrs Norris?" The boy asked with a smirk.

Harry almost fell down when Filch turned to the blonde Hufflepuff with furious intensity, Smith at least looked cowed. "How dare you! You little brat-" he screeched, "Don't you dare accuse Harry, how dare you-"

"Argus!" Everyone looked as Dumbledore arrived on the scene, flanked by a number of other teachers. Because of course now they finally come. He likes the professors here in Hogwarts, he does really, but these people are actually so incompetent at child-caring Harry wonders why more people aren't dead.

Carefully unhooking Mrs Norris from the torch bracket, the Headmaster turned to Harry and Mr Filch.

"Come with me, Argus," he said to Filch. "You, too, Mr Potter. Gilderoy has so kindly volunteered his office as it's closest."

Gilderoy Lockhart beamed from behind him. "I'll lead the way Headmaster." He said in a manner far too cheerful for the situation. The students parted to make way for the small group, Lockhart looking excited and dramatically important, followed by Dumbledore, Filch and Harry. Professor Snape and Professor McGonagall followed up from behind as the rest of the staff tried to push the crowd calmly back to their dorms.

Lockhart's office was covered in magical paintings of himself. Which was fortunate because it pretty much guaranteed that Harry would not see a single splotch of those painted clones, ever. It seems having sentient artwork fear you at first sight does have some perks.

Dumbledore laid Mrs Norris on the surface of the polished desk, suspiciously bereft of paperwork, and began to examine her thoroughly with Professor McGonagall surveyed the poor creature just as close. Harry directed the forlorn squib caretaker to one of the cushy seats in front of the desk and sat beside him. Professor Snape stood behind them, looming and looking like he belonged in the half shadows of the candles. Lockhart was simply buzzing and hovering around like a irritating fly spouting random and increasingly violent suggestions to what might have happened to Mrs Norris. Harry shot the blond a glare and patted his magic-less friend consolingly.

"It was definitely a curse that killed her, probably the Transmogrifian Torture one, seen it used many times, unlucky I wasn't there, I know the very counter-curse that would have saved her…"

Filch gave a shuddering, dry sob. The green-eyed Gryffindor glared. "Mrs Norris isn't dead Professor Lockhart." Harry sneered. "And even if she was, which she isn’t" he hastily reassured to the caretaker looking hopeful at him, "have some tact. Mrs Norris is very important to some of us."

Lockhart gave the boy an 'aw how cute,' expression, "Please, if Mrs Norris wasn't dead then I think I would kn-"

"Actually, Mr Potter is right." Dumbledore finally piped up as he straightened his back and adjusted his half moon glasses. "Mrs Norris isn't dead."

"I knew it!" Cried out the defense professor who was very much ignored.
"Not dead?" choked Filch, "Harry was right?"

"Yes." Dumbledore agreed amiably, "Harry was right, Mrs Norris isn't dead, but however, she is very much petrified. How I can not say,"

"If I might speak, why don't we ask Mr Potter?" Professor Snape volunteered coolly, "After all he was the first one present."

"Harry didn't do it," Filch immediately defended. "He loves Mrs Norris almost as much as I do, there is no way-"

"Patience Argus." The Headmaster said. "We are not accusing anyone of anything yet. Though it is a bit suspicious Mr Potter was there in the first place and apparently not at the Feast," The old wizard raised his brow enquiringly.

Harry didn't flinch, green eyes looked levelly at twinkling blue. The Headmaster was two parts amused, three parts knowing and five parts genuinely curious. "I was at Nick's Deathday party," He explained. "You can ask any ghost, they will vouch for me. Hermione was also there."

"So how did you end up down that corridor?" McGonagall asked, "To get there you have to pass the Great Hall anyway, so why didn't you just rejoin instead of ending up where you ended up?"

Oh shit. Harry opened and closed his mouth. "Oh, uh, oh,"

"Can't you see the poor boy is in shock!?" Mr Filch snapped angrily, "Harry Potter is innocent and it's my cat that's been petrified, so when I say he's innocent, Harry is innocent unless there is some damning evidence!"

McGonagall looked taken aback and both Snape's brows were raised in thinly veiled surprise. Dumbledore just smiled. It's so hard to read that man's intentions. "I don't think that's how it works Argus, but nonetheless we will respect your choice to drop Mr Potter's interrogation. On a much happier note, Professor Sprout had just potted some Mandrakes for classes. As soon as they have fully grown, we will have a potion made to revive Mrs Norris."

"I'll make it," Lockhart butted in. "I must have brewed a Mandrake Restorative Draught a hundred times at the very least. I'm sure I could whip up in my sle-"

"Excuse me," Snape interrupted disdainfully. "But I believe I am the Potions master at this school."

Awkward.

To the shock of no one, the attack on Mrs Norris was one of the only things that anyone talked about for days. Mr Filch didn't help as he practically stalked the area where she was hung. Harry even tried helping the poor man scrub the words off the wall with some Magical Mess Remover that did not work. He even offered to try use some serious raw magic mojo but the squib quietly refused. Harry thinks its because the caretaker needed something to do to take his mind off it all. The boy quietly promises to himself to visit the older man a lot more until Mrs Norris recovers.

Ron's little sister seemed especially distraught about Mrs Norris. Which was strange since as a new first year, she probably barely interacted with the feline. Ron says it was because Ginny was a huge cat lover but Harry still thinks it's a bit strange. Then again, so far Ginny has been pretty much nothing but strange.
"Good evening professor." Harry greeted mildly. Professor Snape looked up from his marking on his desk.

"Potter, what are you doing here?"

Shyly, Harry took a chance to flicker his eyes up to meet beetle black ones. "I uh, I wanted to thank you for your gift. I know it's a little late but I just wanted to say, it was.. Very thoughtful, and I, I want to apologize for overreacting for before. Um."

The boy mentally groaned at his attempt at awkward apologies- because it wasn't his fault, it was all Snape's and if the man had just apologized like a normal, socially adjusted person instead of giving him that frankly precious gift that Harry was still wearing under his clothing, the boy wouldn't have to do this. Now he was socially obligated to be the one to bring closure to their squabble. Damn Snape that cunning bastard.

However before he can further embarrass himself by stumbling through the maze of human societal constructs, a large hand brushed through his hair, ruffling it gently. Harry looked back to confirm, yes, it was indeed Professor Snape who was committing the affectionate gesture. The man definitely did it when he gave Harry his Christmas present but the child just sort of assumed it was a one off scenario. He didn't actually think this was going to be some sort of thing.

Though, as he felt his cheeks inadvertently flush under the caresses, Harry couldn't say without lying that he was completely opposed.

"There is no need to say sorry Potter." Snape said soft, "Your reaction was.. understandable."

"Well I thought so." Harry replied with exaggerated haughtiness earning himself a stifled inelegant snort from the older man. "Now that we've gotten that out of the way I would like to say that I enjoy our," the boy hesitated for a moment as he racked his brain for a word to describe whatever relationship they had between them currently. Finally he settled on, "comradery. And I understand why you'd chosen to not say the things you weren't supposed to say. I guess in that case maybe I was a bit hasty in my aggressions.." Harry dithered a bit as he realized he was reaching apology territory again but Snape just kept waiting patiently for the boy to figure out his thoughts. Honestly Harry's pretty sure his thoughts wouldn't be so scrambled in the first place if the professor would stop carding his hands through his hair. He's not going to point that out loud though in case the man stopped.

"However, uh, however I don't appreciate being treated like someone to be made a fool of."

"Not many people do." Snape replied dryly.

"Oh you know what I mean." The younger of the two huffed and tried to ignore the bemused expression on the professor. It was subtle and almost nonexistent but the condescension was all there. "Do give me some credit, after all, I obviously came out of the whole mess relatively unscathed."

Snape made a pinched expression that generally conveyed some form of unhappiness. "You killed a man. I wouldn't call it unscathed in any sort of relative manner."

"You heard about that?" Harry was surprised; he'd thought Dumbledore would've kept that sort of information to himself. Snape and the headmaster must be closer than he originally thought. Because if Professor McGonagall knew he was pretty much forced to kill someone as a result of some elaborate plan of the old wizard, he's fairly sure he would know. "To be completely fair though- he tried to kill me first."
His hair was pulled slightly as Snape's fingers clenched at Harry's callous manner. Harry couldn't help but let his eyes flutter shut at the sensation. \textit{Shit.} Every feeling was more intense in mortal flesh and he'd always liked a little hair pulling in his, uh, escapades. Adding the fact that he's looked admiringly at the man's slender, long fingers more than a few times and that his young body is on the cusp of puberty... well he's just glad that he managed to not make any inappropriate sounds. "That's hardly an excuse."

"I'm fine." Harry says, and if his voice is a little high and strangled it's because those \textit{goddamn fingers} are still tangled in his hair and sending absolutely amazing tingles shivering down his neck. Fuck, Harry cannot wait to be old enough to actually have human sex. He's embarrassingly shaky in the knees right now and he's no longer aware of where the conversation has gone, he is distracted by the sheer intensity of this sort of contact. How on earth do humans manage to do anything once aware of such pleasures is honestly beyond Harry.

Snape frowned unconvinced by the obviously not-fine way Harry had said he was fine. His fingers tightening as he did so and \textit{Jesus Christ}, faint sparks were dancing down his skin as his head was pulled back slightly at the motion, exposing his pale neck to the light and his professor's gaze. This time Harry couldn't hold back a quiet breathy 'oh,' sound.

The potions master made his own 'oh' noise as he'd finally realized what was happening. Yet looking down at the flushed face of pleasure on the usual unruffled, composed young Potter, Snape found himself staring unabashedly. Almost on their own, his fingers tightened and pulled the younger raven-haired boy's head ever so slightly backwards to show off more of that pale expanse of skin. Harry looked practically wrecked and the older man drank the sight of it fervently, like a man who hadn't seen water in years. Snape gently leaned closer and-

"P-professor?" Harry gasped softly, but it was like a sharp slap in the face for the sallow skinned man. Immediately the potions master let go of Harry like he was burning and took three quick steps back as horror and self disgust slowly welled up inside him. What did he just try to \textit{do}? When did these sort of sordid feelings towards, towards a bloody \textit{child}, even grow inside him?

"I have to go."

And go he went.

"All the copies of Hogwarts, A History have been taken out," Hermione grumbled.

"Professor Snape won't talk to me. Like at all." Harry complained as he listlessly scribbled on a spare parchment. "Also Justin Finch-Fletchley literally took one look at me, turned around and walked back to where he came from."

"Oh boo you." Ron mocked, scowling as he furiously copied something from a History of Magic textbook. "Some of us here have some real problems- like being a whole foot short in their essay on the Russian Wizard war of 1832."

"Shut up Ron, I told you to start when I did, so that is all on you. My problems however are really lowering my self-esteem right now. Seriously, you guys should've seen Justin's face. Is there something \textit{on} my face or?"

"No Harry your skin is as flawless as freshly fallen snow." Draco drawled sarcastically as he pulled up a seat next to Hermione's. "Hello Granger, Weasley. You two are positively glowing with
happiness." The two Gryffindors mumbled darkly in acknowledgement.

"I know you're being sarcastic but that really helped. Thanks." Harry said with a smile. Draco rolled his eyes.

"Oh and Granger, I happen to have a Hogwarts, A History that I took out yesterday if you want to borrow it for twenty minutes." The Malfoy scion said as he pulled out the stated book and waved it teasingly in front of the bushy haired bookworm. Hermione snatched it greedily, "Twenty minutes is all I need." She said gleefully.

"Why do you even need it anyway?" Ron asked.

Draco scoffed, and since Hermione was too busy frantically flipping through the pages, he decided to answer instead. "Obviously, because like everyone else in school, she wanted to read up on the Chamber of Secrets."

Harry choked. Luckily no one noticed, too engrossed in the new discussion about the history of Slytherin's secret chamber. The green-eyed boy didn't listen. He didn't have to. He knew exactly what the Chamber of Secrets was.

Harry said goodbye to his Gryffindor friends and Malfoy, and strode down into the dungeons. He walked determinedly and resolutely. In fact, until about the last six feet between himself and Professor Snape's personal quarters, Harry was as firm and confident as a sunflower facing the sun in summertime. Now though, as he wavered in front of the door, his metaphorical sunflower of resolve was wilting in the cold temperatures of the dungeon.

Things between them, somehow, were three times worse than before. Mainly because this time Harry is fairly sure that his inappropriate and absolutely mortifying reaction beforehand was the reason for the fact the potions professor is no longer looking at him in the eye. And once again, the green eyed second year was at a loss at what to do.

Taking a deep breath, Harry knocked on the door. For now he will pretend that he didn't get more than a little aroused under his professor's hand from some literal petting. Because some idiot was trying to open the Chamber of Secrets and that usually doesn't ever end well.

Snape opened his door but once he realised who exactly was the person who knocked, it was painfully obvious that the man was regretting doing so. Harry gave a childish little wave because that was the cute thing to do. "Good evening Professor Snape."

"Evening." The older of the two answered stiffly. "What are you doing here?"

Harry faltered a little at the detached tone of the potions master. It seemed they just move one step forward and three steps back each time. "I wanted to talk about the Chamber?"

"Are you telling me or asking me?"

"Asking you?" Harry coughed, "I mean, asking you. Yes, I am asking you. Can I come in?"

The professor clearly wanted to say no, actually from the look of his sour expression, the professor would probably invite a bloodthirsty vampire in before Harry. It was insulting and confusing and super rude. Harry made sure none of those feelings showed on his face.
Finally the older man acquiesced and open the door further for the boy to walk in. "Make this point quick." He demanded. Harry rolled his eyes when Snape closed the door behind them.

Taking a seat on the couch from before, the wizarding saviour started with, "Just so you know, I'm clearly not the heir of Slytherin. However, I may know where the Chamber is, how to get in and what beast resides in there."

"That's.." Snape trailed off, choosing to look blankly at the younger male.

"Incredibly suspicious and incriminating?"

"Very."

"That's what I was afraid of." Harry murmured.

The potions master gave him a look. "I'm fairly sure you would have realised what a compromising position you're in if you already managed to figure out the mystery before the story even starts. Do only thing worse was if you had the ability to talk to snakes, something which is consider a trait only Slytherin and his descendants can do."

The raven-haired boy's eyes were gazing anywhere but at the professor. Snape felt the beginnings of a headache coming on. "Potter," He ground out. "Please for the love of Merlin, tell me you cannot speak parseltongue."

"I could say that," the second year said as he watched entranced at a particularly empty space of wall, "but then I would be lying."

"Now I'm the one that's horrified."

Harry shot the older man a small, crooked grin, "Now you know how I felt last time," The professor felt the corners of his mouth twitch upwards before his face smoothed back down to a faint sneer.

"What's the beast of Slytherin?"

"Basilisk. Obviously." The boy didn't hide the roll of his eyes this time. "Slytherin is the house of the snakes and we're looking for a beast that can possibly paralyse a cat. Therefore, basilisk."

"Basilisk kill with their gaze, not petrify." Snape pointed out but his pallor was paler than before and his black eyes were calculating.

"Ah, but Mrs Norris was surrounded by water, if she saw the basilisk indirectly that can explain her petrified state."

"Merlin."

Harry nodded in agreement. It's understandable the wizard would be unnerved. The idea of having lived over a giant, hungry basilisk this whole time would make anyone feel a little unsafe. "Also, I'm not exactly sure how it's been getting around but I can hear her through the walls. That's how I found Mrs Norris in the first place."

"And you couldn't say that you were lead around the castle by voices only you could hear, for fear of sounding insane, makes sense."

"Thanks." The boy said dryly, "Anyway, the chamber is in a girls bathroom- I.. don't remember which one."
Hey, it's not like knowing exactly where this chamber was, was the most important thing to Harry when he was an unstoppable primordial force of darkness and soul taking. How was he supposed to know that this one scrap of information would be so important to this extent?

Snape however, was not understanding and less than impressed. "You expect the staff to guard every female bathroom in the castle? With little to no evidence at that?"

Harry gave a pathetic little shrug. "Yes? I'm sorry but all I remember is that one of the taps has a snake on it. That's the entrance to the Chamber. You need a parseltongue to enter."

"How do you even know this?" The potions master asked suspiciously. Once again Harry chose to use the technique of looking anywhere but at the older man. It really was a reversal of situations from the last time they were in the professor's quarters.

After a relentlessly uncomfortable silence, Snape sighed and closed his eyes. "Fine, I suppose I deserve that. Let me go get the door." The man stood up from his seat and turned to leave. Harry knew he needed to say something, there was no way he was going to let this sort of tension just hang there again.

"I'm sorry about before." Harry burst out as Snape made his way to open the door for him. The professor paused and turned around.

"Excuse me?"

"I'm sorry." The boy gritted out, his face heating up as he fiddled with the hem of his robe sleeves. "I, I don't know what came over me but I realized I answered.. poorly, and I really don't want you to be disgusted with m-"

Harry stopped mid-sentence as he realized that Snape was now in front of him with an unreadable expression on his face. "I don't," he began before halting starting over, "You don't disgust me." Snape finally settled on. Then, guardedly the potions master reached out to give a quick stroke of the younger male's hair before letting the limb recoil back.

It wasn't much, but it was something and Harry would take it. Coyly the green-eyed wizard savior smiled, Snape gave an uncertain but no less honest smile in return.

"Well you don't disgust me either." The boy quipped in cautious teasing, "Goodbye professor."

Snape once again had pulled on another one of his annoyingly unreadable faces. But somehow Harry knew that it was a softer, more positive, unreadable face. "Goodbye Potter."
Death's potion plan

Chapter Notes

Okay, just to confirm, there is going to be some underage content in here. Sorry guys. Turns out. I have no patience when it comes to slash and lemons. None. Because I found that writing it- or at least the foreplay part- is super fun. You guys should try it sometime.

Also I strongly believe in four key ingredients in a good slash romance- 1. Pining, omg the pining, 2. Jealousy, hot, delicious, burning jealousy, 3. Blatant, frustrating obliviousness to each other's feelings- whether because of actual oblivious or insecurities, and 4. A lot of teasing. A cross dressing scene or something, I dunno. But I want to write it dang it.

The one where Death gets roped into making a potion in the girl's bathroom and finds himself in Professor Lockhart's arms.

So apparently when Harry was talking to Professor Snape last night, Ron and Hermione were once again off doing their mini Sherlock Holmes adventures. It involved spiders and girls bathrooms, and Harry doesn't even. All he knows for a fact was Percy caught them, and now the two brothers refuse even to look at each other. Oh, and for some reason, they think Malfoy might be the heir of Slytherin.

The reason is probably that Draco is doing nothing but actively encouraging such rumors but still. The two Gryffindors really need to stop being so lazy in their sleuthing. Everyone in this school should probably pick up some common sense and a half-decent detective novel. And a sub-par education. Heh.

"Seriously guys." Harry sighed exasperated at the two children's expectant gazes. "I cannot emphasize the importance of evidence. I also cannot emphasize how the spider idea sounds quite terrible, but if you insist on that route I'll come with as back up."

"I told you the spider idea bloody sucks," Ron whined in agreement. The redhead making no doubts in confirming his deep-seated phobia for all of arachnid-kind.

Hermione rolled her eyes. "I'm not saying follow the spiders." She huffed, "It was just something I thought was of interest."

"Oh. Okay."

"What I'm saying is we make a Polyjuice potion, pretend to be Crabbe and Goyle and some other Slytherin, then get Malfoy to confess."

Harry stared. "Somehow this is probably worse than following a bunch of insects." He finally settled on.

"It's a good idea, and we get solid evidence if Malfoy is the real heir of Slytherin." The bushy haired girl insisted. "Also spiders aren't insects, they're from the subphylum Chelicera while insects are from
the subphylum Hexapoda."
The Polyjuice potion does seem a bit dodgy to me." Ron admitted, completely ignoring the last part of what his intelligent friend said, "I mean, what if we stay like that permanently- as Crabbe or Goyle? I wouldn't want that sorta fate on anyone."

"Also, you know I'm actually friends with Draco right? He's just being a peacock about the whole thing; he's not the heir of Slytherin." Harry added. "Trust me, if he were the heir we would've heard about it before this year."

"Harry's right," Ron agreed, "Malfoy's mouth is looser than the Fat Lady with a secret."

Hermione looked torn between her hypothesis and the logic handed to her. "But people believe that you are the heir of Slytherin Harry!" She complained, "It's not fair."

Harry softened at his friend's distress. Misguided as it was, the fact that her attempts to diminish any wild rumors towards his person was very kind nonetheless. "Well, it's certainly not fair to try and pin it on Malfoy without any solid proof either."

"There's no solid proof he isn't either." She challenged. Which, point. A stupid point since one could argue that there's no substantial evidence of anyone being the heir, and in that strain of logic then everyone should be considered the heir. But then again, it seems this world just loves to run on stupid points.

The green eyed boy sighed resigned. At the very least, agreeing to this over dramatical farce would throw his friends' way off the scent of whoever the true heir is. After all, whoever wields the basilisk like a weapon is a weapon in itself after all. "Fine. Let's make a Polyjuice Potion. How bad could it be?"

"Wow." Harry deadpanned as he stared at the entrance of a girl's bathroom that his Gryffindor friends were walking into. "This, this is pretty bad."

"Oh come on Harry." Hermione savior, she was grinning like his hesitation and disdain was the funniest thing ever. Ron was this close to laughing outright at his friend's expression as well for that matter.

"No." The green eyed boy denied venomously. "I am not going to some girl's lavatory. Don't mean to point out the obvious, but I'm pretty damn sure only girls should go there."

"Mate," Ron said meaningfully. "Don't be that guy."

"I'm not sexist Ron," Harry responded annoyed. "Just because I refuse to sit on a litter box, doesn't make me against cats."

"Harry no one even comes here! It'll be perfect for brewing."

"If you discount the bacteria, the unhygienic environment and the fact that while no one may come in, people will pass by, and bathrooms echo Hermione. They. Echo."

"Harry, bathrooms are hygienic, after all, we do our business in- actually Harry's right, 'mione." The redhead scrunched up his face as he realized the actual connotations behind brewing in a bathroom. "I ain't wanting to drink no toilet potion."

Hermione sighed and looked up at the ceiling for guidance. Which, good luck with that. "We aren't
going to brew our potion in a toilet." She said slowly, her brown eyes judging them at the very idea. "We'll just be doing it in one of the stalls."

"Oh, so we're doing it by a toilet, I see, sorry for the miscommunication." The raven haired boy replied sarcastically. The bushy haired girl made a little strangling gesture at his neck and Harry faked choking under it. Ron for his part looked partly alarmed but mostly highly amused. The freckled boy wondered when exactly did the two develop such a unique friendship of fake murder and fighting over ideas. At least *he* wasn't like that with anyone.

After finishing their little dramatics, the pair went back to discussing (and turning down) their plans, Ron at the sidelines helpfully adding things in when he could. "Do we even have the recipe for Polyjuice?"

Hermione frowned, "Well, no." She admitted, "I know it's in Moste Potente Potions, but we'll need a teacher to get it."

"Restricted section?" Harry asked with a sigh. This was just getting better and better.

"Restricted section." She confirmed. Even Ron was beginning to doubt the plan.

"Hard to explain why we want the book without saying we're planning on making one of the potions looked," The redhead argued. "I mean how'd that work?"

"We could say we just were interested in the theory." Harry suggested, "And when I say 'we,' I mean Hermione and me, no offense Ron."

Ron rolled his eyes, "None taken till just then mate. And anyway, you would have to be pretty damn dumb to believe that sort of lie." He paused and then added, with an oddly sly look in his eyes, "Or unless Harry asks Sna-"

"Oh my god for the last time I do *not* have a weird Snape thing." Harry blurted out. It was practically instinct at that point to say those words anytime his friend uttered the words 'Harry' and 'Snape' in a single sentence. His pale face did burn a bit warmer though at the name of the potions master, embarrassment and the faint but undeniable feeling of desire and giddiness fuelling his blush as he recalled his last encounter with the older man. Puberty for his meat suit was right around the corner, waiting to tackle his mental faculties to the ground and exploit the hell out of that one scene possibly for the rest of Harry's human life and then some. Harry didn't know if he feared the experience of being controlled by some hormones or was apprehensively excited at the prospect of fully exploring the pleasures only those with actual flesh and blood could have.

And maybe if those pleasures are experienced with a certain dour faced professor with the most amazing goddamn hands, then all the better. Or a handsome centaur. Or maybe a cute and an appropriately aged fellow student. Harry is honestly not that picky. What can he say, death gets around.

Still, doesn't mean he has a Snape thing dammit. "And Snape wouldn't just give me a restricted book for no reason; I doubt he'll even do it for Draco."

"Professor Flitwick might do it." Ron mused. Hermione gave a look that was a mix of agreement and horror at the favoritism apparently running rampant in this school. To be fair, though, Harry's last defense professor did try to murder him, so he thinks it all evens out.

"Actually..." The youngest Weasley boy continued, "There is one Professor thick enough..."

Hermione looked curious while Harry soured his expression as he caught on to the suggestion. "This
plan is just getting better and better.” He groans.

Gilderoy Lockhart is going to pay for every single transgression... Starting with his atrocious humiliations on Harry's person. He'd had enough of a brain cell to stop bringing in live creatures after the whole Cornish Pixie thing, but to Harry's dismay, the blonde instead decided to make defense classes Story Time. Which, would not have been so terrible if the idiot man hadn't been so taken with the idea of reenacting scenes from his books and insisting Harry help play a part in them.

"And who shall I have play the part of the poor, helpless maiden in distress?” Lockhart mused loudly before pointedly looking at Harry. Harry's right eye twitched. Malfoy and the other Slytherin were giving him pitying but still incredible entertained looks. Actually, most people in the class were giving him similar expression, some more sympathetic than others. "Harry! You'll do just fine!"

"Sir I think maybe you should pick one of the girls for the female role." The green eyed boy suggested through gritted teeth.

"Now, now Harry," Lockhart tutted, "We are all above gender discrimination, and let's be honest here, you would probably be the prettiest person in this classroom to wear the dress."

"It's not gender discrimin- I'm not- there's a dress?!” Harry spluttered, angry and frankly horrified.

"What do you mean Potter is the prettiest, I'll have you kno-"

"Draco is this really the time for that?” Blaise hissed as he pushed the indignant Malfoy heir back down into his seat. "And Pansy don't you even start."

"But what does Potter have that I don't?!” The Slytherin girl whined, a few of the more avid fans of Lockhart nodded. "Just because he's a little thinner, and paler, and has really bright green eyes and inky black hair.." Pansy trailed off, looking between Harry and their defense professor with an odd gleam in her eyes and a flush on her face. "Actually.. I think I'll be okay."

Strangely enough, Harry didn't think he'll be okay.

Before he can open his mouth to protest, Hermione gave him a pleading look, and Ron mouthed, 'Pretty please,' when the raven-haired child had the unfortunate luck to meet their eyes. Clicking his jaw shut, the wizarding hero silently seethed and gave a jerky resigned nod to his fate. "But no dress.” He compromised, in a voice that promised murder if said, wasn't accepted.

The blonde professor just gave a brightly lit grin before bustling an extremely unhappy Boy-Who-Lived to the front of the class. Being forced into the position where Harry had to keep the man in good enough spirits for the very soon to be asked a favor, the boy had no choice but to try act as well as his pride would let him. Which was incredibly difficult since pride was something he had in abundance and every single striding of it was urging him to punch this prime example of human idiocy in the face.

"Oh, Mr. Lockhart!” Harry swooned in a sarcastically fake falsetto as he batted his eyelashes and gave a twirl of his hair. The class laughed at his impression while the fraud of a defense teacher just nodded approvingly. "Thank Merlin you came, the muggle villagers are terrified, and I can't exactly tell them that-

"That those animal attacks are actually from a werewolf?” Lockhart finished. Harry nodded meekly like in the book. His eyes glancing down to quickly read ahead as the blonde began what was a five paragraph monologue on how he has narrowed down his suspects to four villagers with just a few clever clues and a brilliant mind for deduction. The boy rolled his eyes at that, truth be told he
actually liked this particular book, very Sherlock Holmes and all, but he would eat the damn thing before believing Lockhart figured out the Mystery of the Mourning Moon like he wrote. Either the professor really is just an excellent writer for fiction like Harry first assumed or the man's stealing adventure stories from other people. What with Lockhart's abysmal use of magic, Harry's going with his first thought.

His musings are cut off by a pointed cough by the man himself. Bringing himself back to reality, Harry batted his eyes exaggeratedly again and gave a wide-eyed innocent look. "I'm so sorry; I was just so enraptured by how you managed to figure it out." He easily improvised.

Gilderoy tutted again, this time waggling his finger to do so. Harry kind of wanted to snaps it off. "While I do appreciate the fact you appreciate me, let's focus more on the acting than the story shall we?"

'I thought the whole point of this stupid endeavor was the story.' Harry wanted to say, but instead he bit his lip, internally cursed his Gryffindor friends and their apparent need for complicated embarrassing plans plus his inability to walk away from them, and then smiled weakly.

"Yes, sir."

"Now I do believe you have your line?" Lockhart raised his eyebrow. The raven haired boy tried to stifle his grimace.

"You are.. absolutely incredible Mr. Lockhart, what with your amazing intellect and even better hair, and even better sense of fash-"

The bell rang, and Harry could've wept at the beautiful sound. "Professor I think you can put me down now." He says, his pale face feels like it had been permanently set at a consistent rosy pink this whole class and his current position certainly wasn't helping his embarrassment.

He shoots a glare to a sympathetic, pitying Ron and a less sensitive, almost envious looking Hermione, as he is practically cuddled up against the blonde defense teacher. They were in the middle of some tense scene where Lockhart and the heroine Genevieve were hiding from the rogue, feral werewolf. In the story, they ran into a small boathouse that began slowly filling up with water due to high tide. It was a great scene, now ruined in the boy's mind as he was forced to cling to his professor's body and smell the overpowering odor of a million roses.

Professor Snape better be doing something about the Heir of Slytherin because if Harry had to agree to play along with another convoluted childish scheme that made no sense in the face of logic, Harry was going to kill another defense professor.

"Lockhart, I was here to discuss the-" The deep voice trailed off and the green-eyed young wizard closed his eyes shut and wondered if he just ignored the situation, maybe it would just go away. "What is going on here?" Nope. He was still there. And Snape didn't sound happy.

"Ah, Severus!" The blonde man holding the wizarding saviour like a princess beamed. Harry would unhook his arms around the other's neck but the floor was hard, and he did not trust Lockhart not to drop him. Then again, the floor did look mighty tempting right about now. "It's a shame you missed the performance. Harry here made a mighty fine Genevieve Allsmart to my me."

Snape sneered at the defense professor, "Well, I'll just wait outside until you finish your.. lesson." He said stiffly before walking quickly back out of the classroom, sparing a quick, unreadable glance at Harry as he did so.
Once the black-clad man had left, it was then that the students began trailing out of the room, talking with each other about this particularly interesting class. By then the blonde had thankfully let the boy in his arms back down onto the ground, Harry immediately made a beeline toward Ron and Hermione. Passing by Draco and the other Slytherins he whispered a, 'I'll explain to you later,' before reaching his Gryffindor friends.

"Harry you have to go distract Snape." Was what he was greeted with.

"I hate you both." Was what he replied with. "If you guys sucked any harder you two would be vacuum cleaners."

"Mate, no idea what you are saying, but I am so sorry." Ron said.

Harry narrowed his eyes. "Don't give me that, I saw you two laugh."

The redheaded boy coughed awkwardly, it did not hide the large grin on his face, "Ya gotta admit tho' that was pretty funny."

"Harry please," Hermione pleaded with wide soulful brown eyes. "If Snape overhears us, all our efforts would be for nothing!"

"You mean all my efforts," Harry said unimpressed. But he knew that he was going to crumble faster than a dry sand tower on a windy day. Not just because he is a pushover, but because the idea that he would have literally acted like some floozy hooker in front of his classmates for nothing fills him with a black, burning fire of despair that would only be sated by the blood of the source of his embarrassment. "You guys owe me a huge favor for this. Like, no questions ask, do what I say, favor. Am I clear?"

"Crystal." The girl agreed.

"Clear as mud," Ron said at the same time.

Harry nodded, satisfied. With as much of his tattered dignity that he could muster, he picked up his books and quills and strolled out of the room while Hermione and Ron headed toward the preening teacher.

Sticking his head out of the door to check where his target was, the boy's green eyes gravitated straight to inky black ones as Snape, who had been leaning on the wall, waiting, watched Harry with vague interest. Like a lion lazily watching a fluffy cub trip over its tail. "And what.." the older man drawled, "exactly were you trying to look out for?"

"You," Harry said honestly, with a bashful smile. The younger wizard might be imagining it, but he thought he saw the potions master seem almost pleased at his answer. "I wanted to see if you were alright, you backtracked pretty quickly out of there you know?"

"Forgive me for being surprised at your unexpected display." Snape defended wryly; the boy felt his cheeks heat back up again at the far too recent for his liking, memory. Why is being human so embarrassing? "Though you would hardly expect me to believe that this is the sort of behavior meant for classes educating others on defending themselves from the dark arts."

"That man has no value educating anyone, defense or naught." Harry seethed. "I don't see why he was hired in the first place. Talentless hack he is."

Snape's mouth was twitching upwards, making a valiant attempt to fight against his stoic mask to crack a smile at the boy's disgruntlement. "You're not wrong." He agreed smoothly. "But as a fellow
member of staff, I shouldn't drive another professor's name to the mud in front of another student, no matter how incompetent said professor is."

"Please Professor," Harry snorted, "I hardly think you care about such trivialities, or you would be far more accommodating to the less able students in your classroom."

"Believe me, Potter, if Lockhart steps one foot into my classroom." The potions master lingers off warningly, looking stern and unforgiving. Harry just grins, seeing the humor in the older man's eyes.

"Well you've left me no choice, I guess I simply must leave a trail of mirrors leading to you just to satisfy my curiosity now." The younger of the two teased, "I think after today, I would die happy as a clam if I could watch Lockhart's arse get handed to him good."

"Language." The man chided half-heartedly, Harry just huffed a small laugh.

"I don't see you denying it."

Snape just hums wordlessly at the playful accusation, which just made the boy smile even more. They didn't say much after that, the whole conversation between them comfortably descending into shy glances and quiet half smiles in the empty corridor. Harry almost forgot what he was out there for. Well almost did until,

"Oh my! It seems I am more popular than I thought!" Gilderoy exclaimed loudly as he stepped out of his classroom with the two Gryffindors lagging behind. "If I had known that you two were waiting to hear my glorious insights, I wouldn't have been so impolite to keep you wizards waiting."

"Actually, I was just waiting for Ron and Hermione. It's good to see you though Professor, ta." Harry said with a wave before making a quick escape from the shiny blond man, grabbing his friends as he fled. Not fled. A retreat. Tactical retreat.

Okay so Harry, Boy Who Lived and physical representation of unstoppable primordial forces, fled. But really. Could you blame him? He almost wants to give Gilderoy Lockhart eternal life just so that he wouldn't have to have the off chance of meeting the man when he dies.

The potions professor seemed incredibly disgruntled at being left to fend off the blonde by himself, though. Harry mentally sent out his condolences.

"So did you two get it?" He asked once they were a safe distance away from the two teachers. Ron nodded, and Hermione pulled out the signed permission sheet. "Sweet."

"It's a good thing Lockhart's daft enough to believe us." Ron laughed. "Not even a shred of suspicion that man had."

"That's because he has great trust in his students, he's not daft!" Hermione defended affronted on her idol's behalf.

"No, pretty sure he's dafter than a troll." The young Weasley said, much to the girl's rising ire. Harry's gotten better at social cues these days, better than Ron at least, and decides to say absolutely nothing that will bring attention to himself. Instead, he lets his mind wander to a specific hook nosed professor the they walked toward the library.

He should've asked the older man about how goes finding that damned Chamber of Secrets, but instead the conversation had taken a turn for the silent. What even was that? Harry's always had a propensity for quiet moments. He does literally live in the realm equivalent of a graveyard after all, but even he knows that the polite thing to do in a conversation is to, well, converse. Not to stare
coquettishly up at the potions master like some old century Victorian noblewoman.

Harry knows in the mess and tangles and mush of feelings for one Severus Snape, there's a low knot of arousal he feels around the man. Sexual attraction. That he understands. Friendship. Vaguer, but he's been around long enough to understand the general idea, what is usually expected and reciprocated from the interaction. Though of course most of that sort of knowledge came from watching the worlds go by and reading rather than any practical experience on his part. It's a tad pathetic to admit, even to himself, that it's been millennia over millennium since he's properly applied the concept of friendship to things that aren't technically alive. Even so, friendship doesn't seem like such a hard thing to contemplate compared to whatever Harry feels toward the dour faced man.

Emotion is complicated enough as it was when Harry was Death and feelings were pale pastels and dull tones of paint with only the rare vibrancy of color between them. As a human, emotions were so bright and intense, they almost hurt. And the meshwork of sweeping strokes and splattered hues decorating the insides of his human husk was unexplainable, incomprehensible to the being. It's the way his mind flits across in a constant buzz and hum that makes it harder for him to listen to his own thoughts while he talks to Snape, how his basic motor functions seem to stall and backtrack, the way the insides of his mouth feel dry, and his tongue is so heavy and slippery it's like it's slowly melting. It's the phenomenon known as hormones. Had to be. Harry was twelve, going onto thirteen. That's well in the average for human puberty to commence and mess him up good for the next few years or so. Or maybe this is just what all humans feel when faced with attractive potions professors. Just a human thing. A mortal thing. Harry hoped so. Because if not these were some very distressing symptoms that strongly indicates an immense boo-boo on Harry's part in his meat suit maintenance. He knew he shouldn't have stayed as long as he did under Uncle Vernon's terrible parenting.

"He is not a brainless git!" Shrieked Hermione suddenly, Harry flinched so hard he missed the corridor turning and made unpleasant contact with the wall. "Sorry Harry." The girl apologized sheepishly under the other's green-eyed glare.

Ron, the wanker, just laughed. "You alright mate?" He asked between giggles.

"Dandy." Harry sarcastically replied. "Are you guys still on about Lockhart?"

"He's not a brainless git," Hermione muttered sulkily. Ron and Harry caught each other's eyes and simultaneously rolled them, the redhead even managing to make a gagging motion before Hermione turned around to stare narrow eyed at the freckled boy. "He is not!"

Harry decided that tomorrow, he was definitely going to hang out the whole day with the Slytherins. He's sure they won't talk incessantly about Lockhart.

"Potterhart is just so cute!" Pansy squealed, Daphne Greengrass looked up at the girl, confused.

"Potterhart? What is that?"

Eager to spread her new obsession, the girl sprang up from her seat to sit uncomfortably close to the Greengrass heiress. "It's a code name I decided on, stands for Potter and Lockhart!"

Greengrass' face was somewhere between amusement and curiosity, with a mild coating of disgust. "You mean, like a couple?"

Pansy nodded.

"But, uh, I thought you liked Lockhart?"
Pansy shrugged, like that one important fact made absolutely no difference to her, "I mean, yeah, Professor Lockhart is my future husband, but if I had to give him up it'd be to Potter."


"Aw Daphne, don't be like that!" The other whined, her face flushing, "You're making me embarrassed."

"As you should be," she mutters with a faint smile on her face. "Besides, Lockhart's like thirty, Potter, as annoyingly pretty as he is, is twelve."

"Potter is annoyingly pretty isn't he." Pansy agreed with a sigh, "He's like that muggle fairy tale my uncle used to tell me about, Snow White. Except his lips are about as pale as his skin and his eyes are greener than mother's best emeralds."

"More like the Ice Queen- but with messier black hair. And way shorter."

The two girls paused and contemplated the unfairness of Potter's looks for a bit before the young brunette Slytherin moved back to topic. "Anyway, I'm the same age as Potter, and you don't see anyone else protesting about the torrid love affair forming between me and Professor Lockhart."

"That's because it's only happening in your dreams."

"Exactly," Pansy winked. The other Slytherin girl rolled her eyes. "Besides, it's not like there are wizards and witches out there with bigger age gaps."

"I guess I can see your logic." Daphne admitted, then with a shy smile she confessed, "And maybe the whole professor-student relationship is kind of, interesting."

"Kind of- Daphne, the Whomping Willow is interesting, that monopoly game Potter introduced was interesting, a professor-student relationship is hot." Pansy moaned, "The taboo, the secrecy, the drama!"

"You've read your mother's 'Affair at Amour Alchemist Academy,' novel didn't you?"

"..Yes."

Daphne stared Pansy down silently before breaking her aristocratic features into a grin. "Me too."

The two girls squealed softly as their friendship took a turn for the crazy. "Professor Lockhart is so a Professor Geodern." Pansy gushed.

"No way, if Lockhart is going to be any character, he's got to be Mr. Dandylion."

"That would make Potter, Daisy Duke, though!"

"True, Potter's more of a Gwendolyn Inkscorch."

"Oh my god, Inkscorch and Geodern would totally be cute together."

"Like Potter and Lockhart?" Daphne asked.

"Like Potter and Lockhart." Pansy confirmed. "Ooh, could you imagine their children?"

"What." Draco said.
"No. Just-" Harry sighed. "I'm leaving."

"Professor Snape," Harry breathed soft and breathy, his pale skin flushed and his green eyes, always so bright and vivid, was wide and slightly glazed as they looked up at the man. The boy's neck was exposed to his gaze like an offering that he wanted to do nothing but eagerly accept.

"Call me Severus," He murmured roughly, the hand not currently entangled in messy raven locks, was tenderly outlining youthful features. The curve of the cheekbones, the softness of skin warmed with desire, the sweet pinkening of lips partly opened so beautifully. His thumb answered the unspoken invitation, finding its way past the pretty pale opening, into that sinfully innocent mouth.

Harry's eyes flared and glowed at the unexpected intrusion but just as easily dimmed, dark with anticipation and confused lust. Snape felt the younger male lick the pad of his finger, giving a soft suck as he did so and the potions master felt heat pool straight to his cock at that.

"Fuck." He hissed and Harry, the sly, sarcastic little shit, smirked triumphant and gleeful at Severus' slip of obscenity.

"Language, Severus." The savior of Wizarding Britain teased, his voice only slightly hindered by the thumb of the older man in his mouth. Snape can hear the laughter and content in the other's voice; it was odd how intimate and comfortable this all felt, nothing like his past and admittedly few exploits in the area. "Five points from Slytherin."

Severus couldn't stop the curl of a smile on his face and the crinkle of his eyes as he huffed amused, "You are shameless."

Harry smiles back; he looks so sweet and beautiful as he looks at Severus, affectionate and tender. He doesn't need to look at his own face to know that he was matching the expression, letting himself be bare in all his vulnerabilities.

Harry then suckles the thumb still in his mouth, and suddenly, things were back to the sweltering temperatures from before. The professor feels his throat go a little dry at the suction and decides instead to replace his hand with his tongue, sliding their mouths together, fierce and frenzied at the desperation to taste. His hand still curled into the younger male's hair tightened and pulled, earning a breathy drawn out moan that Severus swallowed down greedily.

"S-Severus," the young boy stuttered, his debauched, unsure appearance so different to the usual composed, unruffled, dignified person he was. The fact it was the older man who was the cause of such unraveling gave him a swell of pride. It felt almost too good to be true for someone like this to want someone like him.

So beautiful, so precious, so-

Young.

Snapes woke up, silent and sweaty. The hard, incessant throbbing between his legs all the incriminating evidence he needs to confirm what he's dreamt, who he's dreamt of. He looks up at the ceiling of his bedroom, unmoving, refusing even to acknowledge his traitorous body that urges him for release.

This wasn't how it was supposed to be. Snape didn't know exactly what it was supposed to be but certainly not this. Harry was a child, was a boy for god's sakes. No matter how mature and intelligent he seemed, no matter how genuine his affections, it didn't stop his feelings being illegal and perverted at the very best.
He liked Harry. Harry was talented and modest, with words from his lips that had more weight than gold yet fell in an adorably clumsy manner that made people underestimate the true worth of his mind. He easily said yes and was easier to say yes to. Snape enjoyed the quiet company he brings, the tremulous trust he gives like a gift that the older man truly doesn't deserve, the banter between them easy and friendly.

Harry was far and beyond his age group. He was probably far and beyond a lot of age groups to be brutally candid in the professor's opinion. The boy indeed proved the saying, 'Age is just a number.' Unfortunately, if you take Harry's age with Snape's, that number is still older and more legal than the boy.

The point is, Snape liked Harry. He didn't know exactly when 'like' began being seasoned by the foul taint of lust, but he knew that at the very least, the attraction of the more carnal nature was not the driving force behind his gravitation toward the young Potter. That, at the very least, he wasn't so shallow or distasteful as to be only in it for the appearances and youth of the boy. It was a hollow reassurance to his nature.

Overcompensation maybe. He's not opened up and found someone for a platonic companionship since.. since he rather not think about. It's a subconscious projection of wanting a warm body, clinging onto the tentative bonds of friendship. Coupled with what's probably a mid-life crisis, it's probably, hopefully, a normal reaction in a less than normal situation.

He can do this. He can let this pass. He can get over it.

Snape is a man of control. He's lied and done terrible things for love and revenge; he can lie and not succumb to terrible things for.. whatever this was. He is a man of cool, calm control.

And if he runs into the bathroom and loses control of his stomach contents because this was Harry, James Potter's son, Lilly's son- well, no one but him will know.

"Hermione there is a crying ghost in the bathroom." The Boy Who Lived pointed out rather needlessly. "Why is there a crying ghost in the bathroom?"

Seriously the intangible female was so invested by her sobbing and wailing, she barely even noticed the entity of death the next stall over. Harry would almost be insulted if he wasn't quite relieved not to be interacting with the crying girl.

"Oh, that's Moaning Myrtle," Hermione answered, "Just try to ignore her." As she said that, the sobbing got much louder. The bathroom walls letting the noise bounce and echo, filling the room with blubbering howls of unhappiness.

"Tad hard ain't it?" Ron groused

"Wow, some of these potions look positively wicked." Harry commentated as he flipped through the Moste Potente Potions textbook. "This has literally no place in a school environment."

"Well it is in the Restricted Section for a reason," Hermione supplied.

Harry just gave her an unimpressed look. "There's a potion on how to turn one's genitals inside out. And one on earning the drinker a couple of extra limbs- out of his or her mouth."

"That mouth arm picture is makin me sick, change the page already." Ron moaned. "Merlin, that's right rank that is."
"Did you see the drawing of the man being consumed by a horde of spiders?"

"Don't even joke about that mate."

"Here it is," said Hermione excitedly as she found the page headed The Polyjuice Potion. It was decorated with sketches of people midway through transforming into other people. Harry hoped the faces drawn on there were ones of pleasant surprise instead of the open-mouthed agony he suspected they were in.

"This is the most complicated potion I've ever seen," Hermione murmured as she scanned the recipe. "Lacewing flies, leeches, fluxweed, and knotgrass."

"Well, those seem easy enough to get," Harry said. "They're in the student store cupboard so we can help ourselves."

"But there's also powdered horn of a bicorn." Ron added, unsure. "I may not know what's in our potions cupboards but I highly doubt something like that is in there. Also, shredded skin of a boomslang, where in Merlin's name are we going to get that?"

"Not to mention you guys need something from whoever you want to turn into," Harry said.

"Oh nu-uh, I'm drinking nothing with Crabbe in it. Or Goyle. Or anyone really, ew."

Hermione was doing a frankly brilliant job of ignoring the two boys' complaints. To be fair, she's had quite a bit of experience in that department since knowing them."Don't worry about that yet, and we add those bits last."

"Stealing, invasion of privacy, misuse of a professor's trust." Harry mused, "You know, for a girl who supposedly enjoys following the rules a lot, you sure break a lot of them."

What he had said must have hit some sort of nerve because Hermione shut the textbook with a loud, sharp snap of the pages.

"Well, if you two are going to chicken out, fine," she said hotly. Her face was patchy pink, and she looked ready to cry or scream or both. "I don't want to break the rules, you know, but unlike some people, I think threatening Muggleborns is far worse than brewing up a difficult potion. But if you don't want to find out if it's Malfoy, I'll go straight to Madam Pince now and hand the book ba-

Wide green eyes immediately turned to blue, pleadingly. Harry was not equipped to deal with defusing this. He may not have recalled this correctly but he was fairly sure the last time Hermione was something like this, they had been fending off a troll, and Harry had shouted at her to get it together. He somehow doesn't think that such an option would be particularly helpful right now.

"We're sorry 'mione," said Ron apologetically. "We were just taking the piss a bit. We totally want to make sure Malfoy isn't the heir just like you. But not toenails, okay?"

The girl gave a little sniffle before smiling bashfully. "Okay."

"How long will it take to make, anyway?" Harry asked, changing the subject back to the task at hand.

"I'd say it'd be ready in about a month if we can get all the stuff ready." Hermione informed, already looking much happier. "There's certain ingredients that need extra care or need to be picked at specific times like under the full moon or, pickled for eleven days exactly."
"Sounds great." Harry placated. "But I guess the problem now is getting our stuff then."

It was a Quidditch day today. Harry sat in the Slytherin section and cheered supportively with the others every time Draco swooped and swerved or did anything particularly noteworthy. He clapped a bit every time Fred and George did some fantastic flight-work as well but that was a little less well received in the House of green and silver for some reason. Honestly, it was so awkward sometimes not being in one set House.

After the match, with Gryffindor just managing to sneak in with a win, everyone emptied out of the stands and began making their way back to the insides of the castle walls. However before Harry could follow Blaise and his other friends to celebrate Draco's first game, the stern face of Professor Snape came into view as the crowd of students separated like the Red Sea in his presence. "Potter, come with me."

"Sorry guys, tell Draco I think he did smashing for me yeah?" Harry said, Nott grinned, and Zabini cooly nodded in agreement. Harry hopes that Draco will never know he ever thought this, but in his opinion, Blaise Zabini seems to be much more suited to be the one holding the title of Slytherin's Ice Prince out of all of them. He has a similar pureblood pedigree to the Malfoy's from what Harry could gather. However, Zabini's personality just seems a little bit more.. Refined.

Harry followed Snape wordlessly until they reached an emptier part of the castle, only then did the boy start walking beside the older man, more like a friend than a student. "So where are we going, Professor?" He asked.

"The medical bay," Snape answered shortly. Harry mentally tried going over who he knew that wasn't there at the Quidditch match. The raven haired boy couldn't think of anyone at the moment. The answer came in a small, petrified boy, laying on one of the medical beds.

"Colin, oh no." Harry was genuinely sad about the poor first year's predicament. Colin was like the cutest human pet that he never got to have as an entity. They always died way too quickly in his realms. Weeks at best, which was like nothing to him. And while he loves his souls and ghouls and all things in-between, nothing beats living companions with amazingly warm bodies and weird mortal habits that never cease to amuse him. Colin, with his avid hero worship and adoring passion, would definitely have made an ideal pet. "He was so cute."

"Excuse me?" Snape said sharply.

"Is he going to be alright?" Harry asked at the same time, his vivid green eyes glowed faintly as he looked pleading up at the other. Snape seemed to avert his gaze from his own, which was odd because Snape hadn't seemed like a man who would back down and be the first to break away from eye contact. Never been before at least.

"Yes, regrettably the Mandrakes we have currently are still too young to be used for the potion to reanimate Mr. Creevey."

"So he'll be like this for the rest of the year?" Said Harry incredulously. "But couldn't you all order some? Isn't there a Magical Asian community or anywhere that would be able to provide us with freshly matured Mandrakes? Do you people not have some way of magically preserving Mandrakes?!" He didn't realize he was shouting by the end of it until he felt the now familiar weight of the potions master's hand rest on his shoulder. Like an anchor in the turmoil of heated red waves, splashing in his thoracic cavity and thrumming in his arteries.
Harry's angry. He recognizes it. It's the same sort of indignant anger he felt for the child in him being abused like an unwanted doll forced upon a spoilt child. But this time there's something solid and real and emotionally connecting to him in a way nonexistent, hypothetical childhoods and the real Harry Potters couldn't be. Colin Creevey was a good, enthusiastic, slightly stalkerish, child who came to this school bright eyed and bushy tailed. He had a younger brother, a camera his father had given him with his hard earned money and the innocent wonder of magic and heroes like the Boy Who Lived.

It's not fair that this child's first ever real experience with the magical world would be tainted with fear and result in catatonia. It's even more so when the supposed teachers, magical wizarding teachers at that, who should be prioritizing this sort of shit, have done apparently fuck all to help him.

Wait for the Mandrakes to mature. Yeah, and while they wait, bodies of their precious students will pile up in the medical like corpses in a morgue. Bunch of uncreative fucking idiots these people.

"I can see you're clearly upset," Snape began.

"Really?!" Harry spat, his eyes now glued onto the still form of the younger boy. His expression frozen in terror and his hands still gripping his beloved camera.

"But I highly advise you not to take that tone with me." The potions professor finished, voice steely and hard. His voice cold enough to clear the warm, violent haze in Harry's head just enough to calm back down to a more reasonable state of mind.

Taking a deep breath, the boy shut his eyes for a moment, blocking out the image of Colin petrified on a hospital bed. He hadn't even realized that the whites of his eyes were threatening to go completely black in his rage until he felt the darkness inside him seep reluctantly back inside his mortal casing. "You're right," He said, before repeating in a much softer, more ashamed voice, "You're right. I apologize."

Harry knows he's not good at control, he's pretty shite actually. He's struggled with his lack of control since around the beginning of his existence. It's already hard as it is trying to maintain his identity as Harry Potter, little wizard human, what with his overly eager newfound magic bursting from his fingertips and his inherent powers bubbling restlessly inside him just as eager to be used. But it's these emotions and feelings and his awareness of them that's really screwing him over now more than ever. He's seen billions of Colin Creevey's in far worse, far tragic, far more painful conditions with heartbreaking backstories that would make sociopaths weep, and all he would feel would be a vague pitying, sympathy before taking away the lights from their eyes and breath from their lungs.

Now he looks at Colin and feels queasy. And sad. And strangely guilty.

Snape's hand squeezed his shoulder tightly for a moment before releasing his grasp, and Harry felt his body inexplicably relax alongside the professor's grip. It was odd. But at the same time, it was nice enough to not question. "You were upset," Snape said simply like that's all it was. And Harry guessed it was. "I wasn't aware of the extent of your friendship with the boy, so in hindsight, I should be the one to apologize. You reacted.. Far from well, but I should have expected as such."

"Why did you show me this?" Harry asked softly. "I don't understand professor."

The potions master was silent for a bit before finally answering, "I am in a predicament." He confesses, and he pauses again. Harry waits patiently for the man to continue. He's aware that Snape, much like, yet so different to Dumbledore, holds his secrets to his chest like a dragon and his hoard. It lightens Harry to know that he's one of the select few who's earned the privilege to manage to
wrangle out something from the taciturn wizard.

"I think I have located the Chamber of Secrets."

Harry's brows shot up, surprised and impressed. "Well, that sounds like the complete opposite of a predicament to be perfectly honest. Tell me though, how do you know?"

"One of the female bathrooms on the second floor has a sink whose tap is decorated with an ornate snake design," Snape explained. "Wizards are many things, embarrassingly subtle doesn't seem to be one of them."

"And yet no one managed to catch on," Harry noted with no end of audibly dry amusement. "I guess perceptiveness isn't a particularly strong trait either."

"Unfortunately, wizards also tend to lack in basic common sense, which does bring me back to my predicament." With a deep breath, the man pinned his gaze on the smaller figure. "You."

"Me?" Harry was genuinely surprised, and maybe a little offended. "How am I the problem professor? I told you as much as I knew about the Chamber."

"And you will not understand how much I appreciate it, Potter," Snape soothed, his thumb firmly drawing small circles against Harry's shoulder blade in a way that made the boy just want to sigh contentedly and revel in the feeling. Though this was indeed a very inappropriate time to do so. "However it's because you've helped so much in this endeavor that it's a problem."

"I hardly think that's the case, sir." Harry protested.

"You're already a strong suspect among the student body as the Slytherin Heir Harry." The older man tried to explain, "Your technically in the Slytherin house, friends with many students with pure blood heritage and a conservative upbringing, your magic is intimidating to those that don't really know you, you know where the Chamber lies, and to top it all, you can apparently speak Parseltongue."

"Well, when you say it like that.." The boy muttered. "Then just don't tell anyone I told you."

"Yes, because my reputation is so very clean and pure." Snape drawled. Harry shrugged in acquiescence, made sense. Snape was definitely one of the top four individuals the general student body believe to be a viable heir of Slytherin alongside himself, Draco and some Slytherin fifth year with the unfortunate last name of Serpentes. And to be perfectly honest, no one really cared about Serpentes. "No, the fact is, it's suspicious enough if either of us told everyone where the Chamber was, as well as counterproductive because the true heir would be on much higher alert if we go public about our discovery."

"So finding out who's releasing the basilisk out to play is probably the best option for us." The younger of the two concluded. "The problem is we have no idea who it is, what they want, and when they'll strike next."

"Did you really just think finding the Chamber of Secrets would solve all our problems did you?" Asked Snape wryly.

"Maybe just a little," Harry admitted. Because this is apparently what he gets for putting faith in the magical education system. Accusations and complications. The boy sighed tiredly. "So what do you suggest then?"

"We need to find the heir." Snape deadpanned.
The younger of the two rolled his eyes as he covered his mouth to try hide his smile. "Obviously. I mean what's the strategy professor?"

"There's not much that can be done other than keeping our eyes out Potter."

"Is that all?" Harry sighed, how disappointing at the very least. "What about Colin sir? It's not right what's happened to him, he deserves better."

The professor's hands stopped their calming motions at the sound of Colin's name but other than that Snape showed no change as he calmly replied, "Your previous outbursts had some merit, I have connections that could possibly secure myself some properly matured mandrakes. The problem is; however, there's almost no funding available that could possible afford such expenses."

"Problems, there's always problems." Harry hissed under his breath. It was ridiculous how inefficient this community was. There is only so many gaps that could be filled with magic alone. With a louder, more determined voice he said, "I'll pay for it all then. As the sole heir of the Potter fortune, I'll assist financially in your endeavors to secure a cure."

Snape was staring at Harry like he'd just declared to strip down, paint himself in purple body glitter and rule the world with the help of his rubber duck life companion Fredrick Jameson, instead of volunteering his financials to help a person in need like what a decent human being would do. Which, rude. Harry is a very nice individual. Harry also requires the killing of living creatures to survive, but Harry is still a very nice individual nonetheless.

"Are you sure Potter?" The potions master asked. "That's an.. incredibly generous thing you're offering."

"It's what any decent person would do."

Snape was still staring at him strangely. "Yes," He said slowly, "But there isn't much in the way of 'decent people' around here nowadays."

"Really?" Harry asked, "Well I hardly think that's true since I'm looking at one right now."

To the boy's surprise, and immense delight, he saw the pallor of the older man's cheeks flush a light dusting of pink at the compliment, the grip on his shoulder tightening and inching closer to the nape of his slim neck. Harry wanted to lean into the man's palm, warm and calloused from years of experience, and nuzzle against it, but he didn't dare for fear of disgracing himself again in front of the professor. While Snape had reassured him that he hadn't disgusted him, Harry couldn't help but want to avoid such an awkward predicament between each other again so soon.

"Flattery will get you nowhere Potter," Snape says, and Harry feels strongly inclined to disagree. Flattery apparently gets him his favored potions master stroking his neck lightly while presenting the pleasingly rare sight of said potions master blushing faintly.

"I hardly think its flattery if I think it's true professor." His face feels as warm as the hand touching his neck, his heart is pounding like a marathon, and it felt like most of the air in his lungs have gone straight into his head. Harry doesn't understand. His body is thrumming like when he is angry, yet he feels anything but, the shortness of breath like strangulation in the gentlest way, the low buzz of desire isn't sharp in his mind but softer, less defined and ever more confusing.

The green eyed wizard wondered if hallucinations were another one of these newfound human hormonal changes as well, because he could have sworn that Snape's eyes were dilated as he gazed down at Harry. The idea of the possibility that Snape was even remotely interested in him certainly
was an effective way for his train of thought to be cut off in favor of disembodied screaming inside
his head which, was definitely not normal. Not for him at least. The disembodied screaming voices
usually come from somewhere outside his head.

"Call me Severus." The man murmured, his voice lower than his usual deep tenor.

"Severus?" Harry repeated cautiously, once again not completely sure he knows where this was
going. His doubts must have been translated into his voice though because Snape immediately
seemed to recoil back like he'd been burnt, his face twisting into anger and revulsion. "Severus?"
Harry repeated again, now thoroughly confused at the reaction.

"I have to go." The man gritted out, before turning sharply to the door and striding quickly out,
leaving Harry and a petrified Colin Creevey behind.

There was a befuddled silence in the medical bay, before Harry asked out loud, to no one in
particular, "Why does this always keep happening?"
Death's dating

Chapter Notes

Warning- Start of actual underage stuff happening now. Be prepared for future stuff as well I guess.

The one where Death starts dating.

News of Colin's condition had spread throughout the school. News that Harry had pocketed up a sizeable chunk of his family fortune to save the boy was, in comparison, nonexistent. Colin, in the eyes of most of the students, was a dead man walking. Or lying. Whatever. The point was, humans have a huge affection in seeing the most negative side of everything, wizards or not. And everyone was on edge by the morning after. First years would huddle in tiny packs as they traversed the halls, jumping at every shadow in fear of being the next one in the hospital wing. It was kind of adorable. Like little penguins. Terrified little penguins fearing for their life.

Ron's sister seemed to be especially distraught as well. Even more so then when Mrs Norris was petrified. Apparently she sat next to Creevey during potions or something. Harry thinks Ginny is an extremely emotional person. Having just been sucker punched with brand spanking new and annoyingly improved emotions himself, he does not feel any sort of jealousy for when she reaches her teenage years.

Christmas was fast approaching on top of everything as well, so the atmosphere of Hogwarts was quite a mess of petrified fear and excited holiday cheer. Unsurprisingly they were not much of a combination together.

Because of the stupid Polyjuice potion plan, it was decided that the trio was to stay back in school for the holidays to finish it off. Also Malfoy was staying back as well, which to Ron and Hermione, was incredibly suspicious, and to Harry, was completely understandable since Mr Malfoy and Mrs Malfoy had to go overseas as political representatives of the British Ministry of Magic for an important meeting. Harry was not pleased with his Gryffindor friends. Neither was Ron for that matter since he was the one who wanted Harry over at his place for the hols.

Actually, most of the Weasley's was pretty darn upset when they heard the news. Which was amazingly flattering. Even Hermione's iron strong resolve had to melt under five sad Weasley gazes and one Potter one.

"Fine," She sighs defeated and immediately twin whoops of joy and the sound of multiple high fives were heard. The bushy haired girl glared at her fellow second-year friends, "But only if we finish over half of our 'project' by then."

"Deal!" Ron agreed with a wide grin.

"We could even buy some of the more uncommon things we need as well," Harry added which calmed Hermione immensely.

"Even the-" She glanced at the oblivious other Weasley's present in the common room, lingering particularly on the curious prefect watching them, "Really hard to find stuff?" The girl asked
The green-eyed boy looked apologetic at that, "I asked Professor Snape about that, and unless you can afford your own castle and know the right people, that's a negatory." Okay, so Harry could afford powdered bicorn horn. And maybe he could utilise his overpowered magic to track down the right people. But the amount of gold for such a rare ingredient was staggering enough without the guilt of using some dead unrelated people's money in the process. Also he was not putting that much effort in a plan that he doesn't even remotely support. Harry's kind of forgotten why he's going along with it in the first place.

"Ugh, I guess we'll have to get it ourselves then." Hermione sighed. Oh right, Harry agreed to this because his friends actively search for trouble and pain, and it was up to Harry to minimise it as best he can. Turns out 'best he can' involves breaking into a professor's private storage rooms and stealing some endangered animal bits. This will most certainly not end well.

The Burrow was very... homey. Like an old quilt stitched up and patched and worn. It was snug and warm and full of the energy only family and domesticity could bring.

Needless to say, Harry wasn't much of a fan.

His nose wrinkled the moment he stepped in, and he had to stifle the urge to sneeze. The place, while obviously poor, reeked of life and fertility and family. Death, and what he stood for had no place in this household. It made him quite uncomfortable to be there honestly. Like a hunter being invited into a den of rabbits for tea. The tea would be nice, and the rabbits would be adorably friendly, but it would feel wrong and so very awkward on so many levels to someone who's intimately familiar with what their organs looked like twisted inside out of their bodies.

"It's very nice." Is what he says instead. Ron beams like sunlight at that and Harry both wants to coo and shy away from it like a vampire. Normally he wouldn't be so affected, but it's this household that's screwing with him. God, has anyone even died in this place? Ugh. There's not even some sort of skinned animal decorating the walls or anything. At least he knows for a fact the Weasley's weren't vegetarians or he's pretty sure he would legitimately perish. The equivalence of his soul wasting away. Thank the lord for small mercies.

Just then, a plump kind-faced woman that Harry assumed was Mrs Weasley, came into the room, her hands mid-wipe on a flowery dish towel, before she paused and stared at the one dark haired child in a mini sea of redheads. The twins, Percy, Ginny and Ron all stilled as one, like a herd of gazelles not noticing they were under contemplative watch of a lion.

"Children." She said in a very calm and frankly quite alarming way. "Is anyone going to introduce me to this lovely young guest of ours and then tell me why is he here?"

"Did no one tell mum about Harry coming over?" Percy asked in a loud whisper, his eyes, much like the rest of them, had not strayed from their mother's form.

"I thought you were going to do that." Ron whispered back furiously.

"He's your best friend." Ginny hissed.

"Wait." Harry said slowly, "Did no one tell your parents you invited me over for the hols?"

"Ah, well." Fred coughed awkwardly as George finished with an, "Apparently not. Sorry?"

Harry gaped at them before looking back at the equally incredulous (but far more unhappy) Mrs
Weasley. Colouring with embarrassment at the awkward situation he's managed to entangle himself in, the boy stepped out to give out his hand to the Weasley matriarch anyway. He may not have been invited, but that shouldn't excuse him for being ruder than he already was.

"I'm Harry Potter, Mrs Weasley. It's a pleasure to meet you, and, um, awfully sorry about the inconvenience." He greeted sheepishly, "I wasn't aware you weren't expecting me, if it's too much of a burden I can always go somewher-"

"Oh nonsense my dear!" Mrs Weasley burst out, her demeanour much sweeter than before. "Harry Potter you say? Well my boys have gone on, and on about you! Come in, let me show you around the Burrow." She suggested, her arm wrapping around his skinnier one as she practically pulled the thin child further into the house. The woman frowned slightly at the boy's thin figure before pushing it down in favour of some indirect punishments towards her children.

Completely ignoring her offspring, the woman smiled wide and unrepentant as she, so innocently added, "I must insist you see our family albums, oh I have the cutest pictures of their toddler years, you should see when Fred and George during their tea party phase."

All five redheads somehow managed to pale and flush at the same time, each with varying expression of horror and embarrassment. They all just kind of stood there as their mother lead (dragged) Harry into another room, chatting delightedly about how Harry was such a dear, how she cried when she heard about those horrible muggles ruining his childhood and how fantastic Percy had looked in her best pearls when he was five. Only when the two were out of sight then did Harry hear a resounding jumble of frantic noises and shouting protests to come back.

"Just ignore them dear, that'll teach them not to write to their parents and warn them about houseguests." She dismissed after Harry couldn't help but look back when a particularly spectacular crash was heard.

"I really am sorry about the inconvenience." He said again, part out of genuine guilt and part fear of the woman. What was it about this world which produced so many terrifyingly intimidating older women?

"Oh hush now, no need for such talk," Mrs Weasley admonished kindly, "You are a dear friend of my sons and I will eat my own wand before I send a cute tiny thing like you out by yourself on Christmas break. Now, let me give you some nice embarrassing photo albums to busy yourself with while I fetch some hot cocoa and arrange some last minute sleeping arrangements."

"That does sound quite lovely Mrs Weasley." Harry admitted with a cheeky smile. Green eyes twinkled as the boy found himself sitting down on a comfy worn couch. Cocoa and blackmail?

Harry sipped his delicious hot chocolate, flipped to another amusing page filled with embarrassingly adorable memories and pointedly ignored any shouting in the other room. Maybe the Burrow wasn't too bad after all.

When the Weasley children finally slunk into the cosy living space Harry was currently residing in, his drink had been magically refilled twice and the child felt quite content as he watched the children and teens sulk. "I don't know about you all but your mum is just the sweetest isn't she?"

The boy got some grumbling that said otherwise.

"By the way," Harry continued airily, casually flipping the large, slightly tattered book in his hands. "I do love that year all of you dressed as reindeer. Love the tights. Very fetching."
"Give me that." Ron groused, snatching the album from pale fingers and hugging it protectively to his chest. And not all of us were reindeer."

"You're right." Harry agreed with a grin. "Because the muggle elf suits were just so manly."

At the confused looks of the pureblooded wizards Harry sighed. "They're not by the way. Manly I mean. Whoever convinced you to wear this was vastly misinformed if you thought that."

"Dammit dad I knew it." Fred muttered under his breath.

"Don't damn your father!" Molly Weasley snapped as she passed the room, thick duvet in her arms. Everyone jerked in surprise at her sudden appearance, and Harry heard George whisper, "How does she do that?" Before repeating in a much louder, cheekier voice, "Course we won't mum! Wouldn't dream of it."

The older woman narrowed her eyes suspiciously but let it go to instead, look at Harry. "Harry dear, this is quite awkward but is there any particular preference to who you would rather sleep in?" All the young wizards and witch blinked uncomprehendingly.

"Excuse me?" The green eyed boy gaped.

"Well you're such good friends with all my boys, so I thought it would be nice for you to choose. Ron and Ginny share a room together though, and so does Fred and George."

"Not that we don't mind sharing." George piped up, his face pink and eyes dark.

"Certainly not," Fred agreed smoothly and of similar appearance, "We would love the, uh, company."

"How come Harry can come into your room and yet I'm not allowed?" Ron protested, Ginny nodding beside him. They went ignored as Percy then insisted that it would be more convenient for Harry to stay with him.

"I have more space." The prefect said. "And my room isn't littered with anything that could drench you in toothpaste."

"Meaning your room is boring and ours has character." Fred retorted.

Percy snorted. "Is that what they're calling 'death trap' nowadays?"

"Please, do you even know Harry? He loves our pranks and so-called 'death traps'."

"Well I know that Harry loves a good night sleep, something he wouldn't have with you two fumbling around doing god knows what."

"Oh." The Weasley matriarch said, her eyes wide as she looked at her three arguing sons. "OH." She repeated. And then she grinned. Wide and excited and a little shark-like. Harry, Ron and Ginny shivered. Seriously, the women in this world.

"It was nice of Mrs Weasley to let me sleep here." Harry remarked happily. Misgivings about being not informed about their holiday houseguest aside, Molly Weasley had been the epitome of a good host. Dinner especially was absolutely exceptional. "It's unfortunate that there wasn't a spare mattress around."

"Well mum isn't the type to not bring in a stray dog when she sees one." Percy says as he busies
himself by straightening out the duvet on his bed and trying to hide his excitement.

"You calling me a dog?" The younger boy asks wryly. Percy laughs.

"I'm certainly not calling you a cat." He jokes back, Harry smiles at the prefect and Percy suddenly felt his throat run dry because Harry looked so sweet and precious and open. It made the older boy want to kiss that soft smile and soak it all into his skin.

Percy knows he hasn't been particularly grateful to his parents recently, but he's never been so aware of it until now. The prefect isn't a moron. He knows very well that even if they hadn't had the spare mattress for Lee Jordan, conjuring or transfiguring one would be simple as a swish of the wand, and he's never been more appreciative of his mum for not doing so.

It makes him feel incredibly guilty though. Sure Percy may have said in his mind a few times how he would sell off one non-vital body part just for such a situation like this to happen between him and Harry, but now that it's actually come up Percy finds himself not wanting it. Not like this anyway.

Damn his penchant for the rules. Even the unwritten ones. Perfect prefect Percy indeed.

"Percy? Is something wrong?" Harry asked, and woah, when did the petite younger boy get so close to his person? "You're kind of just staring at nothing."

The older redhead could feel himself and his voice of reason short-circuit as they instead chose to focus on trying to count every single dark eyelash on those bright unworldly green eyes and committing the faint scent of tea and rain to his memory.

Chess games and night patrolling weren't exactly the most tactile of activities he could get with the subject of his childish affections, the prefect liked to take what he could get.

"If you are, uh, uncomfortable with sleeping with me-" Percy floundered, his face warming to a nice shade of pink, "-I can always transfigure another mattress for you if you'd like?"

Harry blinked. "Are you uncomfortable with it?" The younger of the pair asks curiously. It made sense, Percy was a teenager after all, not exactly unexpected if he wanted space.

The teen flushed harder, his red face taking on an expression of surprise and vehement disagreement, "Wha- no!" He denied loudly.

"Then what's the problem?" Harry questioned patiently, and Percy doesn't even know how to begin. 'The problem is that I want you to sleep on the same bed as me, because you want to and not because of my good-intentioned mother.' He wants to say. 'The problem is that I think you are stupidly cute and nice and smart and seem to appreciate who I am, even when my family doesn't always.' 'The problem is that I'm just a tad in love with you and you sleeping in the same bed with me is going to incur some highly mortifying problems.'

Instead though, like the smooth, suave playboy Percy Weasley was, he garbles out a strangled, "Problem? There's no problem." Then laughs awkward and nervous and suspicious as hell.

Harry frowns, because as socially inept as the boy can be sometimes (and Percy loathes how utterly endearing he finds Harry's stumbling through societal cues) this seemed not to be one of those. "Percy, I personally am fine with the idea, but if you need your space or don't want me so close physically I could just."

"It's not that!" Percy blurts, because Merlin no, it is certainly not that. Harry waits patiently for an answer and the prefect suddenly can't think of a single reason why he shouldn't tell the truth right
now. Well, he could probably think of a few reasons why he shouldn't confess his feelings right this very second, the night they are supposed to share a room for what could be most of the Christmas holidays, but they seem to fade in the face of bright, expectant green eyes. To be honest, most things seem to dull and fade under them. "It's- it's not that." He repeats lamely.

He's not sure how the younger wizard does it, but Harry manages to get even closer to his face without touching each other's. Percy does his best not to look down at Harry's lips. "Percy," Harry sighs, and the prefect had to look at those pale lips, parted open and invitingly. He couldn't help it. It would've been rude not to. Also he was weak and hormonal. Mainly the second bit to be honest. "Please just tell me, you know I think unnecessary teenage angst is much too complicated and counterproductive in the long run."

"It's embarrassing." He confesses, because it was true and maybe Harry would be satisfied with that. He wasn't. Of course he wasn't.

"I won't judge." And the worst part is, Harry probably won't. Not much anyways. It's not like he's confessing that he's Death incarnate or something equally as crazy. Percy knows rationally he needs to get over this crush, Harry complicates his plans of the future. He's going to be Head boy, he's going to work in the Ministry like his father but unlike him, he's going to be rich and successful if it kills him. He wants kids of his own that he can afford not to give thrice old hand-me-downs to. He wants the white picket fence and the magical garden, he wants the well-paid Ministry position and he wants the respect him and his family deserve.

And while he does hopelessly pine and fantasize about sharing something like that with the Boy-Who-Lived, it always felt off. Harry just doesn't seem to fit in the jigsaw of his perfectly planned life. The boy looked like he belonged in a painting of gothic, haunting, beautifully dark things. The delicate complement to the darkness curling in every corner. Percy was always mesmerized at the way the moon would hit the younger wizard's face and how the shadows would always seem to frame angelic features into something innocently deadly. Percy knew he was aiming high, hoping to soar in the sky and maybe even become Minister in the process- but Harry, with his overwhelming power and seemingly endless potential and subtly captivating personality, he was already halfway to space.

"I, uh, I," Percy stammers but he has already near made up his mind. He needs this. Even if Harry was interested in the less fairer sex, something no one has even confirmed by the way, there was still no way he would be interested in Percy. And even if Merlin revived from the dead just to grant such a miracle, a relationship between them would unfortunately not last. It's not even all because of Percy's future plans. Harry was the sort of person who would do the best to accommodate even the stupidest things, case in point, Ron. Percy just couldn't though, no matter how much he wanted something with the other, he wanted a long lasting relationship and his carefully planned future a bit better.

His family may run on the power of their emotions and love and whatever other nonsense, but Percy was far more rational. The prefect would not be led on by his heart alone. Harry may be kind and pretty and held a dry sense of humor that Percy loved. But at the same time, Harry was a crush, a fixation and a distraction that Percy craved but certainly didn't need. He could see himself sacrificing everything for this charismatic young wizard, his dreams, his future, his ambition, and that terrified him in its temptation. It was best just to give a swift end to his feelings before he got to such a point. Percy needed closure.

"I like you Harry." He confesses in a rush and flurry of words because Percy also needs a new brain to mouth filter since apparently he's either stumbling over his words or he's shooting off embarrassing confessions with no in-between.
Harry blinked uncomprehendingly for a moment before staring at the fidgeting red-faced teen like he'd never seen the prefect before. "You like me." The younger of the two stated.

"I like you." Percy confirmed. "Non-platonically." He added just in case.

"Huh."

There's a silence as both wizards look awkwardly at their shared bed, the tense awkwardness was almost tangible between them. Harry took the opportunity to sneak evaluative looks at the physically older teen as he tried to set his mind in order. To be honest he'd never even contemplated the prefect as any sort of viable sexual conquest, Harry's always just assumed the other was comfortably satisfied as good friends. Sure Percy was kind of blushy, and initiated a lot of physical contact and proximity, but to be brutally honest, all the Weasley's were. How on earth was Harry meant to know any different?

Percy was cute though. And intelligent. A little too bland unfortunately, but Harry could see himself having something with the teen. Nothing long term. Percy was too.. domestic. Harry's heard about Percy's 'future plan' and it's given him hives just listening to it. The prefect was surprisingly a romantic at heart. In a weird OCD way. If it was Order or Love, they would have gotten all up in that in a heartbeat.

Then again, if the teen is offering, Harry can't think of any sort of reason to reject a little Christmas indulgence. Knowing Percy, it's going to be incredibly vanilla but at least it'll be sweet.

And let's face it, its been a while, and he's admittedly kind of, a little bit of, a slag. On mortal levels to clarify, if we're comparing him to other gods and entities in their need for sexual gratification, he's practically a saint.

With a calculated shy smile, green eyes looked through dark lashes demurely as the younger of the pair moved closer, casually resting his hand on a larger one in the process. "Yeah, okay. I'd like that."

The prefect just kind of gapes at that. Like Harry had just slapped his face with a Boggart instead of answering like a normal human mortal. Which was very confusing. Most organisms would feel honored that he would accept their offers. The entity has once had a brave Vulcan warrior practically weep when he had accepted the invitation to be bedded during the Vulcan's Pon Farr. "What."

"I said," Harry patiently replies, "I wouldn't be adverse in starting something. With you. Non-platonically."

Percy just stares at him like he's questioning Harry's standards. Or if he has any in the first place.

Which, rude. Harry does have standards, they are just incredibly low. As Death, you don't really discriminate in attraction. He doesn't even require a pulse to have intercourse with it- vampires for example. As Death, he's pretty sure that his sexuality is a singularity even among his more godly companions. Life is pretty darn heterosexual, Knowledge is asexual but indulged in carnal acts for more scientific purposes than anything, Order, Time and all the others are generally pansexual with certain.. preferences. Death would definitely fall in with the last category. Love is- well Love is as versatile as it gets, no holds barred. And Chaos, who once fucked a cooked thanksgiving turkey bare ass naked on a bench in Santa's workshop, was on a whole other league entirely.

It's hard to define really. Genderwise, he's found himself more attracted to the same sex of whatever form he's in. As a male he finds men more arousing, in the form of a female (which is quite rare to be honest) other women tend to be his first choice. It took a while, but he's realized that it's the infertility
that attracts him. The inability to create life. Men and women that can't have children are just as appealing to him in any gender then.

"O-okay then." Percy suddenly says, snapping the younger boy from his musings.

"Okay what?" Harry asks.

The prefect looks nervous, unsure, his hands are wringing themselves and honestly, it kind of feels like when Harry was in the forest with He Who Must Not Be Named as he contemplated eating the boar who had volunteered itself as a meat sacrifice. As reassuring as he can, the green eyed boy tightened the hand still on the redhead's own. It seems to work because Percy looks Harry in the eye, suddenly more resolved and decided, before grabbing the younger boy's hand and pulling him close to himself for a kiss.

Taken by surprise at the uncharacteristically bold move of the prefect, Harry practically fell into said kiss. It was expectedly awkward, with lips mashing against lips, and their noses were dangerously in the 'squished' category. Percy obviously hadn't had much experience and it showed. It wasn't off putting at least, the teen was certainly trying to make up with it in eagerness.

Amused, Harry decided to take pity on the prefect and dragged them both onto the bed with Percy lying on top of him. Then, taking advantage of the sudden change of position, smoothly moved his head to a much more comfortable position before proceeding to practically devour the redhead.

Percy made a startled noise at the sudden aggressiveness of the situation before melting under the heat, moaning loudly into the kiss and tentatively outlining the planes of Harry's lithe form with his hands. The green eyed wizard could feel Percy's erection, hard and gently rutting up on his thigh, and he could feel his own dick already responding to the stimulation at a frankly alarming rate. Harry panted at the sheer sensation of it all, it's clumsy, his partner is probably the most inexperienced he's ever been with, and they've barely done anything but make out like children but every touch seems to burn hotter than he's ever felt when he was Death. His skin has never felt more sensitive and aware of everything happening, the shift of clothes, every move of delightful friction, the weight pressed against him.

Somehow it's never really occurred to him that pleasure could be even more.. pleasurable.

Human bodies may be fragile and annoyingly confining and stiff sometimes, but they certainly had their impressive perks.

Percy had apparently decided to move on from kissing to try better things, because he was laving at the crook of Harry's neck, licking at the skin as he watched curiously as the younger wizard whined breathily at the sensation. His neck stretched out to give the prefect better access and Harry could feel his body almost involuntarily push up further against Percy's own as his mind tried to fully savor his own heightened pleasure. His arms found themselves curling possessively around Percy's head, bringing the other closer to his neck. Taking the invitation for what it was, the redheaded teen then enthusiastically tried to bite and suck the messiest hickey ever onto the side of his neck where Harry makes his appreciation for the prefect's attempts very much known. The skin under Percy's mouth throbs in time with his heartbeat and suddenly Harry understands why having a beating heart is so appealing.

The orgasm he has shocks Harry, he's tilting his head further, arching his back, with a moan bordering on a sob on his lips as all he can see is burning white spots. His hands had migrated over to his head, pulling his hair as if to steady himself but it was like trying to stop a volcano from erupting by dropping ice cubes in it. It's the first time in his human body that he's done that, well,
awake anyway, and it was absolutely mind-numbingly overwhelming to say the least.

"Harry," Percy groans out next to his ear, and Harry can distantly feel the older teen thrust up his leg, one, two, three times before shuddering and seizing to a halt like an electrocution victim. The green eyed boy gasps softly as the prefect bites him again on the skin he had been working on, harder than before as Percy cums. "Harry," Percy growls again, in a low, rough voice that Harry has legitimately never even imagined could belong to the straight laced prefect. And oh, hello teenage refractory period.

"Oh god, Percy, fuck." Harry sighs happily as Percy seems to quickly catch a second wind too and has decided to use it wisely by taking off Harry's top and pressing kisses and soft bites down the younger wizard's chest.

The redheaded teen pauses his ministrations suddenly and looks up, a more familiar unsure expression on his face. "Is, is this alright?" He asks tentatively and Harry just wants to coo at how cute Percy is.

Breathlessly Harry smiles, still high from his release and showing it off proudly. "More than alright I should hope."

Percy looks a little awestruck for a moment, his blue eyes darkening as Harry absentmindedly pressed his fingers against the pinking skin on his neck. It's definitely going to bruise wonderfully, the younger wizard was exceptionally pleased at that, he's always quite liked the idea of his amorous exploits being decorated on his skin. However, actually finding a partner that could keep its marks on an entity was always such a rare find. "I just, maybe we are going a little fast." The prefect says reluctantly.

Harry wants to protest at that. Harry's young teenage body really wants to protest at that. But he sees concern and nervousness and confusion in Percy's eyes, and Harry may be craving to explore the more sinful parts that come with humanity, but he certainly doesn't like it to the point of making someone feel uncomfortable like he's doing right now.

"Uh okay?" He's baffled to be honest. And disappointed. Did Percy not enjoy it like Harry had? The thought was mortifying at the very least. Maybe the prefect realized that he preferred the fairer sex instead?

"You want us to stop? Was it not.. good?" Harry asks softly. No one has ever told him that they were going 'too fast' much less ask him to 'slow down,' and frankly, Harry was feeling a little rejected at this whole thing now.

The rejection must show because Percy was awkwardly reaching out to cuddle his smaller body closer, heedless of the sticky messes of their pajama bottoms, and kissed him chastely on the cheek. "No, no, it's not that you weren't good," Percy soothed, then embarrassed he continued, "You were, uh, very good. Fantastic really. Better than I ever ima-" He coughed, his face one of someone who was just about to say something they would've completely regretted, despite the whole mess of the situation Harry giggled at the prefect's expression. "The point is, I just think, maybe we try do this bit by bit?"

The prefect was visibly struggling to find the right words, and Harry was struggling to understand them. Is Percy unsure how men have sex with one another? Was he uncomfortable with doing more than making out because of Harry's age? Or was it a case of not wanting to disappoint with his lack of experience in this area? He can't see why Percy seemed so adamant to stop, why the teenager seemed to think it so important.
"Is kissing fine then?" Harry asked tentatively, his fingers curling against Percy's freckled chest as he tried to navigate through a whole new set of strange, unfamiliar social constructs. He understood the mechanics of sex, sex was safe and easy and simple. It was an expression of non-platonic mutual attraction and Harry wasn't completely sure what other expressions there could be.

Percy looked surprised, like Harry didn't even need to ask, and the entity didn't like how stupid he felt at such a simple question. Kissing was, is, just as intimate as sex to Harry, so much so he barely finds it much of a distinction between them they're so interconnected. It's odd to think otherwise.

"Of course Harry," The Gryffindor says emphatically, kissing Harry lightly on the lips for good measure. In contrast to Harry's wavering certainty, Percy has gotten more sure of himself during this exchange, "I just don't want to rush into anything too fast too soon." He explains, "If we're going to be dating, I want to do this right."

Percy sounds so sure and resolved that Harry feels bad that the first coherent thought he has to that was, 'What the absolute fuck?' And then he feels even worse when that is followed up with a, 'I didn't know we would be dating.' He didn't. Honest. It's not exactly like he's known for his dating repertoire. Mostly because he doesn't have one. Even when he was eons younger and flitted around other worlds more than in his own realms he's never took up the dating experience. Any sort of relationship formed usually was during some form of massacre, plague or warzone, and despite what some historical dramas may say, it was far from dating ideal.

But this wasn't a warzone. Not a battleground. Hell, Harry's pretty sure no one has died in this house since ever. Which is both incredibly annoying and impressive.

Harry looked up into the prefect's eyes, he could see genuine adoration coloring Percy's soul- a simple little orb, light red with crisscrossing straight lines lacing it through- and suddenly the idea of dating, actually dating, didn't sound so daunting as he thought. What the hell, he was on vacation anyway, might as well try it out. When in Rome and all that jazz.

"I've never dated before." He heard himself confessing quietly, because Percy deserves to know that Harry is going to be absolutely shite at this. He won't know exactly how shite Harry truly is at it but at least he'll be vaguely aware of it.

The prefect chuckles nervously under his breath, "I'm not much of an expert myself. I'm sure we'll figure it out."

Harry isn't surprised at that, he'd figured that Percy had limited experience with romance. What he is surprised at is how self deprecating he sounded when he said that. The prefect was a very appealing specimen of a wizard. It wasn't his fault the general student body of Hogwarts has failed to see that.

"Well I'm glad that it's you." Harry declared, "Wouldn't have had it any other way." and Percy just looked so surprised and touched and grateful, Harry almost didn't feel too bad for lying about the last part.

"Oh," Was all Percy said, could say, and instead of words he pulled Harry in closer so that he could kiss him properly. With tongues together and arms wrapping around each other's bodies. The younger wizard was quite content with the response and happily returned the favor.

Together they nestled properly into their shared bed where they indulged themselves with several amazing minutes of kissing in a way that Harry hasn't really done with anyone. Kissing had always been just a pleasant prelude leading to sex, foreplay, not something really indulged in for its own sake. Though Percy's mouth was valiantly making some very good argument to just how wrong that idea was. Taking it slow doesn't seem so bad at that moment.
Of course Harry's body didn't really seem to get the message and embarrassingly climaxed twice throughout the make out session. The younger teen bit his now swollen pinked lips, humiliated at his lack of control. "Shit I'm sorry." He apologizes, Percy looks at him equally as flushed but with eyes darkening with hormonal want.

"I hardly think you should apologize." The prefect says hoarsely, his mind replaying the scene just moments before unable to move past it. The feeling of soft lips, cool skin warming under his touch, the way all Percy had to do was press ever so slightly harder before Harry jerked away with a gasp, glassy eyed as he writhed and mewled helplessly through his orgasm, mindlessly shaking against him. It seemed Harry, cool, composed, once helped fight off a troll Harry, was extremely sensitive to pleasure. "Merlin you're amazing."

And there was the confident, bold Harry from the beginning, smirking through blushing cheeks and slightly teary green eyes. "Aren't I always?"

"Always." Percy agreed. And then kissed him again.

As Harry slept on, his body exhausted by the numerous climaxes that the prefect giddily drew out of the younger wizard. By the end of it all, Harry had been a weeping, trembling, beautiful mess of a person as he finally succumbed to exhaustion. Percy laid down and watched the younger sleeping figure with soft eyes. He still feels disbelief that this has all happened. The prefect is honestly just waiting for himself to wake up in a tangled mess of bed sheets any minute now, alone, with an embarrassing mess in his pants.

The idea of wanting closure to his stupidly gigantic crush on the Boy Who Lived seems so far away right now. Percy's gaze lingers on the darkening patch of skin highlighted on Harry's neck, the faint indentation of a bite mark still there and the older teen felt a fizzle of possessive satisfaction at that. Had he really believed that it would be the best to not pursue something with Harry? It seemed the very pinnacle of blindness now.

Percy wasn't like his family. More rational, ambitious. He doesn't like following his heart or making decisions based on a feeling or being led by whatever gooey emotion in his heart.

But, as he nestles into the blankets and allows himself to cuddle close to Harry, who in turn sleepily snuffles toward Percy, the prefect couldn't help but think maybe following that gooey emotion in his heart wasn't too bad after all.

Of course their new relationship status was found out almost immediately. It wasn't like they've charmed bright flashy hearts and the words 'I KISSED THIS GUY AND I LIKED IT' in bright Gryffindor colors hanging above their heads, but they may as well have from the stupid smile on Percy's face, the hand-holding as they walked down to breakfast, and most damning of all, the smattering of red hickies and a large almost painful dark love bite decorating pale white skin exposed by the too large 'P' woolen jumper a very sleepy looking Harry had put on.

Needless to say, the chattering when they arrived, immediately ceased in favor of outright staring and gaping. There was soft choking noises that filled the short silence before Ron, naive innocent Ron burst out an indignant, "Merlin Harry, Percy bashed you up good!"

Now it was Percy's turn to gape while Harry in turn burst out laughing. That boy will never fail to make him smile. "Ron, Percy didn't hit me." He says patiently. Ron still didn't seem to understand.

"He kicked you?"
"Please, please say he kicked you." George muttered darkly. Fred next to his twin, was still staring blankly at the pair.

The raven haired wizard shook his head and gave the present Weasley family a bashful smile as he tightened his hold on Percy's hand. That, seemed to get Ron's attention because he opened his mouth and the oddest squeaky sound came out of it. It was then Mrs Weasley seemed to come out absolutely nowhere and tackled the two with a crushing hug, she too was emitting a squeaky high sound but in a distinctly happier pitch than Ron's more horrified one.

"Oh my! Don't you two look just the sweetest?" She exclaimed, and in an embarrassingly loud whisper she added to her son, "I do hope you weren't doing anything too... scandalous. Harry is still very young, dear."

Percy blushed a frightful red color and Harry could feel his own face heat up too. Good lord, did this woman have no sense of place? Mr Weasley seemed to share his sentiment as he had a suffering expression on his face as he tried to swallow down his coffee. "Molly really, don't embarrass the poor boys."

Crumpling up his newspaper, the patriarch of the Weasley family stood up, coughed like he was about to impart something terribly wise- which Harry honestly thought would be quite the feat considering this was the man at dinner last night interrogating Harry about the role of rubber ducks in muggle society as if rubber ducks were the key to all wizard-kind's future- before asking, "Percy did you try those muggle contraceptives I got you? I mean, I never really expected you to go for wizards but I'm sure those rubbers work either way."

Harry... well Harry was speechless. Like utterly, completely, incomprehensibly speechless at the sheer disregard and blatant implications this man was spouting. Worse off, it seemed Arthur Weasley was just genuinely interested in the use of condoms more than anything. Harry could speak every single dialect of every single language of every single species in every different variation of the universe, but there were no words in any of them to reply to this.

Percy was looking at the ground mournfully, like he was physically disappointed that his family's flooring has failed in aiding him a quick escape from this whole mess via giant hole. Ron, thankfully just seemed confused about where this awful turn of conversation had gone. The twins however, Fred looked ready to puke and George's juice was, oh, so Harry didn't imagine the sound of shattering glass. Well it wasn't exactly surprising their reactions, the green eyed boy reasoned. It was perfectly understandable for one to feel a little disturbed when faced with their older brother- especially a brother not especially liked- is dating a friend of theirs.

It's completely rational for family members to feel awkward in such a situation, Harry had pretty much come to terms with that about five seconds before actually seeing the Weasleys for breakfast. Except it seems only Ron was going to be doing the normal thing around here and everyone was just running across the spectrum like there wasn't one in the first place. Mr and Mrs Weasley were taking this in an amazingly cheerful stride while the twins in contrast looked almost heartbroken and angry at this new relationship status. Ginny hadn't come down from her bed and apparently the other two older brothers have yet to come back home, but since they aren't even friends with Harry and therefore will not feel as awkward as they should, they didn't really count.

But seriously, the twins. Fred looks like his heart is on the table, smashed and leaking blood all over the place, and George is the avenging fire, seething and ready to lash out.

When Ginny came down to eat, and she finally caught on to what's going on with Mrs Weasley's so very subtle, "So have you boys planned a place for your first date? I do hope it's awfully nice considering you two well- Oh don't get embarrassed Percy, you know I taught you all to treat your
beloveds right, and by the look of dear Harry's neck, you definitely better be getting the sweet child a good meal in him." The girl took one look at the newly tentative couples humiliated faces, their hands holding each other, and promptly ran back up to her room with a sob.

This family. Really. So odd.

"I am so. Sorry."

Harry pats Percy's shoulder sympathetically, the older boy flashed a small crooked smile before realizing he's meant to be hopelessly embarrassed and buries his face in his hands again. "Well I had fun." He tries. "It was a very nice first date, and I've never been to the theatre before."

Blue eyes peeked through fingers tentatively hopeful, "Yeah?"

The raven haired boy grinned, Harry nudged the other's shoulder with his own, playfully gentle, "Of course. It was interesting." Then with a short pause, he added, "Though I think you should've let me choose the film."

"How was I to know that muggles would use such confusing titles?" Percy bemoaned, slumping in his seat in shame. "Or that they could be so bloodthirsty."

"I thought Candyman was quite fun." Harry says honestly.

"That's because you're quite morbid aren't you, Harry." The redhead sighed defeated, Harry giggled and pressed a closed mouth kiss just on the corner of Percy's mouth. He's getting much better at the whole chaste thing. Hell, maybe this dating thing won't be so bad. Three dates and then sex is commonplace right?

"Well I had a rather lovely time." Mr Weasley says cheerfully as he drives the flying car back to the Burrow. Percy buries his hands in his face again while Harry pats him consolingly.

To Death,

I must say, I have never thought you would do such a thing. It's very unlike you. Not that I am implying you are a coward who never tries new things. I am just saying that the probability of you doing something adventurous or particularly bold to this extent is like if Order decided that wearing socks and sandals is somehow fashionably efficient. Which is to say, it's technically possible, but virtually nonexistent in the realm of everywhere.

Fascinating really.

I am most curious to see how your human body is effected by this. It seems growth is occurring normally, if a little stunted but that could be conferred to your own desire to experiment with the experience of pain. And if recent developments should be noted, which they have been, you're hormonal growth seems fine though your sex drive has spiked unusually high and early considering your age. Considering you are physically a prepubescent child, I suggest you curb your depravities and vices until a more appropriate age for mortals. Or whenever your secondary sexual organs fully mature.

Merry Christmas by the way.

Regards,
Knowledge

P.S. Love is pissed you are trying to ruin your cute little relationship with sex. I, personally share your views with connecting with an attractive organism via fornication in that adding sex in a relationship is like putting books on mobile devices— it's improved, quick and easy. However I also live in fear of my counterpart's wrath so I shall stay verbally silent on the matter.
Death's brought to bed

Chapter Notes

Umm.. warning for possible triggers for burning and pain and injury? It's not that explicit but just in case.

The one where Death finally gets someone to bring him to bed. In the unsexiest way possible.

Word gets out that Percy Weasley has somehow managed to get Harry Potter to date him. It was inevitable really. They were holding hands together when the entered Platform 9 and 3/4s, they somehow managed to stand together in a way that maximized as much body contact as possible without looking like idiots, and Katie Bell caught them making out just outside the prefect compartment. While Percy was a little shy about it, Harry seemed to have no problem admitting their relationship to the public. It's not like he particularly minds if it's a secret or not, but he thinks that Percy deserved the ego boost that came with the publicity of having someone famous unashamedly admitting their affections for him.

Ron, as usual, complained loudly about how disgusting they were being and demanded food to heal the mental scars he was incurring just looking at them. Though obvious unhappiness about his best mate being stolen by his stuck up big brother aside, the redhead had been taking the whole thing rather admirably. Supportive, but not supportive enough to want to hear anything or watch them kiss, or touch, or say anything remotely romantic. Harry could live with that. Hermione thought they were absolutely adorable, and applauded them for being so proud about their sexuality. Then she pulled a Mr Weasley and interrogated them about safe sex practices her dentist parents stressed to her about.

Draco was deeply unhappy about this new status who, mainly he seemed more upset his friend was dating a Weasley more than anything, especially one who was 'so old'. And more than a few older Gryffindor students had passed by him, patted him on the back, winked, and then walked off without saying a word. That was certainly weird.

The Weasley twins, Fred especially so, were still showing signs of deep unhappiness. Even revulsion. Harry thinks maybe they got dumped, or maybe it's teenage moping because Percy managed to get a relationship before them. He's fairly sure Percy is one of the reasons for it, the poor prefect was certainly fraying at the edges a tad what with the barrage of increasingly mean-hearted pranks he's fell victim too during the holidays.

It was only when Percy burst into his room, angry, face blotchy with unshed tears and terrible, rude insults inked on his skin did Harry had to force his hand and put his feet down.

"Okay what the hell guys?" He had slammed the door open to the twins' room angrily, Fred and George's heads snapped up in identical expressions of surprise, guilt and a terrible attempt at innocence. "I know you like picking on Percy, and yeah I admit I find your pranks hilarious, but this is getting downright cruel now."

"We don't know what you're talking bout." George says mulishly.

Harry sighed angrily, "The insults, the constant rain cloud that followed him for a whole day, that
goddamn creepy doll that keeps following him around."

"Oi," Fred protested weakly, "that doll ain't creepy."

The younger boy shuddered. "That thing frightens me far more than it does Percy." He confesses, because it's a fucking nightmare on porcelain legs and he needs it gone like, three days ago. "You know it's mental right? I tried to burn it up and it comes crawling back, barely a curl out of place."

"Yeah... We didn't have multiple copies of the doll or anything." Harry looks absolutely aghast at the idea.

He doesn't like dolls much, with their unblinking painted faces and frozen pretty features crudely trying to mimic a life never there. He doesn't like how they are almost always children. And he doesn't like that all the creepy fucking vengeful things in the world for some reason prefer to posses those things over legitimately anything else in the entire world they reside in. Like, what was up with that? It's either dolls or actual children. No one wants to posses a rich billionaire or a Ms Universe or their favourite actor, no, because that apparently would be a complete and utterly stupid waste of their ability.

"That is horrid." He says vehemently. "Absolutely horrid. Why would you even-" Harry stops short and just gives the two an odd look. "Um, by any chance are you two homophobic?"

Now its Fred and George who looked appalled. "What?" "No!"

"Because that's okay," Harry barrels on. It's the 20th century, albeit the later side of it, but there's not many earth worlds that have accepted the notion of homosexuality in this point of time. Harry gets it. The union of two individuals of the same sex doesn't produce offspring which is technically against the whole 'ensuring the species' thing they all have to do. For organisms that actually need to reproduce to preserve their genetic information, it's not exactly hard to see why all of that sort of discrimination popped up in the first place, still, humans especially take quite the long time to get over those things. "I mean if us showing affection makes you two uncomfortable then-"

"It's not that!" Fred protests while George mutters under his breath, "Well, it's a little that." And the other twin promptly jabs his counterpart in the ribs. Harry just raises an unamused eyebrow.

"We are not homophobic." Fred insists. "I'm gay." And wow, Harry didn't know that. This is a pretty terrible coming out all things considered. "And George is bisexual. Probably." And somehow, George's coming out was that much worse.

"Okay." The raven haired wizard said slowly. "That still doesn't explain the colour changing shampoo, or the doll-" "Annabelle." "Of course it is. Anyways, look, good for you two for not hating on same gendered relationships, still doesn't tell me why you are both being complete pricks."

The twins both pointedly did not look at Harry. Harry narrowed his eyes into threatening slits of green.

"I am completely okay with you guys not answering me. But only if you are completely okay with me hurling abuse at you two and me thinking that you guys suck for the remainder of whenever this pettiness stops and you apologise to Percy."

The Weasley teens lasted valiantly right until Harry inhaled dramatically and opened his mouth to begin the first scathing insult. Which was barely any time at all. Really, wet toilet paper could have lasted longer.

"It's nothing against you." George says.
"Or Percy." Fred continues, though George mutters something unseemly under his breath which Harry can't hear. "And we don't have a problem with gay relationships."

"You just have a problem with ours." Harry concludes for them flatly.

It's as if finalising their thoughts and speaking them aloud really seemed to solidify the thing that had been dancing around their conversation since the very beginning. Harry is faintly surprised at how it hurts him to say it, knowing how true it is already. The twins in turn look ashamed at it.

"We, we're just not.. used to it." George grits out. It's flimsy and weak and obviously not the whole truth but Harry thinks that if the two are trying this hard not to say it, it probably wouldn't be a truth that would benefit anyone by coming out.

"But we will.. eventually." Fred amends. He's sad, the boy can tell, sad in the way his counterpart is angry and Harry honestly doesn't know what to do with that. It's somehow his fault he feels. Wait. No. It's probably, definitely, his fault.

"I, uh, good." Harry cough awkwardly, righteous anger dying out. Now he's just.. There. Unsure how to proceed.

There's a silence after that. It's awkward, because of course it is. And Harry fumbles out an excuse to leave and a demand to destroy the devil child dolls, something which earns him two amused noises and two freckly smiles, before quickly making his exit.

It's odd after that, with the twins. They've stopped the pranks since then at least but somehow, Harry doesn't feel at all pleased. He hopes it'll get better with them in time.

The situation between Harry and the Weasley twins did get better in time. Well it helped quite a bit that a few weeks after school started, Percy and Harry had broken up. Officially, it was a mutual understanding based on various factors that arose as the school term started. Unofficially, it was pretty much the same thing except it wasn't that mutual and Harry may or may not have been high on potions at the time.

But that's for later.

Surprisingly enough, Zacharias Smith and Gilderoy Lockhart do not get along at all. Harry only realised this as he was forcibly roped along by Lockhart one day to listen to the man lecture about PR tactics of the famous and rich. Smith and his cronies passed by at the time, and the look of mutual disdain that plastered on both their features was almost worth the twenty mind-numbing minutes leading up to it.

This revelation was particularly hilarious to the entity-on-hiatus considering that the two individuals seemed so obviously to come from the same strain of narcissistic idiocy. The only difference was that Smith enjoyed being a rich, talentless bully while Lockhart was a rich, talentless hack. Apparently, there was a limit to the number of egomaniacs in a castle.

"That boy," Lockhart huffed as Smith and his gang walked out of hearing distance, "is a loudmouthed attention seeking menace."

Harry choked. "What."

Tutting, the professor patted his back assuringly, "I know it's wrong to say such things to a student, but I know you would understand dear Harry. Us sort of intellectuals cannot help but feel irritated in
those who seek to garner fame through exaggerations and obvious lacking of skill to back up themselves."

There was just so much wrong with that one statement. Harry didn't even know such sheer hypocrisy was possible. Say what you will about the moron, he is on a whole other level to anyone Harry's ever had any displeasure of meeting. "What."

Lockhart smiled, completely misreading the raven haired wizard's reaction, "Of course that's not to say I don't understand. Children like that do tend to show their feelings with boasts and insults, especially to the cute ones right Mr Potter?" The teacher winked.

Harry suddenly felt quite queasy at the implication. "What."

"Then again, excuses aside, Smith's snotty attitude definitely needs some work. Luckily he's got such a great and esteemed teacher like myself to try guide him out of his self-absorption." The defence professor gave a small, regretful sigh, "Well, I am sorry for cutting our simply scintillating conversation short, but I do have work to do. We simply must do this again soon, ta." And with a jaunty wave, and a little skip in his step, Lockhart bided his leave, leaving Harry in the hall, befuddled, confused and with a loss for words save one.

"What."

The first staff meeting of the term was less a meeting of staff and more a meeting for gossipmongers over the age of twenty. Each professor rushing in to discuss with great emotion about one very specific subject. And no, it certainly was not about the fact their school was being terrorized by Slytherin's beast and their students were dropping left and right. God, no, why in Merlin's name would they do that?

"I guess it's never occurred to me this would happen." Professor McGonagall admitted to Madam Pomfrey and Professor Sinatra. "I mean, to be perfectly honest, I thought if one of the Weasley boys were going to ask the boy out it would be the twins."

"Which one?"

Mcgonagall shrugged, "Fred? George? Both? I've always thought they came as a package really."

"Academically the pair make sense," Sinatra pointed out, "A hardworking, honour student and a young prodigy passionate about new things- they would share similar interests."

"Both are very responsible and respectful young boys." Pomfrey agreed readily, "I'm not sure about Mr. Potter's young age for this sort of thing, but I'm fairly confident Mr. Weasley would know what he's doing."

The three woman paused contemplatively at that, however, the lull in conversation was quickly interrupted by more professors coming into the room.

"I'm just saying," Professor Flitwick said exasperatedly to an aggrieved looking potions master, "Potter may be twelve but he's hardly much of a child. I hardly think Percy Weasley of all people has violated the boy in the dubious and nefarious manner you've implied. Mr Weasley's once almost cried the one time he forgot to hand in a simple assignment for Merlin's sake!"

Professor Snape looked thunderous, "Mr Weasley, should have waited till Mr Potter was a more appropriate age before making his less than platonic intentions known." He insisted venomously, "Potter may act older than he is, but I hardly think, what with his abusive past and all, that he
properly understands what a proper relationship implies."

"Percy Weasley is a fine and upstanding young man," McGonagall butted in indignantly protective of one of her own. Snape sneered.

"Not upstanding enough to refrain from snogging a second year against the prefect's compartment."

"Oh my god that was true!?" Madam Hooch squealed like a teenage girl as she caught the tail end of the growing conversation. Following behind her was a beaming Lockhart chattering at a rather pained looking headmaster, and equally unenthusiastic looking Professor Grubbly-Plank, Professor Vector, Ms Pince and Mr Filch who all had the misfortune to bump into the defence teacher on their way here. "Is it also true that Potter was shirtless at the time? Because I can't exactly figure out if the rumours are either truth or just another fifth year's fanciful imagination."

The squib caretaker pulled a face at that. "Those brats have the dirtiest minds. I've confiscated six notes on the subject of Potter's love life, and I had to burn five of them, they were absolutely disgusting."

"What about the last one?" McGonagall inquired more than a little interestedly. Some of the other professors too were trying not to look too curious at the now uncomfortable looking caretaker.

"Well, it seemed not all the students are completely subpar in their literacy skills." The man coughed awkwardly in a pathetic attempt to explain himself. Truth be told, against his own wishes, Filch may have cried a little bit at the extremely touching story of Prince Harry and his royal advisor Percy's forbidden romance that had been scribbled hastily onto a magically expanded napkin. There was drama and wit and a surprisingly good grasp on the characters considering that whoever had wrote this was probably not personally acquainted with the pair. Glancing up to see the inquisitive fascination in more than a few witches and wizards, he mumbled in a much quieter voice, "... I'll send you all a copy afterward."

"I," Gilderoy Lockhart interrupted loudly and self-importantly, "personally do not find Mr Weasley and Harry well suited to each other at all!"

Snape's face, if anybody had bothered to look his way at that declaration, was quite comical. A mix between relief at someone sharing his sentiment on the new 'it' power couple, and deep revulsion of having to be forced to share it with someone who probably doesn't even understand what 'sentiment' even meant.

"What do you mean?" Professor Vector asked, "I may not know them too personally, but from what I understand, they are quite cute together." To everyone's immense irritation the blonde man shook his head and made a disappointed clucking sound.

"Can you not see?" He says rhetorically, before sighing dramatically, "Well, I guess it's understandable. Not many people are as experienced in empathizing with the students like I am. You have to learn to notice the little things, talk to the little bright-eyed boys and girls, be personable."

"Oooh, why I ought'a-" The Hufflepuff head of house huffed angrily, rolling up her robe sleeves as she began running up to the self-absorbed man, only to be stopped by fellow Heads of both Gryffindor and Ravenclaw houses.

Lockhart failed to notice the rising ire of the rest of the room as he continued his tirade, "My dear little friend Harry over here is far out of Mr Weasley's league."

"Well, that's a little harsh." Dumbledore tried to defend.
"Pardon my straightforwardness Headmaster, but Harry is a hard-working, charismatic, magical prodigy that rivals even my own amazing traits!" Lockhart exclaims, he's blatantly complimenting Harry but in such a way that somehow he looks good doing so. It's almost admirable how he manages it, if it weren't so annoying. "He's friends with centaurs and ghosts and professors alike, all Houses seem to be fond of him, and despite his young age, is aesthetically pleasing enough to apparently both male and female students of varying ages to be seen as viable in some form." The blonde defence professor takes a deep breath, "Percy, while a prefect and notable in studies, I have noticed is far too serious and has limited friends. In my experience, there is going to be a lot of strain in this new 'relationship' what with the lack of privacy, the obvious imbalance between the two, and most importantly- the consequent judgments and jealousy from their fellow peers."

The professors stared as Gilderoy Lockhart fanned his face.

Professor Vector was the one to speak next, "That was... surprisingly astute of you Mr Lockhart."
She admitted.

Lockhart beamed and straightened up even further.

"I'm so glad you think so! After all, I didn't become an internationally famous wizard with a five-time award winning smile and title of one of the most bestselling authors, without knowing my way around some basic social tangles. Why, just the other day I had to-"

"Oh Merlin, now he's never going to go away," Snape muttered in the background.

Truth was, Lockhart was right. After the initial shock and awe in light of Percy and Harry's relationship, unrest began to settle in. There's the muggles who grew up in a more heteronormative environment who struggle with the whole concept entirely. The conservative purebloods who just don't like how open they are on such a, while not taboo but still looked down upon, affair. The ones who had hoped to earn Harry Potter's affections themselves. The ones who wanted Harry Potter's affections to be subjected with someone else's. And the really weird ones who fell into both of the last two categories.

Percy found himself conflicted. On one hand, he's never felt happier by Harry's side. They are good together. His twin brothers aside, those last few weeks of the holidays was easily the best of his life so far. But now between prefect duties, and schoolwork and the absolute hostility he was garnering from his fellow wizards and witches, Percy found himself running absolutely ragged with stress.

Harry tries to make him feel better, and he does, with soft kisses and cuddles and quiet reassurances. Yet even the prefect can tell the younger boy was feeling a little frustrated at everything as well. It didn't help there was absolutely no privacy in the school, well there was, but as a prefect he had to refrain from going to those places despite how tempting Harry pleaded otherwise.

So many people are judging him for apparently 'defiling' Harry's young body when really, Percy thinks he should earn some sort of award for resisting his boyfriend's immeasurable charms. Percy has been a fucking saint and sometimes he can't help but want to scream that at the Great Hall.

What's worse, Professor Snape, whose never been any Gryffindor's biggest fan, has for some reason made it his personal vendetta to try and murder the prefect with nothing but the hatred in his eyes and the venom in his words. It's all incredibly petty in his opinion, calling him out with questions clearly not in the given readings, loudly criticising his work in front of the class, even pointing out tiny mistakes in his potions as he exaggerates the flaws to the point it sounds like Percy was purposely trying to plot mass murder on the class. At this rate the prefect's fairly sure he's not too far off on that.
It all came ahead three weeks after the term started.

"Ah, well if it isn't Mr Weasley," The potions professor intoned coldly as Percy jumped at the sudden presence of the dour faced man. His name on Snape's lips somehow sounded like the crudest of insults.

"Professor." He replied back politely.

Professor Snape sneered at him, "And what are you doing here in the halls so late at night?"

Percy blinked dumbly. "Um. I was patrolling the halls. Because I'm a prefect. That is one of my duties."

If anything, the logical explanation made the older man's face sour further. The potions master scowled furiously, "Don't take that disrespectful tone with me, Mr Weasley." He barked, "Ten points from Gryffindor."

"But, that's not-"

"Three points for failing to address me properly, and a further five for talking back." Snape snapped before Percy could finish his protestations. "Now anything else you would like to add, Mr Weasley?" The professor asked mockingly.

"No sir." Percy says defeatedly.

Snape looked disgustingly pleased at the redhead's obvious misery in his opinion. As the man strode off into the shadows of the night where he probably belonged, Percy just felt.. tired. Worn.

He likes Harry. Harry is sweet and funny and beautiful. Harry despite every evidence to the contrary genuinely enjoy's Percy's presence. He makes Percy feel warm and giddy and actually attractive. He's happy with Harry.

But now Percy wonders if he's happy enough.

Severus slammed the door to his private quarter closed, rage and disgust in himself welling up. It doesn't help that a part of him, a large part of him, preens at his petty vindictive victory over the studious Weasley.

He wants to make the boy suffer for taking someone who was never his, to make him hurt how he hurts every single time he imagines them together. Imagines Harry actually returning the Weasley's feelings, smiling and blushing and so very much enamoured like all first loves do. Severus takes out his wand and bites out a hex which results in one of his more favoured decorative vases to shatter, and shatter, and shatter.

There's the very fleeting satisfaction of destruction, before the ache of jealousy, unrequited want fills him again. He can't help but lash out, to jab and barb, to humiliate, to hurt, anything to try alleviate his own selfish self-inflicted pain.

It's awful how familiar it is. The feeling. Chasing something that will never be caught. But it's different too. Worse.

It's darker and uglier. Seeping through his chest and making it hurt unbearably, his ribs are closing in, suffocating his lungs, his heart, his everything.
He wants to scream and pull them apart. It hurts so bad he can’t sleep for days.

"So I think I should be the one to do the actual stealing." Hermione said as they walked toward their double potions class. "That means you two will have to make a diversion to keep Professor Snape busy."

Harry and Ron exchanged uncomfortable looks. "You couldn't have told us this a bit earlier Hermione?" The redhead asked, "Because I would have liked to have written my will first."

"Oh don't be overdramatic," Hermione dismissed, "Snape won't kill you guys. Just don't get caught."

"Easy for you to say." Harry groused, deeply unhappy at the idea of causing any sort of havoc in Snape's classroom. He doesn't like the thought of making the older man upset with him. He doesn't like the thought of most people getting upset with him to be perfectly honest. Except for Zacharias Smith. That boy can go suck a lemon while kissing a dementor for all he cares.

"Also, if we do get caught," Ron pipes up, "We all know that it's gonna be me that greasy git takes it out on. Snape favours Harry just as much as Malfoy."

"That's not- Professor Snape doesn't- does he really?" Harry asks shyly. If Ron could roll his eyes any harder, Harry was sure even the earth's rotation would be affected. The boy had no idea why his freckled friend would even roll his eyes in the first place, it was just a question.

"The point is," Ron sighed, "I am not exactly going to come out this well if Snape finds out who's behind setting his classroom on fire."

"Well, you have Harry to help back you up." Hermione assured. "Even if it's Harry."

"And who says we have to set anything on fire?" Harry asked dubiously, "Seriously. Who told you two, diversion immediately equated to arson?" Because this seemed to be the start of a disturbingly recurring theme with the pair. Then, after a seconds pause, the boy did a double take at Hermione. "And what do you mean 'even Harry'?"

"Well Ron is right, you do have a-"

"I do not have a-"

"Are you three quite done gossiping outside my classroom, or do you still need another twenty minutes?" Snape drawled disapprovingly. Ron and Hermione gulped and shook their heads before quickly making their way to their seats. Harry lingered back a little longer so no one but Snape could see the shy smile and small wave he gave the older man before he made his way to sit in his usual seat next to Draco. Sitting otherwise would only draw unneeded suspicion.

Twisting to see Ron and Hermione whispering behind him, the green eyed child raised a questioning brow at the two Gryffindors. "Anything you might want to tell me?" He whispered. Draco was busy talking to Crabbe and Goyle about something so they had a good solid few minutes before the Malfoy heir would notice their conversation. The only thing that would divert the platinum blonde's attention even further would be if there was a mirror at hand. Heh.

"We're going to spill potion on you," Hermione whispered back.


Ron looked sheepish. "Yeah sorry about that."
"If it helps, when we mess up the potion, I'll make sure to neutralise any severely harmful effects."
The bushy haired girl added oh, so helpfully. "That way, no one gets in too much trouble and there
would be enough commotion to distract the whole class. Plus, Professor Snape is usually obligated to
help any students harmed from a potion spill so that would get him out of the room for a while as
well."

Harry narrowed his eyes, his green eyes bright and toxic. "What exactly do you mean by 'severely
harmful'?' He hisses like a snake, stocked filled with venom and everything in his words. But before
the two could say something back, before Harry could point out every single tiny thing wrong with
this new plan, Snape just had to take that moment to stride into the middle of the room, demanding
everyone's attention in setting up with the utmost care in preparation for making a Swelling Solution.

"Ugh, I like potions but this is so gross." Draco complained as he plucked out another pufferfish eye
and holding it up to the light, inspecting it for any scratches. "Harry?"

"Huh, oh yeah." The boy hummed in absentminded agreement. Draco gave him a funny look.

"Uh, Harry are you alright? You seem kind of off."

"It's nothing." Just waiting for a messed up potion to hit him on the back and potentially give him
some non-severe harm. Damn those two. He liked them, liked them very fondly actually, but damn,
those two are such troublemakers. "Just a bit tired."

"Okay." Draco said uncertainly, and Harry felt quite touched that he saw genuine worry for him in
the other boy's grey eyes. "W-well, don't fret Potter. I will take charge of today's potion. After all, no
illness is going to ruin our perfect grades- and I refuse to rank lower than Granger in Potions."

Harry smiled and gave a friendly shoulder nudge to his friend, "Awww, you are just the absolutely
best." Draco spluttered, his pale face aflame with a mix of embarrassment and pride at the praise.

"I will have you know," the grey eyed boy huffed, visibly flustered, "I already knew I was the best
thank you very much."

The young wizard saviour giggled at his friend's dramatics, "Come on Draco, let's melt those eyes
shall we?"

Which was of course when Hermione and Ron decided it was time to ruin a potion.

He just didn't realise that it was going to be his own potion they were going to explode.

Harry didn't even need to fake his scream. Hermione may have the forethought to neutralise the
potion's major side effects with whatever she'd thrown into their bubbling cauldron, but she clearly
did not think about what temperature can do to someone's body. It's a new and very unpleasant
experience being doused by boiling potion in the face. Very unpleasant.

They are so lucky he is a very forgiving and passive aggressive entity, because he knows if his twin
counterpart were in the same situation she would absolutely ruin them. Ruin them to the ground.
Life is a bitch after all.

Distantly he can feel Draco scrabbling at his clothes and babbling his name frantically and Harry
resolves to make the young pureblood his new bestest friend ever. It's only after a particularly sharp
tug to his robe that his body finally gets the memo. Jerking out of its shocked stupor, Harry wasted
no time in shirking off his outer robe and groaning as cool, blessed air made itself known to his body.
Unfortunately said body was still covered by a soaked shirt and pants that was saturated in botched potion. The boy was beginning to feel the aftermath of the burning sensation, coupled with an unusual electric tingle he was fairly sure wasn't normal. He was more than fairly sure it wasn't normal when that tingle quickly evolved into full on spasm inducing shocks throughout his body.

He could feel everyone's eyes on him as his body involuntarily jerked at each jolt of electricity running through his veins like five year olds on a sugar high. Hermione better be taking good advantage of this moment because Harry was certainly not going to do this again. Visually, the boy was not seeing much but his ears was picking up a cacophony of chaos and noise. Ron was blubbering unhelpful reassurances and defending himself from Draco's snide remarks and Professor Snape was barking for everyone to calm down, sit down and shut up.

"Weasley, do not touch Potter if you value those sticky little fingers of yours." The deep voice of the potions master snaps, "We have no idea exactly how a simple Soothing Solution has caused such a mess and I have no intention of helping idiots who fail to use basic common sense in the face of much more serious cases."

In a softer but no less firm voice, Harry could hear Snape ask him. "Potter, can you hear me?" The boy flickered his eyes toward the crouched professor in what was hopefully some form of agreement. His mouth was too busy trying to hoarsely grasp for oxygen to form words at that moment. "I'm going to take that as a yes."

Harry dearly hoped his look of absolute derision was clear in his eyes, despite the whole burnt skin and spasming body distraction he had going on.

"Everyone, continue what you were working on before." Snape barked, "Draco, go get another professor to supervise- anyone but Lockhart obviously. Weasley, help clean up this mess. Granger- where's Granger?"

"She's uh, she saw what happened to Harry and had to go to the bathroom." Ron supplied quickly, the professor narrowed his eyes and curled his lips distastefully.

"Fine. Tell her when she comes back to help supervise whilst Draco gets a professor. I'll bring Potter to the infirmary."

The redhead nodded vigorously, his eyes glancing guiltily at his fallen friend. Luckily for him, everyone was far too busy also staring at the Boy-in-Pain to notice. It did not make Ron feel better though. As someone with more siblings than fingers on his hand, he knows he screwed up royally bad and there is going to be some serious sucking up in his near future. Like having to be Ginny's servant for a week sucking up. Except way more. After all, he may have broken his sister's leg, but he did just burn his mate's face off.

Snape whipped out his wand and cast a simple floating charm, something which Harry would've objected to considering how unflattering people tend to look prone and not lying on anything, but was far too immersed in experiencing the excruciating pain of being burned so thoroughly for the first time ever. Not that he intended to do that again anytime soon. He's interested in pain but he's far from being such an extreme masochist ta very much.

The injured boy wasn't completely sure what happened next. It was kind of like a slow, buzzing blur like the moments between a meaty punch and the fall to the floor, except much longer. He remembers being lifted out of the room, the wide eyes of students watching him and the deep tenor of Professor Snape as he switched between reassuring murmurs or muttered death threats. Or what he hoped were reassurances or death threats, Harry did blank out a few times so the man could just be reassuring death threats to his prone form for all he knew.
Soon enough though, Harry felt himself slip back into enough of a state of awareness to realise he'd finally made it to the medical wing.

"What happened?!" Madam Pomfrey gasped.

"Potions accident." Snape answered briskly, then in a lower murmur that Harry barely even heard, "Though I suspect some foul play at hand."

"Burns." Harry rasps from under the older man's hold, "And tingles."

The woman wasted no time in taking Harry's vague self-analysis, and turning it into a full out diagnosis with the help of some fancy spellwork. Snape now and again putting his two cents in what he thinks must have happened to the destroyed potion while at the same time gently leading the injured child toward a medical bed to rest. Harry just softly moaned every time he shifted on the mattress.

This was not how he envisioned his first time getting a grown man to bring him to bed as a mortal human. Not even. close.

Warily he forces himself to lift one of his arms up to asses the damage of his skin. He winces at the rosy red colour where once was bone pale, and how his skin blistered and peeled. Harry doesn't really want to see what his face might look like right now. He feels weaker than he's ever felt before, let himself feel before and it's both humbling as it is terrifying.

"Professor?" Harry murmurs, and as if summoned, large, mercifully cool hands lightly touch his raised hand.

"Potter." Snape says as he smoothly places Harry's hand back onto the bed, "You have severe burning and your body is experiencing something akin to shock. And maybe slight nerve damage. Madam Pomfrey here will be watching you overnight to see if there's any magical side effects to your injury, if you don't show any alarming new symptoms in the thirty-six hours of strict supervision then.."

"Out?" He asks hopefully, because the green eyed boy could only really muster the energy to things one word at a time at best right now. The older man, as if sensing this, gave a tight smile.

"Yes Potter. But you'll have to stay with me for a while, it was the only way I could get Madam Pomfrey to agree- if you want, that is."

Harry did give that some thought. Like, a second of it, before agreeing with a sharp but pointed nod. The boy understood the logic of it of course, Snape was the resident potions master and therefore would have all the pain numbing potions and burn salves Harry could possibly need, not to mention have a better eye at detecting any symptoms and causes. But truth be told, logic had nothing to do with Harry's decision. Harry had no idea exactly what was the fuel that drove him to agree in staying with Snape in his personal quarters, but it was certainly not logic.

Though Harry did think it was a little odd that Snape of all people even volunteered to take care of him in the first place, was it a comment on their growing friendship, or was it that Harry was actually more injured than he'd thought? The boy didn't get to ponder this any further before he blacked out.

But really, what had Snape been thinking?

What had he been thinking?
Snape slammed the door to his bedroom behind him and groaned loud and frustratedly at himself. Man of control indeed. The wretched boy of his twisted affections gets hurt and his mouth immediately suggests the child stay by his side for the major duration of his suffering. It took a lot of Slytherin cunning and a healthy dose of bullshit just to get Poppy to stop looking at him funny, and even then he knows the woman threw some deeply suspicious looks his way while he was comforting the injured boy.

But it wasn't like he couldn't do anything. Not when he can see Harry's twitching burnt body and hear the boy's shocked howl of pain, rewinding and replaying like a muggle video in his mind. It's far from the worst accident that's happened in his classroom, but it's definitely up there in terms of agony alone. It would be monstrous not to want to take care of Potter in such a situation. He may be a monster to lust over a child, but he's at least not that sort of monster.

Doesn't stop the fact what he did was clearly a terrible idea. Doesn't stop the fact that Harry's apparently been shacking up with a Weasley and is completely, in all forms, undeniably unavailable. Doesn't stop the fact that some part of him, that treacherous, lecherous part, was whispering dirty, disgusting, less than decent things at the possible implications that could come forth with Harry sleeping with him. Staying with him. Doesn't stop the implications with Harry staying with him.

Harry hasn't even stayed one night with him and already Snape is losing his mind. Wonderful.

"We are so extremely positively sorry, Harry!" Hermione wailed as she threw herself across the room in her haste to hug the bedridden boy. Ron, being the observant one shot his arms out to stop the girl from her good intentioned path.

"Hermione you'll only hurt him more if you go and tackle him like that!"

The bushy haired Gryffindor looked ready to protest at that before she took another good look at the bandages and faint burn marks on Harry's face and just clamped her mouth shut, eyes stricken and ready to cry. "It's worse than it looks." Harry lied, it felt just as shite as he seemed.

The two second years didn't seem to believe it much either as they both adopted the same equally tragic, guilt ridden expressions. To be fair, Harry thought they kind of deserved it. Hot potion fucking hurt. And healing was never one of his strengths, quite the opposite all things considering. So not only does he know that despite his newfound powers he'll be recovering at a pretty slow rate, he's also been informed that there's a chance his perfect white skin is going to be marred from the incident. Not permanently though, thank god for magic potions and salves, but he'll have twisted raised gnarls of skin all over his face, neck and hands for a while. He's even had to shave the sides of his hair off so it'll be easier to apply lotions there.

Harry does admit he looks good with his new hairstyle. Might even keep it after he stops looking like a burn victim. Hell, maybe he'll keep some of the more attractive looking scars, if anyone could rock a near death experience, it would be him. Until then though, Harry's going to wear creepy plain white face masks to mourn the loss of his unblemished snow white skin.

"Oh Harry this is all my fault." Hermione cried, "I didn't even think about cooling the potion!"

"It's my fault too." Ron volunteered glumly, "I should have suggested a different idea, we should've done something else like flooding the floor."

"And boil everyone's feet in the process?" Harry croaked wryly.

Ron winced at the jarring, hoarse voice coming from the usually cool, almost silvery voiced friend.
"Uh, yeah, guess that wasn't a great idea either huh?"

"How long will it take for you to-" Hermione trailed off, as she gestured helplessly at the mess of bandages and red skin and shaved hair.

"I'll be stuck here for a short while before hopefully the pain will just become manageable enough to continue schoolwork." Harry explained softly, not wanting to strain himself. "Honestly Madam Pomfrey wants me to stay for a good two weeks but Professor Snape was kind enough to allow me to stay with him instead."

"Oh that's so good of him!" Hermione gushed, eager to latch onto something that won't potentially make her bawl for the second time today. "Really, I know we didn't think the best of him before, but I guess we were wrong about how generous Professor Snape is. He's probably got better experience dealing with potion accidents and you'll get much more attention there than here, what with all the petrified students in the infirmary. Isn't Professor Snape great Ron?"

"Yeah Ron." Harry smirked. Or tried to anyway, the bandages and puffy burn marks probably made him look like he was grimacing. "Isn't Professor Snape so nice?"

The redhead opened his mouth before closing it after a moment's thought. Scrunching up his nose and looking like he was going to be slightly nauseous, the boy tried a, "That's.. He's... Well, Professor Snape does have his, uh, moments." Ron, for his troubles, gets a back handed slap on his chest from Hermione. "I mean, totally, yeah, Snape's bloke of the year. That man makes flowers fart glitter every time he- ow! OW! Hermione!"

Harry laughed, his throat felt like it swallowed shredded sandpaper and the boy was pretty sure he could taste blood in his mouth, but Harry was still fairly sure he wanted to keep these little humans as his friends despite it all. Even if they could be annoying and tend to cause excessive injury if handled wrongly. He liked them well enough.

Won't stop him from milking this whole thing out till the cows come home though. After all, they did burn his face.

"Oh that reminds me! We're not going to do the Polyjuice potion anymore, Draco seemed far too worried about you to be the heir of Slytherin, and we realised you were right Harry- what we were doing was stupid and dangerous."

"..."

Harry was wrong. Harry was going to wring their skinny little necks the moment he could lift his arms without whimpering. And Harry was going to enjoy every second of it.
Death's break up with a Weasley

Chapter Notes

WARNING UNDERAGE SMUT IN THERE SOMEWHERE YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED DO NOT HATE. Honestly its been hinted at for a while now, I would have hoped you got the memo by now but there is some very strong underage shit happening.

There's also like a bit of angst but I'm sure you guys can get over that.

Pretty sure the smut is near the end, like its the last quarter of the chapter.

The one where Death breaks up with a prefect and convinces a professor into his bed (and yes, it is much sexier than the last time)

The thing is, dating Percy was an experience. Not a bad one mind you, but Harry doesn't think it could be categorized as particularly great either. Percy seems more awkward than before, all stumbling questions and concerns every time he so much as sneezes. There's a lot of elements of a courting that applies in dating; apparently. Gifts and compliments and no sex, except the gifts and compliments part is supposed to be a very mutual endeavor to Harry's intrigue. Luckily Percy seems to be easily satisfied, so the boy didn't have to do much in the way of that, which was good because he was sure that he did not do a good job at it anyhow.

That's not to say there weren't nice parts to all of it. Teaching the prefect how to kiss was fun, and Percy, like in Hogwarts, was a pretty enthusiastic student. Harry liked his stupid attempts at jokes. Harry liked the way he could be such an earnest romantic. And most of all, Harry liked how at the end of the day, whether it was during the holidays at the Burrow or in the dorm rooms, Percy would always kiss him sweetly on the cheek and insist in his own shy roundabout way for them to snuggle under a shared blanket. The redheaded teen was trying at times, yes, but it was obvious he was also trying. And Harry appreciated that with a fierce fondness. He did.

It's just. It's just the whole thing is so goddamn juvenile that Harry was actually worried he was going to lose his mind. The sweaty hand-holding, the hesitance, the chaste everything. Sure it was cute at first. Adorable really. Like watching a puppy roll around in the sunshine. But soon enough it gets old, and the puppy will eventually roll around a vegetable patch or something, and then it just becomes a little less cute and a little more.. grating.

And the fact that all they ever seem to do is neck and grope and rut, and, if Harry was really lucky, suck, is also another, completely different but equally great, source of frustration for the young teen. Harry's had to resort to.. self-gratification. He's never had to do that before in his undead life. That is what adoring worshippers were for.

Admittedly, exploring his amazingly sensitive, self-heating, nubile young body with hands filled with centuries of experience in the arts of pleasure was hardly a hardship in itself. Being forced on this journey of self-discovery in the bathroom of his friends' and also boyfriend's family home was a little more so. It was the principal of the thing that annoys him more than the act. Not to mention, weirdly shameful in how pathetic he feels after. Debasing himself because his boyfriend wouldn't do it for him is more than a small blow to his ego.
Even then, Harry thinks he can handle it, the cloying sweetness, the sexual frustration, the insistence on holding hands.

But then Percy walks into the infirmary with a bunch of flowers. *Flowers.*

And okay, Harry likes the idea of being able to grow plants in this new life, it's a rush to realize he can be part of the creation of life. You know, instead of being life's equivalent of the garbage man. It's a novelty that still hasn't fully waned in him yet.

But he kind of, maybe, a tiny bit… absolutely *fucking despises flowers*, especially as a gift. It's an innate thing that no perspective of life can change in him. Like his affinity to darkness, his appreciation of quiet, his morbid little interests that involve far too much blood for the general standards of most organisms. He is Death and therefore does not care for life. He can appreciate it and has learned to like it after eternities watching life grow and fester and still be continually surprised and fascinated by it. But symbols of life, pregnancy, and fertility were, well, to be frank, they sicken him. And flowers are all three. Fuck flowers. It's his emotional hay fever. Giving flowers to him is like the equivalent of giving a bunch of dead carcasses to Life or just any sane human being.

He doesn't know how to end it, though. He barely understood how it even started. And the green-eyed wizard knows he still likes Percy, just not like like him. It's gone to a point where, when they do engage in anything remotely steamy, Harry can't help but let his mind wander, imagining an older more mature lover. With long fingers, confident movements that belay experience and an eagerness to use it. A deep voice that murmurs depraved things unashamedly in Harry's ear that makes him go hot and bothered without relying on the physical friction of their actions to get himself aroused. Someone he can banter and tease. Percy is friendly but far too serious for that sort of thing. The redheaded teenager yearns to be mature and doesn't realize that maturity and a solid sense of humor don't have to be unrelated to one another.

Harry knew that in the long term they wouldn't be compatible, knew it right from the start he fucking did. But he was far too curious and impatient, and Percy was so willing.

It makes Harry feel like a horrible person, it makes him feel less like Harry and more like Death. Because he tries very hard to berate himself, to make himself feel guilty for essentially using the prefect, playing with another's feelings to try to satisfy his lust, and yet at the same time he can't find it in himself to care. Not really. Just a faint buzz of irritation at not getting carnally satisfied and a growing anxious trepidation for the inevitable break off.

Because the confrontation will be hard. Harry's seen the telly shows. And he's seen the crap Love likes to watch when they look over the different worlds. Break ups are almost never friendly. There's inevitable awkwardness and jealousy, and no one knows where they'll fit in the others' life anymore because it's never just 'being friends' afterward. And God forbid if someone cries. Harry can't stand that. He caves when Hermione looks close to tearing up. He's not even that close to Hermione.

Harry likes to think that if he had less potion in his system and weren't in immeasurable pain right then, the moment Percy walked in with an obnoxiously sunny looking bouquet in his hands, he would have handled what happened next differently.

"We should break up." He mumbles quietly, half awkward, half genuinely unable to muster the energy to speak up.

Percy looks confused, "Pardon?"

Harry mumbles it again. The prefect still fails to hear.
"I'm really sorry Harry, but you're really going to have to-

"BREAK UP. I WANT OUT." The injured boy hoarsely shouts annoyed.

There's a heavy silence that envelops the air. Madam Pomphrey, who had been innocently minding her own business and totally not eavesdropping, gave a very fake coughing noise. "Well," She starts, as she edges slowly out of her own ward, "I'll leave you two some privacy for a bit okay?" Waiting for no answer, the witch slides out of the room, unnoticed by the two, too busy wrapped up in their own drama. She's usually very watchful over her patients, especially ones in critical need of it like Harry Potter, but she's also been present for two break-ups in her infirmary before. The last two were enough for her to decide confidently that she didn't want to be part of another.

"Pardon?" Percy repeats, but his voice is softer, shakier. "I don't understand."

Harry looks helpless at the teenager, his green eyes wide and shocked by his own outburst. The younger boy looks immediately regretful for what he says, but the damage has already been done. Percy isn't sure what to do. He feels like a fool standing there with a bunch of flowers in hand.

"It's.. I like you, Percy. I do." He croaks. The boy pauses a bit to get his words in order and to wet his lips. "But.. I don't think I'm good at this dating thing." He finally decides on. "I- I don't know what to do, and I don't get the point of it, and recently, I don't think you really want this as much either."

The prefect's face twisted, blotchy and pink as he finally seemed to realize where exactly this could only go. Harry wished Percy was less expressive than he was because he had no choice but to watch the feelings sort themselves out on the other's face in painful explicitness. He feels bad, for Percy and maybe a bit at himself because what he said was true.

Harry just doesn't think he was wired for dating. He's not patient enough to wait for a pleasure he can have. He doesn't like flowers or poetry or constantly holding hands everywhere. He doesn't like how it's made such an easy relationship so weird and awkward and different. Percy is sweet and caring and lovely and absolutely tiring to be around now.

"Harry," Percy says softly, and Harry's face must be either worse than he thought, or his face is, in response to Percy's sad emotions is mirroring his own sad feelings because the prefect sounds like he's talking to a skittering animal. "You're not, I mean, yeah okay maybe I've been having doubts about.. this." He gestures to the space between himself and Harry.

"I'm sorry." Harry apologizes sadly. Because he knows he's certainly held a lot of cynicism to this relationship, but he's tried his best not to show it, not to make Percy feel this way. Percy is a great human being, and he needs to know that because not enough people do, that Harry was the problem, not him.

It's not Percy's fault that the closest Harry has been to dating was during a three-month escapade with a very handsome young werewolf. Where, between vigorous bouts of sex, Death would whisper bloody tactics into the other's ear, helping the man slaughter a whole tribe of other weres and claiming an alpha status like no other. Dripping with blood and pride and glory, the werewolf had turned to Death and smiled, teeth sharp and fangs bared as he held the dripping intestines of the previous alpha. And Death, so much older and younger than he was then and now, had felt his chest constrict in butterfly beats. Dark infatuation lined with corpses and wrapped in violence and lust. It was the closest thing to a relationship. It was the closest thing he had at that moment to what he thought must be love.

But right now he wasn't Death. Not really. He was Harry James Potter. There's a distance, a
Harry smiles more, he blushes, his emotions are so much more temperamental, and his ability to empathize with others has peaked astronomically compared to before. Death is constantly stoic, incapable of blushing or turning any other color unless he wills himself to. He is muted and feels things under a thick layer of ice cold numbness, and he'd once watched Chaos convince a woman to eat her children alive while all he felt was a mild irritation at the loud shrill cries of the young victims to be.

Harry likes mild flavors in his meal and cold tea in the summertime. Death indulges in eating heart-stopping, disgustingly unhealthy garbage and always has a bottle of dark red wine the color of blood in his hand for his image. Though in private he swallows down any sweetened beverage served in the hottest, most scathing temperatures it can be made, because he secretly craves the scant few moments of burning warmth it could bring to him before it's replaced with the cold consuming darkness that is his very essence.

Harry is a human with magic and friends, and now he has a tentative romance forming, growing in his hands. Death is... he's not. He's got minions and people that he likes, but he's far too powerful to consider any of them friends, and the ones who are just as powerful as he are like his brothers and sisters, which is not the same. And the rare bouts of romance he gets was always a short, brief and sometimes bloody experience, despite Love's best attempts otherwise.

Harry was an ideal that he could finally live as. The fantasy that can be brought temporarily to reality. It's the bitter black coffee of Death sweetened with sugar and milk. But no matter how much has been changed, altered, tweaked, it's still coffee in the end. Harry is still Death.

And Death is so tired from this saccharine relationship with Percy. He feels exhausted with the idea of any relationship like this again.

"But it's not because of you, not really. I'm the one that's-"

"No way." Harry protests, a little louder than he expected. His throat rakes against his nerves painfully as punishment for his raised voice, and he winces at the unpleasant sensation. Still, he presses on because Percy does not deserve this. Percy doesn't need another person to put him down just because of how he's a bit more noticeably different than everyone else. "Percy it is because of me."

"Is not." The prefect shoots back almost angrily. Harry feels like he's starting to get unexplainably angry too.

"Is too." Harry insists back, like a child. "I'm not wired for this Percy." He tries to explain, his eyes wide and begging for Percy to understand, that it's not the redhead's fault. It's his. It's all his fault. For jumping in too fast. For not wanting enough. For being so, well, he wouldn't say damaged, but maybe just so emotionally unavailable to feel anything more than friendship between them.

"It's not about being wired or not!" Percy snaps, and Harry goes abruptly quiet. "You're being ridiculous and self-deprecating and frankly Harry, if this is how you want to be, maybe it is you."

The prefect continues heatedly, "Or maybe it's me. Because I like you, Harry, I do, I like that you laugh at my obviously terrible jokes even if you don't really think it's funny, I like our quiet walks at night, I like that crooked smile you get when you think I've said something particularly amazing, I like the fact I've managed to get one of the smartest, most powerful, most well-liked wizards in the history of ever to even look at me like I'm made for something more... So yeah, I like you Harry, but lately, I've realized for a while now I've always valued our companionship more than our relationship."

The Weasley prefect paused, breathing heavily as if a weight he's been carrying for a while now had
suddenly been lifted off his chest and now he's relishing the freedom of it. Harry's sure what Percy said was something profound and conclusive, yet he could only feel frustration and confusion well inside him, like that heavy weight Percy lost had been passed onto him. "What does that even mean?" He asks angrily. He doesn't understand, and it feels sorely like a riddle that he cannot decipher.

Percy looks at the younger wizard with a sad little smile, and Harry doesn't know what to do with that. So he waits as patiently as he can and listens to what the redhead says next. "I.. don't think I was ever that interested in you," Percy coughs awkwardly as Harry makes a highly offended noise, "sexually, I mean." Harry did not feel any less incredibly offended.

"Then why even pursue something with me?" He bites out because there would be no reason to even start this whole thing unless there was some attraction right? Sex is the whole point of dating right? Then, a cold, ugly though slivered up into his mind and Harry looked at the older teen in dawning horror. "Unless- did I, did I force you into this?" It made sense because apparently, Percy wasn't even bloody that hot for him and Harry had been practically begging him like a whore for-

"What? Merlin, no!" Percy replied, equally aghast. "Harry for wizarding's sake, you are incredibly gorgeous,"

"Not gorgeous enough for you to want me," Harry muttered bitterly because he's a petty, petty person who is fucking ravishingly gorgeous, thanks very much. Percy ignored him pointedly.

"but you're just so young, and that awful muggle family has clearly taught you some really messed up definition of what dating is because it's not as much as your clueless to dating as in you've gotten yourself some awfully wrong ideas about it and have cheerfully embraced it. And I'm not at all comfortable with taking advantage of you like that Harry. I never was, but I don't know, when you looked at me like I was the best thing in the room and asked for a kiss so prettily, I couldn't help but not refuse." Percy moved closer to his injured and soon to be ex-boyfriend, letting himself give the lightest brush of his knuckles against the bandages covering the side of Harry's cheek. It stung a bit, but Harry made no move away from the gesture, too off kilter from the speech, too lost. And maybe a little too enraptured. "Harry, you are one of the most beautiful blokes I've ever seen in my life, but you have issues I can't fix even if I tried and I have a long term plan that I know you've never wanted to be part of."

"You knew it wasn't going to last," Harry whispered, and he knows how accusing he sounds, far more than he has any right to be considering he was the one who wanted to call in quits first.

Percy's smile widened, it was still a very sad smile, sad and tired but far stronger than Harry had thought Percy to be, "I think we both know, you knew too."

Harry didn't want to insult Percy anymore with his lies, so instead, he asks him, "Do you think there's something wrong with me?" Green eyes look at Percy as he lay one of his insecurities bare for the other to see. "Do you think I'll ever find someone I love enough to want to do all those things I couldn't do with you?"

"Oh Harry," Percy sighs as he brushes his knuckles gently against the other's cheek again. "I think if you find the right person, it's going to be the scariest thing because you'll find that despite everything, you would want to give the whole, wide world to them just to make them happy, except they wouldn't even want the world because they already have you for that."

"That's very profound." The younger wizard says, "And beautiful." 'And stupid. And impossible. And that's never going to happen to me.' He doesn't say.
"Mum likes telling us things like that." Percy admitted, "I used to think it was a load of sentimental rubbish but when we were together I thought.. I mean, I found out maybe it held some merit."

"I wish I was that person for you." Harry murmured, his eyes fluttering shut slowly as a wave of drowsiness hit him. "I hope you'll find that someday." Because it's okay if Harry never does, as long as there are Percys out there who do, he thinks he'll be fine.

"And I, you," Percy said, pressing one last chaste kiss onto the top of Harry's forehead, it tasted of salt from sweat and tears that the prefect realized were running down his own face. "Get better soon." He muttered before fleeing the infirmary.

The Weasley ran down the end of the hall before stopping to press the palms of his hands into his eyes as he failed to suppress a sob. He knew it wasn't going to last. He knew it, and yet.

"You were that person for me." He choked out to himself. He needed to say it to someone. He needed to say it out loud. "I loved you, Harry. I-I, fuck, I would have given the world for you."

"Hey, Harry likes chocolates yeah?"

George glanced at his twin who seemed to be staring at the packet of chocolate frogs in his hand like they might suddenly combust. "You've asked this thrice already, of course, he does. It flowers he doesn't like."

"That's so bloody weird." Fred sighs, but it's less a resigned sigh and more of an 'isn't he absolutely lovely and unique,' sigh than anything else.

"Oh shut up and get moving lover boy," George laughed, even though in his mind he too was thinking fondly about Harry and his numerous odd quirks. "If we don't get there soon, Potter's going to fall asleep on us, and then we'll have to wade through the icky firsties when they finish classes."

Fred blustered unconvincingly against the lover boy comment while George teased him heartily as they rounded a corner and right into-

"I see you two have been let out of your cages and are running amok in the halls again." Professor Snape sniped, Fred instinctively hid the chocolate frogs behind his back. Every good Gryffindor knows that if the potions master spotted anything nice and good in their hands, they would just be confiscated and left to die a terrible lonely death in the dark dungeon basements. Prank items, unauthorized animals, even alcohol, honestly, that man is so unreasonable. The fact he's one of Harry's favorite professors is a genuine character flaw on the young Potter's part.

"Good afternoon, Professor Snape." The twins chanted in unison, knowing full well how much it peeved off the older wizard.

Snape's eye twitched but other than that, he was disappointingly stoic. "Since I see you two have, for once, not left a trail of chaos and paint in your wake, I will gladly bid you two goodbye."

And with that curt reply, the professor walked away. Well, he tried to anyway.

"Why are you following me?" Snape snapped irritably as soon as it dawned on him that he had two mischievous redheads trailing in his wake.

"It's not like we want to," George said, rolling his eyes safely away from the professor's line of vision.
"We're here to see Harry," Fred added, but not before making a vaguely obscene hand gesture they had learned from those suits of armor from that one time they got charmed to do amusingly vulgar things at Harry's person. Hah, that was classic. They still haven't managed to track down who did it but they will. Oh, they will.

Snape turned back to look at the two Weasleys just to narrow his eyes suspiciously at them before continuing his stride. Fred gave his brother a pointed, 'can you believe this guy look?' which George shot back with a satisfyingly disbelieving noise of agreement.

They spent the rest of their time behind the professor communicating in silent, meaningful eye-centric conversations, mainly about the greasy state of a certain someone's hair. Sniggering quietly to themselves, the two almost missed the sounds of stifled crying coming as they got closer toward the medical bay. Almost, it was hard to miss the gut wrenching sobs in empty halls.

It was not until they were just a hallway before the medical bay that all three of them saw the source of the emanating sadness.

"Percy?" Fred and George blurted out. Percy snapped his head to look at the three, his eyes were red-rimmed, streaked with tears, and face blotchy with his freckles standing out in a very unattractive manner. Hastily their older brother wiped his face with his sleeve in an attempt to maintain some decorum.

"Excuse me." The prefect dismissed with shaky nonchalance, "I, uh, have to go do something."

"Perce?" Fred tentatively questioned as his older brother pushed by to get past them.

"Are you alright?" George asked, equally as unsure. They've never seen Percy cry before, certainly not in public, and they weren't a hundred percent comfortable with suddenly being faced with the fact their least favorite sibling has feelings other than condescension.

Percy just waved their concern of with a mumbled "I'm fine," that was so clearly not fine even Snape, who had been awkwardly present during the whole thing, winced.

"Well, I'm glad that you are fine." The potions master said, it sounded incredibly insincere and robotically forced, "It would've been quite an annoyance if you skipped your prefect duties because you were overreacting from feeling just a bit under the weather."

Percy halted mid-step. The twins felt themselves stop breathing.

The prefect, Percy Weasley, Perfect Prefect Percy, turned around to face the Head of Slytherin, his face was still blotchy, but his eyes were brightly laced with his family's well-known fiery tempers.

"Oh, do go fuck yourself, Professor." He snarled before striding away, leaving three shell-shocked wizards in his midst.

The Hogwarts rumor mill was on fire right now. If the whole Heir of Slytherin wasn't enough, Harry Potter was currently hospitalized from a very suspicious potions accident AND had broken up with Percy Weasley. It was all very exciting.

Some said Percy was the one to set the accident up as revenge for breaking his heart. Some said Harry wasn't the one who wanted to break up with the prefect but the opposite way round. Others say Percy found out Harry was the heir and broke it off. A few say the accident was rigged by a jealous suitor and Percy broke Harry's heart to keep him safe. One particular prickish Hufflepuff proclaimed that Harry spilled the potion on himself on purpose for the attention.
That particular prickish Hufflepuff may have also gotten hexed, a lot of points deducted, his robe set on fire, three detentions and punched in the face in the few days after his very vocal accusations.

Harry, stuck in the medical wing still due to his incredibly slow healing and tenuous health status, had found great sadistic delight in those stories. He had found greater delight, though, when a week after the whole painful incident, Madam Pomfrey finally deemed him stable enough to live in Professor Snape's quarters. It was more than the 24 hours of confinement they promised him, but at least he's out.

He's fairly sure he would've gotten out on the third day if he hadn't been so bored he tried to spiritually walk out of his body. How was he supposed to know that those thirty minutes floating around the castle left his body clinically dead and a visiting Cedric Diggory to get a minor panic attack? No one came out of that stressful situation at all pleased.

Not much changes between getting stuck in the infirmary and getting stuck in Snape's quarters. The only real difference is, now Harry's able to hobble around in much more pleasant circumstances, mainly being able to have the choice between the bed and a nice couch. It's not much but the food is better, and it is a very nice couch.

Unfortunately, he's still got to be practically pumped potions into his stomach daily, and still he's got to go through recovery the muggle way. Apparently, his magic wasn't even trying to speed up the healing process of an injury of this extent. Madam Pomfrey, Headmaster Dumbledore, and every other professor plus the mediwitches and wizards consulted, were absolutely baffled by it. Harry has a strong theory it's his affinity with all things nonliving that's really screwing up his human body's ability to recuperate and regrow the necessary cells.

Dumbledore looked especially worried with the news considering he had very minimal emotional connection to Harry. That old man was all sorts of very suspicious, but, since Harry gets a nice little purple bottle of magic morphine for his pain on the same day the old wizard visits, Tuesday usually, he waves the nagging feeling off easily.

Draco tells him later that he makes up the absolutely best, most fantastical stories he's ever heard on those Tuesdays. Ron and every other person who's visited agrees with the sort of reverent awe that a normal child would give in the face of magic. It seemed Tuesday afternoons were the equivalent of Dungeon Story Time to the students (plus a few teachers). He's pretty sure Lockhart had been lurking around a few times with a quill in hand. Harry is just so fucking glad people are taking good advantage of his drugged up state. Truly.

…Those fuckers.

Harry decides that he has to redefine his personal view on the word 'injury.' Originally it was based off on his past meetings with Mr. Dursley's fat fists, sharp bruising pain that echoed for days. It was based on the hunger he had endured, the hollow ache in his torso that buzzed incessantly for attention. It was based on the way his lips would dry and chafe and bleed as his mouth desperately screamed for moisture.

Now pain was foul smelling salves with equally as terrible potions. It was the way his nerves would screech in protest every time he moved. It was the ugly scars and dirty bandages and liquid food. But most of all, it was the humiliation of being unable to do more than lay down on a bed like the invalid he was.

"Prof." He croaks because Harry finds recovery has good days where he can string one or two god damned pearls of wisdom in the form of sentences without needing a break and bad days where just
the idea of opening his mouth makes him want to cry a little on the inside. Or outside. He wasn't that good at distinguishing the two at this point in recovery. Or any points so far. But today, in particular, was not a good day.

Snape turns around from where he sat, coffee in hand and numerous papers in front of him. The man had been kind enough to let him out of his confined, empty, boring excuse of a bedroom for the first time in eight days and Harry felt kind of terrible for being such an awful inconvenience as he watched Snape mark assignments on a makeshift desk formally known as the dining table. He surprisingly feels worse about this than actually breaking up with Percy. At least he can console Percy and stay on friendly terms with the teenager. Being considerably injured helped a lot in that aspect actually.

Pity is the best weapon you can ask for after all, if humans had less pride they would see that too.

"Something the matter Harry?" He asks, and despite everything, Harry cracks a wane smile at the professor's use of his first name. It's strange how his chest flutters every time the potions master says it. Like light tapping fingers on his rib cage. This new level of informality between the two is one of the few perks about this whole situation Harry can find, and he's determined to milk as much of it as he can.

"Drink, please?" Harry rasps so quietly even he had a hard time hearing what he had said, but Snape just nodded and made his way to the kitchen. It's absolutely uncanny how good the man's hearing is, there is a legitimate reason why people kept calling him a bat after all. Harry's been rather neutral on bats, weirdly nowadays he's found himself kind of fond of them.

The professor hands a glass of water to the boy who takes it with shaky, bandaged fingers. "Ta."

The injured wizard had expected Snape to go back to his work after that, so he was quite surprised when the man chose to sit next to his prone figure on the couch, dark eyes watching him sip the water like a hawk. Harry rolled his eyes irritatedly, "I think I can handle drinking a cup of- oh shite."

Snape smirked smugly as he snatched some tissues up and passed it to a much more sodden Harry who sulkily accepted. "You were saying?"

"Nothin," Harry muttered petulantly, half heatedly dabbing himself. He kind of likes the cool, water on his frazzled skin, but then again, wet bandages are not welcome for anyone with a working sense of smell.

Somehow sensing Harry's foreboding grumpiness, the potions master stopped smirking and softened his face into something more sympathetic. "Why don't I help you to your room, Harry?" He asks. The green eyed entity wanted to be angry at the implications that he couldn't walk to his room by himself, he wanted to be indignant and to show the professor that he didn't need his help. But at the same time he wants to be the absolutely pathetic mess he feels and curl up in the older man's arms and let himself be carried off.

Snape seemed to understand his conflicting feelings- and how is it that Snape seems to see through him like this so easily?- And adds in a more professional tone, "We do have to try the new salve I made using aloe vera anyway. It'll take far less of my precious time if you just let me help you."

Harry ducked his head down to hide the stupid blush on his cheeks and the smile on his mouth. "Oh, well if you insist." He mutters embarrassed and lets the potions master sling his arm over his shoulder so to support the younger boy's injured body. Harry tries very hard not to lean too heavily on Snape as they shuffle together across the room. And when he says tries very hard, he means not at all.
They reach Harry's room and Snape gently deposits him onto the soft bedding, "Stay there for a bit, I'll go get the salve." He commands lightly before quickly leaving the room. Harry sighs when his door snicks shut and makes a start on undressing from his clothing.

It's not that hard. Because of his skin, he's had to wear loose fitting pajama clothes anyway, so he shucks off his shirt and shimmies out of his wet pants, leaving his only slightly damp briefs on. He'll be putting on some herb goop onto his skin anyway, and it would take too much effort to put on some new pajamas just to take them off again.

Harry sighs again, loudly, just because he can, and no one can bloody judge him because he's been burned in an incredibly unpleasant way and then found out he's a completely shit healer. Naturally and magically. It's... scary to be honest. Space's words from before echo in his ears and when he focuses inwards on himself he can feel his very being straining against his mortal body, magic the only thing trying to keep Harry together. He feels like a poorly made doll with far too much stuffing inside him and not enough fabric to protect him, from his own self.

But there's not much Harry can really do at this point. He's put himself in a stalemate with himself. He can't afford to spare much magic because what little of it left from trying to keep his own innate essence inside, is too busy trying to fix the damage on the outside. And he certainly can't use any of his own powers. The entity wasn't sure his mortal body could handle it in this state.

So he does what he can, and he waits for Professor Snape. On his bed. In his underwear.

He's inappropriately far more disappointed than he should be that there was nothing remotely sexual in this context at all.

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Snape falters on his way back to Harry's bedroom as he passes by the couch with the recovered glass of water sitting innocently on top of it. There was still water in it, and the potions master rather not have the drink spill any further onto the couch.

Slipping the salve bottle into his robes, the man picked up the cup delicately between his fingers. If he put it up to the light, he could see the faint smudges where Harry held the drink, where Harry's lips were when he sipped the water. The professor's mouth feels dry at the thought, and he wonders idly on how low he has sunk, how depraved he was acting.

"What am I doing?" He mutters to himself, "Harry is in the next room."

Harry who is practically living with him. Harry who is injured and scarred and weak. Harry who still looks so gorgeous in spite of it. Harry who is killing Snape inside, slowly, strangling the very breath out of his lungs in both the worst and best way possible.

It wasn't like he couldn't explain it away if he were caught. Snape reasoned to himself; he could say he just wanted some water and Harry's cup was the closest.

Still, Snape hesitates as his fingers curl possessively over Harry's abandoned glass of water. He couldn't. He bloody well shouldn't. It's the line between pining voyeurism to outright stalking and sexual harassment. His throat closes, and his mouth has never felt drier. 'It's just a sip of water,' he weakly defends to himself again, 'Just a sip. No need to make it seem any worse than it is.'

The older man brings the glass closer to his mouth, lips almost numb in nerve-wracking anticipation at the deed he's about to commit. He hesitates again, and looks around his empty living space like someone is just going to suddenly roll out under the coffee table to point accusingly at him and scream, 'Ah-HAH!' No one does of course. The only one judging him fiercely here was himself.
Unfortunately, his morals were never all the best, and soon his guilty want won him over.

He tilts the glass, his mouth where the faint markings of Harry's had been as he takes a drawn out swallow of water. Snape's lips over Harry's.

There's a brief fission of something hot and electric at doing something like this. Something secret. Something wrong. His heart is beating so fast for such a simple little act, the flicker of fear getting caught out on his perverse needs gripping on him from the inside. It doesn't stop him from taking another swallow of water. And another. Until the glass was empty and Snape self-loathing has inversely, filled him to the brim.

"Prof?" Harry called from the bedroom, causing the potions master to curse under his breath as he fumbled with the cup he almost dropped in his surprise. "You okay?"

"Yes, yes I'm fine," Snape replied back a little harshly, slamming the accursed glass onto the nearest tabletop. "I just.. knocked my shin." He concluded lamely.

There's muffled laughter from the room, and Snape would feel sour at the amusement at his expense but it's been a while since Harry's laughed, and the professor can't help but savor the sound. Seeing Harry the last few days had been difficult, as much as Snape secretly enjoyed taking care of the boy, seeing him so tired and constantly unhappy was not exactly a picnic in the park.

He must be getting better though if he can laugh without the aid of potions, Snape hates those pain alleviating potions, they weren't supposed to be used long term, and it was starting to take it's toll on the poor young wizard. It's not the worst case of aftereffects he's seen happen to a wizard, but the subsequent crash after the high of the potions always made Harry quite.. weepy. A moderate state of depression that Snape suspects isn't helped by the constant confinement the other is forced into. The potions master is trying to determine whether he can tweak the recipe for Harry's sake but considering his poor affinity for the medications in the first place, Snape isn't confident there's an alternative at the moment.

Fiddling with his new vial of salve, Snape knocked on the door to his guest bedroom, Harry's room, "Harry? I'm coming in."

There's a faint shuffling of sheets which the older man took as an affirmation, and opened the door.

Snape was glad he left the salve in his pocket, or he would have most definitely dropped it right then and there, along with his cracking sanity and self-control.

Harry's body, was stretched out against the bedsheets, pale skin decorated with pink scars that curled around every corner in a violently possessive embrace. The young wizard looked relaxed and pliant waiting for him, waiting for Snape. And merlin's balls, did Harry not realize how tempting he was right now? Lying in nothing but a scant bit of dark fabric covering his privates? Snape wondered if this was some sick, deliciously twisted karma for what he had just done not a few minutes beforehand. Because if it were, he would like to protest how very unfair and poorly thought out this punishment was.

Green eyes stared at him, bright despite the dim lighting of the room. "How would you like me, sir?" He asks, and Snape thinks he managed to gurgle something out of his mouth but isn't entirely sure. What he is sure of, is that this is going to be the memory at the forefront of his dreams tonight and he is going to wizard hell.

"Fine where you are." Professor Snape answers shortly, his voice sounds a little croaky and Harry
wonders if the older man is getting sick. If so, he feels bad about laughing at the image of him hitting the corner of the coffee table and swearing bloody murder like a normal human being.

"Kay," Harry says and lays his head back down to look up at the ceiling, feeling a little self-conscious. Sure the dour faced Slytherin had wrapped up his bandages and covered his burned skin with healing ointments before, but this is the first time Harry feels completely coherent and aware of this, not to mention so undressed. Usually, he's either half asleep, dizzy from pain or exhaustion, or just feeling too down even to notice.

The feeling must be mutual because Snape took his sweet time lingering awkwardly by the bed. Harry could feel his skin prickle under the other's gaze.

Finally, the professor seemed to decide on an action to take and sat down on the bedside nearest to Harry. It was a queen sized bed mainly because Harry tended to shift in his sleep in his quest to try to find the coolest spot on the bed and Snape was secretly a marshmallow who switched the beds after listening to Harry complain about it.

"Give me your arm." The man ordered stiffly, Harry lazily complied.

"Cold." Harry hissed as Snape dropped a generous dollop of the semi-translucent paste onto his arms without warning, like a horrible human being. The entity could almost feel gravity shifting against the intense eye roll above him.

"Oh, do get over it, Potter." The potions master says dryly, the effect weakened over how carefully his hands were smoothing the jelly textured salve onto Harry's arm.

They spent a few minutes like that. Snape, making sure every angry red mark, bump or scar was coated in the slick gel, Harry, closing his eyes and taking in the feeling of it cooling his skin in a pleasant fashion.

"Other arm, please."

"Mphmmn." Harry whines incoherently in protest, feeling far too comfortable to move.

"Harry." Snape tries warningly, but to both their ears they can clearly hear the distinct tenor of someone about to agree. "Fine." The potions master sighs, before getting up to sit on the other side of the bed.

"Thank yew," Harry mewls cutely, because he may be scarred on almost every part of his body, but he can still be friggin adorable when he wants to be.

"Shut up Potter." The older wizard snaps in mock annoyance, though Harry doesn't know who he's kidding, they can both easily hear the smile in his voice.

"Five points." The green eyed boy jokes quietly, lifting his other arm for the Slytherin Head to hold. Snape snorted, amused.

They don't talk much, they were never the type for inane chatter, and Harry can't help but think the silence between the two of them were far more comfortable than any with Percy. Sometimes Harry would say a short sentence and Snape would reply in turn, but there wasn't any urge to fill the empty spaces in between. The entity sighed happily as he let Snape manoeuvre his body as he saw fit, covering every sore, singed bit of flesh with the cooling salve. Gently, firmly following the traces of scars up to his neck, his face, gradually moving back down to his chest, tracing his ribs as he does so.

It feels good, dangerously so. Harry slowly opens his eyes from where they'd been sleepily shut as it
comes to his realization he was slowly but surely getting sexually excited from his professor's ministrations. Like a frog stuck in a slowly boiling pot, he didn't realize he was getting cooked before it was too late.

"I'm going to do your legs now okay Harry," Snape murmured soothingly as he moved toward to the foot of the bed. And before Harry could say, 'No, it was certainly not okay, this is possibly the most opposite of okay,' the potions master kneeled onto the bed and took the younger wizard's ankles in his hand. As in, hand, singular. Harry is a little ashamed to say what came out of his mouth instead was a very squeaky, "meep."

The Head of Slytherin quirked his eyebrow at the odd noise but said nothing, focusing his attention back on Harry's legs. It wasn't too bad at first. Snape's hands slowly worked on his ankles and feet, taking his time to massage in the salve into the tender skin. His legs and feet took the worst of the boiling potion, what goes up must go down and all that. Harry even found himself giggling uncontrollably at a particularly sensitive spot underneath his toes.

It was only once Snape moved his ministrations upwards did the real problem start.

"Professor," Harry whispers hoarsely, his eyes dropping down to Snape as he flushed in mortification. The salve being rubbed up his legs was doing... things to Harry. Terrible, terrible, pleasurable things. Harry can feel his dick throb interestingly at his professor's massage, and all Harry can think, was how he wants. Oh, how he fucking wants.

This must be his penance for coldly hurting an innocent heart like Percy's, he just knew it. For being given what was probably the fluffiest, most functional, sweetest little relationship and throwing it onto the ground dismissively.

Lust was just another part of the broad spectrum of love and Love knew just how to use it to screw people over. Death always found Love's punishments funny. He doesn't think he finds it so amusing now.

In his defense, though, Snape's fingers were absolutely _sinful_. Slim, long things that kind of knobbed a bit at the joints giving them an elegant spider feel to them. Beautiful calloused and experienced fingers he was sure would feel positively delightful shoved wetly inside of him. Harry wants to put them in his mouth and gnaw on them; they are just so perfect.

Snape presses on a particularly sensitive bit of healing flesh, uncomfortably high on his inner thigh, and Harry has to bite his lip with tears threatening to flood his eyes at the overwhelmingly confusing mix of icy pain and sizzling pleasure. Tears have seemed to be a constant thing for him now, and Harry isn't completely sure how he feels discovering that in this mortal form he's a crier. Not exactly ecstatic that's for sure.

He manages to barely stifle the moan, just a whimper that could be passed off as a noise of pain slips from his mouth. But his body betrays his true belying excitement at his predicament as his traitorous legs shift ever so slightly open, a silent invitation for more. It's undignified, what he is doing, what he wants, what he aches for. Neither the time, nor the place, nor the person, nor the context, is right. Long, spidery hands still on Harry's aching skin, he closes his eyes completely mortified. Snape had no doubt noticed what has happened, how could he not?

Feeling the professor's gaze on him, the younger wizard tried to hide his face in shame at his depraved and lustfully sensitive body, completely missing surprise darkening to burning arousal in beetle black eyes.

"Harry…" Snape breathed in hushed tones somewhere between an almost childish wonder and a
much less childish lust.

"Severus," Harry whispered, his voice shaky with his disgrace and his trying restraint that threatened to completely break whatever dignity he still had in front of the man he's found to be most fond of. He's never been so thoroughly humiliated like this, shamed by his own body in a way he's never felt a lick of before, yet at the same time, he's never experienced such unabashed, unadulterated excitement as he's felt at this very moment. He's fire burning, desire at its pure rawest, feelings and sensations fogging up his mind, boiling it until it can no longer function anymore. "Please.. don't look at me." He pleads desperately, because that's all he can do, bring himself to do.

Of course, he doesn't. If anything the potions master seemed to stare harder. Harry would too if the positions were reversed. And oh, wow, that was a very delicious image he had just came up with.

The pressure on his thighs tightened, large hands dragging themselves down his legs eliciting a desperate longing for more in the green-eyed wizard. He gives a long drawn out whine at the feeling, his back arching off the bed despite the sting of his healing skin stretching against his flesh and if Snape's hands weren't holding his legs down so beautifully tight, Harry knows his legs would have spread wantonly as they begged for more.

But soon enough the pressure lessened, hands slick with medicinal lotions slid off Harry's ankles, thumbs reluctantly tracing the curves of his heels before fully parting from Harry's body. Snape stood up from where he sat by the bedside, his eyes never leaving the younger wizard as he did so, lingering longer than they should on Harry's exposed legs and his evident arousal barely hidden under the thin black stretch of fabric that covered him. Just imagining what the professor was thinking, maybe it was disgust, or maybe second-hand embarrassment for a favored student, or, or, maybe, possibly, hopefully, there is a mutual desire in the man. Brimming as warm and electric as Harry feels.

It makes him blush, and it makes him pant, it makes him ashamed and vaguely suspicious about what the fuck is in the bloody pain potions he's been drinking like water.

"I think.." Snape says haltingly, his voice low and rough and sounds as shaky as Harry is feeling right now, "I think I should go now."

There's disappointment and relief that washes over Harry's heated body in tepid waves which does nothing to lower his body temperature, "Oh," is all he can articulate, and it does sound more disappointed than relieved. Fortunately, it seemed the professor hadn't noticed. Too busy trying to not eye up Harry's leaking erection, pre-cum leaving an obvious stain on his underwear. The entity on hiatus bitterly regrets asking for such light fabrics for sleeping.

"You should probably.." And the older man's face would probably be considered rather funny if not for the context, all twisted and pink and filled with disbelief at the words he was going to say, ",..take care of yourself." Snape coughs like the phrase had had to have been dragged by their tiny sharp nails out of his throat. Then he makes a vague hand motion gesturing to the entirety of Harry's flushed body like it wasn't obvious enough already. Harry wants to actually die. Vacations like this are the stuff that only comes out of stupid rom-com movies, or really bad porn foreplay.

Oh, shit now he was thinking about porn. Well, more like his very pornographic memories of previous exploits. Still. Not a great thing to think right now.

"Oh," he repeats weakly. His hands seem to move in accordance to Snape's words, moving down to trace the waistband of his briefs, their trembling, Harry realizes. His hands are actually trembling with the need to find release; he's so aroused. Firmly he presses a hand onto his hard length, still covered by his underwear, and moans softly at the pressure. Fuck, how he wishes there was a
different hand other than his own, he's pretty sure even bloody Smith with his arrogant smugness couldn't stop him now.

He begins tugging down his underwear when he hears the sound of his door banging closed, and that's when it horrifyingly dawns on him that Snape hadn't even left the room until then. That Harry had been so distracted in his fevered daze that he hadn't even. "Shit." Harry groaned to himself, "Why does this always happen?"

"Fuck."

Snape slammed the door to his own room closed, and barely had time to breathe before he was hurriedly unbuttoning his pants, fishing out his hard cock and tugging at it in frenzied, desperate motions. He runs the memory of Harry lying in front of him, panting and aroused under his hands, legs opening ever so invitingly for him. For him. He remembers telling Harry to take care of himself, and Harry, the precious boy, so lost in his haze of pleasure had complied so easily.

"Fuck, Harry." The potions master pants, his hand moving fast and sloppy, still sticky from the salve he had put on Harry. Merlin, it took all he had to leave that room, the most exquisite hell. He wonders if Harry even knew he had seen, if he had even noticed when he had left. He wonders what Harry was doing right now. Snape imagines the young wizard, his whole body covered in that fetching shade of blush as he's unable to control himself, small hands pushed into his underwear as he tries to fuck into his own grip. How far has that damned Weasley gotten to him? How much does Harry know about sex?

The man bites the jealousy that threatens to ruin his self-gratification and brings back up the scenes from before in his mind. Snape can feel the soft, warm flesh of Harry's thighs, the curve of his neck and shoulder, the smoothness of his chest. He can hear the restrained breathy pants, the meek, desperate plea of his name. He can see Harry, looking at him, excited by him-

Snape throws his head back as he climaxes, his cum spilling onto his hand and onto the floor. He grunts something that sounds like 'Harry.' as he slows down his hand, riding out his high and milking his dick carelessly until it feels like there's nothing left. He looks down at himself, his crumpled clothes, his hand holding his now flaccid genitalia out of his pants, and the mess he's subsequently made, and repeats so very eloquently, "Fuck."
Chapter Summary

The one where Death drinks a *uckload of potions. And then does things.

That word above by the way was duck load. As in, a duck load of potions. Like, a fuck ton of ducks. A fucking fuck ton of ducks worth.

Alternate title: The one where Death gets a little, itty bitty bit high on pain numbing drugs, I mean, potions.

Chapter Notes

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Harry is biting his lip, green eyes teary and imploring as he gazes up at Snape. "Professor," He whispers, and it aches and excites the man how such a confident, gorgeous boy like Harry allows himself to be so wrecked, so vulnerable to someone like himself. "Professor, please," Harry's crying as he begs softly, fat streaks quietly rolling down flushed cheeks, and Snape knows he shouldn't think of how beautiful he looks right now. How he wants to hold the boy tight and never let go. How he wants to kiss the pleas from his lips and lick the tears from his eyes.

Harry's moving closer now, desperate keening sobs shuddering through his petite, painfully breakable body as he shifts toward the Slytherin, until his bare chest was brushing, flush against his own clothed torso. It's almost unfair how pretty the young wizard looks despite the marks of ugly raised burns clawing at his skin. The slowly, but at least now visibly, healing injuries look almost decorative now. Irregular stars that stretch into curling red veins of destruction that clings possessively on thin arms, curving up to small shoulders like cruel outspread wings made of thorns that trickled down the sides of his smooth chest, the remnants of fire embracing the beautiful boy as best it could.

Maybe Snape was just getting too used to it, but secretly he thinks he hopes some of them stay imbedded on Harry, filling the perfectly white expanse of of soft skin with brilliant imperfections that highlight the beauty of the young wizard even more. Of course it's not like all the burn marks are
particularly appealing to look at, Snape may be stupidly, inappropriately besotted but he isn't completely blinded by his romanticism and attraction.

Harry's neck for one was, well to be honest Harry's neck looked a little like his flesh had been blended viciously with glue and then haphazardly pasted back on. And that's being polite about it.

Draco actually had to leave the room the first time he saw his friend without bandages on his neck. More than one Weasley had to dry heave in the nearest toilet after accidentally walking in to see a shirtless Harry getting his dressings done. The Diggory boy had stayed the same pallor of spoiled milk for three days when he came that one excruciatingly painful week Harry's neck got infected. It's not a pleasant sight, even when matched with a face as pretty as Harry's own, and Madam Pomphrey had concluded that it was most likely there where the potion had first made contact when it exploded before splattering onto his face and slopping down his body onto his lap.

Snape, who knows what its like to be at the wrong end of a hex or seven, cannot even imagine the agonizing pain Harry must be going through. Merlin, even he had to admit Black or Potter the elder had never gone to such lengths, and those two were the banes of his existence. If they ever find out who did this, the culprit will suffer a punishment so severe they would wish they were the ones whose neck had been mangled, Snape would personally make sure of it.

Too busy in his internal monologue, the professor only realised how much closer the teary raven haired wizard had managed to get. Harry was practically straddling him at this point, trembling thighs spread wide to sit on the older man's lap, his arms slowly creeping around Snape's neck as if taking a longer time to do so would make the potions master unable to notice the act. "Professor, Professor, Professor." He chanted in a slurred desperation that Snape wished was in a context far more sexual than it currently was.

"Yes Harry?" Snape asks in his most neutral voice he can muster in this situation. He's lied to the Dark Lord's face without blinking an eye but apparently all it takes is a half naked crying Harry Potter to get his voice cracking to embarrassing levels. He wants to hold the other closer, to grip him so tight that those scars aren't the only thing that clings to his skin. It's tempting. Terrifyingly so. He wants to push Harry off and apparate to the nearest monastery to try reclaim as much karma as he possibly can even though he's pretty sure that the best deal he would get is being reincarnated as a worm or some other unfavorable life form. Merlin, Snape so badly wants to shove Harry off his lap, distance the temptation before he does something he probably, to be honest, would not even regret. But he can't. This wasn't the first time this has happened after all.

The first time the boy clung to him, weeping so prettily, shakily, barely clothed and fuckable, Snape may have thrown the slim figure down onto the floor in pure shock. That was a mistake if the absolute hysteria that consequently followed was any indication. There was a lot of ugly full-bodied sobbing with nails scrabbling at the hems of the professor's robe or Harry curling into a ball and rocking himself into a state of further distress, his mouth babbling self-deprecation, strange cryptic nonsense about things like time and space and love, and wretchedly tragic pleas that hinted at soul carven insecurities that Snape was not at all comfortable with hearing, and frankly, not emotionally equipped to handle at all. That was not a fun day for either of them, though only Snape came out of that day with the memory of it in full clarity.

So when Harry snuggles closer, with every shift of his body purposely grinding into the older wizard's own in an innocent need to be comforted and touched, and not for any obscene lust for more like Snape's mind keeps unhelpfully supplying, Snape just takes it. He sits there like a loser and suffers through this strange level of hell that is currently his life because it turns out he's also a fucking masochist.
"Nmm.. Professor." Harry hums contentedly as he finally finds a satisfactory position on his professor. Even pleased, tears are still falling from dark eyelashes. "Severus.." He whispers into his ear softly, and Snape clenches the fists by his side and grits his teeth as the man ignores his burgeoning erection underneath Harry's pert bottom. Somewhere out there James Potter is stabbing his eyes out and cursing Snape to hell and back and hell again, it is literally the one comforting thought he has to this ridiculous scene. "Hey, Severus?"

"Yes Harry?" Snape asks quietly, inwardly feeling a sense of possessive satisfaction at being allowed to call Harry so familiarly and while it's been a few weeks, the professor doesn't think the novelty would ever fade at such a privilege. Harry buries his face into the crook of his neck, Snape would savour it if he wasn't too busy trying not to react to the fresh bout of tears soaking his shoulder. "Harry, what is it?"

"Professor," Harry sobbed helplessly, "I, I just," The boy hiccuped, and really that noise shouldn't be as cute as it is. Also his dick is still semi-hard. Snape may have a serious, serious problem. "If clouds are made of water, doesn't that make rain abandoned cloud pieces because they're not good enough to be clouds?"

Harry broke into wails at this point, he was always a quiet child so this hysterical blubbering was quite unnerving. The potions master sighed and awkwardly patted Harry's trembling back. "Maybe it is merely old clouds that turn into rain?" He tries weakly.

"That's even worse!" Harry sobbed harder.

Snape sighed again and continued comforting a crying Harry. Tuesdays. He's really got to see if there's any way to reduce the potion dosages.

It's another day being spent like a lazy slug. Harry has done his school work, he's read three large tomes on potion related things, which unsurprisingly enough, were not incredibly riveting tales he had hoped them to be, and he's done the stupid nerve-muscle exercise bullshit they insist on making him do.

It's not like he doesn't have a sort of schedule to follow anymore either. He knows Tuesday is his Drugged up day. It's usually passed in a mad flurry of potions and emotional highs and lows, what with Harry practically drugged up to the gills in an attempt to speed up his recovery. Harry's not generally fond of Tuesdays. He can never fully recall those days but he's suspiciously sure that he cries a lot for some reason. And cuddles things. Humanity seems to be 40% embarrassing yourself and 60% trying to get over it.

Saturday is when he gets the most visitors, mainly his friends from the upper years that are usually too busy with their schoolwork to visit during the rest of the week. Percy always managed to be the first one on those days, mother henning about and generally being as fussily sweet as he always was, something that made Harry inside relax in relief and fondness at the casualness of it all.

Ron and Draco have some sort of weird unspoken rule to never visit Harry at the same time. Well, to Harry it was an unspoken rule. But from what he heard, the rest of the school apparently had heard the very loud, very spoken rules being made by the two rivals. He's still not a hundred percent sure what had happened to cause the increased animosity between the two but it had something to do with Draco being a prick and Ron eating a bunch of slugs for some reason. Harry doesn't really want to know. The point was, Ron and Hermione as well as most of the other Gryffindors in their year usually stopped by after lunch or before dinner, while Draco and the Slytherins preferred to visit around breakfast time or after dinner.
But today was a Wednesday, and not much happens on Wednesday. Professor Snape had feed him his liquidated potion nutrients, patted his head and left for breakfast hours ago. He hasn't come back to his quarters for lunch like usual though. If Harry wasn't confident the man was a relatively powerful wizard with a good grasp of sense and self-preservation skills, he would be worried. But since he did, the boy spent the better part of his meal trying to swallow cold soup and sulking. And maybe he was a little worried, but sometimes the drugs got him paranoid so he dismissed it.

It's odd how easy a sort of dependence can be forged despite how reluctant Harry had been on it. Professor Snape has been patient and stern and kind in turn, generally an all round marvellous example of a concerned caretaker slash friend. Harry's never had to be taken care of before, but he thinks the so-called 'Bat of the Dungeons' was doing a pretty good job in doing so. Not that anyone would believe him.

Despite the.. 'Incident that Shall Not Be Named Ever But Will Apparently Star In Harry Potter's Fantasies For A Lifetime And A Little More', Snape has been surprisingly cool about the whole thing. Like, frigid cool. Ice cube. As in, stiff and almost unresponsive for a day before melting back to normal and acting like the whole thing had never happened. Which was totally fine for Harry. Denial was a beautiful concept he wholeheartedly accepts into his beating heart.

And if Harry's eyes linger on Snape's goddamned fucking hands when he's not looking, well, he's high on drugs or whatever, he can look. Sue him.

He doesn't want to admit it, but he thinks he actually misses the professor. Which is absolutely stupidly ridiculous since Harry saw him off just this morning. Not even a quarter of the day has passed. It makes no sense.

Still, Harry could actually feel the lack of Snape's presence across from him on the dining table, sitting where the man usually sits. It's in the absence of his deep voice complaining about the day's events so far, the sounds of cutlery scraping against porcelain, the weight of dark eyes watching over him carefully. There's a vacuum of space in front of Harry that only he can feel. It's unnerving. It's probably the drugs. Harry is blaming his excessive medicinal drug use on a lot of things lately.

So Harry sips his sad bowl of soup and manfully tries to ignore the part of him that wants company in the shape of a dour-faced sarcastic potions master. He also tries to ignore the part of him that wants said potions master in other more erotic forms of company. He knows his body is far weaker against light, affectionate touches than any cruel physical blow but lately, after the latest humiliation that is the 'Incident that Shall Not Be Named Ever But Will Apparently Star In Harry Potter's Fantasies For A Lifetime And A Little More,' Harry's been noticing a very obvious increase in his surface nerve sensitivity that correlates in his brain to sensual stimulus.

Basically, he's perpetually horny. Like, oh my god, kill me now, why is this happening to me, horny.

The young wizard shifts his legs awkwardly as his dick starts to stand up in attention despite the fact attention was not needed, wanted nor particularly sought after at this point of time dammit. "This is ridiculous." Harry sighs into his soup, before looking pointedly down at his crotch and saying accusatorially, "You're ridiculous. Seriously, what is wrong with you?"

Predictably he gets no response. Harry glares at it either way. Someone needs to tell off his body, because clearly it is out of control. This is further proven by his dick not softening at all, semi-hard in its defiance.

Harry really hopes this is all because of the drugs because he is not a hundred percent sure what he makes of the person he is slowly becoming otherwise.
He tries drinking a few more sips of the soup before he finally gives up and submits to his carnal desires. "This is the drugs fault, this is all the drugs fault." He mutters in an attempt to try reason with the frankly alarming number of times he's self-pleasured himself the past few weeks, while he unbuttons his pants and fishes out his cock.

"This is the drugs fault, this the- oh who am I kidding?" Harry groans as he grabs his length that is now fully interested in the proceedings. "If anything this is Snape's fault. Or Love's." Actually it might be Love's fault. That woman fucking lives for this sort of bullshit. Love and lust were always entwined anyway, but nowadays they seemed to be inseparable. Love merely adapted to the change with mortifying results. It's a wonder her form isn't some scantily clad sadist of a man-child. He's not shallow enough to think that the cover should always fit the book, but if the shoe fits, you might as well wear it.

Anyway, now was not the time to contemplate the other entity's role in Harry's quickly diminishing dignity that seems to occur whenever a certain professor is near. Harry was a little more occupied in other things.

With slow lazy strokes, Harry decides to take his time with this. Its honestly not like he has anything better to do. His left hand plays teasingly at the tip of dick, lightly stroking his slit and pushing his leaking pre-cum down his shaft, making it easier for his other hand to tug himself a bit harder like how he likes it. "Shite.." He curses enthusiastically as he lets his nails lightly rake over his length, the sharp sensations shooting through his nerves and up his spine, causing him to shiver in pleasure.

The young wizard continued this for at least twenty minutes, twisting and tugging and fondling himself, until he was practically shaking with the need to cum. Moaning softly to himself, he began to stroke himself harder, faster than his previous light teasing touches, biting his lip and closing his eyes as he savoured the frenzy of movement. For a brief moment he played with the idea of going into Snape's bedroom, to have his first time ever visiting his favourite professor's room only to sully it with his filthy mind and actions, to lay on his bed, on silk sheets, because Snape seems like the sort of posh bloke that insists on silk, and rub himself off to completion there. The idea felt so insanely naughty, Harry has to gasp like a fish out of water just imagining it, God, he's so close, just a little more and-

"Harry, apologies for being late." Snape called out from the doorway and Harry abruptly froze, weeping cock still in hand.

Fucking buggering shit, Harry hates this life.

The only saving grace here was that he was faced sitting away from the doorway, so the professor was unable to see his shameful self. "Uh, it's okay." Harry replied a little too high-pitched and breathily to be on the safe side of normal. Licking his dry lips and hoping the older man couldn't hear his deafening heartbeat beating down his chest, the mortified wizard slowly, and as casually as he can, tucked his erection back into his pants despite it's angry protests. "What took you so long?" He asked in faked nonchalance, even though a part of him wanted to scream why the hell the man didn't take just a little bit longer, and a larger part of him just wanted him to go, like this instant.

Soft, swooping steps are heard behind him, Snape must be heading to the kitchen area. "Lockhart, that inept buffoon, is forming a defence club as I'm sure you've heard."

Harry perked up at the news, his humiliation temporarily forgotten. "Ah yes, Draco, Ron and the others told me about it bout a week ago. Awfully excited despite who's teaching. Was today the first class?"

The older raven haired Slytherin gave the other a funny look. "Harry, they told you two days ago.
The news came out on Monday."

There's a pause as both contemplated the amount drugs Harry's had to consume to lose his track of

time so easily. Snape looked very concerned but pushed the subject back on track to Lockhart

instead. "No, it turns out I'm the volunteer," Snape said 'volunteer' in the same horrified disgust

someone else might say 'human sacrifice', which didn't fail to crack a smile on Harry. "that's

overseeing this new fanciful club of his."

Harry couldn't help but bark out a laugh at that, even if it did lead to a massive coughing fit

afterwards. The potions master summoned a glass of warm honey water for him. "Thanks." Harry

said gratefully between coughs and chuckles.

"Not thankful enough to stop laughing." Snape deadpanned, earning another burst of giggles coming

out from the boy.

"I'm sorry," The boy wheezed, sounding anything but, "it's just, imagining you teach-"

The professor, walking with his own mug of tea to sit opposite Harry, raised his brow unimpressed,

"I hope you do realise I am a teacher Harry, if not, I clearly have overestimated your intellectual

abilities."

Harry flushed sheepishly, "I mean, you're always so grumpy teaching normal potions lessons. Just

imagining you being forced to do extra, as a teacher's aide, for Lockhart of all people-" Harry

couldn't continue his train of thought because he started laughing and coughing uncontrollably again.

"Yes, well, I'm glad someone finds this awfully amusing." Snape huffed, but the sternness that was

usually in his tone was absent. The younger of the two looked at him with one of his usual crooked

smiles, something that had been much less present the past few weeks.

"And I'm glad that someone is me." He replies cheekily. Snape smiles in that not smiling way of his,

with amusement in his eyes and the ever so slight twitch upwards at the ends of his mouth. "Do you

think I can go to the first day of Duelling club?" Harry questions curiously, he's not disillusioned

himself to think he could participate or anything but he's desperate enough to walk somewhere

further than the bathroom he's willing to kiss Dumbledore at this point.

Nothing intense, just a quick peck. He's not that desperate.

Snape eyed his injured form warily. "I don't think you're fit enough.." He hesitates as Harry starts

begging him silently with his eyes. "Harry you couldn't even get to the kitchen without complaining

how every thing hurt and that you would rather scalp all the skin from your body and cocoon

yourself in blankets until you emerge a beautiful butterfly."

The boy stared incredulously at the Head of Slytherin. The Head of Slytherin stared back

unwaveringly before amending, "You may have been a tad intoxicated with the new batch of pain

numbing potions."

"If they didn't work so decently I would have stopped relying on those forsaken things since the

start."

"Unfortunate as the side effects are, your wounds have been healing faster." Snape helpfully

supplied. The wizard savior wrinkled his nose irritatedly but grudgingly agreed. His sores and scars

were starting to smooth out, and while his skin still felt like seated knives have dug into it whenever

he so much as stretches wrong, it no longer feels like those knives have been pumped with electricity

dipped in a boiling vat of salted limes.
"Healing enough to let me go to Duelling Club?"

"No." The professor put down firmly. "It is not."

Harry did not pout. He is an entity who is so old that age has no meaning to him. He did however, start tearing up and sniffling like a scolded toddler which is arguably much worse. It's the potions. It's probably the potions.

God Harry hopes it was the potions.

The potions master looked nervous and twitchy as he saw Harry's unhappy, wide green eyes. His hands actually lifted up for a second, outstretched toward the second year as if he wanted to grab onto his shoulders and shake the sadness out of him. Well, to be fair, Harry was sure the professor wouldn't do that, no matter how uncomfortable he was at Harry's tears. But it was a little hard to imagine the stoic, sullen teacher actually offering a hug or some sort of affectionate gesture like that. "Maybe.. If you are feeling better you can join your friends for lunch afterwards."

Harry mulled this over for a minute before rebutting, "I get to walk myself there by myself, no need for any accompaniment."

Snape scowled at the condition, the green eyed wizard didn't see why he seemed so displeased. If anything it was awfully beneficial for the elder wizard, sparing him from rushing back to his quarters after the club and the consequent embarrassment he would get from Harry having to cling onto his arm like a newborn faun as they traversed to the Great Hall. "You would fall." He complains. "You will inevitably fall and hurt yourself."

"That's what walls and other large stable objects are made for." Harry points out very logically.

"They were not made solely for you to lean on."

Harry tutted as if he was the teacher and Snape was a particularly disobedient student. "They were made exactly for me to lean on." He announced imperiously. "In fact they have waited ever since their creation to be touched by me in such a way."

Snape muttered something inaudible that the boy couldn't make out but it sounded childish. "What was that prof?"

The professor stiffened like he didn't expect his comment spoken under his breath to be heard. Harry watched in slight fascination as the tips of the older man's ears dusted pink. Was he blushing? Was that a blush? "..Nothing."

What on this earth did he say?!

"Clearly it was not nothin-"

"You know what, Potter?" Snape interrupted, clearly flustered and hiding it under a very convincing veneer of angry annoyance, "I'll let you drop yourself off to the Great Hall for dinner but if you so much as you bruise your pinky I will send you back to our quarters faster than you can say golden snitch." He warns in a manner that would make Longbottom cry, but Harry is grinning ear to ear as he visibly delights in this bluster of embarrassment. Snape, not being blind and seeing how unaffected the boy was to his snarls, picks up his dignity and dramatically leaves for his bedroom.

Harry manages to stop his widespread, deeply amused smile to ask, "Seriously though, what did you say?!" His answer was a slam of the door, much like a sullen teenager. Harry answered back with a laugh.
He's not going to lie, but Harry is pathetically excited with the prospect of walking out into the school by himself again.

"Hogwarts, I have never been so glad to see your halls." He declares as he shuffles slowly through the dungeons with a giddy smile. The sentiment must be shared because the green eyed entity could feel a distinct shift in the air to a warmer, more comforting temperature around him rather than the usual chill. He and Hogwarts share a very complicated love-hate relationship that Harry feels like he should be more worried about if Hogwarts was an actual being that was capable of things like sex or getting drunk or, god forbid, marriage.

That would be a terrible romantic sitcom. Love would love it. They could call it, Build-a-Pair. It would be set in an alternate universe where buildings grew sentience and a soul over time, but only a few of the best could hold a human form. Lady Liberty would literally be a lady of liberty. The Louvre would be some suave artistic french snob. Architects would be one of the most popular jobs ever except only a few ever make it to any level of fame, so much like any other reality really. Harry, of course, would be cast as one of the protagonists, or at least a main supporting character who was a talented architecture student whose only criticism was that he lacked 'heart' in his works and is forced to visit various buildings to cultivate an understanding of what it takes to make something with a soul. Draco, who comes from a wealthy lineage of renowned architecturally affiliated family and is subsequently torn between living up to his pureblood expectations or trying to find who he really is, and Ron, the idiotically friendly redhead that wishes to make a name for himself, get the cute bookworm's number, get the cuter cupcake delivery's number and enjoy life in relative ease, would be his mates that support him and simultaneously get into all sort of shenanigans. Chaos would totally write himself as that crazy fun brother that secretly has an interest in the Chrysler building.. or something.

Harry's kind of regretting taking that afternoon numbing potion now.

He's also kind of regretting the whole 'walking himself to the Great Hall' thing as well. "Were stairs always this exhausting?" The young wizard pants as he practically crawls up the stairs. If Snape wouldn't be so smug, and Harry knows the man would be, the boy might've contemplated giving up, turning around, and sliding himself back to his room for a nice long nap. As it is, he continues on, feeling as determined as a patriotic soldier trekking through a desert and as bone deep exhausted as one too.

The halls where he is are empty, nothing but him and a bunch of terrified magical paintings that were peeking out of their frames in curiosity despite their fear of the entity. Well, it was hard to fear something that looked like a tiny, whimpering, vulnerably hurt child. The overwhelming aura of death however was still as off-putting as ever though, possibly even worse since his human body has weakened and his magic is doing its all just to keep his very being inside. Still, he must’ve looked pathetically helpless because one of the braver paintings, a knight in shining armour, had moved back into the frame and asked, "Dark Princess, are you alright?"

And oh, Harry dearly hoped he misheard that 'ess' sound at the end of his new nickname. Prince of Darkness he could live with despite how middle school fantasy-esque it was. Princess of Darkness though? That rings disturbingly with the image of a lot of black lace and jewel studded skull tiaras, and Harry has grown out of that phase ages ago.

He admits he may still use some lace garments from that time but… those aren't important right now. Harry wonders what Professor Snape would think of his lace garments?

"Knight." He acknowledges as he tries not to sound like he's about to keel over from exertion. "I
Surprisingly the knight seemed unconvinced. "Fair maiden of the shadows," He starts and Harry *knows* he didn't mishear that. "You are clearly unwell. I will do all that I can to aid in your plight."

"No that's not really.." But it was too late. The strange knight in the painting was growing more confident in his newfound goal, nodding to himself as he talked.

"Even if you are from hell's kingdom, you are royal and of immeasurable beauty and in distress. " The knight assured.

Well, the painting wasn't *wrong*.

Plus, Harry had to say it was very flattering being told he has immeasurable beauty, even with the scarring. Especially his neck scarring. Harry was sore about that in both a physical and aesthetic manner. Ron had so helpfully informed him that it looked a lot like the mince his mother used to make, before it was cooked and slathered in ketchup. Cedric stopped visiting for a week when he saw it. Draco and Blaise the first time had taken one look at his exposed neck and had to stand outside in the dungeon halls for ten minutes for mental recovery. So hearing that he was still pretty, while a little out of context and demeaning all things considered, didn't know how much he got his bruised ego boosted nicely nonetheless.

"Can you please just point me to where the Great Hall is? Preferably to the route with the least amount of possible stairs." He finally relented.

"I, Sir Cadogan, shall do better than that my damsel of the dark!" The knight, Sir Cadogan apparently, exclaimed in eager joy. His painted metal amor vibrating with his emotion. Harry had a terrible feeling that this was the sort of individual that the saying 'give an inch and they'll take a mile' was made specifically for. He can already feel the oncomings of a headache that no amount of numbing drugs or healing salves could subside. "I will personally make it my honourable duty to escort you there myself!"

Harry looked balefully at the painted knight, all puffed up with pride and self-righteousness. There were snickers and giggles and whispers coming off the walls and the entity in a wizard's body knew very damn well that whatever abject fear they held for him was ruined at this point onwards. Harry closed his eyes and exhaled slowly before opening them back up again. "I appreciate the offer Sir Cadogan. Thank you." He finally ended up saying with awkward politeness.

It would be a win-win situation anyway, the knight would be appeased and Harry would have a look-out in case Hogwarts changes her mind and decides it would be funny to do something that would no doubt put Harry in some sort of disastrous scenario. Nothing too physically damaging, even Harry wouldn't believe Hogwarts to go that far in his condition. But definitely something highly humiliating. Like making one of the suits of armour hold him bridal style or like in a firemen's hold or something.

Of course, maybe he should've just let a suit of armour sweep him off his sore feet. At least they were incapable of speech.

"-and I told thee, 'Be vanquished foul beast!' as I swung my mighty sword like this-" Harry glanced up at the current painting on the wall by his side to catch Sir Cadogan showing off his swordsmanship skills at the empty space in front of him. Or was it paint? But then, since everything is composed entirely of paint would it be considered empty space like how air is dismissed as empty space? How did the painters manage to even create actual space on a flat canvas? Why isn't there any art classes for this sort of thing? Harry would totally sign himself up.
Harry wants more and less potion in his system right now.

They continue walking for a while, the injured entity slowly but surely making progress into the castle and Sir Cadogan very nobly keeping his pace like the gentleman he claimed to be. He had found himself starting to warm up to the loud knight in shining armor, after all, Harry's always like good manners. Now if only Cadogan could stop the name-calling.

:So hungry.: 

Harry paused mid step. The knight stopped the moment he noticed and cocked his head to the side. "Shadow maiden, is something the matter?"

"I don't know," Harry looked up at the corner of the ceiling. "did you hear that?"


"Come on." The boy mutters urgently, "I sense a beast that needs slaying."

Sir Cadogan's face inappropriately beamed like the sun. 

"I fear we were too late Damsel of Death." Sir Cadogan announced sadly.

"Yeah no shit." Harry says as he stares down at the frozen face of one of the Hufflepuffs in his year. Justin Finch-Fletchley, one of Smith's pals and weirdly, firmly convinced that Harry had been the heir of Slytherin. So, he wasn't that worked up over that, and he wouldn't have been if there had not been a second victim to the basilisk.

Poor Headless Nick. Harry didn't even know ghosts could even be affected by a basilisk gaze. Jesus, how were they even going to feed him the antidote?

"Sir Cadogan, if you will, run and find help." He orders quietly. The boisterous knight, sensing the mood, gave one quick nod of acceptance before running off into the scenery.

Unfortunately before the painted knight could come back with help, Harry was confronted with a small flock of Ravenclaws. A study group from the looks of their books wrapped in their arms. They had been chattering along happily until they caught sight of Harry, standing stock still in surprise next to two petrified individuals. Harry stared at the Ravenclaws who in turn stared back.

"Um. This isn't what it looks like." He says lamely.

One of the girls screamed.

"Shite."

There was a lot of commotion after that. And some very hysterical mean hearted words. Seriously, that 'snake-fucker' comment was truly uncalled for.

At the very least, Sir Cadogan managed to come back relatively quickly with a harried McGonagall by his side. "Good heavens," She says as she takes in the screaming, terrified Ravenclaws, the petrified Hufflepuff and ghost, and finally a huddled, injured Harry Potter trying to uselessly become one with the wall. It takes her barely any time to snap back into efficiency though. The transfiguration professor asked Sir Cadogan to get another professor, and talked the Ravenclaws through their panic enough to move them along to the Great Hall before turning her attention to
Harry who tensed up instinctively under the stern gaze.

McGonagall shook her head, a sigh escaping her lips and most of the tension in her body with it. "First Lockhart's odd interest in you, then the potions accident and now this?" When she looked at the young wizard again he could see that the woman was wryly amused. "I must say Mr. Potter, I do not envy your luck this year."

Harry couldn't choke back a surprised laugh. "I hardly think anyone would wish to be me at the moment Professor. Boy-Who-Lived be damned."

"I'm surprised Professor Snape let you out looking like that though Mr Potter." She continued idly, her eyes looking up and down judgmentally at the petite, scarred figure. "You don't look.. well."

"I'm well enough Professor McGonagall." He assured unconvincingly. Harry winced as he realized that once Snape hears about this, the boy was probably not going to be able to walk out alone for a long time now. Shoving a hand down one of his loose robe pockets, he fished out a small vial of cloudy, ominously gray liquid to show the older woman. "See? I'll just take some more medication, it's about time anyway."

The boy unscrewed the vial and swallowed the potion like it was a shot glass filled with a particularly nasty dose of alcohol. God, he would kill for a proper bottle of something strong right now. Whisky. Tequila. The blood of a hundred year old virgin drained through a silver strainer by the hands of someone with a broken heart. Rum would be nice too.

"If you're sure." McGonagall says uncertainly before changing the subject. "How have you been by the way. Is Sev- I mean, Professor Snape treating you well?"

Harry beamed despite himself. "Sev- Professor Snape has been brilliant. He's been very accommodating and nice and he's really.." He trailed off as he noticed the amusement just radiating off the professor, and blushed heavily. Maybe that potion wasn't a great idea. "I, uh, yes. He has."

The transfiguration teacher raised a knowing brow, and even though Harry had no idea what she seemed to think she knew, he blushed harder anyway. "I see." She says in a manner that feels far too similar to the sound a cat makes when its got the canary and a bowl full of fresh cream. Harry respects and maybe fears Professor McGonagall a little bit, but he kind of wants to slap the smirk off her face.

Luckily Sir Cadogan arrived with the calvary before Harry's slightly drugged and lowered inhibitions started contemplating that with any amount of seriousness. Professor Flitwick and Professor Sinistra, huffing slightly from their run, did the obligatory stare-and-shock thing before a more professional McGonagall filled them in on what has happened.

"Mr Potter, I'm going to accompany the others to the medical wing to inform Madam Pomphrey and the others. Will you be okay going to the Great Hall by yourself?" McGonagall asked concerned.

Harry waved it off casually, like he wasn't dying just a little inside at the idea of walking more after all this chaos, "I'm fine professor." He lies.

He doesn't think he was completely believed in going by the three worried looks of the witches and wizard but they let him go anyway. Before leaving, Professor McGonagall patted his head and said, "If you want to talk about anything, anything," She stressed, while giving him a 'look', "don't be too shy to try talk to me okay Potter? I won't judge and everything you say will be in confidence you hear me?"
"Uuh." Came the oh so eloquent reply. "O-kay?"

With a last firm pat on the head, the older woman gave a reassuring smile. "I know it must be a very confusing time but I just want to help you out the best I can okay?"

And oh, this must be about some lingering guilt about his childhood or something. Maybe the professor wants to try making up for what parental guidance was lost on Harry. Well, that was incredibly nice of her, especially since she's already done her best already by visiting him and informing him personally on what he's missed on classes. To be fair, most of the teachers seem to make an effort to do that, but McGonagall always did seem like the type to secretly dote. It was also not much of a secret that, despite what she tries to act otherwise, the transfiguration teacher did favour Harry out of the majority of her students.

Harry smiled kind and gentle and appreciative, "Thank you professor." He murmurs a little abashedly. "I, um, appreciate that greatly."

Her face seemed to soften even further, and what seemed almost reluctantly, the woman moved her hand off Harry's head and walked back toward her fellow professors waiting patiently for her. The boy watched her for a minute before making his own, much slower way, to the Great Hall.

"What was that about Minerva?" Sinistra asked curiously as they levitated the petrified bodies toward the infirmary.

Minerva hummed, despite the new bodies, she couldn't help but find it hard to stifle the urge to smile. She can't feel too guilty about that though, Severus was in the process of finishing the antidote and just needed another few days to complete it before they can pass it on to the poor students. And speaking of Severus.. "Oh, nothing."

She did hope Harry took her up on her offer to talk. The boy was at a very confusing time of his life indeed. He needed someone older and more objective to his plight, a parental figure that he'd never had to talk about things with. It's not hardly surprising that Harry's imprinted onto Severus, they had been on friendly enough terms before the accident but now that the potions master has so uncharacteristically generously volunteered to act as essentially a live in nurse maid for the young wizard, it wasn't exactly hard to disbelieve that respect has turned into something a little more.

The transfiguration professor chuckled under her breath. While Harry had seemed cheerful enough 'dating' Percy, it was nothing to what his face had revealed as he essentially gushed on about Severus. To think, Severus has earned himself an admirer! And for it to be Harry Potter of all students to have developed that crush, even if the young teen might not even know of it himself yet. It was all very adorable.

She would have to tease Severus about Potter's frankly sweet infatuation of the man, nothing too obvious as to betray Harry's trust but enough for her to get some pleasure out of it. More than she was already getting anyway.

It's not like anything would actually come off on it right?

"Absolutely nothing at all." Minerva murmured to herself.

"Harry, you're here!" Ron exclaimed happily as he made his way toward the Gryffindor table, never failing to be one of the first people down for a meal. "You would not believe what happened during Duelling Club."
"Bet you my story's worse." Harry challenged dryly. The Weasley laughed and shoved his friend playfully, taking particular care to be more gentle than usual.

"You are on mate." He says, "So get this, Lockhart as usual was being a huge walking moron, and Snape, the git, was his assistant! And boy did he not look happy- looked like he swallowed one of his own gross potions or something, no offence." Harry rolled his eyes but made a 'continue' gesture with his hand. "Anyway, so Lockhart was all 'I'm gonna duel Snape but don't worry yeah? I won't kill 'im.'"

"No, he didn't." The raven haired boy breathed out like an excited schoolgirl coming across the juiciest piece of gossip, his interest in this story was rising exponentially. "What happened next?"

Ron grinned, "Whaddaya think? Obviously Snape wiped the floor with the guy in a second! They barely started and all that snake had to do was shout an expelliarmus and Lockhart was sent flying into the wall!" The freckled boy laughed at the clearly fond memory, "I gotta admit, I don't like Snape but that was pretty amazing."

"That's awesome," Harry agreed, "I wish I was there to see it." He added none too jealously. God, he would pay good gold to see that. Was it weird that he felt a little hot under the robe, if you know what I mean, imagining Snape wiping the floor with this year's defence professor?

Ron patted him consolingly, "My story ain't over yet bruv."

"Go on then, I'm listening."

"Well, then Lockhart tried to brush the whole thing off as his own idea- no one but Hermione and Lavender Brown and the other dumb girls bought that whole lot of crap-"

"Ron!" Hermione said affronted as she stood behind the two boys.

The Weasley cringed. Harry just waved pleasantly at her.

Hermione shot one last glower at the redhead wizard before physically melting at the sight of Harry. Her hands visibly spasmed in her need to throw her arms around the pale boy and cuddle, something she had been taken to doing now. Really, it's all nice and good for Harry and Ron to be her friends, but she really does need at least one female friend, just one, for talking about feelings or gush about Lockhart or complain about boys. Because Ron is terrible at all of those things and Harry, being slightly less terrible at them, has by reluctant default, taken that role instead.

"Oh Harry, are you feeling better? Did Madam Pomphrey and Professor Snape finally said you're okay to continue on with classes? We have missed you terribly, even Smith was pestering us constantly about when you would be back."

Harry raised an eyebrow, "I'm sure that wasn't exactly how he said it."

The girl looked sheepish, "Well.. no.. But the sentiment was there… I'm fairly sure."

Both boys looked at each other and snorted at the same time, Ron may not know Smith's annoying traits as personally as Harry did, but being the good mate he was, was willing to hate the Hufflepuff just as fierce as Harry did. In return Harry admits to Ron that yes, Draco is a little bit of a poncey wanker sometimes, and yes, Ron, you are my favourite Weasley, despite me having 'swapped spit' with Percy.

"Your story Ron?" The green eyed boy prodded pointedly.
"Why ta Harry, thought you weren't ever gonna ask." Ron grinned. Hermione huffed but made her way to sit next to Harry and listen anyway. "Anyway, we had to be paired up to practice disarming each other right? And I ended up paired with Seamus which was okay but Hermione."

"I got paired up with Bulstrode." She shuddered. Harry winced in sympathy, Millicent Bulstrode seemed okay enough to him, but she was large and seemed like the sort of witch who could survive on a desert island without her wand, and was very against Gryffindors as a general rule of thumb. Some sort of family grudge or something if Harry could recall, these people did so love holding their grudges after all.

"Yeah, it was a right mess." Ron agreed, "Bulstrode actually got 'mione into this headlock by the end of it. My blasted wand did.. something to Seamus, I don't know what, but his face was pretty grey. Smith made Boot bleed like his arm was a bloody waterfall- which in fairness, was probably an accident because Smith ended up fainting right after at the sight of all that red. I think Finch-Fletchley and Neville looked like they got dragged by a short leash up a rocky hill by a three headed dog with a vengeance. And Malfoy was screeching about… I don't know, his hair? I feel like it was his hair. Either way it was loud and angry."

"I think he got magically punched in the eye." Hermione chimed in.

"No," Ron shook his head adamantly. "Pretty sure it was something to do with his hair."

"Oh do get on with it," Harry says impatiently, he's eyeing the number of students pouring into the Great Hall, and clearly they have heard what has happened about the new victims from the Ravenclaws because everyone was staring and whispering at him.

"So, Lockhart was all, 'Maybe we should have thought you all how to block first.' In which we were all 'no duh,' so he gets Malfoy and Smith up in front of the whole class and Smith's like, this absolute prick about getting chosen, and Malfoy's being a prick too but at least he wasn't so loud about it which is saying something. Then Smith started saying stuff about how the Malfoy's must be really brought down to new lows because he's friends with you and obviously we were all pissed on your behalf, Malfoy especially though."

"You should've seen the way Malfoy fumed Harry!" Hermione interrupted, looking fit to burst with her own input, Ron scowled, obviously unhappy the best part of this story was about to be snatched away. "He was absolutely livid he was."

"So he whips out his wand," Ron quickly pushed back in, much to Harry's amusement, "and he shouts 'Suck on this, Serpensortia!' at Smith and this giant friggin black snake burst out of his wand! Smith screamed liked a little girl and ran off the stage."

Harry giggles, pleased by the turn of those events, "I can imagine that."

"But then, Lockhart tries to help out by banishing the snake or something, and I think he did the equivalent of a magic bitch slap because that snake was pissed, Harry. That thing looked so pissed." Ron breathed gleefully, "It ended up chasing Finch-Fletchley out of the room!"

Well that did explain why the Hufflepuff had been separated from his herd. Chased by a snake only to get petrified by a bigger, more dangerous one. There's a beautiful irony there.

"Where is the guy anyway?" Hermione asked looking around, "I would've thought he would be here right now."

"Um, I may know the answer to that." Harry coughed awkwardly.
"Potter!" Blaise, wild eyed and uncharacteristically frazzled, as he grabbed the green eyed second year's shoulder to see the boy face to face, "Are you hearing what everyone's been saying about you? They think you're the heir of Slytherin!"

Draco in that moment ran up to the four, panting, "Potter! Did you hear-" Grey eyes zoned onto his fellow Slytherin and he visibly deflated. "Dammit, I wanted to be the one to tell him."

"Enough with your theatrics, honestly you Slytherins," Harry huffed, "And I was the one who wanted to tell these two over here." He gestured at the two confused Gryffindors.

"Harry," Hermione says slowly, "What is going on?"

"I... may now be suspect numero uno for the whole Slytherin heir thing again." Harry says sheepishly, "Apparently showing up first to the scene of the crime twice is highly suspicious."

"Mate." Ron stresses as he shakes his head like he was some resigned parent and Harry's a troublesome five year old, which, Harry would like to point out was highly offensive. After all, which out of the two of them had burnt someone's face off?

Technically the answer is both of them but Harry likes to think the tally only applies in the context of this particular lifetime.

"I didn't do it!" The Boy Who Lived defended. "I had to leave early to get here on time, and I have a witness." That witness may be a slightly insane, very egotistical painting of a knight but- oh dear god, how has Harry come to this point in his existence?

"We all know you didn't." Hermione soothes. The other boys all made various noises of agreement. "But everyone else.."

All of them look around the now nearly filled up Great Hall to see all eyes staring back at them. There's whispering and pointing. Mainly in the Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw tables where Harry's presence in their Houses was weakest, and while there were a few people that looked like they were protesting against the rumours there- Cedric Diggory, Padma Patil and Terry Boot- the majority were obviously not as inclined to believe in Harry's innocence.

"If it helps, at least half of the Slytherins don't think you're the Heir." Blaise comforted.

"Yeah, and even if they do, it's not like the Slytherins would hate you for being the friggin heir of their House Potter." Draco drawled in an odd way that was probably meant to be a comforting manner. He was getting better at it at least. "Seriously, the upper years practically swoon when they talk about you. Marcus Flint, our seventh year Slytherin Quidditch Captain, and Dahlia Quiverknacker, one of the richest third years, were in an actual physical fight on who would try asking you out to Hogsmeade first."

"Thanks guys." Harry replied politely, feeling a little flattered at hearing that his popularity hadn't taken too bad a hit. It was for extremely superficial reasons but it was still nice to know. "Though I would prefer Flint over Quiverknacker any day." Flint wasn't too bad, not the prettiest bloke, a little obsessed with Quidditch, but he had a rough sort of humour and Harry likes to think looks weren't everything. Quiverknacker though was a complete gossipy bitch, he's hung around with her once or twice and while he didn't mind her too badly, he would not be jealous for anyone dating her.

Ron and the other two boys did not share the same opinion. "What?! Are you bonkers Harry?" The Weasley protested. "Why would you chose Flint over Quiverknacker?"

"Ron." Harry said very calmly. "I dated your brother over the holidays," Ron screwed his face up at
the reminder, "I think you figured out I'm just a little gay."

"Yeah but its Flint." He muttered petulantly.

"Weasley's right." Draco added, "I don't care how gay you are, who chooses Flint over anyone?"

"Well that's not very nice." The green eyed boy protested half heartedly.

"Harry, Flint is mean and dumb and his face kind of looks like its been through a wall or three." Hermione piped up. "I would choose Quiverknacker over Flint."

"The only one worse than Flint would be, like, Filch." Blaise murmured good humoredly. Harry shifted uneasily. "Oh come on Potter?! Filch?!"

"I just think he's a very nice man," He defended. "I mean I wouldn't want to date him but he's not the worst human being ever!"

Draco threw his arms up in the air, "Merlin, you, you just have the worst taste in guys!"

Harry blushed indignantly, "Wha- that's not true!" He tries very hard not to think of his previous paramours and the amount of people they have killed. To be fair though, it wasn't like he actively looked for individuals who had murdered a bunch a people and may or may not derive some sort of satisfaction or pleasure from the act.

So maybe he doesn't exactly passively looks for guys like that either. Just because they've killed doesn't make them any less pleasant okay? Harry totally has fantastic taste in men ta very much.

"You dated Percy." Blaise pointed out, "Percy is kind of known for being a bit of a huge prick."

"Also Harry," Hermione said in a manner similar to someone about to start an intervention for their alcoholic friend, "You do have a bit of a weird Sna-"

"I do not have a weird Snape thing." Harry hissed, "And Percy is not a huge prick, he does however have a pretty sizable-"

"NANANANANANANA" Ron yelled with a finger in his ear and another one forcibly covering his best friend's mouth. "NANANA I DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING YOU DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING NANANA."

The green eyed boy shrugged, he wasn't exactly sure he meant to say that anyway, must've been that potion starting to kick in a bit more. "Just saying," he says, though it was muffled under the redhead's hand.

"Well, fun as this all was," Blaise began, "It seems me and Draco have to go. We'll see you after dinner as usual."

"Just ignore the others." The Malfoy heir practically ordered, "They're idiots who don't know what they're talking about."

Harry gave them a thumbs up sign before waving them away. Once the two left, green eyes stared pointedly at Ron until the freckled boy realised his mistake and finally dropped his hand off the other's mouth. "You better have washed that hand before you came here."

"Uhm.. Yes?"

"I'm going to pretend, for the sake of our friendship, you did not hesitate just then to say yes."
"Hey, did you hear?"

"About Potter?"

"Heard he killed that Hufflepuff Finch-Fletchley."

"Fuck, I always knew there was something not right about him."

"I knew he was the Heir, who willingly hangs around Slytherins so much?"

"Do you think it's true about him threatening the Sorting Hat? Remember how it screamed?"

"How could he?"

"Why has none of the professors done something about him?"

"Bastard."

"Wonder what goes on in that sick mind of his?"

Harry could feel the worried looks of Hermione and Ron by his side as he tried to casually swallow down some awful cold porridge. "Don't listen to them Harry." Hermione assured quietly as Ron tried very hard to glare one of the older Gryffindor gossipmongers into submission. He didn't manage to do it of course, the young Weasley looked far too similar to an angry squirrel than anything. But the twins and Percy were doing a fine job in his place.

"Hey Potter!" Someone called behind him, Harry turned around warily just in time to see a Hufflepuff throw some water in his face. "That's for Justin you arse!"

"A hundred points from Hufflepuff!" Percy yelled, with McGonagall and Snape only echoing the sentiment just a second after while Professor Sprout began scolding the student in question.

"Harry, are you okay?" Neville asked worriedly as he passed his clean napkin toward the raven haired boy who took it gratefully.

One of the nearby Gryffindors muttered just loud enough for the table to hear, "Bloody deserved it." And Harry could actually hear the moment when he snapped.

"No." Harry says because he is tired. He is tired and in pain and hungry and he will persevere through this absolute bullshit. "No, I will not let you bloody stupid pricks accuse me of something I clearly didn't do." Harry says, his voice is raspy and soft, faint as crackling autumn leaves. But the steel and angry undertones of something not quite human was enough to stun the whole cohort into silence. With a pained grimace, Harry stepped up onto the Gryffindor table and declared, "I have been stuck between the infirmary and my bedroom for six fucking weeks. I've only just got to the bloody loo unassisted, let alone go around wandering the halls and ordering some fat beast to petrify people. Also, I like Mrs Norris. And Colin. And Headless Nick. Though the Hufflepuff was Zachariah Smith's crony so I hardly care to be honest." Quiet murmurs shook the hall at that. Harry silenced them again with a glare.

"You know what? If I was the Heir, Mr Smith over there would have certainly been in the infirmary ages ago that's for goddamn sure. Seriously Smith. I hope you get violently eaten and then slowly digested." Smith's eyes bulged and his hands made a 'what did I do now' gesture.

"POTTER!" Came the angry scandalised shout of Professor McGonagall. Usually he would bow
down by now, but something about being treated in long term care has just caused him to completely lose it. Dumbledore in the background looks both vaguely amused and having flashbacks of his own firsthand experience with the boy's temper.

"NO!" He shouts, "You do not understand! I haven't had solid food since ever." He bemoans furiously. "Potions are so bloody disgusting and I loathe porridge. Do you wankers understand the hell I am put through?! Nothing but mushy crap and potions for weeks, months?" The students were looking much more sheepish about themselves but still they watched the usually cool headed Potter pretty boy completely lose it on top of a dining table covered in numerous painful looking scars. "I mean, I would happily give you Slytherin's beast on a platter if I was the heir at this point just to get a fucking steak. A cookie. Hell, even an undercooked steamed bit of broccoli would do. I just want something hot and hard in my mouth dammit!"

Vaguely he notes that a lot of the older students and all the teacher's faces were turning quite red. A couple of people are choking and coughing in the background. There is repeated banging on the table. Harry didn't care. He was on a fucking roll here. "I don't even care if it choking me, just shove it in my mouth and let me savour the feeling of something big and heavy in it. If it's too much I won't swallow, just let me suck it for a bit before I spit it out." Harry breathes out heavily, feeling the strain on standing up for too long, but not finding it in himself to mind too much. It's like a small weight had been lifted off. Who knew yelling and venting at a whole school worth of people was so cathartic? He'll have to do it again sometime. Satisfied, the young wizard saviour nodded to himself before carefully stepping back down to the ground, settling himself between Ron and Hermione's gawping persons and gracefuly began eating some more cold oats.

Harry had to admit to himself, as he stumbled on his feet while being led away from the Great Hall by Professor Snape's firm hand, he may have been a little high on potions right now. But he doesn't think there was one word out there he spouted that he didn't regret one bit. Especially the Smith thing. Seriously, he hates that guy worse than the porridge.

"I shall endeavour to get the house elves to whip up something better then." The potions master drawled as he gently pushed Harry toward his bed, and when had they managed to get to his room so quickly?

"Merlin, Harry, clearly I'm not adding extra boiled quail yolk into the immune booster."

Harry just cackled uncontrollably like a mad person hearing the funniest thing in the world before falling onto his bed, already asleep before he even hit the mattress.
The one where Death gets off on a book. That was an unimportant and completely unplanned thing that happened, but it has happened nonetheless.

Alternative title: The one where Death, as well as this story, hits a whole new low.

Harry ended up confined in Snape's quarters for two full weeks before he was deemed okay to go out into the castle again. And only for short walks accompanied by a fifth year or higher. He could've probably managed to get out in ten days if he begged or pleaded nicely enough, but Harry was far too embarrassed about his little 'speech' in the Great Hall even to try.

He doesn't fully remember the whole thing, but he does recall shouting on top of a table and telling everyone he wanted something hot and hard in his mouth.

The boy buries his face in his hands.

"Come now Harry," Argus Filch soothes, passing the boy a cup of tea, "I'm sure it wasn't that bad."

"Oooh, Mr. Filch I am indefinitely sure it was much worse." He bemoaned, "Percy told me he keeps getting pats on the back, and people congratulating him and calling him a 'lucky bastard.' Cedric laughed the whole time he visited me. And Fred won't stop blushing and staring at my mouth when I see him!"

The caretaker took a nice long sip of his tea so to not betray the highly entertained grin on his face. It would be terrible of him to find such amusement from Harry's embarrassment, especially since the first place Harry had requested to visit in the castle was his office. Filch was incredibly touched by that. He truly was. It does not stop this from being any less funny however.

"I'm sure they'll forget about it soon." Filch dismisses, "Those sniveling spoiled brats have attention spans smaller than a flobberworm."

Harry smiled as he drank his tea. "Aw, Argus, you do say some of the nicest things."

Colin Creevley visited him a few days after the Great Hall tantrum incident. Well, Colin Creevey, Mr Filch with Mrs Norris, Justin Finch-Fletchley and any other victims of the Basilisk that Harry does neither care nor remember.

Hey, its not his fault they came on a Tuesday. Luckily they came in the morning when he wasn't feeling the effects too badly, but a bit of memory loss at this point was a given.

Anyway, everyone but poor Headless Nick, who was a ghost and therefore could not swallow shit let alone an antidote, was cured of their petrification. Apparently, Madam Pomfrey is thinking about using a spray bottle for Nick, see if that works, but that requires a bit more mandrake then they currently have and to be perfectly honest, they were kind of saving the extra ingredients for when an actual student gets petrified again.

Priorities.
On the bright side, with even Finch-Fletchley supporting his innocence on the whole Heir front, his name has been pretty much cleared. Though those pictures of him coming out of the shower being spread around were not appreciated. Ta for that Creevley.

That boy was lucky he was cuter than a hamster because Harry is starting to have a sneaking suspicion that kid had a thing for voyeurism. Pervert in the making that kid was. Or worse. Paparazzi.

"Harry, Harry!" Hermione rushed into his room panting breathlessly with Ron not too far behind her. Harry looked up surprised considering the time of day. Snape had gone to a staff meeting, and most of the students by now were snug in their dorm rooms. "Oh good, you're up."

"Sleeping away most of the day does do that for you." The green eyed boy replies. Then his eyes were immediately dragged toward the sight of a little black book in Hermione's hand. "What is that?"

The bushy haired second year grinned excitedly, "We found it by Moaning Myrtle."

"Well I mean, we didn't find it as much as Moaning Myrtle was wailing about it being thrown at her to anyone that would listen." Ron corrected.

"But we were the first to search for it." Hermione argued, "And therefore locating the notebook counts as us finding it." She turns to Harry expectantly waiting for the only other intelligent human to speak up for her.

Harry shrugged, "Sounds like Moaning Myrtle technically found it."

"Ooh, what good are you?" She scowls half-heartedly as the two boys laugh.

"Hey, don't you have classes to get to?" The green eyed boy asks curiously, it is the middle of the day and barely anyone but Filch or Snape visits him during this time. Hagrid sometimes comes too but he's too big to come into his room which is awkward for everyone involved. "Not that I'm not pleased but, seriously, you should probably leave."

"Yeah, yeah, eager already to shoo us off mate?" Ron grinned easily, earning a pout from the other boy.

"You know I didn't mean that."

"Suuuuure."

Harry stuck his tongue out childishly. Hermione giggled as Ron mirrored Harry's display. In defiance, Harry tried to push his tongue out farther, the Weasley boy did the same, and the bushy haired girl tried to hide her growing entertainment by feigning indignity at 'dumb boys.'

"Am I interrupting something?" A deep and familiar voice questioned dryly. The redhead spun around so fast at the voice he tripped over his own feet and oh so gracefully falling on his behind on the floor. Hermione had to actually slap her mouth to confine her hysterically high-pitched giggle.

Harry didn't even bother trying to. "Hello, Professor Snape." He greeted between fits of laughter and coughing.

Professor Snape watched the trio with wry, amusement, dark eyes staring almost unblinkingly as he looked down at them and his lips pursed ever so slightly in an upwards direction. Harry thought the man looked quite dashing, all relaxed and carefree like that, especially with the way his long body
stretched as he leaned against the doorway. "Potter, tell your… friends they need to head to their classes now, I'll give you a few minutes."

The green eyed child smiled and waved the older man off, "Of course Se- Professor Snape."

Snape nodded acknowledging the temporary farewell and strode out of the room. Once he had left, immediately Ron scrambled up from his, frankly embarrassing, position on the ground to look at Harry with a manic look in his eye.

"Cripes! I thought that man was gonna deduct so many points off Gryffindor that the red would leave my hair!"

"Or you know, something much less dramatic like insult you." Hermione deadpanned.

Harry blinked. "What are you talking about? Professor Snape wasn't mad."

"Mad? He looked like he was thinking about slicing me into one of his potions ingredients Harry!" The other boy exaggerated, "He looked livid."

"Professor Snape did look pretty unhappy Harry." The girl supported as Ron grumbled about that being an understatement.

"I think it's you two that are mad," Harry laughed, "Snape was smiling." He explained.

The two Gryffindors goggled at him.

"Mate." Ron whined, "Why are you so bloody weird with your taste in men? Why Percy? Why Snape? If you tell me Draco has pretty eyes I'll shoot the killing curse at myself I will."

Hermione looked torn between laughing and following her redheaded friend's example. Upon looking at Harry's pleading expression to get Ron to stop bemoaning Harry's apparent tastes in people she shrugs in a very un-Hermione like manner. "Ron's not wrong, you do have a weird Snape thing."

"I do NOT have a-"

"No, yes, you totally do." Ron interrupted. "Do not deny it mate, 'mione told me denial ain't just a river in Egypt."

"Hermione you suck."

"Come on Harry, just man up," Hermione said very sternly and not at all amusedly.

Harry sighed exasperatedly, ignoring the slight buzzing heat on the tips of his ears he admits, "Maybe I have a little, tiny thing."

Hermione made a sound that could only be described to share the same pitch as a dying pig, but far happier. Ron made a puking sound with all the necessary hand gestures to emphasize this. Harry is not particularly impressed with either reaction.

"Ron, you suck too."

Ron put his hands up in the air in surrender, "Woah, hey, I'm happy that you could admit I'm right don't get me wrong mate. Am I happy that it is now official you have a weird Snape thing? No, ick, Merlin no."

"But am I happy this isn't a weird Percy thing? Extremely," He smiled reassuringly at his best friend who gave a tentative smile in return, "because no offense, you two were absolutely disgusting and I did not need to know Percy had interests other than being a prefect and working in the Ministry."

"Aaaand, now you have stopped being cute."

"Aw shucks you say the nicest things."

They all pause for a bit, their playful banter lulled into a temporary silence as they just enjoy each others company. Harry's eyes eventually slid back to the book in Hermione's hand, green eyes glowing faintly as they rested on the innocent looking black cover. Hermione of course noticed and handed it over easily.

"I know how unfair I was being, taking charge and making plans without you." She apologizes genuinely, "I-I guess I was still kind of jealous of you, but then you got seriously hurt! And there's nothing I can do to take that back.. So I swear, seriously swear, I'm never going to do that again Harry!" Hermione starts tearing up again, but her face is set and determined.

Frankly, Harry was a little shocked at the outburst. Honestly, he expected such character development and maturity from her sometime in at least their fourth year. Shows what he knows on the mindset of the human child. "Thanks, Hermione." He replies gratefully because he was surely not going to complain about the girl being less brash. "I appreciate you being so forthright with me."

"Friends?" Hermione asks tentatively because despite everything Harry guesses she is still the insecure bookworm she had been before Hogwarts.

Harry smiled, "Friends." He reaffirmed.

The bushy haired girl gives the Potter heir a delicate but no less smooshing hug, as Ron huffs annoyed as he stands in the background. "What am I? Chopped liver?"

"Awww, Ron come join us in our friendship hug!" Hermione beckoned.

"Yes. Our.. hug of friendship would not be complete without you." Harry says dryly, clearly not enjoying the embrace as much as the other. The visible discomfort of his friend seemed to be the thing that finally won the grumbling redhead over, and Ron too joined the group hug.

They hugged for a bit longer until Harry decided enough was enough. "You know," he says nonchalantly, "Draco's eyes do have a certain darling quality to them."

"Aaaand moment ruined," Ron says, dropping his arms faster than if he had been holding Draco himself in his arms.

"Well we do have to go anyway," Hermione chuckled at the smug self-satisfaction radiating off Harry. "So, fair warning, this notebook has some.. interesting quirks Harry, and to be frank, Ron and I aren't particularly sure what to do with it. Honestly, it seems harmless in itself, but I figured you would know what's up."

The green ey ed boy brushed the spine of the little book reverently with his fingertips; he can feel the familiar hum of a soul-tickling his fingertips. It feels rather... amazing. "And I am so glad you thought so." He breathed.

"Dude you sound like what you sound like when you swoon over Snape, or Percy when you were
dating Percy," Ron said, a little grossed out.

"Or how ruggedly muscled the centaurs are," Hermione added.

"Or that one horrible time you insisted to me how gorgeous Mr. Malfoy and his hair was." Ron gave a full body shudder at that memory.

"You were very into his hair." Hermione supplied unhelpfully. "And let's not forget the time when he started describing gourmet French food to the House elves."

"It is an actual bloody wonder how there are people out there who were surprised you were gay mate."

"I don't want to impose stereotypes Harry but, despite us being twelve, you are extremely gay."

"Super gay."

"Your kind of a pervert actually."

"A-class one considering your... range of tastes."

"Haha, that is SO tru-"

"Okay, OKAY, I got it!" Harry snapped irritated. "Don't put a label on it or anything, Jesus Christ guys."

The two Gryffindors just laughed, as Harry scowled. Friends, he had found, were very complex relationships that basically boiled down to insulting and being insulted. Harry is not exactly unhappy at this revelation, but he would appreciate it if he wasn't on the end spectrum of the insulted quite so much.

Once Snape came to drag Ron and Hermione away, Harry turned his attentions back to what had caught them in the first place.

"Now that they are finally gone it's just you and me, Mr. Riddle." Harry purrs as he cracks open the worn book. On the first page, in smudged ink was T. M. Riddle damningly written there, confirming his thoughts. The boy traced the slanted handwriting, closing his eyes as he shuddered under the pure, electrifyingly wonderful sensation of Mr. Riddle's soul that was practically soaked in each page, masterfully held together with powerful magic.

"Fuck this is gorgeous." Harry practically moaned, he is actually salivating thinking what the man's, no, the teenager's, soul must taste like. He can feel how much stronger it is compared to the Dark Lord of the present, how much more whole. God, if this Tom tastes half as good as he feels...

Young hands flip to the next page, and it seems young Tom Riddle has felt what he is feeling right now because already words are forming onto the blank paper.

'Who is this? What are you doing to me?!'  

Harry licks his lips in anticipation; he is strangely excited. It's an odd state he is in, somewhere between curious fascination from an entirely objective view and an outright mix of arousal and gluttony. The entity does not even stop to think as he summons an inked quill and begins writing.

'Hello Mr. Tom Riddle, I go by many names, but you may call me Harry Potter.'
'What are you doing to me? How do you know my name?'

God, teenage Riddle was so cute. Harry could feel the panic emanating from the page.

'Why I am merely touching your soul Mr. Riddle. Your beautifully bastardized shard of your soul. Does it not feel good?'

Tom does not answer back for a while, and Harry waits patiently for him to figure out what to say. Once in a while he will stroke the page, with a finger, with his whole hand outspread, once nuzzling his cheek on the flat surface, the sensation he gets is indescribably pleasurable and Harry finds it hard pressed for him to stop.

If this is what it feels like when people tear their souls and shove them into things, he thinks it is a pity he had not encouraged this sooner. This is absolutely amazing. He wants one in pillow form.

Harry wonders if there is something inherently wrong with him that he finds the idea so arousing.

He muses on his newfound kink for a bit until he finally notices black ink writing itself out on the paper below him.

'It does not feel.. bad per say.'

'If it is half as good as it is for me Mr. Riddle, I should hope not.'

'You... feel it too?'

Slyly and fuelled with the confidence that no one could see him doing something so insane, Harry took the notebook and brushed his lips against the cover, sighing as pleasure buzzed against his sensitive skin. He feels it rush through his veins and the whites of his eyes gray as the control he so fastidiously holds, loosens in the luxurious comfort that washes over him. Faintly, Harry could just taste a shadow of something cool and fresh, minty even, with just a hint of something spicier, earthier, bitter.

Fuck, the green eyed being did not realize how much he desired such a flavor until now. It's enough to get his meat suit practically bursting at the seams with his excitement, his blunt human teeth sharpening and the ends of his hair blurring into a more shadowy form.

'Harry... you feel so good, so intense... It has been so long, Merlin you cannot even imagine..' The words trailed off into illegibly flustered scribbles.

And Harry could indeed imagine, could empathize with Mr. Riddle's young soul.

Harry moaned as he felt the Tom's cracked soul in the book almost burn under his fingertips with ecstasy, a feedback loop had been formed as each other's newfound sensitivity to each other grew in response to the other's ecstasy. The green eyed wizard's forehead was crackling with a fervor, pulsating to the beat of his human heart. He's vaguely aware of his already very receptive body responding to the sensations, his lower region already hard and sensitive as he instinctively pressed himself harder into the bed he now laid on.

Jesus, he really was kind of a freaking pervert.

The green eyed entity was glad the Real Harry Potter wasn't somewhere in Heaven watching this because he feels like the Real Harry Potter would not appreciate what weird shit he has been getting up to in his body. Well, it wasn't like it was the entity's fault that he died- oh, wait. Shit. Now he actually did feel a little bad.
With far more self-restraint than Harry thought he currently possessed, Harry pushed the book off the bed and away from his tempted reach. Feeling the foggy haze of desire lessen from his mind, the young wizard groaned and buried his face into his pillow. Unable to help himself, he reached down and quickly stroked himself to completion, practically screaming into the pillow as he came.

As Harry felt the high leave him, and the self-loathing settle neatly under his skin, a firm knock on the door was made. The green eyed boy almost fell off his bed at the unexpected noise, but instead managed to scrabble at the mattress just in time to prevent such a fate. "Uh, yes?" Harry called out in a slightly high pitched voice.

"Harry?" Snape's head poked through the door, his face was flushed faintly like the older man had run somewhere, "Are you.. good?"

The younger of the two wiped the sheen of sweat on his forehead and gave a shaky smile. Was he quivering? Because he feels like half melted custard right now. "Ah, yeah I'm good. Totally, good. I was just reading."

"Reading." The potions master repeated doubtfully.

"I read," Harry replied defensively, guilt and the fear of being caught sparking irritation inside of him. In a manner that he hoped was casual, Harry slowly pulled up the blanket to further cover himself and the mess he had made in his pants. "It's not like I have much else to do." And okay maybe that sounded a little too sour.

"What book?"

"Something Hermione passed to me," Harry said easily, then just as casually as before, which is to say probably not at all casually, he pushed a pillow off the bed to hide Mr. Riddle's papery form from the professor. Of course, being too busy trying to successfully cover the book, Harry missed the way the Head of Slytherin tracked his movements.

"Granger gave you this.. book?" And now it was Snape sounding a little strangled.

The young wizard stared down at the floor, contemplatively wondering if Snape could see the book. No, it looks pretty well smothered by the pillow. "She said that there was some.. interests that we may both share in there." He mumbled absentmindedly.

"Merlin," Snape muttered. And no, Harry wasn't imagining that blush reddening further on the the professor's face. "Well, lunch is ready, so, uh." The man trailed off uncertainly.

"I'll get myself ready," Harry assured, "I'm just going to take a quick shower if that's alright? I'm feeling a little sticky from," the wizard savior blushed as he realized what exactly he was so sticky for, "reading." He finished lamely.

"Reading." Professor Snape repeated again like he wanted to re-emphasize how unbelievably dumb the excuse sounded. Harry wasn't sure what the professor wanted from him, but the man would have to threaten him with actual painful evisceration before he admitted the truth to what he had just been doing.

Besides, like trying to explain he had been getting his rocks off by feeling up a magically possessed book that had half a soul of the current Dark Lord would have gone so well.

Christ his life. No wonder he is the entity of all things against it because he is so very shit at it.

"Reading," Harry says again firmly, like he really, seriously means it. Even though he does not.
Harry isn't sure he can take himself seriously after this particular new low he has now set himself.

The potions master stares at Harry like somehow that could help uncover the truth. "I.. see." Clearly, he does not. "Well I'll tell the house elves to keep it warm, I'll be waiting outside."

"Thanks, Severus," Harry demurred. There is something about the older man taking such sweet care of him that makes him feel like there are tiny little fingers tinkling the inside of his throat. It's embarrassing how much he enjoys the attention like he is something precious and breakable. Usually, he's the doting one.

Severus smiled, much more open and fond then the one in the presence of his Gryffindor friends. The man really does look quite dashing like that, maybe not objectively handsome.. but dashing. "No problem. Oh, and Harry?" The smile turns into an almost fiendish smirk. Harry shifts his legs and presses his hands onto his lap, because that smirk does things to him. Things. "Do be careful to be more quiet during your, ah, reading time."

Immediately the young wizard finds his pale face once again set aflame in mortification. Professor Snape, because at heart, that man is a bastard, chuckles at his visible discomfort and leaves. Harry buries his face again into the pillow, this time in hopes of suffocating himself.

---

Dear Death,

I must say I've seen people getting off to books, but you certainly put that on a whole new level.

Knowledge

Harry now wears gloves when writing with Mr. Riddle.

---

Dearest Death,

Sorry, we haven't written for so long, we've all been a bit.. booked up.

While we draw a blank about what to say about your latest publication, know that it is not like we can judge what you do under the covers... or between them. Though it was quite a surprise how your pamphlet turned so quickly into a hardcover if you know what we mean. (You know what we mean.)

Hopefully, this will not escalate to the point you will be making the beast with two paperbacks with the diary. Unless you were planning to overthrow Chaos' running championship title of finding the weirdest thing to have sex with.

Either way no matter what you do this shall always be a bestseller in our fondest memories.

Anyway, we better book it.

Life, Fate, Love and Magic

---

Harry occasionally does not wear the gloves though. He refuses to talk about those times. Chaos fucked a blender- with the power on, compared to that he was still the normal one.

He was.
Dear brother,

When we hoped you would live this life to the fullest, this was not exactly what we envisioned. To each and their own, we guess.

Space and Time.

Death,

HAHAHAHAOHGODSHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAI'MDYINGHAHAHAHAHAHA

Chaos

"Harry, are you really a Hogwarts student?"

"Of course I am Mr Riddle."

"How may times have I told you to call me Tom?"

"Six times give or take."

"And yet you still don't."

"You truly are a genius Tom; it is not a wonder you were one of the top students in your time."

"It is not a wonder that someone threw boiling potion in your face."

"Hahaha for your information Mr. Riddle, if anyone were going to throw potion in my face it would be because they were jealous of my devastatingly handsome looks than any minor defect in personality."

"You are lucky I have no eyes or concept of vision because if I did you would be on the brunt of some truly scathing comments about your appearance."

"More like you would be too speechless at my beauty."

"You are incorrigible."

"You have to admit; I must be better company than your last few owners."

"...

Valentine's day is here.

"Oh, Mr. Riddle you should see Hogwarts now. It's absolutely tragic."

"What, why?"

"She has been violated. With diapered dwarves wearing wings."
'...I'm sorry, what?'

'DIAPERED DWARVES WITH WINGS AND ROSES HAVE TAINTED HOGWARTS' SACRED PASSAGES.'

'Harry I am sorry but what the absolut.-'

"Harry, are you still writing in that diary?" Draco drawled, rudely closing the notebook while Harry was still reading. "You know it's super weird how you even have special gloves to write in that thing?"

"Draco, are you still unable to make a proper observation?" Harry mimicked, dropping Mr. Riddle into one of his expandable pockets in his robe and peeling off his gloves. "Anyway, what's all this then? I stay away from all of you for a week, and this happens." The green eyed wizard waved spastically at the pink confetti, the gaudy heart-snapped decorations, the flower petals and the grumpy winged dwarves. Oh my god the dwarves.

The Malfoy heir scowled. "Lockhart." Is his explanation, and it's all the blonde really needs because Harry nods his head understandingly. "Apparently it's his way of expressing joy for the recovered victims of Slytherin's beast."

"Not like he's acknowledged them once other than to get a photo with them," Blaise says as he moves to sit next to Harry, Crabbe, and Goyle following behind to sit on the other side of Draco.

"We talking about Lockhart?" Theodore Nott spoke up opposite them, "Because I have some words to say about him, I mean- oh, hey Harry, you're looking less terrible."

"You know what, I'm going to take that as a compliment," Harry says prissily making the other Slytherins laugh.

"Seriously though, we have missed you, Potter, Draco's been a right prick without you."

Harry hummed thoughtfully as Draco spluttered indignantly, "Isn't he always?" He asks cheekily. "Harry!" The blonde protests, giving a half-hearted slap to the other boy's head as punishment. Harry laughed loudly before his throat caught on air and he started coughing again.

"You okay?" Goyle grunted out, and everyone was looking at him with worried eyes. The green eyes savior flushed under the scrutiny.

"I'm all right." He croaks out. And it was true. Yeah, he still gets stiff from pain and his throat isn't exactly the definition of 'healthy', but at least he no longer looks like a walking mummy, rotting flesh and all. His scars are faint and pastel pink, and he looks more like a shattered porcelain doll put together than anything truly horrendous. "Seriously guys, I'm all right." He insists.

"If you say so," Blaise says doubtfully, luckily, or unluckily, the conversation ended as Lockhart wearing fluorescent pink robes, stood up from his seat and waved for silence.

Professor McGonagall and Professor Snape were sitting next to the blonde defense professor. On a not so unrelated note, Professor McGonagall and Professor Snape also looked like they were very close to having an aneurysm or at least valiantly trying to fight some deep-seated homicidal rage. Very deep-seated stuff. Like the anger has been building, festering for the last yea- huh.

"Happy Valentine's Day everyone!" Lockhart yelled with a beaming smile. "Let it be known that the festivities was the result of my, Gilderoy Lockhart's, own design. As a celebration of love, I would
like to express my fondness for the lovely Madam Pomphrey and Professor Snape for finally taking their time to make an antidote for the petrifications—though it would have probably happened much faster if I had a hand in it."

And wow, was that goblet in the potions master's hand actually cracking?

"Also may I thank the forty-six people who have so far sent me cards!"

"That idiot got forty-six valentine cards?" Harry gaped.

"Forty-six people really sent that idiot cards?" Draco said disgustedly.

"Let's not forget the friendly, card-carrying cupids!" Lockhart added, gesturing to some very unfriendly looking dwarves that were wandering the hall. None of them have even gotten close to Harry oddly enough, though it did make sense. Harry could taste their shame from across the room. "They shall be puttering around school today delivering your valentines! But don't stop the fun there—why not get Professor Snape to show you how to whip up a Love Potion? Professor Flitwick might be able to teach you some.. enhancing charms, the sly old dog!"

The half goblin teacher looked down at his feet, face red and embarrassed. Snape was just glaring furiously at everyone, just daring them to ask him for his help to make a love potion.

"Harry, please tell me Granger was not one of those forty-six." Draco murmurs. Harry groans. "God, I didn't even think about that!"

For the rest of the day, with the chagrin of the professors, winged dwarves fluttered in and out of the classes, handing out valentines gifts and cards and roses to blushing, flattered students as the secretly jealous ones watched. And the not so secretly jealous ones.

"This is the worst first day of class." Harry groused as he watches Smith get his third Valentine card today. The boy had almost forgotten that he was technically supposed to be a Ravenclaw this term, and Ravenclaw teams up with Hufflepuff, meaning constant Smith. Ugh. And he's not even that close to any of the Ravenclaws either.

"I'm surprised you haven't got any yet Potter." Justin Finch-Fletchley commented. Apparently saving the Hufflepuff from his petrified fate had unlocked the boy's friendship with him, hence the sitting next to each other thing. And the constant staring at his face. And the weird lack of personal boundaries. Were all Hufflepuffs this friendly? Cedric is pretty touchy-feely too now that Harry thinks about it, but he's more of an asshole about it. Not that anyone believes him when he says that.

"Yeah Potter," Michael Corner, a friendly enough Ravenclaw pretty boy teased, his own little pile of valentines gifts stacked neatly beside him, "I mean, despite you being horribly maimed and scarred, I know for a fact you were still considered better looking than Smith of all people."

"Aw." Harry says, touched, "I think you're my new favourite Ravenclaw."

"Of course I am." Corner says confidently, he flips his hair pointedly, and to be fair, it is very nice hair. Not Lucius Malfoy hair, but the lovely chestnut curls on Michael Corner's head cut a pretty close second on 'Hair Harry would like to grab on'. "I mean, look at me."

Harry laughed softly, "Okay, now you are definitely my favorite Ravenclaw."
"Oi, what about me?" Justin protested.

"You just switched sides from Smith to me." Harry explains like he was the professor in this class. It's Charms anyway, Mr Flitwick adores him enough to ignore when he's not paying attention this once. "Michael over here has not previously had or been associated with someone who has openly antagonized me while also sharing my sentiments that Smith is a tool."

"Massive tool." Corner agreed.

"You on the other hand, once looked me in the eyes in the hallway and literally ran the other direction. Our friendship levels are not the highest Finch-Fletchley. You could almost say they are basement level."

"Oh." The Hufflepuff says dejectedly. And fuck, that boy has brought out a truly devastating facial expression onto his face.

"Woah, hey," Harry says because he is a pushover and that face. Jesus Christ, Harry has a cute face, and he knows how to use it well but this, this was like some secret natural ability like being a shapeshifter or that thrill thing vampires can do. "I mean, you are nice enough now. Our friendship levels are like second floor high now at least!"

"So we are friends now?"

"Not good ones." Harry says, "But yes. We are."

Justin beamed, "I'll take it."

Green eyes squinted at the Hufflepuff. "You, you are surprisingly resilient huh."

"Hufflepuff." Corner and Finch-Fletchley say in unison like it explains everything. It doesn't. Not really. But once Harry gets used to the two Houses he hopes he will.

It happens near the end of the day. They had Transfiguration. Pretty much every student had abandoned doing any real schoolwork today, much to the consternation of every actual professor teaching.

Professor McGonagall looked ready to scream when four dwarves with a staggering amount of valentines gifts and cards waddled into the class. "Merlin and Morgana, are you serious?" She asks to a passing dwarf who shrugs. "How many could possibly be left?!"

The dwarves walk around listlessly at the edges, only handing a few roses and small cards out, the majority of their gifts still in their grasp. As time passes on and the dwarves dawdled further, the second year students become even more intrigued in the recipient to the remaining gifts. Even McGonagall looks like she has become reluctantly interested as the minutes passed on. It's not like anyone was paying attention to her anyway.

Finally, finally, the dwarves were finishing circling like blind vultures and started heading toward one specific direction with expressions similar to soldiers heading into carnage. Harry watches them like a lion. Lazily and with confident patience.

"Y-You are Mr Harry Potter?" The first and bravest one spoke up, not looking at glowing green eyes and trying his hardest in hiding his diapered form from the gaze.

"I am." He confirms, earning some excited mutterings and 'eeps' from the creatures. Clearly, they
were not comfortable with wearing such humiliating attire in his presence. Like having to meet the English queen in just pantyhose and a fireman's hat. Harry was sympathetic. The one time he had been forced into diapers it had been absolutely humiliating. And he'd been a baby at that time, which is a totally appropriate time for wearing diapers. Anyway. "Are those for me?"

Almost shyly the dwarves nodded, holding up the large amounts of cards and roses and even a nice little heart pillow. Harry liked the heart pillow a lot. Mostly because it was bloody friggin soft as a marshmallow. His hand does not leave the pillow, squeezing the fluffed up thing absentmindedly as he smiles and thanks the dwarves while carefully not acknowledging their attire. The dwarves looked partly relieved and partly awed once they left the classroom, Harry barely noticed, too enraptured by the pillow.

He wants to forever have this hypersensitive sense of touch if it meant he could experience more amazing shit like this.

"Good going Potter," Michael Corner praised with a raised brow, clearly admiring the sheer size of the wizard saviour's stack of gifts. "Clearly you've got a fanbase."

"Psh, not like that was up for debate," Finch-Fletchley rolls his eyes, "Even Smith knows your popular, he complains about it all the time in his group." The Hufflepuff coughs awkwardly, "I.. may have said some stuff about you back then that insinuated stuff."

"Insinuated stuff." Harry repeats. "What stuff?"

Justin looked at the desk abashed, "Well, like, I dunno, things about your personality and that you might be kind of stuck up or somethin- in my defence!" He quickly amended once he caught sight of Harry's bemused if slightly offended expression, "In my defence, I did not know you that well and I could not stand listening to Smith make backhanded compliments about how pretty you looked and how you were probably a girl."

"Smith thinks I'm pretty?"

Michael stared at Harry, "Really? Not the part about you looking like a girl?"

Harry shrugged, "Well I am unbothered by it because I know for a fact I do not look like a girl." The raven haired boy paused as he took in his new friends' uncomfortable expressions and shifting eyes. "I do not look like a girl, right? Right?"

"You kind of look like one of my porcelain dolls when my sister mangled their hair with her scissors." Su Lin says behind them.

"Okay, Su? Thank you for your input but let us all draw the line at not criticising my hair." Harry insisted because that was uncalled for. His hair was a result of a very unfortunate and excruciating potions accident and should not be targeted against. Also, his hair still looks frigging good thanks.

Justin shrugged, "She's not wrong Potter," He supported, giving Su an exaggerated wink. The Ravenclaw girl giggled at that. "You are quite.. petite."

"If you put on some lipstick I swear, I wouldn't be able to tell." Michael admitted.

The green eyed, apparently feminine looking, wizard looked at all of them with suitable outrage. "That is not true!" He hisses. The wizards and witch all look back with incredibly irritating pity in their eyes.

"Harry, I guarantee that out of that frankly impressive bunch of valentines shit, seventy-five percent
of that is from dudes."

"You are fucking on." Harry declares heatedly because while he knows fully well that looks are not everything… He does not look like a fucking girl okay? It's a pride thing. And also a 'I am the Lord of Darkness and Death, fear me' thing. "Also, just because they're from guys doesn't necessarily mean they like me because I look like a girl. That is not how homosexuality works."

Michael, Justin and Su Lin look at each other in silent conversation. The raven haired boy is instantly resentful at the fact this sudden close bond they share is over his questionable masculinity. Finally the Chinese witch nods in acquiescence. "Sounds fair, okay, then we only count wizards that we know are not predominantly gay."

"And any we aren't sure of count as not gay." Justin supplied because he was a sneaky snake of a Hufflepuff. Harry breathed out a few particular curses under his breath but accepted the conditions.

In the end, he had gotten seventeen female admirers. Seventeen out of sixty-three. One of the seventeen being from Ginny Weasley which he is going to assume was platonic considering every other Weasley he knew had put in a Valentines bar, Ron. Another was a fourth year Slytherin who is apparently quite interested in feeding him sweets and cuddling him by the fire like a teddy bear, hence the teddy bear gift set with a lovely pink bow around its neck. But most of them ended up being not even proper valentines gifts. Mainly just fanfiction of him paired with various wizards and two rather fantastic artworks of him.

"You have to admit; these are pretty good," Justin says as he objectively admires the way an older looking Harry has been artistically depicted, draped across a griffon with only angles and lighting and the griffon itself protecting his unclothed modesty. Michael whistles lowly, as he admires the painting far less objectively, "Damn Harry, if that's how you end up in four years I might send you a valentine too."

"You're into guys?" Justin questioned, to which the Ravenclaw answered with a shrug, "I dunno. I'm like twelve, we can't all be secure in their identity like Potter is.. Also, it helps painting Potter could still pass off as female."

"Your figure is quite curved for a supposed teenage boy in this." Su Lin observed with a wicked grin, and really, for someone, Harry barely knows, the young witch was being awfully familiar with him. Though that could be said the same with the other two.

Harry groaned, "You know what?" He says exasperated, "This tentative bond of friendship we have started growing together? Tis gone."

"Aw no."

"Don't be like that."

"It ain't our fault you're so darn pretty."

The boy blinked his green eyes. "Wait. This is just because I'm too pretty?"

Su Lin reaches out over her desk just to hit the wizard saviour's head.

"Ow! Hey! I need the ego boost right now."

"Potter we've all in some form overhead a few of your conversations. You, Malfoy, Smith and Corner are the four most narcissistic wizards in our year, though you are the most likable admittedly."
Michael Corner did not look impressed. "Wait. What?"

Justin looked at the other with a smirk, "Come on Corner, come on."

The Ravenclaw boy looks uncomprehending, "What."

"Your hair for starters." Harry points out gleefully, eager for the attention to be moved away from himself. "And you're a flirter."

"Oh, am I?" Michael flirts, leaning into the other boy's space and batting his eyelashes.

"I think you are," Harry purrs back as he challengingly moves even closer to the handsome young Ravenclaw's face. Justin makes a disgusted noise in the background which is immediately shushed by Su Lin and a bunch of other people. Wait. How many people are watching this?

Green eyes flicker back to realize that the trio has effectively caught the attention of the majority of the classroom, professor included. Smith in the corner with his cronies looked bright red and ready to pitch an absolutely spectacular fit. Probably because of all the insults being casually and dismissively being hurled his way. "Um, don't we all have some Transfiguration to learn?" He asks pointedly while his face slowly starts burning like the sun.

"Class ended two minutes ago," McGonagall replies across the room calmly. "And frankly, we weren't learning anything that interesting today anyway."

Harry closes his eyes and bangs his head on his table. He gets a paper cut on his cheek from a painfully glittery card. Maybe it'll get infected, and he'll be forced to stay in Snape's quarters for the rest of his life. He can dream.

"So Potter's got quite the amount of admirers if his Valentines gifts are any indication."

Professor Snape slammed the ink pot he had been holding against the desk. Some black ink sloshed over the edge of the container and soaked a corner of one of his students' test papers. At a quick glance, Snape immediately dismisses the resulting mess. It's only the young Weasley boy's work if anything the stains might've actually improved the quality of his answers. "Yes." He grits out, pretending to be annoyed at the ink staining anyway. "I have noticed the obnoxiously pink assemblage desecrating the top of my dining table."

Professor McGonagall looked down at him, unimpressed by the scathingly dry tone. "And I see you are clearly unaffected by that."

"Clearly."

The Gryffindor Head of House watched him blandly as the wizard rather sulkily cleared away his spilled ink with a muttered cleaning charm. Sometimes McGonagall wondered if the other man had ever progressed from the state of 'angst-ridden teenager' to 'adult.' It would certainly explain a lot. "You know Severus, I was kind of expecting some conversation when I came all the way down here."

"Sorry to disappoint then." The man grunted before busying himself with inconsequential things in a pathetic attempt to show how busy he wasn't.

McGonagall let him have a few seconds of being a petulant child before commenting airily, "Did you hear that someone actually got Potter some women's underwear for him?"
"Lies, the most inappropriate thing I found was some blasted artworks." Snape immediately said before cursing at his slip up. "That's not what-

"Severus." The Transfigurations professor interrupted in a mix of disappointment and exasperated fondness, "Please do not even try with me."

Snape closes his mouth, and his excuses, with a sharp click of the jaw. Inwardly the witch hides a grin at the easy compliance. Yup, still got it. "Now, tell me about what you got Potter for Valentines."

The potions master choked, his face shocked and wide eyed. "E-excuse me, Minerva?"

McGonagall looked just as surprised as the other. "You mean you haven't got Potter a present?"

"You have?!"

"Of course I have!" The witch snapped annoyed, "Flius has too by the way, and Argus, and Albus, and-

"How did I not know about this?" Severus demanded, there is a faint sheen of panic in his eyes that made him almost look manic, "Seriously, when was this decided and why am I the last to know?"

"We never planned an official thing, Severus." McGonagall replied patiently, "I wanted to get the boy something nice considering all the... 'extra credit' I've been assigning him, and when I told this to Aurora, she thought she should do the same. Then Flius jumped on board. And then it turns out Argus was going to invite Potter for brownies or something because he had some new exotic rose tea which was valentines day themed. And it just became a 'thing.'"

"A thing," Snape repeated.

"A thing." She confirmed. "I just assumed you already had something sorted considering…"

"Considering?" The Slytherin prompted challengingly, his tone just daring her to finish that sentence upon threat of death.

McGonagall was honestly puzzled at the tone, she expected defensiveness on the topic, but this reaction seemed a bit over the top. Snape seemed suddenly ready to lash out and whip his wand out against her. "Well, considering Potter's infatuation with you of course."

Snape stared at her.

She stared back.

"What."

"Oh, you cannot possibly be so blind." She sighed, "No of course you are."

"Minerva, I swear to Morgana, if you are pulling my wand I will-"

"Seriously Severus, Ron Weasley figured it out before you. To be fair, the boy figured it out before me too which is something I will never willingly repeat again, not that I'm saying the boy's an idiot but-"

"-hex you to kingdom come-"

"-he isn't exactly the fastest broom-"
"-because what you are saying is ridiculous and-"

"-on the Quidditch field, if you know what I mean."

"No, I do not know what you mean! You are speaking nonsense words woman!" Snape snapped irritatedly, "Potter is not enamored with me, nor am I with him!"

McGonagall gave him a strange look. "I never said anything about you being infatuated with the boy Severus."

The potions master flushed, "Ahem, yes, well, I thought you did." He said defensively, pointedly looking at his desk and away from her far too suspicious gaze. "My point still stands."

The older woman shook her head despairingly, "Wizards." She says like that meant something, and then she left the room. Not that Snape noticed. He was far too busy trying to figure out what sort of Valentine's gift he should get Harry.

'Harry, I wish I had eyes to behold what beauty you must have to garner so much interest.'

Harry rolled his eyes at the sheer honey-coated fakery being written down. The young Mr. Riddle had somehow got it into his nonexistent head that seduction would be the best way to.. well Harry wasn't completely sure what the Horcrux wanted to accomplish actually. He would like to think that they were already on a somewhat friendly status, and he knows Tom has been dropping a lot of hints about Slytherin's heir and his past at Hogwarts which means either Tom Riddle is the only teenager in existence that enjoys sharing every little emotion and memory of his school days or he is leading up to something.

Harry's going to say it's the latter. Sneaky little snake that Mr. Riddle is, but then again, he's not going to lie and say he doesn't hate it. He's fucked professional serial killers, and he once kept the soul of Hitler in his office, it's not exactly like liars, and shitty attempts at conning him for something was a deal-breaker. The half-soul diary thing was more of a concern than anything else. And what a teenaged Riddle considers proper seduction.

'I'm sure those eyes sparkle like emeralds in the sunlight and that your smile shines just as bright.'

Because seriously? He knows the young Dark Lord has no eyes, ears, mouth or literally any other physical body part but Harry knows he has a personality. Use it for god's sakes.

'Please stop Mr. Riddle. I'm begging you.' He writes.

'But yo-' The words do not finish because Harry blots them out with black ink and hastily writes underneath it, 'NO.'

There's a pause before Tom wrote again, and this time Harry could actually feel the sulkiness from each letter being transcribed onto the page.

'Is there a reason you do not appreciate my advances?'

'You are a book for one.' The boy immediately responds, because that is an important thing to point out, 'But for the most part, your attempt at advancing is... not great? No offense.'

'Offence duly taken.'

'Aw, and there's the Mr. Riddle I would accept advances from.'
'I do not understand.'

'You don't have to.' Harry answers primly, 'I just prefer my men with some backbone. Sass. Flavor.'

'Flavor?'

'Did I say flavor? I, uh, mean taste. As in, good taste. Not what they tasted like.'

There is another extended pause. It grew from seconds to minutes, and the entity began to feel his human body sweating with anxiety. With a quick scrawl, he added,

'I don't eat my suitors, I swear.' Sometimes he just swallowed them whole or sucked them like the lolly part of the lollipop. Simply just eating could be so dull after a while.

Nothing happens for a moment, a heartbeat, but then the diary... flutters. Just a little. Enough for it's pages to jitter and for Harry to realize it's laughter. Tom Riddle is laughing, and it brings a smile to his face inadvertently as well.

'You are..' the words scribble out, far less neat than Riddle's usual calligraphy, 'The most unique individual. I wish we could have met when I still had a body.'

Harry cannot help but blush at the simple and awkwardly honest compliment. Mr. Riddle wasn't like this before. Mr. Riddle was sharp and sarcastically witty and with a twisted shard of a soul redder than blood and tinted in the ash of some of the darkest magics. Mr. Riddle isn't so sweet and passionate and… inexperienced.

It is, well, Harry isn't exactly sure why he finds himself so endeared by this new side of the other.

He does not let his confusion about his sudden new feelings about this matter show. He is far too busy with dealing with literally everything else right now to contemplate what these newfound feelings are to what is essentially the most messed up jigsaw puzzle in this universe. Instead, he smiles down at the diary, and takes off one of his gloves and presses his bare hand against the page, fluttering his eyes closed at the low thrumming sizzle of pure sensation against his sensitive human flesh.

When he pulls himself away, he sees the fading ink of a hand much larger than his own on the paper.

For the next few days, Harry finds himself hard-pressed to remember a time he didn't have the diary in his grasp. It's become something of a habit, to write a message or two to Mr. Riddle between classes. More often than not he will just open the book, and a message will already have been written there, waiting for him. Not many people complain about this surprisingly enough, it wasn't like Harry was completely obsessed to the point he was neglecting his friends, and it wasn't like he actually needed to do much in the way of academics considering he's already read most of his textbooks during his bedrest.

If anything Hermione seemed particularly annoyed at finding his new little hobby did not stop him from slipping from perfect grades at all. So maybe the character development wasn't that huge in that aspect, but, to be fair though she was way more supportive about his newfound diary obsession than how Ron or Draco was taking it. And maybe Professor Snape seemed a little too curious about what he was writing in the diary, but, to be fair, a lot of his friends were. It just happened that the potions master seemed to be taking this curiosity of his to an almost personal level. If Harry knew better, he might have even said the man was jealous.
He felt a little bad at that. With juggling assignments and multiple friendships and Horcrux correspondences, Harry had to cut some sort of time out from his day, and it just inadvertently had been time originally spent with his favorite professor. And any time he's spent with the potions master recently, Harry could not recall a time he had been fully focused on the man like he usually was.

Which was, admittedly odd considering Harry's never dismissed Snape before. Honestly, it's like his mind recently has been clogged with water, and Mr. Riddle is the fresh air that he yearns for. He feels he should be worried about that.

Maybe later.

"I think there is something wrong with Potter." Snape says abruptly.

McGonagall blinked and lowered her fork from her lips. "You mean apart from his usual problems associated with having his face burned off and the humiliation of standing up in the middle of the Great Hall in a drugged up state loudly implying he wished for oral sex?"

Dumbledore at the end of the table choked on a carrot. Snape's face went an incredibly unflattering red color. The other professors that were present at the time showed an interesting mix of both these reactions. Hiding a smile from her fellow colleagues the Transfiguration professor continued with her meal as she patiently waited for the Head of Slytherin re-compose his thoughts.

"Minerva," Flitwick said, putting every ounce of his scandalized horror and disapproval in her name. For some reason, the half-goblin had put Potter up on a shiny golden pedestal. Which, fair, a lot of the staff, herself included, have found that there has been no limit to the young boy's capabilities, no overestimating him or putting him down. However, Flitwick has made it extremely obvious he is a much more hardcore admirer of Potter's skills. McGonagall strongly suspects if the boy asked for sacrifice, Flitwick would have pulled out a body prepared ages ago, ready to be defrosted for that very moment.

Snape clears his throat right before she finds herself tempted to see how far she can go in teasing her short-statured friend which was a pity but nothing that cannot be revisited again. The Slytherin professor talking about his worries? Now that was something that doesn't come up often.

"It is not about.. that." The potions master sneered, red-faced. "It is about Potter's new paperback accompaniment."

"That battered old diary?" McGonagall asks surprised. "What's wrong with it?"

"What's wrong- he is obsessed with the thing!" He hissed, "Alarmingly so."

Ah, so it was less actual feelings and more paranoid rantings on Snape's part. Disappointing but unsurprising. The older woman sighed and continued eating her dinner. The other professors must share the same idea as they all rolled their eyes and followed suit.

"Severus," McGonagall says in a flat tone after a minute of letting Snape stew in anger at being ignored. "The poor boy is an orphan that has been thrust with the title of savior, has a history of some serious child abuse with his guardianship still undecided despite the fact the end of school is coming up soon, and more recently has been put on bedrest due to a very suspicious accident which resulted in severe scarring, limited contact with the school and a day of the week where he is literally up to the gills in potions. I'm sure his newfound interest in writing down his feelings is something we should be incredibly supportive of because Merlin knows he needs some sort of coping mechanism."
Snape, in the face of this logic just scowled. "Minerva, I'm fully aware of all this, I just think that this level of sudden attachment to a book of all things is rather dubious."

The Gryffindor Head of House looked at the other curiously, "You suspect someone cursed the book." She translated. "No offense Severus, but just why would anyone do that?"

"I don't know." Snape said slowly, menacingly, "But I'm going to find out."

McGonagall just hummed noncommittally. Someone was clearly jealous, and she is not completely sure how much she wishes to partake in this particular endeavor, as amusing as it promises to be. "Please don't invade your student's privacy even more than you already do."

The potions master stared at her. "I would never." He says vehemently like he's never before been caught doing just that, even when he was a student himself.

She somehow does not believe him.

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'Do you want to meet me?' Tom writes suddenly. Harry blinks at the words before writing back. It is nighttime, and the question came out rather suddenly considering they had been mid-way through a rather fascinating conversation on their opinions on human transfiguration and its illegality.

'Of course.' He answers honestly. The green eyed entity is rather interested to see what Mr. Riddle looked like as a teenager, or as a human in general. So far he has known him as a wraith, a deformed head on the back of a defense professor, a wraith again, and now a glorified notebook. Souls can tell you a lot of things about a person, but unless they became ghosts or you were attuned with the fine arts of soul searching, a physical appearance was not one of them. Really, he would have to blind, dead and dumb to not feel a little curiosity about what he looks like. And he knows for a fact he is technically only one of those things.

Technically. The other two can be debated for.

'Let me show you then.' The words formed in a rush. Mr. Riddle must be nervous then. Or excited. Tone was such a hard thing to convey in text.

Harry barely hesitated, he pulled off his gloves and lightly brushed against the book in consent as he wrote, 'Please do.'

The pages of the diary began to flip erratically as if caught in a high wind until it finally stopped to the last page in the whole book. Harry cannot help but marvel at how intelligent Mr. Riddle must be, not only figure out how to insert part of his soul into a book- something while not exactly recommended should still be commended for how hard it is to pull off- but at such a young age too. A certified genius really.

A Certified genius who thought it would be a good idea to put half his soul in a diary and leave it for anyone in Hogwarts to grab.

With hands trembling slightly, he brought the book close to his face, and before he realized, he was tilting forward, his body leaving his bed and falling into a twirling wind of colors and shadow. Soon, but not soon enough in Harry's nauseated opinion, he finally felt himself hit solid ground.

"Urk."

"Hello, Harry." A velveteen voice greeted. The raven haired boy shakily stood up from where he fell. God, he's not sure if he actually fell into the diary or Tom is projecting his soul or something, but
whatever it is, it feels very real, and Harry feels very dizzy.

"Um, yes, hello Mr. Ri-" Harry stared.

"Oh my god, you're gorgeous." He stated disbelievingly. "Oh my god you are legitimately, objectively gorgeous." Like, the sort of dangerous gorgeous that implies either future businessman-lawyer shark with father issues or hot serial killer villains.. with father issues. Either way, the entity can't help but feel a little blindsided. He had kind of assumed from past contact that Tom would be a bit 'mangled' or at least someone like Snape or Firenze- handsome in their own right but not what normal people generally considered, aesthetically pleasing.

The gorgeous (and did he mention gorgeous?) face of Tom Marvolo Riddle snorted at the bluntness of the compliment. "Should I have not been?"

"No, no," Harry hastily assures, his face is warming steadily, and he feels like what a teenager in a romantic sitcom must be portrayed to feel. "It's just," and he tries not to let his eyes wander down from Mr. Riddle's face to his amazingly proportioned body, because woah, "I didn't expect it that's all."

Really, really didn't expect it.

He has to wonder why the fuck the current, present Mr. Riddle mangled himself so thoroughly because if he kept these looks, Harry is fairly confident his quest to rule over England would have succeeded by now. Hell, possibly half the world if the man forwent his purist, bigoted ideals. The whole world is probably stretching it, Riddle is hot like burning, but there are certainly people out there who are much hotter. Still. Damn. Hot damn.

Mr. Riddle chuckled, "This may be the most flattering first words anyone has ever said to me. Especially," And it is his turn to appraise the other boy, "someone as equally as surprisingly stunning."

"Mr. Riddle, you flatterer." Harry accuses but he is delighted at the compliment nonetheless.

"I told you to call me Tom." The teenager chides, though he looks oddly strained when he says the name, it makes Harry curious.

"Are you sure you want me to call you that?" He asks.

Riddle shrugs, "I am admittedly not fond of the mundaneness of my name. However, it is certainly better than Mr. Riddle at the very least."

"You are essentially a living diary," the boy points out dryly, "I hardly doubt anyone is going to accuse you of being too 'mundane.'"

The Horcrux laughs softly, "Touché." His eyes (blue eyes, it's funny, Harry didn't think his eyes would be blue) looked at Harry with open-filled wonder. "I honestly didn't think this would work so well," Tom admits reluctantly. "The furthest I've ever managed was being able to show a set of my memories to anyone. This is the first time..

Harry raised a brow, "Tom, are you telling me I'm your first? I'm flattered." He joked, Tom rolled his eyes, but the teenager smiled nonetheless. And Jesus, was that a dashing smile. Life really did beat this guy to near death with the pretty stick, and he throws it away to be a smooshed face on the back of a below average defense professor. Honestly, beauty was just wasted on this guy. Wasted.

"Yes Harry, you had the prettiest handwriting of them all. I just had to have you." The young Dark
"I do have great syntax structure don't I?" Harry grins crookedly. It's times like this where Harry could really see the teenage boy in the possessed diary, where Riddle becomes Tom and where Harry could actually envision him as an actual person. Mr. Riddle, when he had been a wraith wandering a forest, had been like that too actually, putting up blusters and airs until he finally lowers his defenses enough to allow the snark to shine through.

And Harry is very fond of the snark.

"I dare say you have the most legible scrawl in the world." Tom drawled, walking closer toward the shorter boy, until they were just an arm's length apart. "Though if you forgive me for saying, I personally am slightly more interested in your more... physical assets."

The teenage soul looked pointedly up and down Harry's form, making exaggerated admiring noises. Harry flushed at the rather uncharacteristically crude compliment on his appearance. Tom usually wrote in flowers and prose when he wished to indulge in his suave side. Maybe that's just what living in a diary does to you. "Flatterer," Harry muttered bashfully.

"May I?" Riddle asked lowly, stepping even closer into Harry's proximity as he raised his arm, hand splayed facing toward the other, eager and expectant.

And how could Harry refuse such temptation? They are both stripped bare from their physical forms, another layer peeled away from them, Harry cannot even imagine what their exquisite touch could feel like now. Tentatively he pressed his hand against Tom's, his own anticipation and fear caught in his breath.

"Well if you ask so nicely, how could I- guh,"

He actually fell to his knees at the sheer immensity of feeling. Tom too has fallen on the ground, panting unevenly and looking at the younger boy with almost reverent lust. They look at each other as they try to summon up enough strength in their limbs again. Once they finally do, it is like a magnetic pull as they practically leap at each other for an embrace, desperately craving this addicting stimuli of the others' touch.

Truly, this could only be described as a 'soul-touching moment.'

"Kiss me," Harry demands breathily.

"Bossier than I thought," Tom comments idly, sounding smug and way too composed for someone who has just experienced literally the best feeling ever. "I rather like it." His pale skin is flushed, and he wears his smile like he isn't used to it, isn't used to this sort of affection that brims inside him. Well, it figured that most individuals that actively tear up their souls to stuff into books usually don't exactly have a history of sunshine and rainbows.

Harry does not have time, however, to delve into Riddle's sad life story, however. He has neither the time nor the mental faculty to spare for that sort of maudlin thoughts. He just needs to be kissed again, like, right now.

"Tom." He whispers urgently, because it was either whispering or screaming like a madman, "Please."

Begging apparently is what does it for him, as Tom's pale blue eyes are hooded with desire and the grip on his hips is so tight it borders on the sinfully painful. Harry is going to have to remember this in the future. "Harry, you are so perfect." The teen praises, and Harry, Harry just melts at that, at
how sweet and genuinely bewildered the words come out as.

Tom leans down and kisses him hungrily, eagerly if a little clumsily. Not like Harry was slacking either, licking just as enthusiastically as he explored into his mouth. Though that was slightly less due to the pleasure itself than the actual taste. It didn't occur to him until the moment unexpected flavor burst against his tongue, that the Tom Riddle here was still just a soul. A soul Harry could taste and consume like any other soul. It brought a new layer of pleasure to the entity, as well as possibly a new meaning to the phrase 'playing with your food.'

Tom Riddle's soul tasted like the heady bitter spice of cumin and slightly burnt caramel, cut with the sharp flavor of minty intelligence and laced with the remnants of childhood innocence and naivety that is honeyed milk. Cynical and jaded, but not so much that he has lost the hope for things like love. Delightful. Delicious.

Great. Now he's aroused and hungry.

Harry hopes he doesn't accidentally eat Tom mid-way through whatever this was. He has done it before. He is not proud of it. Though to be fair, he still thinks its slightly better than his sister's problem in accidentally impregnating her partners just from something as simple as handholding. Dead, soulless husks certainly at least don't cry as much as very confused, distraught and very pregnant individuals- usually males of high standing or farmers (his sister has a type).

Tom, ignorant of any of his growing cannibalistic desires, pushes their bodies closer together so they can revel in the almost overwhelming sensations that buzzed through them. The older looking boy seems entranced, trying to capture as much skin contact as possible with their clothing still on as he fluctuates from kissing to murmuring barely coherent praises against bone white skin to kissing again. Harry moans and pulls the other down so instead of kneeling they are laying entwined with each other, they hadn't landed in the most comfortable of positions, but they powered on through any discomfort for better things. The green eyed wizard's hands were making themselves busy trying to insistently tug off Riddle's clothing as Riddle himself lazily lets his hands map Harry's compact form like he's the fountain of all magical knowledge in Braille.

"Please tell me this isn't stuck on you like an actual ghost." He groans as he tries fruitlessly to tug the clean, pressed shirt out from its tucked in state. "Why did you choose to dress like a prefect when you split your soul? I mean, just, why?"

Tom breaks away from leaving lovely little marks decorating the scarring on his neck to stare at Harry with confusion and growing suspicion. "How did you know I split my soul?"

"Um," Harry blinked his wide green eyes in calculated deer-like innocence. Tom narrows his own eyes. "Would you believe me if I said you told me that?"

"No."

He tries fluttering his eyes seductively, he knows for a fact his long black eyelashes highlights both his porcelain white skin and glowing green eyes. "Would you punish me then?" He whispers with a demure smile, trailing his hands slowly up Tom's neck until his fingers run against the short curls at the base of his head. "If I refuse to speak will you pin me down, put me in your mercy Tom, make me beg." Harry emphasizes the last word by tugging at the teenage Horcrux's hair lightly.

It's working if Tom's heavy panting and dilated eyes are anything to go by. "Harry." He groans, "I think, I think I'm--"

"HARRY!"
Harry finds himself yanked out painfully from Tom's grip, shivering wet in his actual body and being shaken by a very frantic potions master. "S-S-Severus?!!"

Professor Snape's tensed body seemed to just slump in relief at his chattering voice. His expression of panic schooled into something less fearful but still concerned. "Harry," he murmurs lowly, "Are you okay? Do you feel strange or-"

Harry mutely shakes his head. He's a bit in shock from the sudden jarring mental transition and the sudden soaked state he is in doesn't help matters. If he wants to be honest, Harry feels somehow defenseless, oddly exposed, vulnerable.

"Good, that's, that's good." Snape breathes before he hardens his face and oh, Harry can see the anger now, and he wishes he hadn't shaken his head at all now. Because right now he has the explicable need to be hugged right now. And fucked. And then hugged again. While being fed sliced meats and grapes. Okay so, Harry is still kind of hungry. "Now what were you thinking?!!"

"I, uh, well,"

"Can you imagine what it was like, to find you sitting there on your bed, glassy-eyed and comatose with that damned diary in front of you?!" Snape shouted, "I knew that there was something wrong with that thing, but I foolishly brushed it off and actually had the stupidity to put my trust in your drugged up state of mind! WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?!!"

Harry could not help but curl up in himself defensively in the face of the professor's anger, he is shivering, and he feels the hot shameful trickle of tears leaking from his eyes. He misses Tom, he wants Tom, and for some reason it's like there is a physical gaping wound in his head that needs the soul possessed diary, mourning the loss of his presence. Just thinking about it makes Harry whimper a little. Snape, breathing hard after his outburst sees the sad state Harry is making and just.. deflates.

The older man sighs and wipes some hair from his face as he looks down at the sniffling child. "I shouldn't have yelled." He concedes softly, "I just, Harry, you were non-responsive." Snape murmured, moving slowly toward Harry, like any sudden movement may spook the other. It occurs briefly to Harry that the man has had experience now with his less than flattering mental states these past few weeks. He's not sure how he feels about that, how Snape feels about him now that he's seen so much of him like this. "It took twenty minutes just to separate that cursed object from your grasp, and that involved showering you with an ice bath. Despite that, you still weren't responding. I called for you and yelled, and I couldn't even spell you awake."

Dark eyes looked at green, distraught painted in them, begging him to understand. And now, on top of everything, Harry feels absolutely awful for putting that expression onto his most favorite professor's face. The guilt grew worse when Snape whispered,

"For a moment I thought you wouldn't come back to me."

Aaand there goes Harry's one working heart. Those words, the guilt, the emotion- absolutely devastating.

"I, I'm s-sorry." Harry choked out, and like a lost child he lifts his arms out in a silent plea for a hug, "C-could you p-p-please?" It feels like he is so distressed and clogged up inside that his limbs feel like rust as the effort it takes to shakily bring his arms rivals the struggle of fresh burns laced across his flesh. He is not sure anymore if this was because of the whole 'soul ping pong' thing he had just inadvertently put himself through but if this is what other mortals feel like when he rips out their souls and stuffs them into various inanimate objects for fun he has a lot of apologies to make.
Ugh, why was character development or moral lessons always so painful to get through?

"God, Harry," Snape said in a wrecked voice as he desperately hugged the young boy tightly. Harry probably didn't even have needed to ask for that hug, what with the way the potions master was clinging to him, not that he was that much better. "You do that again, and I'll deduct so many points from Gryffindor that the red will drain right out of the banners."

Harry choked out some watery laughter. "R-Ron said something similar actually."

"And I'm going to pretend you just said nothing of the sort." The older wizard said fondly, as he squeezed the boy even harder while Harry clung onto him and laughed wetly. The young savior isn't sure how long they stayed there, in each other's arms like that. But as his eyes slowly close from exhaustion, Harry wondered if maybe, this too could be considered a 'soul-touching moment.'

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biggerbagofsin said to hweianime:

i read Btdom, fabtastic btw, and i was really curious on the "conquests" death has had with other entities. Lmao thanos? The 3 other horsemen? Im imagining death horseman walking into his "dad" in an orgy with his friends. Sidestory pls?

"Fuck, I've wanted to do this since forever." War groaned, he was a soldier right now, with hands dirty, sweaty and filled with blood sullying the perfect bone white skin of the entity as he pushed them up against a wall. Death grunted at the impact, not yet used to the tangibility that comes from entering a more physical plane. He recovers quickly though, and laughs at the frustration of the violent horseman whose currently trying to tear of the shadows that made up his clothes. Each rip of the darkness covering his body revealed an expanse of skin so pale the moon would be envious, teasing the other before tauntingly hiding itself again as the shadows restitched together.

"Here, let me." Death hummed amusedly, with a mere wave of his hand at his clothing, his garbs slid off like sand of the darkest night, exposing his naked body flush against the horseman's own.

"It's less fun this way," War grumbled peevishly, but the entity could clearly see the lust in the other's eyes as he raked over his bare figure. A calloused, wet hand dragged itself down Death's chest, nails digging deeply into the skin. If he was a mere human, he was sure that he would be screaming in agony as the nails punctured his skin, ripping it open like fabric. Instead Death just looked down curiously and raised his eyebrow at the strokes of dark red blood mixing with his own black essence that now decorated his torso.

"Delightful." He drawled.

War grinned, his teeth sharp like knives and eyes burning like the villages that he'd been set upon just minutes ago. "I thought so."

"I would think the word for it is.. Delicious." Death and War turned towards the newcomer in their room. A lighter voice than War's deep, rough tenor; it showed in the almost waif-like model figure who was staring at the pair hungrily.

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"Famine." Death greeted, only the faintest note of bashfulness colouring his tone, "I.. didn't expect you here."

"For fucks sakes go away." War growled, "No one likes a sore loser."

"Speaking of sore-" Another man walked into existence, tall and broad shouldered and with a sunken pallor to his cheeks that looked borderline sickly, "Why was not I invited to this charming party?"

Famine sneered irritatedly. War actually snarled at this point. "Pestilence." They both said like he was the plague. And well, he petty much was.

The entity of Death stared at three of the four horseman incredulously. "For the love of all things good, please tell me my son isn't coming or I swear to god I will never look you three in the eyes for the next seventeen million years." He finally said.

War groaned, "Come on, I worked hard to woo you! It is not my fault the others are sex-fuelled scavengers, here to pick up the leftover remains."

"The leftover remains." Death echoed with a raised eyebrow, faint, translucent shadows were beginning to wrap around his body, slowly threatening to cover his nude form.

"And I hardly count amassing a large scale city apocalyptic war as good 'wooing'." Famine pointed out while very crudely tilting his head to hungrily admire the entity's semi naked body.

"Yeah, I was planning on getting someone to literally cough out their heart for you!" Pestilence insisted eagerly. Then he added with a mutter, "Now if only I could find a way to make sure it comes out of the throat intact."

War stared at his fellow horseman, then at the entity of death. Death shrugged. "They're both pretty romantic to me."

"But I did it first." War whined, his hands wandering to grip tightly at the entity's hips. "Do you know how hard it was to get you to even go out with me?" His eyes glow a bloody red, as determination and the willpower of soldiers across battlefields burn inside him, "I've wanted you the first time you slaughtered the Kzdilils way back then, so pretty in their blood as you swallowed their souls whole."

"Well, I wanted him the moment he came to congratulate me on my first plague!" Pestilence shouted angrily, moving closer toward the other horseman in an embrace with Death, only to pulled back by an equally irate horseman of famine.

"Fuck you both, I've wanted him the moment he introduced himself to us." Famine hisses, "I deserve to have him first."

And that's when the argument spiraled down to 'Nu-uh's and 'You're a fucktard's and 'Why I oughta's. Just baseless name calling really. And Death has a sudden spike of empathy for his Horseman counterpart slash almost son of his. He feels like he should be worried that his potential paramours are all acting like children but he has slept with Loki and Lucifer, who both not only are childish and almost uncomfortably similar to Chaos but both had some serious daddy issues. Serious daddy issues.

"Um." Death spoke up awkwardly. "I just wanted to have some fun before the next galaxy explodes guys." Because lately the paperwork has been building up exponentially since Space got the absolutely stupid idea of allowing certain universes and people the potential ability to cross over into
other alternate universes. The entity has a feeling he won't get the opportunity to get out and about as much in the next few millennium or three and this was so not how he envisioned spending the last of his temporary freedom.

Also, seriously, dimension hopping? As if time travel wasn't enough. And who does that doctor prick that lives inside a police box thing think he is? Fucking confusing is what he is.

War, Famine and Pestilence stare at him like they had almost forgot he was here, which, incredibly insulting especially since War was literally holding him in his arms so tightly, a normal demigod would have succumbed to some serious internal bleeding.

The annoyance must be showing because War frowned slightly at Death, worrying his lip before deciding to take a swift coarse of action- ravaging his mouth even more senseless than usual. It was brutal and messy and Death is pretty sure he just swallowed something slimy that is definitely not a tongue in there, but he melts into it all the same, attacking back with a frenzied fervour as the fight inside him ignites.

War excites battles with his presence, and it seems a battle was about to be brought as the two other horseman made some very infuriated and indignant noises as they watched, effectively ignored. 

"We'll show you fun," Pestilence says forebodingly as he is suddenly right next to Death, his voice, hoarse and sickly rasps in his ear and suddenly Death finds himself feeling dizzy and lightheaded. Some sort of fever, an incredibly strong one to even remotely affect the physical form he's constructed. It goes away quickly enough, though almost immediately another wave of it hits him as Pestilence nibbles at his ear and making him shiver at the heightened sensitivity in his slightly weakened state.

"You won't be able to stop craving us once we're done with you." Famine purrs on the other side of him, apparently not willing to be excluded from this. He bites playfully at the curve of the other, pale long neck stretching out to best accommodate the horseman.

Death closes his eyes as he savors the feeling of all three Horsemen touching him like this, each trying to outcompete the other and the winner clearly being the entity in the middle. "Fuck," he says emphatically, "Are you all serious?"

"Deadly," they all say, and grin at each other, current hostility forgotten in favour of their inside joke.

Death stares up at the ceiling and wonders how he always manages to snag such absolute children as his partners. Violent, homicidal, possessive children.

Then War slashes open his shirt in the same manner and ease someone rips off a silk tie, revealing his body's scarred and muscled torso. Forget the ceiling, Death suddenly has a new favorite thing to look at.

Of course, not to be outdone, the other two began stripping too, showing off their bared human skin. Clearly when they found their hosts they had a certain set goal in mind, because while one looks middle aged and sickly, and the other is gangly and thin, they are both clearly well fit despite themselves, and with faces that many would deem attractive.

Violent, homicidal, possessive and extremely good looking children, he amends because praise is deserved where praise is due.

"I wish you two both chose to meet on Xycba." Pestilence complained, "There's a disease there that would have made my reproductive organ."
"Oh don't be disgusting," Death chuckled goodheartedly, still admiring the human forms. "Besides, if you and Famine had asked beforehand like polite little Horseman we could have arranged a different place to rendezvous."

"And miss out on your surprised expression?" Famine murmured, kneeling down and nuzzling at Death's taloned hand affectionately. "Never," The Horseman hissed vehemently before taking a long lick, from claw to wrist, his eyes leering up at the powerful entity. "I want to see everything of you, devour everything you will deem to give me."

"Besides," Pestilence adds, his mouth still terribly close to the other's ear, breath hot and sending fevered shivers down Death's neck, "I'm Pestilence, disgusting is just something I do baby."

"God that shouldn't sound so hot but it doesssss." Death groans, tilting his head back and letting Pestilence grab at his shadowy tendrils of hair while he continues murmuring dirty plague-filled whispers to him. Famine is practically worshipping his hand, a hungry tongue demonstrating the potential it could have in.. other aspects.

War claims another bruising kiss onto Death, rough hands running down his previous bloodied marks on the other's chest, exploring Death's physical form like a man on a mission. "Don't forget about me beautiful." He grunts out, tweaking Death's nipples harshly and reveling in the breathy gasp he gets from the action.

"Wouldn't.. mm.. fucking.. dare." Death pants with a faint smile, eyes fluttering closed with pleasure under the three harbingers of the apocalypse's attentions. Of course, it would be terrible awful of him not to offer some reciprocation. He may be the reason all things die but he isn't a monster.

"Shit." Pestilence swears as Death blindly gropes for the Horseman's erection, stroking it hard and rough, borderline painful, not that it sounded like it was the way the pleasures groans kept spilling out of the other.

War is gripping hard on Death's hips, hoisting him up singlehandedly from the ground as he furiously begins rutting against him, letting the friction of skin against skin spark alight with electric sensation.

Famine, greedy for more, grabs the entity's shadowy hair and pulls him downwards till Death is eye-level with his crotch. Death doesn't need any verbal prompting, he knows exactly what the other wants as much as the horseman knows exactly what he craves right now.

There's a lot of.. things that happen after that. Much of it involves inhuman flexibility, swearing, some seriously depraved, filthy words and a not so healthy dose of blood being spilled. Finally the high thrum of energy and heat gradually simmers down between the four, and it dissolves from rough, violently passionate fucking to something just barely softer, sweeter.

Death arches his back off the floor as three mouth lavish his body worshipfully, he can feel the long fingers of Pestilence's human body lazily stretching inside him as Famine and War are carefully exploring every ridge and curve of his musculature. The entity feels as ravaged as any land with the misfortune to come across one Horseman, much less all three. Ravaged and sated and content.

"Famine, kiss me." He demands, voice rough with overuse.

Famine chuckles, his throat equally as wrecked, "Of course your highness." He mocks but eagerly complies anyway, pushing himself up to press his chapped lips to pale ones. Famine kisses like a starving man, licking every corner, making sure to take every taste, every breath, every thing he could take.
"God you're so bloody hot." War openly leers while stroking his cock, "I cannot believe we haven't done this sooner."

"Well believe it you fuckers." A new voice growls, his voice dark with promised destruction, "Because you are never going to do this again if I have anything to say about it."

Immediately everyone tensed in the room, almost as one they turn to look to the empty back corner of the room to see another man, another incredibly unimpressed man. Tall, suited and with a face that looks sharper than a blade, Death the Horseman aka the Grimmest Reaper stares back. "So," He says slowly, primly, almost gentlemanly if there wasn't such obvious visceral rage lurking under the word.

Pestilence gulped as he realized where exactly his fingers are currently violating under his fellow Horseman's gaze, slowly, like the action would have gone unnoticed if he managed to move at the speed of a dehydrated snail, he tried pulling out. Of course, because he was Pestilence and not something like Luck, the Horseman was immediately caught the moment he tried to shift his fingers back. The Grim Reaper's gaze flickered to the movement and the whites of his current human eyes darkened to a foreboding storm cloud grey.

"I hope violating my father was worth it, because I'm going to kill you dead now."

War will deny it to this very day but he did not 'meep' thank you very much.

The entity sighed as they three Horsemen backed away from him like he was a cursed object, quickly he sloppily covered himself with shadows, enough to cover the general form of his nudity. "Grim." He greets in exasperated embarrassment.

"Father." The Reaper responds back, looking pointedly away from Death, choosing to focus his glare on his comrades. His traitorous, perverse, father-fucking comrades.

Oh they will pay. They will pay in blood and bone and whatever else he can pull out of them.

"This was.. I did not expect you." Death says lamely, he is gratified his humanoid form does not naturally allow emotions such as mortified humiliation to color his face in pink blushes because he would be an unattractive scarlet right now.

The Grim Reaper raised an unamused brow. The younger Death incarnate was always like this, the moment he was created there was always an air of noble condescension around him like he was the father of the two instead of the other way round. It amused Death, he had always thought his most favoured Reaper, Horseman, son, was rather endearing in his behaviour. Now, caught in a very compromising position, he does wish that the other would stop making him feel like a chastised teenaged mortal.

"That makes both of us." The Pale Horseman mutters.

There's a suffocating silence that hangs in the air. Like a guillotine above their heads and no one knows when it will drop. Even War looks ready to make a strategic retreat the first chance he can get.

Death, because he knows he has the advantage, and that the Grim Reaper won't incur anything too scathingly permanent to the other three Horseman, decides to make the first move. With an awkward cough, the entity draws all the attention to him. "Well." He starts, because he is fairly sure there is no social protocol in any species, planet or universe that would save them now, "I am going to, uh, go."

"No. Wait!" Someone calls out desperately, Death does not waver to see who it is. They were big boys, they could handle it. Preferably without him.
With a little wave he lets the shadows consume him completely and flees to somewhere less filled with tension. Like Hell. Nothing too bad happens there.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so after the next chapter or so I'm going to temporarily focus on something else but I will be accepting like, any prompts and shit you throw at me at the time and posting like a bunch to make a filler chapter instead. This prompt extra at the end is an example of what I kind of expect and stuff. I won't do all the prompts, just the ones that interest me. Wow that sounded really mean. Sorry.

So uh, PROMPT AWAY.

...

Is that how this works?
Death's spiders

Chapter Summary

The one where Death angsts and gets molested by some spiders.

(There really is no in between in this story)

The one where Death angsts and gets molested by some spiders.

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Snape slowly loosened his hold around Harry, who had wept till fatigue finally caught up to the poor boy. Carefully, gently, the professor moved the other, so he was lying comfortably on his bed. Harry gives a soft, raspy huff once his head hits the pillow before nuzzling his face against the thing, his eyes are rimmed red and faint lines of dried tears were still visible. Despite that, the young wizard still looks unfairly incandescent to the professor, just lying there breaks all his resolve, and the man cannot help but gingerly press a light kiss to the sleeping boy's forehead.

"Goodnight Harry," The Slytherin whispered, "Don't worry I'll make sure this never happens again." He swears, and he means every word.

He's failed the boy once by not checking up on this mysterious diary, despite his own suspicions, and now because of his inaction Harry had been almost ensnared by whatever dark magic was peppered into those pages. Who knows what could have happened if Snape hadn't checked up on him? The man is just glad he will never find out. With grim determination, the potions master levitates the accursed object and walks out of the room with it, fury in his eyes.

He has failed Harry once. He will not do so again.

Harry wakes up, groggy and eyes bleary. He wants to immediately go back to sleep, for like, another solid two hundred years. Maybe three.

But wakes up he does, pushing himself to a more upright position on his bed, the wizard groans in despair as his muscles start to complain at the movement, oddly stiff and unreliable. Harry feels like his whole body has been pummelled by Mr. Dursley's fat fists what with how tender he feels. He looks down and is actually surprised he wasn't covered in bruises. He does not even bother with the theatrics of waving his hand to summon up his clock, and when he does finally manage to read the blurry numbers and make sense of them, he groans. It's only been about an hour or two since Harry fell asleep.

He needs to tell Tom, in no uncertain terms, that while amazing as their little semi-tryst was, the consequences both emotionally and physically were far too traumatizing to continue that sort of behavior on a regular basis. Even once a week could be too much, maybe fortnightly. They’ll discuss it.

With that thought decided, Harry strains himself to lean over the bed to find the diary he must've dropped during the chaos, only to find it not there. The boy mentally shrugs and checks out the other
side of the bed, but there too had no diary in sight and Harry could feel the creeping sensation of
dread and panic tiptoe up his chest.

He flings his blanket off him, ignoring the aches of his body, and frantically begins searching for Mr.
Riddle, for Tom. "Shit, shit, shit, where are you? God fucking dammit where the fuck-" Green eyes
glowed bright and enraged as the whites of his eyes threaten to go black. His human heart is beating
furiously, and Harry is going to claw it out with his bare hands if he doesn't get that soul-embedded
diary back. He needs it. Needs Tom.

It takes fifteen agonizing minutes searching his room like a madman until Harry finally admits it's not
there. It takes an extra three to come to terms with the realisation.

He has lost the diary.

He has lost Mr. Riddle.

Oh god, Harry feels like he's going to be sick.

Or murder someone.

Painfully.

Snape heaves out an exhausted huff of frustration and stares at the damned diary, looking innocent
and untouched while surrounded by ash and debris and various liquids. If he hadn't thought the
blasted thing was suspicious before, this more than confirms it. What objects are acid proof? Crazy,
cursed, dark objects that's what.

Annoyed, he opens up the book with a flick of his wand, determined not to even touch the thing just
in case he contracts whatever curse that Harry had been inflicted with. Maybe if he wrote into the
accursed book, he could have a better idea of what transpired, or hopefully how to properly ground
the thing to dust.

What Snape saw made burst into cold sweat.

From the top to the bottom, the opened pages were filled with Harry's name. Writing was moving,
fading, rewriting itself. It was terrifying.

Harry?

Harry!

Harry what happened?

Harry? Where are you Harry?

Harry!

Is this because of last night?

Harry!

Harry.

HARRY!

What is going on?!

Harry!

Harry.

Harry.

Dammit Harry where are you.

Harry don't leave me.

HaRRY.

Why aren't you

answering Harry?!
The moment that thought registered in the potions master's mind, all frantic writing ceased. It was as if that thing had realised it's been opened.

Suddenly all the ink fades, disappears from the man's eyes, only to be replaced by new letters, slowly forming into words, and then finally, a sentence is made out.

'You're not Harry.'

The book lurches, in a blink of an eye, it is hitting the opposite wall with a useless thump. Snape, panting from across the room, is gripping his wand so tightly it's a wonder the wood has not cracked under his hands. "Merlin." He repeats, because there are no words, no words to comprehend the hideous dark magic that must have gone into that monstrous object.

How could he have been so blind? How could he have not noticed the foul smell of tainted magic? How could he ever have let that, that thing near the boy?

The professor waits anxious for a moment, his heart pounding and skin sweating, yet nothing happens. It seems despite the monstrous implications inside those pages, a book was still a book. Thank bloody Merlin for that.

Snape warily, unsteadily approaches the diary. He doesn't want to touch it; he doesn't want to be even near it now that he knows how dark it is. The black mark tattooed on his forearm itches incessantly underneath his robes and it only confirms to the professor that this thing must go.

With a quick swish and spin of his wand, Snape darkly muttered a curse. Something stronger than an Incendio, more controllable than a Fiendfyre and most importantly, something that would drag the parasitic life from that disgusting book in a slow and excruciating manner. It was the least he could do for how that thing has violated Harry.

Fire spouts out of his wand, hot and burning and the colour of, ironically, blue ink as it aims itself toward the fallen book with the precision of a homing missile. It covers the diary slowly, the movement more akin to a gel-like slug than the quick burn of fire. The potions master watches the whole thing with growing satisfaction, preferring to take his time in inflicting the pain as the book begins to start fraying at the constant, torturously steady burn. The whole thing is taking longer than expected, but Snape didn't feel too worried, after all, there would bound to be a few protective enchantments defending the wretched object but eventually it too would be forced to give way to the painfully slow, continuous curse.

Then the wretched thing started to scream.

"TOM!" Harry cried out, the door to his room slamming open as if the book's wailing had summoned the young wizard into existence. Though, to be fair, with the noise the diary had begun making it would have been rather impressive if the boy had managed to sleep through it unawares.

'Like a baby wailing for its mother.' Snape snidely thought, glaring bitterly at the slowly burning book. 'Absolutely pathetic.' Of course, he does not say it out loud. The potions master would be a fool if he failed to see how distraught Harry looks, how far the boy has fallen into the diary's sinister spell. "Stay back Harry." He commands.

"Like fuck, I will!" The green-eyed boy shouts, his voice is still hoarse from his tear drizzled sleep, scratchy and croaky yet Snape quickly pushes that useless thought away as he tries to move the flame ridden diary away from the angry Potter boy. "Severus, what the bloody hell are you- stop it- you're hurting him!"
"Him? **Him?**?" Snape's nostrils flared, and he spitefully lifted the flaming book just above Harry's physical reach. "Potter, this thing is not a **him**, it is an **it**! Do not be blinded you stupid, foolish boy, that thing can't feel pain, it has no feelings, and certainly none for you."

"You don't understand," Harry pleads desperately, changing tactics quickly and grabbing onto Snape's robes like his life depends on it, hands tightly clenching on the black folds of the professor's robe as he looks up at him beseeching. The older man takes a second to mentally curse his life, and how even in this messed up situation he can't help but wish the boy was clinging to him in a completely different context. "Tom isn't some evil artefact; he's a soul, trapped in his own making. He has self-awareness and is capable of feeling. If you destroy him, you'll be taking a life."

Snape looks down at him, angry and unmoved, "No," He rejects, it is obvious from the tightness in his jaw and around his eyes that he is barely restraining himself from lashing out, "It is you who doesn't understand Harry. I am trying to protect you, living or undead, that thing is leeching off you."

"He is not-"

"He is!" Snape booms out, harshly grabbing the boy's petite shoulders and shaking them none too gently, "Can't you see Harry? That thing doesn't have feelings for you; it is using you, manipulating you for whatever gains it is trying to earn."

"That's not true!" Harry shouts back, furious and defensive as he hears such insults against Tom, worse, against himself. He is powerful and old, he would not have been blinded so easy.

Of course, because what Harry lacks physically, he more than makes up for in magic, so the boy extends his arm, and Snape can feel the harsh, insistent pull of the book in his invisible grasp. Snape glares down at the younger male, but he has nothing on the acidic fury that stares back up at him. "Let Go." The potions professor grits out, punctuating each word with a strong surge of magic that pulls the diary further away from Harry.

Harry, still groggy and weak from before, grinds his teeth and clenches his fist in the air as he viciously tries to summon the book closer toward him. "You. Let. Go."

It's the most tensely ridiculous tug of war ever, and Snape hates the accursed book all the more for making him part of it. The diary in question is shaking violently in mid-air under the two wizard's intense battle for possession, still smoldering slowly even if the flames have been subdued slightly by all the concentrated magic. The older man can only hope he can just keep the stalemate up until either Harry tires or the book finally burns to ash.

Of course it takes less than a minute for the Head of Slytherin to realize that neither option was going to happen. While the older man had skill and finesse and experience over the boy, he's aware that none of it really matters in this context other than raw magical strength and youthful endurance, something which unfortunately, Potter has in spades. Harry too seems to come to the same conclusion as him, slowly relaxing his posture into something more cocky and relaxed as he waits for the inevitable. Clever infuriating boy.

But of course, Snape wouldn't have managed to survive this long if all it takes is a bit of clever to bring him down.

The potions master carefully schools his expression into something annoyed and strained, looking all for sorts exhausted and drained as he carefully moves his wand in small, calculated movements that could be easily be mistaken as trembling. Harry doesn't catch on, the boy's not the best at picking up social cues after all, and Snape isn't afraid to press that to his advantage. But with smaller wand gestures, the spell he plans to cast becomes weak and unpredictably unsteady, a measured if
unfortunate risk.

"Exilium malum!"

Harry goes rigid at the unexpected shout, and it's enough time for the spell to take effect, for the diary to vanish completely from their gaze. It's not destroyed, even if the wand movements had been done perfectly Snape is sure the spell wouldn't have been strong enough for such concentrated dark magic, but it would buy some time away from Harry's person, and he'll gladly pay that price.

Though the older man does sort of wish, the price wasn't the infuriated betrayal practically painted on Harry's face.

"Professor," Harry says, dark and angry and foreboding. "Where is the diary?"

"Hmmm? What diary?" The potions master asks perfectly innocently. Like the book hadn't just disappeared by his own hand.

"Professor," Harry snarls, but Snape can hear the high pitched panic beginning to bubble at the edges. The boy sounds desperate, like an addict needing his fix. It's deplorable and pitying and enraged at the same time. "What did you do?!"

Snape narrows his eyes, and hardens his features, "I did what I should have done weeks ago. I did what any proper teacher, any responsible adult would do." Harry grits his teeth, waiting, "It's destroyed." He lies, "Obliterated."

He had expected shouting, maybe a few crude, explicit responses that Snape would let go because he understands what it feels like to be told the person you love won't ever love you the same way. Granted, Lily was an actual human being who hadn't actually led him on or tricked him with a curse, but the core of it should be the same. Probably. He expected many things, but he hadn't been prepared for the sheer and utter grief and miserable pain on Harry's expression. Tears filled those big green eyes as the boy chokes back a sob. The potions master looks worried at him, but he stays his distance, trying to look unrepentant and unforgiving. It's harder than he thought.

"You bastard." The boy choked out. There is an irrational fear that spikes up in the younger wizard, like having an icicle shoved down his throat, except the complete opposite. The fear comes hand in hand with the rage, and Harry does his best to not resort to bodily harm.

"Harry, it was a cursed book. What you are feeling isn't real." The professor chides, and this time Harry doesn't even stop himself from throwing the closest thing, some textbook, at the other wizard. He misses of course. Though he's not sure if that was on purpose or because his vision is too blurry to aim properly.

"Fuck you!" He screams, "I love him!" And woah, even Harry has to pause at that. Love? Is this what it is? It must be so; he has never felt anything as good as what Tom makes him feel, has never felt so wretched as the idea of never seeing him again. The more he thinks the word over in his head, the more right the word feels. And, from the way the professor is staring at him like he had just punched him in the gut, it's not like he can back out from the admission now.

"I.. love him.." He repeats in a quieter voice. The words feel a little too heavy on his tongue, a little off, a little too stilted, but it must be true. It explains everything. "I love him."

Snape slaps him across the face.

It's not too hard, nothing like Vernon Dursley who prefers a closed fist to an open palm, but it's sharp
and stinging and what the actual hell?! "What the hell?!" Harry says out loud because the sentiment needs verbalizing. Loudly.

"I never want you to say that again," Snape spits out, he's trembling and looking visibly shaken, ill, nauseous, "Not like this, never like this."

"... Severus?" Harry finally questions tentatively, unneeded and unhappy as he was about the slap, it did help clear his mind enough to notice the state his professor has worked himself up to. "Severus, I, maybe you need to sit down, I can get some water an-

"The diary is riddled with compulsion charms." The potions master blurs out. He's pointedly not looking Harry's way, eyes firmly to the ground and his body hunched over like he is genuinely upset over the fact. It doesn't matter though. Harry is far too busy reeling from his words.

Denial was the first thing on his lips. "You're wrong."

Snape laughs, but there's no humor in it, just resigned bitterness. "I'm not Harry." And then, because the man is nothing but sharp edges and cutting remarks, he has to add, "I'm not like you."

That stings. Badly. But Harry pushes it away to make room for answers. He juts his chin out defiantly as if he isn't crumbling inside. "But,

"It's barely been two months Harry. Don't you think it's a little strange? Two months and you're admitting you're in love when I remember distinctly that you once told me that very adamantly that you need to be six months into a relationship before you could even consider that word."

Harry pauses at that, furrowing his brows in contemplation. He does remember something like that, they somehow got onto the topic of Percy one day and Harry may have gotten worked up about how uncomfortable people are just casually throwing around the 'L' word and how he hates the pressure and why is gooey-eyed even a term because that is completely disgusting and he just doesn't understand.

Okay, so maybe he does completely remember that. With embarrassing clarity.

Still, he's fucking Death. Compulsions, even high levelled stuff, shouldn't really work on him to such an extent unless he has some incredibly debilitating handicap other than his mortal meat suit. Then it hits him.

The soul shard in his forehead. Tom Riddle's fucking soul shard. Inside. His. Head.

MOTHERFUCKER.

"I'm sorry Harry." Professor Snape says softly like he genuinely is sorry, and the kindness of the act stings more than if he had been callous about it.

Harry makes a hollow sound, far too quiet and bitter to be called a laugh but it's the closest thing to describe it. He feels numb. "Why are you sorry Professor?" He rasps, "It seems I'm the one at fault here."

"Harry..."

"Could you, could you leave me for the night? Please?"

The potions master hesitated, clearly unhappy at leaving the boy for the nth time but reluctantly understanding his need for space. He of all people knew there were some times where you just
needed to be left alone. So the man nods in acceptance, if a little regretfully. "Fine. Just, just know that my door is always open for you." He moves toward the door, opening it before looking back at the young wizard, still beautiful maybe even more so with the atmosphere of tragedy surrounding him. It's almost unfair how magnificent he looks, like he is constantly being painted by the most godlike artists with the finest brushes and pastels. So alluringly unearthly, it was hard to imagine the boy growing old. It was hard to imagine sometimes the boy was real, not some divine entity sent down from the heavens. With a softer voice, Snape couldn't help but add, "Always for you."

Harry doesn't hear him.

All he hears is the door clicking shut and the harsh, pounding echo of his own mind.

A compulsion charm.

It was all a fucking compulsion charm.

Harry was aware that by taking over an actual human body, he too was more vulnerable to... everything really. He's watched Order, as a human, get drunk with only one pint, Life experiencing PTSD when she enlisted in the Tryadian Intergalactic War, Knowledge had lived a whole life bedridden with illness, Love had gotten Stockholm Syndrome thrice, and on one memorable occasion- Space had accidentally given someone else Stockholm Syndrome.

That one was actually quite a humorous story. The two got married in the end. Not the point though.

The point of it was, Harry had been charmed by Mr Riddle's words, and not in the consensual way. And knowing that, knowing he had been so easily used for the teenage soul's whims, how his mind was even capable of being pierced, cracked open and played with... it's terrifying in a way no promise of physical injury could hit him.

He feels so stupid and cheated and betrayed. This has never happened before, not like this, never like this. No one tricks Death and gets away with it for long, and yet he wasn't Death, not right now, not really. He was Harry Potter, and he had been played the fool.

It is devastatingly humiliating.

And not in the manner where he wishes the ground to swallow him whole, or to flee the scene, or to close his eyes and turn back time. No. His mind had been tricked, his body had been cursed, and his heart had been swayed, all for a sodding laugh, a passing amusement as the broken soul waits for his stupid, insignificant plans to flower. This was the sort of humiliation that burned. This was the sort of humiliation where he wants the other to beg on his knees, apologies on his lips, tears in his eyes, and nothing but utter regret and repentance in his mind. This was the sort of humiliation that demands vengeance in blood and calls upon the dark fires of destruction.

This was the sort of humiliation that makes him want to rip out his stupid human heart and cry.

Harry doesn't rip out his heart, but if he does cry into his pillow at night, it isn't pathetic, it is simply fulfilling step one of his plan for vengeance. Yeah, that's what it was. And if he continues doing so for a few nights, well, that's just him being a perfectionist. Yeah, that's what it was.

Snape closes his eyes firmly shut as he halfheartedly tries to block out the muffled noises of heartbreak in the next room. The feelings he has on this matter for Harry is.. complicated. For one thing, he is still so angry at Harry, furious at him. It's an incredibly selfish emotion, but just remembering Harry's words, defending so earnestly that, that thing... well it brings up an unnervingly vague sense of deja vu.
Of course it's not just inexplicable anger that boils inside him, searing his bones and burning his flesh till numb. There is the obvious ugly coloring of jealous fueling him too. Equally as selfish an emotion, but Snape has never really thought himself as a selfless man anyway. It just gnaws at him. Harry is smart and gorgeous green-eyed, and there's something in him that is so inherently charming that even the reclusive centaurs come out from their forests to have a chance to exchange words with the young wizard. And yet the boy in a span of mere weeks has apparently given his heart, in a way he's never even hinted to the Weasley prefect, in a way he will never give to Snape, to that accursed fucking book.

The potions master wants to blame it on the compulsion, he so badly wants to be one of those naive and incompetent dunderheads and believe in Harry, believe he would never have fallen for a dark object, not this quickly, not this hard. But the thing is, Harry is strong. Maybe not physically, but magically certainly, though maybe not necessarily in this context, and mentally definitely. He has admittedly, a varied and slightly dubious taste for his choice in company but Snape knew the boy had a good sense on who to pull closer into his circle and politely, subtly pushing out those who have no place there. Or not so subtly if we take Smith as an example.

The point is, a compulsion charm can do many things, but even the most powerful, the darkest, the most taboo of charms cannot grow such genuine feeling, cannot connect souls, cannot pour devotion into a heart, not unless something was already there to let it.

And there was something there. Snape knows. That something had haunted him for years before he finally laid it to rest. Whatever Harry might've felt originally was genuine enough, it would have to be, the seed of curiosity, intrigue and maybe even attraction to the odd little book that could write back. Loneliness could be a factor. A need for attention when isolated. Or even something more deep seated that came from his abusive upbringing. Harry had saw this book and must've latched on eager and excited and pleased. The cursed thing must've used that against him, encouraged him with silver dipped words drugged in compulsions.

And that's where the selfishness of the jealousy comes in. Because that twisted, desperate affection may have bloomed under less than consensual circumstances, that the compulsion had matured Harry's feelings too fast, evolved them too quickly in a whirlwind of sweet nothings until Harry could not even notice a single thing wrong, that maybe it had all been entirely dark magic that had shaped the boy's emotion into some faked facsimile of love that never was.

But what if it wasn't?

And it's that simple question, with all its possible answers, every one worse than the last, that makes Snape burn with envy.

And then, finally, in the darkest, cruelest recesses of his mind- the place where he can feel nothing as he kills his fellow man and betray those he had held dear, he wishes. Like bright butterfly wings, temptingly beautiful as it is poisonous, his dark wishes would flicker through his mind. Wanting the boy. Imagining it could have been him to have enraptured him so, how if he had the balls, the willingness, the chance, maybe he could have been the one to...

No.

Snape growls at himself as he pushes such evil thoughts away from the forefront of his mind. He cannot vanish them away completely, he is not strong enough, but he is also not the same wretched man as before. So he pushes the vile fantasies and the rage and the jealousy and the hurt and sympathy, he pushes it all down until he chokes on them, and he heads toward his room, hoping to wash the taste of his emotions down with a nice bottle of Firewhisky.
And he leaves his bedroom door ever so slightly ajar, just in case.

In the middle of the night, Harry sits up suddenly, struck with revelation.

"Exilium malum." Harry repeats slowly. "Expel evil."

The diary wasn't destroyed. It just moved.

Snape swore, his robes a mess, his hair frazzled from being tugged on in frustration and panic.

"Accio cursed diary." He tries. Of course nothing happened. He's used more advanced spells to naught but still. When he had exiled the wretched object out of his room he knew the location might have been different to what he'd had in his mind, but he also knew that the spell kept it restrained to at least the empty classroom he had transported it to. Which means that either he had fucked up the spell or someone had taken the damned thing.

Either way, the diary was gone.

"Fifteen minutes, then I'm bringing you back to the dorms." Snape declares before walking out of the bedroom, leaving Harry and Ron with their privacy.

They look at each other awkwardly, and its only until they could hear the faint sound of another door in the quarters closing, then they felt secure enough to talk. "So." Harry says, "I hear you almost strangled Malfoy again."

Ron laughed at that, "Yeah, well, that prat had it coming."

The green-eyed second year shot his friend a sympathetic look, "Talking smack about Dumbledore again?"

"And 'mione."

"I'm surprised you didn't succeed in your strangulation attempt." Harry says wryly. Ron chuckles again, but the humor in it is as weak as the mood surrounding them. Not much has been going right since the diary had disappeared from Harry's grasp. Another attack almost immediately after the fact only cemented the betrayal Harry had felt, the fact the victims this time wasn't just some Ravenclaw known as Penelope Clearwater but also a very unlucky Hermione, was like the cement had been set viciously aflame and poured over Harry's still healing wounds.

Because he wasn't daft okay? He knew who the true Heir of Slytherin was now. He knew exactly who he had been played the fool by and he knew exactly what he was going to do the next time he sees the prick.

Apparently, Hagrid was being blamed for all this mess due to some sort of similar incident that had occurred back in the day, back when Tom frigging Riddle and the half-giant had both been students of Hogwarts. The poor half man had been taken into custody by the Minister of Magic who had the unfortunate last name of 'Fudge.'

To make matters worse, Dumbledore had been stripped of his title as Headmaster at the same time, thanks to Mr Malfoy. Well, to be completely fair, while the timing could have been done better the reasoning for the man's dismissal was rather understandable and not at all unexpected. The man had let like, eight underage children under his supervision get petrified by a giant mythical and unknown
monster for the past year- Harry was honestly surprised it took this long to call the guy out really.

However, while the ex-Headmaster didn't make much difference to Harry personally, it certainly made an impact in the school. With the old wizard gone, fear had spread throughout the castle as never before, the comfort of twinkling blue eyes and oddly knowing smiles obvious in its absence. There was barely a face that wasn't tensed in worry, and laughter, when there was any, was hollow and strained.

They had been present at the time both Hagrid and Dumbledore were forcibly removed from the premises, hidden under the invisibility cloak where they could do nothing but watch the whole mess unfold in front of their eyes. Again, Harry was not greatly affected but Ron, well, that poor boy was shaken to the core. They had just lost Hermione to the basilisk barely a few days before, and the young Weasley was forced to lose not only another friend but an idol he had looked up to as well. It would have been hard not to feel some sort of survivor's guilt from that.

Harry can't blame him. Not with his own guilt welling up inside him, threatening to brim to the surface of his thoughts every moment.

With the freckled boy alternating from guilty hopelessness and burning determination to figure out the clue in Hagrid's last words of 'following the spiders,' Harry has ended up taking what little of his own time accompanying the redhead. This resulted in a terribly jealous Draco who in turn, responds by lashing out by very vocally supporting Slytherin's beast with a prejudice only a pureblood could bring to the table. This, coupled with the fact that Mr Malfoy, Draco's father, was a reason for Dumbledore's abrupt departure, obviously caused whatever somewhat semi-friendly camaraderie they had begun to share, to crumble like a badly made biscuit.

And like that wasn't bloody enough, it seemed that apparently, Ron and Draco's relationship had more weight in the Gryffindor-Slytherin house dynamics than Harry had anticipated because that also soured faster than milk in the microwave.

This whole thing was all just one big shitshow of the highest order really.

"So.." Harry says, breaking the thoughtful silence between the two, "You find any spiders yet?"

Ron frowned, "It's the weirdest thing mate," he complains, "I have been looking all over for those disgusting things, and usually I'm pretty good at picking out the ugly buggers but I haven't seen a single hairy leg of one."

"It doesn't help that everyone's being chaperoned everywhere either." The green eyed wizard sighs in understanding. "I wanted to see if I could talk to Firenze and the other centaurs about Hagrid's last words- they occasionally converse you know, and maybe 'spiders' was some sort of star code or something-"

"Merlin's hairy balls I hope so."

"...but Professor Snape is pretty much my personal bodyguard." He finished apologetically. It was true. The moment classes end, it didn't matter which class, the potions professor would be waiting right outside with or without a small group of students behind him to drop off first. If it had been another time, another context, Harry would have been secretly thrilled at such personal attentions from the man. Now of course, when their relationship was on some rather rocky waters since their argument, Harry would have cut off a finger to avoid spending any indeterminable amount of alone time with Snape. Just seeing the potions master reminds the wizard savior about his mistakes, his foolishness, and worst of all, his misplaced faith.
Ron snorts, completely unaware of the complex tangle of thoughts that parasitizes Harry's mind, just the way Harry prefers. The young redhead already has his own share of grief right now, and while their problems overlap a lot, there are quite a few obvious.. conflicts of interest that would arise if Harry decided to pour out his feelings.

Like how he indirectly got Hermione petrified, and the Groundskeeper and Headmaster removed by letting the Heir of Slytherin go free because he had fallen for his stupid charm. Compulsion or otherwise. Also the Heir of Slytherin was a magic diary. And he had climaxed numerous times to it.

Yeah... That would go so well.

"Snape's a damn git," Ron spits angrily, because apparently the man has been egging on Malfoy and making his own crude remarks about the situation in the classroom since the incidents. The wizard saviour didn't believe it the first he heard the redhead complain about it, what with his rather unabashed bias against the Slytherin Head. However, well, even Harry is aware that the potions master tends to put up certain fronts and facades, each thornier than the last. "I mean, yeah, don't get me wrong, I agree with how well he's watching over you and all but.. I fucking bloody hate his guts."

"Understandable." Harry murmurs in agreement. Honestly, he's inclined to believe that Snape has his reasons, especially considering their last blowout was in concern over Harry's wellbeing. But fakery was what got him into this mess in the first place so the green-eyed child can't help but feel wary at the two-faced farce. "I am.. not fond of the way he is acting in the classroom lately either. Professor Snape has always been harsh, I admit, but his behavior in Potions has developed to incredibly unprofessional standards."

"You can just say he's been a right arsehole Harry." Ron says, more amused than irritated now. Harry smiles in response to the genuine jibe at his choice in language.

"He's been a right arsehole, then." This time Ron cannot help but giggle in disbelieving delight.

"You said it! Oh Merlin, Harry, you have made my day you have. I shall have to treasure the memory for the rest of my life."

"I do swear Ron." The green-eyed wizard sighs in mock annoyance. Though in retrospect he does keep most of his more vulgar thoughts inside his mind more than anything. He likes to think that he can keep it a little child-friendly around here.

"Yeah but you're always so damn posh about it all the time ya ponce." His freckled friend teased, "Bout time you start learning some proper slang round here."

"Good gravy heavens," Harry replies back in an exaggeratedly scandalised upperclass accent that sent Ron into a fit of laughter, "Why I never, heaven forbid, my father will hear about this!"

"Stop, stop, you're killing me mate!" Ron gasped.

Harry grinned, glad that he has gotten his friend to finally loosen up to his usual cheerful self. "You did start it."

"Did not."

"Did so."
"Did not."

This went on for a little longer until the loud rapping of the door halted them. "Fifteen minutes are up." Professor Snape sternly declared from the other side. "Hurry up Weasley; I have got better things to do than accompany you back."

"Greasy git." Ron muttered darkly but he stood up and stretched from his position anyway. "What I wouldn't give to punch him in his ugly mug."

"Hey," Harry defended half-heartedly. Ron grinned anyway.

"Yeah, yeah, you would rather I not."

"Well, I didn't say that." The green-eyed child smirked wryly, "I was just going to say Professor Snape's face isn't as unappealing as you make it out to be."

The young Weasley made a face, "I think I would have rather you told me not to punch him."

Harry put his hands up in surrender, "Oh no, if what you say he says is true, punch away my friend, punch away."

"And that's why you're the best, mate." Ron laughed.

"I know," Harry says smug, only feeling a pang of guilt at the insults he'd given. "And Ron?"

"Hmm?"

Harry gave his friend a meaningful look, "I've healed. Completely."

Ron just shot him a quizzical look, "Uh, congrats?"

The wizard savior made an annoyed despairing sound before trying to force the other to understand via even more intense eye contact. "Everything about me is now in top condition. Every. Thing." He even went so far as to waggle his fingers suggestively, tiny sparkles flickered at the action.

"Oh. **OH.**"

"Yeah, **oh,**" Harry repeats dryly.

"**Weasley!**" Snape shouts, banging on the door loudly.

"**Coming sir!**" Ron shouts back. Next to him, Harry whispers in a lower voice, "I'll meet you outside your dorm at eleven."

Ron wisely doesn't say anything and just nods.

"Gotta say mate, this invisibility cape of yours- super convenient."

"I know right?" Harry whispered as they shuffled awkwardly under the cloak through the quiet halls. "Though I have to admit that this whole walking thing would be way easier if you had your own."

"Oh yeah," The raven haired wizard could hear the eyes rolling, "Let me owl up my mysterious rich friend and get **them** to order up a spanking new invisibility cloak."

"I'm just saying, it would be nice not to feel your warm heavy breathing down my neck" Harry
complains quietly, then absentmindedly he added, "I guess it runs in the family."

Ron halts mid-stride, causing Harry to almost trip and potentially wake like, thirty magic portraits who would have gone into screaming fits. He and the paintings were getting better with each other, but the paintings were like tiny hamsters- you needed to avoid startling them at all costs lest they lose their collective freaking minds. "Dude." He hisses disapprovingly.

"I'm sorry," Ron hisses back in a manner which suggests he wasn't really that sorry, "I was too busy trying to obliviate myself from the absolutely disgusting thing you just implied."

Harry blinked a few times before he finally got the memo, then he just coughed embarrassedly, "I, uh, didn't mean for you to hear that?"

"I hate you."

"Well- hey look we're reaching the forest edge. Stay here. I'll go see if I can get Firenze."

"I still hate you." The Weasley mutters as his horrible friend ducks out from under the cloak. "So much."

"Oh, you'll get over it." Harry says dismissively like he hadn't just mentally scarred his friend. Just for that Ron kicks him in the shin. Somehow it hurts more because he's invisible. "Fucking hell!" Glowing green eyes glare at the general area the kick had come from, "I will get you back for that." He promises.

"Worth it." Was the smug reply.

Harry scowled again but decided not to waste any more of the night they had left, with a slight limp, the boy set off into the woods. It takes him roughly ten minutes before he locates the nearest centaur on patrol, and even then it takes a few minutes longer to get close enough for the half man even to hear him. The green-eyed boy may have better night vision than most humans in his current body, but there was no getting out of the fact that he wasn't exactly top physical condition to traverse an enchanted forest in the middle of the night to catch up to a creature with literal horse legs.

"You there!" He calls out between heavy breaths. Thankfully the centaur heard him and turned around to finally notice him. It's one of the younger ones the green-eyed boy has seen in passing once or twice.

The young creature's eyes widen as he easily recognizes the smaller figure. "L-Lord Pluto!" He stammers, clearly not used to patrolling alone what with the way he's twitching at every little thing. "What, what brings you here on this starless night?"

"I am here to request Firenze's help," Harry says firmly, "Please, bring him here as quick as your hooves can be."

Now that he's been given a more specific task, the younger centaur straightens his back and nods with a confidence that wasn't there before. "Of course Lord Pluto." He bows slightly before dashing off into the forest, eager to complete his task.

It doesn't take long before Harry can once again here the crunch of hooves over leaves, and he mentally chides himself for not getting the young centaur's name to thank later. "Lord Pluto!" Firenze greets enthusiastically, "The stars had hinted of an unexpected meeting, to think it was you!"

"Firenze," Harry welcomes with a smile, "I am sorry for taking so long to visit and under such... ill-fated circumstances."
The centaur's face turns somber at the reminder, "Ah yes, Hagrid had told us about the situation right before he had been forced out. Is this about the beast?"

The entity shrugs, "Sort of, it is more about bringing my friend a sense of closure and accomplishment. But yes, it is related to the beast. Hagrid told us something about following the spiders before he had left and I was wondering if you had an idea of what he meant."

Somber darkens to something a bit less sympathetic and far less comforting. "Spiders?" He asks, even though it is clear he has heard what Harry had said, and even clearer he was unhappy about it.

"Spiders," Harry confirms for him, just in case.

Firenze nods his head thoughtfully, his expression still far from happy, more resigned than anything. "I know what he meant," he admits, "there is an acromantula that rules over the spiders known as Aragog. If you had followed the spiders they would have led you to his hollow."


Who tells children to go meet a goddamn spider king? Isn't Ron his friend? Seriously, what the fuck? Why was none of the staff here normal? Or at least, not psychopathically wrapped with vague riddles and head games that would possibly end with your demise? Was that too much to ask?

And it's not like they could turn back now. Ron's expecting green-eyed and Harry has watched enough real life to know that guilt and feelings of uselessness and inadequacy usually led to bad things to an individual's psyche. So no, it's not like Harry could tell the other boy he's already solved Hagrid's clue without him and they should shove off, but then again, it's not like it's completely appropriate to knowingly lead his arachnophobic friend to a giant spider nest either.

But then again, maybe it would help him get over the fear. Aversion therapy and all that.

But the danger..

Nothing Harry's sure he can't handle actually. Honestly, now that he's thinking about it, he's fucking Death. What was he even worried about? A sudden awareness of what pain actually feels like tends to do that to you apparently.

"Lord Pluto?" Firenze prods tentatively, "I've had the forethought to bring a hot beverage and a blanket, do you wish to use them? Not that I'm implying that you are so weak to-"

Harry laughed, "Firenze, this is the one time you should judge me by my appearance. Yes, a blanket and a hot cuppa sounds absolutely smashing."

The centaur preens at a job well done. "May I?" He asks, gesturing to the items.

Harry nods.

Firenze steps into his personal space, taking the small but warm looking blanket off his back with a little flourish before taking his time wrapping the thing around Harry's shoulders. As he was fussing with it, the centaur murmured, "Forgive me if I'm overstepping my bounds Lord Pluto, but you seem... burdened?"

The boy gave him an amused smile, "Meeting a spider king in the middle of the night does that to you." He jokes, but Firenze surprisingly does not laugh. If anything he looks a little pained.

"I didn't mean, I meant," The half man gives a frustrated little huff, it was very horse like. Sometimes
it's hard to remember that, as elegant and noble centaurs as a race are, they live in rather primitive housing in forests and therefore are not exactly the epitome of poetry that they like to make themselves out to be. "You deserve better than whoever had the gall to hurt you."

Harry sharply inhales, the night air is freezing, and it feels like it scrapes down his throat. "How did you-" He starts before he stops himself, choosing instead to glare at the night sky with indignation. Fate was not going to hear the end of this, he silently swore. "That is none of your business," He says tightly, embarrassed and irritated at his mistake, his stupidity being brought up once again. "And I would prefer if you would drop the subject now."

Firenze looks down, chastised. A hoof kicks the dirt almost petulantly. "I am just saying, that person is a fool to hurt you."

The green eyed being closes his eyes and shakes his head self loathingly, "No, I was the fool." He says, and before the other could protest, Harry gives him a wane smile, "But it is very nice of you to say Firenze."

"Anyone would devote their whole lifetime just to have a fleeting moment of your affection." The centaur declares confidently. Harry's smile turns devious as his cheeks redden and his eyes glow appreciatively at the praise.

"And would you happen to be part of anyone?" He asks curious and suggestive, taking a step closer to the bared chest of the handsome creature.

Firenze flushed, confidence evaporated under the heated question in the younger wizard's gaze. "I.. wouldn't say I was nobody."

"Mmmm.." Harry hummed appreciatively as they moved a little closer to each other. "I certainly wouldn't say that either."

The centaur immediately gives in, leaning down to push his lips gently against the other's own. It was very sweet, if a little timid, but Harry patiently coaxes the half man to relax into it, wrapping his hands around his muscled neck as best he could to tug him down encouragingly further. Firenze mirrors the movement; hands are far bigger than Harry's own and the entity loves how the creature's hand practically envelops his thin neck, enough so that his thumbs could absentmindedly play with the lobes of his ear, making him shudder against the feeling.

"You're so.. responsive." Firenze says wonderingly.

The wizard smiles, "Thanks." He responds, before moving his hands further upwards from where they had rested previously. His palm gently molds against the curves of the side of the centaur' face, feeling the curve of his cheekbones, the heat of his skin, and the off feeling of an uneven shave that tickles under Harry's hand.

Firenze doesn't move, doesn't dare to, his eyes blown wide in disbelief and breath held back in tentative excitement. "You are gorgeous," Harry murmurs, "So wild and majestic at the same time. I want to watch you run free for miles for eternity and yet I want to cage you up for just as long."

"Do it, my lord." Firenze chokes out. He's breathing heavily now, whether it is from fear or lust his heartbeat beats fast with the anticipation. "Whatever you want, and I will give."

"So subservient," Harry croons, smattering kisses where he can reach, "So loyal, even for me."

"Especially for you." The centaur swears breathlessly. "You are beautiful milord, you are not the stars that watch on but you are an inescapable nightmare of the sweetest torture."
"Such pretty praises from your lovely mouth." Harry's eyes darken until it's nothing but black oil and radioactive green rings, the entity can hear the other's pulse ratchet up faster at the sight. There's an exhilaration, a rush that comes from tangling with death, of managing to foolhardily run headlong into it and coming out unscathed, and Firenze can feel that high like a drug as he literally looks at Death in the eyes. Not the lovely Harry Potter, not the refined Lord Pluto, but pure unadulterated Death. It's a feeling you could die for. "Come join me. Let go of your place in Fate's domain and join mine. Join me." Harry hisses, and his voice sounds like it's been overlaid by an echo of something much darker. It's the voice in your head that tells you to pull the trigger, to end it all, to take that final step over the edge. It's faint and full of cruel sympathy and so terribly, terrifyingly seductive with promise.

It would be so easy to bend and break and get down on his legs to worship the being before him. The centaur almost does, wavering visibly as Harry surges up to give him a demandingly beseeching kiss. Soft, cold lips are pushing against his own insistently, as Harry licks and nibbles into the inside of the centaur's mouth with an expertise that belies his physical age. Small hands are running down his bared torso, expertly mapping out every contour and muscle, and the centaur can feel his own much larger hands do the same.

There is a sense of eroticism there, almost poetic if it wasn't so perverse. Roughened hands of a beast that grope such a delicate, moonlit body of a young boy under the shadows of the night, looking so easily fragile, breakable were it not for the knowledge of knowing what truly resides under the pale skin. There are parallels in convoluted parallels in this picture, enough to make one question which one is really the beast, and which is the innocent child being led astray?

Firenze bends and bends, but he does not break, "Lord Pluto," He chokes out rather undignified, as he pulls away from the searing kiss that threatens to complete burn his lungs.

Death looks smug at the sight, "Your answer Firenze?" He asks lazily, lightly tracing the major artery of the other's neck with his nails.

"I would give up anything for you," Firenze says, soft and subdued. "My life is yours to take. My soul is yours to use."

The smile on the young boy's face was both angelic and predatory, "Just what I wanted to hear." Death croons, he leans in to seal the deal with a classic kiss but finds himself pushing at air. "Huh?"

Firenze has taken a step back, looking nervously at the ground. His hind legs shift side to side, and his tail flickers anxiously. "But I just cannot give up my faith. I am truly sorry milord, but to disregard everything I've been taught as a young foal, to abandon my race, that is something I do not think I could do."

There is nothing but the void of silence and darkness between them now. The centaur's ears twitch warily as his keener senses go on full alert, as if only just then truly aware of the immense power of the being before him now that he is unsure of where he stood in the other's eyes. Said eyes had gone completely black, save for the rings of green that were glowing so brightly they could be easily mistaken for stars in the night. The darkness around them has gotten even darker, what's once was a comforting presence now felt choking and ominous to the centaur.

"You would tease me like this?" Death asks, the voice of Harry Potter barely heard over the hissing echoes of his ghoulish voice. Firenze instinctively takes a timid step back, hunches his shoulders, flattens his ears, anything to look smaller, more submissive. "Feed me these half-truths, and pretty little promises, only to step away at the very last second?"

"I'm so sorry Lord Pluto," the centaur apologizes profusely, "I didn't realize what I was doing, and
you were right there, and it was all so fast,"

The entity does not respond, instead choosing to stare Firenze down with his eyes. His eyes which, had terrifyingly gone completely black save for the smallest pinpricks of green that burns through the darkness. Firenze can hear himself panic, his breath shortening, heart beating down his rib cage anxious to escape, fear has won over excitement, and it consumes him as he realizes that this is no longer a game to play with. This is his life, and it is currently on very shaky ground. "M-milord, please..." He begged soft and shaky.

Death blinked, long and slow like one of those lazy cats in the summer sun, and it occurs vaguely to the centaur that the boy hadn't blinked his eyes once since they've changed color. "I think," He finally says, low and dark and horrifyingly foreboding, "There's been a bit misunderstanding."

Now it was Firenze's turn to blink dumbly. "I don't, uh, um?"

Death squinted, "You thought I was going to kill you didn't you?" It sounded accusing and the layers upon grating layers of voices overlapping made him sound haunted and indignantly fierce.

"I-I'm sorry?" Firenze hastily replied, a little confused at the dissonance between expression and tone. The child containing the being of all things dead sighed.

"No, no," The younger looking one shook his head, his voice dripping with cutting and icy disapproval. Firenze had the uncontrollable urge to bow his head like a shamed student. "I'm the one who should apologize. I am not mad, well not really, this is just what I sound like at a particular point."

The centaur snapped his head back to attention and just.. stared. "What?"

"My true voice is... difficult for mere mortals to hear, let alone try to vocalize. Think of this as a more unfiltered, crude version of what I would usually sound like." Death explains with a calm patient demeanor that completely contrasts with his voice that sounds like it was the unholy product of a mass genocide and an insane asylum. Though as he keeps talking, the centaur can hear his voice slowly but surely reverting back to the more crisp, clear English accent Harry Potter usually takes on. "I don't usually push someone like this," He adds apologetically before embarrassedly admitting, "I guess, maybe, you were right. About me not feeling so great about.. getting hurt. And I am sorry I took that out on you like this."

"...No worries Lord Pluto." Truth be told, it stung a little bit to realize he was essentially a rebound to the being, but Firenze was far too relieved not to be struck dead right now. "If anything I should apologise for backing out like that, or at least leading you on in such a manner while you were emotionally uh, overcompensating."

Death waved the excuse off dismissively, "I think we can both agree that what is done is done." Death closes his eyes and sighs, before opening them to reveal a normal set of bright green eyes. It's not just the eye color, the moment he reopened his eyes it was like something shifted back in the world, something heavy and more had taken a step back, leaving the mysterious, enigmatic Harry Potter behind. Harry smiled wryly, "It is just as well, since I'm fairly sure with the mood I'm in it would have ended with us either failing to attempt intercourse, which would have been physically impossible since I'm restricted to this limited form, or me literally choking you with my tongue."

"I, um, don't understand how you could-"

"It's a thing I like to do." Harry vaguely answers. To be frank, it's one of his preferred forms of taking a life, an intimate kiss of death that could either be the most painfully orgasmic feeling for the
victim or just downright torturous, depending on the day. Of course, explaining the exact details of
how it would go down would probably scar the poor half-horse creature for life. Hell, even
explaining it to people who actually get off to being asphyxiated might pull back. "Don't worry about
it."

Firenze still looked incredibly concerned over his inadvertent near death, which really, probably
means that Harry just dodged a bullet there. It's not a good move, politically, to create powerful
spiritual beings who feel resentful about dying so quickly just for a quick fling. It also meant the
centaur had no idea how serious the entity in him would take it when he said his life was in Harry's
hands.

Harry blamed this on the increasing divorce rate these days. It's like, no one takes these sort of vows
seriously anymore. He kind of gets it, sometimes there are certain contexts and specific situations
which warrant a need to break such oaths. But people should realise that words have a meaning, and
that promising your life away can actually mean something to others.

He'll have to lecture Firenze about this later, when the wound is less fresh obviously. Because while
Harry doesn't want to be a victim blamer here- he acknowledges that a lot of this mess was due to
him putting unwanted pressure on the poor centaur- but the creature was kind of asking for it. You
don't plan to dance with the devil without being prepared to be tripped up after all.

Tripped up.

Screwed over.

Oh my god.

"Shit!" Harry swore, "Ron's going to kill me for this!"

Ron sneezed as he tried to maintain what little warmth he could get. Invisible the cloak may be, but
properly insulated it is not. "I am going to kill him." He swears fervently under his breath to the
freezing night air, "I'll kill him, I bloody will,"

He has his head is poking out, floating and visibly shivering from the cold night's air for the last
however long it's been, just in case his wanker of a friend forgot where he was. Though at this rate,
unless Harry had gotten horribly eaten by something, Ron was going to give up this whole thing and
find new friends.

"Ron!" Harry calls out.

"M-Merlin, are y-you s-s-serious?!" He complains as Harry is trotted up on top of Firenze with a
warm-looking blanket wrapped around him and a cup of something steaming.

Harry grinned, "The soup's for you."

The Weasley still side eyed him irritately but seemed otherwise satisfied. "Oh, well then- wait did
you make out with Firenze?! MATE."

The green-eyed boy just kept smiling as he hopped down to pass his shivering friend the cup.
Honestly, Ron was getting really good at figuring out stuff like that for some reason. The kid has a
surprisingly impressive gaydar. Last week he accidentally outed some seventh year Ravenclaw. Poor
girl. All she wanted was to get the last blueberry muffin. "I'm not even going to ask how you knew
that."
"Your shirt is ruffled, and your hair is a mess, but it's not like, dirty, meaning stuff happened that didn't involve you face planting into a bush or something. Your skin is pink, but that could be cuz of the cold- however, your mouth definitely looks like it's been smashed onto something, very enthusiastically actually. And your neck looks like what it looked like the morning after you snuck into Percy's dumb private prefect bedroom." Ron immediately listed.

"What are you? The Sherlock Holmes of second base?" Harry muttered sulkily as he self-consciously tried to neaten up his appearance.

"The who?"

"Never mind, you'll get it when I give you your present next Christmas."

Ron sighed, "Harry.. I want to say I'm excited.. but I have the worst feeling that I'm getting a book for Christmas."

"You are. Surprise."

"Shite."

Firenze coughed, breaking the flow of the banter and becoming the main focus of the two young boys, "If you are quite finished my lor- Mr. Potter, Mr. Weasley, I will accompany you to Aragog's lair."

Harry looked up at the centaur and patted his flank, "Ah yes, thank you Firenze for reminding us. Would you mind terribly if Ron and I-?"

The creature gave the entity a soppy, devoted look that had Ron wanting to gag. Really, did Harry have to bloody seduce everything with a penis and at least a three-year age difference?

"For you, I will gallop through fire." Firenze declared proudly, "Hop on! We have a bit of distance to carry."

"How does he know my name?" Ron questions as he hefts himself up onto the centaur behind Harry, "Are you actually dating this guy? Who the hell is Aragog?" Then with a really soft and embarrassed whisper, "Is he, uh, still horse.. down there?"

"I meet up and converse with the centaurs from time to time. Your name has come up in passing." Harry replies as Firenze begins a quick trot across the forest ground. "We are not dating due to different interests and lack of time and," Harry coughs awkwardly and multiple times which the young Weasley assumes means whatever Harry says next is going to be the real reason why they weren't dating, "different anatomical bodies."

"Ah." Ron bloody fucking knew it. Horse cock. Heh. He wonders if they actually attempted- nope, OBLIVIATE.

"Aragog is a giant spider!" Firenze blurts out suddenly, and Ron immediately feels bad for talking literally behind the poor, mortified half-man's back. But then the guilt is replaced swiftly once the centaur's words sink in.

"How giant is giant?!" He shouts alarmed. Because clearly, that should have been the first question he asked. Bloody hell, if it is any bigger than his foot…

"Well, his young minions are the size of small cart horses," Firenze continues conversationally, apparently eager to move on from any conversation relating to his genitalia, and completely oblivious
to the wide-eyed terror emanating from his red headed passenger, "But Aragog is much larger. Hagrid had once described him as the size of a baby 'elephant,' whatever that is."

Harry glanced back at Ron with worry. As he should be. Because Ron was looking at the fast-moving ground passing by like he was contemplating how injured he would be if he just fell off right there and then. "Uh, you've met Aragog personally yes?" He asks warily. Harry isn't fond of spiders as a whole himself, but he certainly won't be too badly off by it. His friend however, may be a bit of a problem.

The galloping centaur slowed down a bit as he pondered on his answer. It was obvious he was picking his words carefully, this did not bode well. "Yes.. But, we centaurs, as a community, do not, well, approve of the acromantula's presence in this forest. This sentiment is very mutual."

The young wizarding savior closes his eyes and massages his forehead. "So what you are saying," He translates, annoyed at this stupidly complicated story he has inadvertently jumped into, "Is that you both are feuding for the land and hate each other."

There's a pause before, "…Yes."

Ron groans like the admission has physically pained him.

"You probably won't be joining us then?" Harry questions, already knowing the answer.

"…Apologies." Firenze says sheepish, but quickly adds, "But I shall be waiting a short distance away and will swiftly arrive at your call should you require a hasty escape from, um, being consumed."

Now Ron sounds like he is being stabbed in the stomach. Multiple times.

Harry pats him comfortingly on the knee.

It's not very effective.

They're in some sort of cave, dug out thing. It's covered in webs and spiders. Harry would not list it anywhere near best places he's been in this world so far. Admittedly not the worst. Still. It's not the interior decorating that's the problem, it's the inhabitants.

Turns out, Firenze wasn't exaggerating about the size of the spiders. Or Aragog. Jesus Christ.

Aragog was huge. However, past the size, Harry noticed that there were hints of gray hidden on the spider's hairy black body, and each of his eyes was glassy and milky white. Aragon wasn't just huge. He was old. And blind.

"Who is this?" He clicks to the smaller (in comparison) spiders.

The spiders all click and chitter excitedly as they throw out various answers, clearly they have recognized who Harry is. To his thinly veiled disdain, and to Ron's relief, the spiders had all but ignored the Weasley in favor of crowding around Harry. The raven haired boy had to shudder at all those hairy legs brushing up against his body in a manner meant to be enticing.

'It could be worse,' He thinks to himself, as one very bold leg nuzzles up his inner thigh. 'It could have been to follow the slugs.'

"DESIST." Aragog orders, much to the relief of Harry.
“Mate,” Ron whispers at the side of his mouth, "You kay?"

"A little violated," Harry admits, "But I'll deal."

"I am so glad you are here," His freckled friend says fervently, "so glad."

"Because I'm spider-nip?" He asks dryly.

"No." Ron is not meeting his eyes. "Okay, yes."

"Ta for that," Harry mutters before turning to face the giant eight-legged creature before them. "Aragog!" He calls out before Aragog calls him something like 'Death Lord' or 'Prince of Darkness' or 'Hell King.' He's not sure how to explain that away to Ron if he did. "I am known as Harry Potter here, me and my companion are friends with Hagrid!"

Aragog does not answer for a bit. Harry dearly hopes Aragog is one of those giant spider kings that are intelligent enough to read behind lines. Surprisingly enough, there are not many giant spider kings out there for him but the ones he has met, its a fifty-fifty chance that they can quote Oscar Wilde or they're dumber than a chipped kettle. God, he hopes Aragog can quote Oscar Wilde.

"Hagrid has never sent any… humans into our hollow before." Was what the acromatula finally settled on. Harry internal breathes a sigh of relief.

"Hagrid's in trouble," He explains, "He's gone to some sort of prison?"

"Azkaban." Ron corrects in a squeaky voice. Apparently even in his biggest nightmare, the boy had to be a smart arse.

The boy rolled his green eyes, "Yeah, that place. Anyway, they think he set Slytherin's beast onto the school."

Aragog clicked his pincers fearfully; the sound multiplied a hundred fold by the other spiders surrounding them. It was intimidating, especially with the echo of the cavern making things even worse, but it was clear the noise was out of concern than malice. Even Ron did not look as sick as Harry expected. Still looked pretty ill though.

"But that was years ago," Aragog clicked fretfully. "They thought that I was the monster that dwells in their secret-filled chamber. They thought that Hagrid had opened the Chamber and set me free."

"You… didn't come from the Chamber of Secrets?" Ron asks warily, and Harry wants to smack him. Aragog looks equally as incensed.

"Oh my fucking god Ron." Harry snaps before breathing out very slowly. Deep breaths. Deep. Breathes. It is not Ron's fault all wizards are idiots. It is not Ron's fault all wizards are idiots. It is not Ron's fault all wizards are idiots. "Slytherin's beast… is a gigantic mutherfucking snake."

"Oh." The redhead says thoughtfully, "Huh." He says again. And finally, "That makes way more sense."

"Also, a traveler gave me to Hagrid when I was just an egg and him, only a boy," Aragog added. Harry feels like Ron told him something about the half-giant getting a random dragon's egg last year. Ron clearly remembers it if the face he pulled was any indication. Jesus, how many eggs does Hagrid get from strangers?! "Hagrid cared for me, hid me in a cupboard in the castle, fed me his scraps. When I was discovered, and blamed for the death of a girl, he protected me. I have lived here in the forest since. Hagrid still visits me. Even got me my wife, Mosag. He is good man. He is
friend."

"That's... nice?"

Harry is very proud of Ron for being so polite, despite literally facing his worst fears. Go Ron.

Aragog clicks his pincers in agreement. "Yes. It is."

There's a lull in the conversation. It seems the spider has overused his vocabulary for the day. The young Weasley nudges his friend and shoots him a pleading look, Harry immediately understands. With a smile, Harry claps his hands with the finality of a smarmy businessman sealing a shady deal with some poor naive sap. "Well, this has been a very fun time for us all, but it's late, and we should go... Why are you guys creeping closer?"

"Go?" Aragog says slowly. "I think not..."

"But, but, but," Ron stutters. Harry is frowning disapprovingly, not that the old spider could see it.

"I will not allow my sons and daughters to harm Hagrid." The large spider clicks, "But Hagrid told me a story once, about how some human managed to get a beautiful creature as his mate by stealing her water skin. And what father would not want their children to have the best mate possible?"

Harry wants to bury his face into his hands. It figures the spider probably doesn't know Shakespeare, but he knows the lesser known stories of the Selkie maiden. Fucking Hagrid. "And my friend?"

"Pleasedon'tmakemehavesexwithspiders, Pleasedon'tmakemehavesexwithspiders, Pleasedon'tmakemehavesexwithspiders, Pleasedon'tmakemehavesexwithspiders." Ron is chanting relentlessly.

Aragog does a full-bodied jerk which could be construed as a shrug, "When fresh meat wanders so willingly into our midst, how can I deny it?"

Ron stops his frantic chant, eyes wide. But then he shrugs as well, "Eh, better than the alternative."

Harry doesn't answer. Instead, he grabs Ron's hand and bolts out of there, "RUN YOU MORON, RUN!"

"FIRENZEEEEEEE!" Ron helpfully screams at the top of his lungs, the redhead has always had a larger lung capacity and it proves incredibly useful now.

The centaur bursts through the bushes, with Bane right beside him. "Pluto!" Bane shouts, his muscular arm reaching out to grab Harry, and, in an amazing show of strength, hefts the small child onto his back mid-stride. Harry has to mentally fan himself a little. Damn.

"Did he just call you-woAH!" Ron yelps as Firenze does the same. His question is easily forgotten as the two centaurs galloped quickly through the forest, escaping the hordes of spiders through a series of leaps and twists and other incredible displays of physical prowess. It was frankly, incredibly hot. He even caught Ron admiring Firenze and Bane's form once or twice, apparently intrigued at the way their musculature allowed such flexibility and agility.

At least he's not that traumatized over this then.

It's about twelve minutes in that the trees finally started to thin out and the group can at last see the flat lands outside the forest area. The centaurs dash evened out into a light, fast-paced trot and soon enough they halted to a stop, reaching the edge of the woods. Ron whooped loudly in relieved
victory, Firenze even indulged the young boy and reared up on his hind legs to make the scene even more dramatic. The Weasley laughed at that.

"Firenze.." Bane says disapprovingly, clearly still with his hang-ups about dealing with wizards and witches. The dark haired centaur though pauses as a small hand runs through his thigh mane.

"Oh, let my friend be indulged," Harry murmurs, "He has just faced his own worst fear, and that deserves some pampering don't you think?"

"Of course milord." Bane demurred. For stepping down so easily, Harry rewarded the centaur with a chaste kiss under the crook of Bane's neck, relishing in the shiver he has sent through the larger body.

"Harry!" Ron admonishes, apparently having the worst timing in the world. Firenze is also watching the two, looking oddly both wistful and bemused. Apparently almost dying from fraternization changes their relationship dynamics to something a little less romantic in nature.

Wait. Is Harry getting friend zoned?

Shaking off these thoughts, he puts on a cheeky smile for his redheaded friend, "We all have different ways to relieve stress." He says enigmatically.

"Yeah well," His friend mutters, "As long as you don't relieve stress with me…"

Harry made an exaggerated gagging noise as he dismounted Bane, patting his flank in silent thanks before making his way to the redhead. "Please, with the exception of your sister, you are the last Weasley in your generation I'd consider relieving stress with."

Ron, very rudely, flipped him the bird in response as he got off Firenze's back, "Cheers to that mate."

"Speaking of cheers," Harry turned to the two centaurs, "You have our utmost gratitude Firenze, Bane. Thank you so much for helping us."

"Yeah!" Ron piped up, "You guys are the best!"

"It was our pleasure," Firenze replies gracefully.

"Farewell milord and human companion." Bane stupidly says as he bows. Ron raises his brows at that, while Harry tries to glower the centaur out of existence. Realising his mistake, Bane hastily backtracks back into the forest, followed by a serene Firenze.

When Harry looks to the side, he can see Ron's eyebrows still firmly stuck upward on his forehead. "Milord, really Harry?"

"It's, uh," The raven haired wizard wracks his head desperately trying to think up an excuse but is saved by, of all people, Ron himself who just shakes his head exasperatedly.

"Mate, no offence, but I don't want to hear about whatever weird shit you and the centaurs wank off to when no one's watching."

Of course, with excuses like that, Harry isn't exactly sure if he should be feeling glad about this alternative either. "Ron!" He splutters, scandalised. Ron is what, twelve? Thirteen? How does he even know about stuff like that without access to technology or films or whatever constitutes as the internet in this time period?
Oh Jesus Christ, is this Harry's fault? It feels like it is very much his fault. He has officially corrupted a child. He feels dirty.

Ron, the prick, just laughs at his friend's shocked embarrassment, "Harry, oh Merlin, your face!" He wheezes. Despite wanting to protest more, and question Ron about how sex education works in this community, Harry holds off, for now, to ask something much more important first.

The green-eyed boy shifts awkwardly before starting to begin their slow walk to the castle. Ron immediately follows suit. "You feeling okay I gather then?" Harry asks in faked nonchalance.

In reply, Ron shrugs, "My biggest fear isn't being murdered by spiders anymore at least," The young Weasley then pulls a sour face at him, "though I'm not quite sure how to feel about that since now my new biggest fear is being sexually assaulted by them."

"I feel like that should be my biggest fear." The green-eyed boy replied dryly.

"Either way, I'm gonna murder Hagrid." Ron vowed, "'Follow the spiders' my arse."

"Well at least we know now he's not the Heir of Slytherin for sure."

Ron rolled his eyes and scowled, "Yeah, because growing a giant arse flesh eating spider in a cupboard is such a great alibi."

"Hagrid is a pretty shit guy in that respect yes," Harry agrees. Because while the half-giant is a pretty nice fellow all in all and certainly has an admirable love for under-appreciated creatures, it does not change the fact that his ability to rationalize and awareness that he lives in an environment filled with tiny, vulnerable children is incredibly fucked up. Like, those giant spiders just live there, twenty minutes away from where they all sleep. Get your shit in order Hagrid, seriously. "But technically innocent in this context."

"Yeah." Ron reluctantly agreed, "Ain't gonna stop me from giving him a piece of my bloody mind later."

"Get in line buddy."
The one where Death meets a Basilisk.

Or alternatively, the one where Belynda (variant of the German word that roughly translates to beautiful serpent) the Basilisk meets the Romeo to her Juliet

Alternatively to the alternative; the one where Tom Marvolo Riddle is pretty much Paris from Romeo and Juliet, except Paris never did the do with Romeo. Or got eaten.

Or alternatively to the alternative alternatives; the one where Harry finds himself a reluctant Romeo in the middle of a very messed up scene where Juliet is a giant basilisk and Paris is a half-souled dick. He's fairly sure this wasn't in the original writings but Lockhart cries like a lil bitch so it's alright.

OR the meta-alternative; the one where every Tom Riddle x Harry shipper hates the author and threatens to burn me down

So, Hermione woke up.

Everyone was absolutely gobsmacked. Harry kind of hates how stupid every wizard and witch here seems to be. After all there was still some of the antidote left over that they didn't use on Headless Nick just for this very bloody reason. And though that was used mainly for the older Ravenclaw that had also been petrified at the same time, Hermione had ingested enough to recover, albeit at a much slower rate.

It was all very anti-climatic in Harry's opinion. Not that he isn't grateful. But still. It's almost like his decision in going out in the middle of the night to make out with centaurs and get molested by spiders in the dark forbidden forest suddenly meant absolutely shit nothing.

But yay for Hermione or whatever.

At least Ron was in a much better mood now. Well, he was. Right up until they had their first Transfigurations class with Hermione again. Because the moment the news spread, he and the general student body lost their collective shit.

"HOW DO WE STILL HAVE EXAMS!" Ron howls at lunch time, his voice just one of the many loud complaints and whines filling in the Great Hall.

Hermione sniffed, "It's like Professor McGonagall said, the whole point of keeping Hogwarts open was to maintain our education. Plus it's not like any of us really stayed petrified for long."

"Yeah, it would be a complete shit thing to do to just continue exams if a bunch of people had been lying petrified for the past half year or so." Harry agrees as he sips his apple juice. "At most they've lost like two months. And those students were mainly like us second years or firsties so they don't really have any serious crap they needed to do like OWLs and TROLLs."

Hermione sighed, long-sufferingly. Like being petrified was the least painful thing she had to endure compared to listening to Harry. "Troll is a grade, Harry. It's not an exam."

Harry smiled at his friend's pain, "Oh I've missed you."
"Guuuuuys." Ron moans, slumping till his chin hits the table, "How are you not feeling what I'm feeling?"

"Oh, well I've written down my notes a few weeks ahead so technically I'm not really behind on anything." The bushy haired Gryffindor shrugged. Harry copied the motion.

"And I've never gotten lower than perfect in most of the practical stuff, so I only really need to study for Potions and Herbology. And I've lived with Professor Snape for like a few months so..."

"I need dumber friends." Ron muttered darkly.

"Professor... Can we... uh..."

Severus looked up from where he was marking some particularly horrible fifth year essays. He despairs at the future of wizard kind. Harry stands awkwardly just outside the potion master's personal bedroom, he's wearing an oversized shirt. Snape's oversized shirt. It's almost ridiculous how adorable and erotic the younger wizard looks. He just wants to tug Harry onto his lap and-

"Yes?" The Slytherin asks coldly. Harry fidgets even more uncomfortably and Snape tries hard not to look at the way the hem of his shirt would lift up against the young wizard's shifting thighs. If it would just move a little further up...

"Uh, Professor? Are you even listening?"

Snape jerked his head from where it had been slowly tilting to the side in his body's traitorous way of trying to succumb deeper to his perversions. "Wha- I apologise, I was thinking of... ways to choke Glassing for this horrible essay."

The unexpected change in topic startles a surprised laugh from Harry and the older man can't help but smile wryly in return. It had been a while since they had felt enough at ease with each other to exchange lighthearted conversation, and it had felt even longer since he had seen Harry's sweet smile directed at him.

Apparently emboldened by the professor's smile, Harry shuffles into Snape's bedroom with only a little hesitation, and walks up to where the man was currently sitting. The boy curiously cranes his neck to peek at what the other is writing. Snape does not stare at the pale skin Harry so obliviously exposes at the action. But, if he just bends forward a little bit more, Snape swears he could...

The professor inwardly panics that he's getting worse.

"You write with a lot of red ink." Harry comments, completely unaware of his professor's wretched and conflicted thoughts. Snape on his part just raised an eyebrow that somehow both conveyed irritation and very mild amusement.

"I can see that. I am the one who is writing with it after all."

"Yes but from what I've learnt, red ink usually heavily implies to a student that the comment is negative and they're doing something wrong."

"That's correct."

"But you're writing nice things."

This time, the deadpanned look Snape gives is a hundred percent genuine. "Potter I never write nice
Harry huffs and crosses his arms, "Well the fact you're not berating them and their future offspring makes me say differently. Why don't you write in blue ink or something? It's less intimidating."

"Ah but I am the Unholy Bat that lives in the dungeons." Snape states dryly, causing the younger boy to chuckle at the rare show of dramatics, "I rule my classrooms with fear, it is not in my nature to mark with blue ink."

"What about stickers?"

"...You cannot be serious."

"Stickers seemed to be quite revered by children when placed on their work. It indicates good work." Harry replied so seriously the potions master couldn't help but let himself smile helplessly, he can only hope his expression is restrained enough not to reveal how hopelessly endearing he thinks the young Potter boy is.

"Aren't you one of those children?"

The green eyed boy looked at him strangely, before giving one of his half quirked grins, his eyes crinkling in humor at a joke lost on the older man. "Of course I am. However I'm not so immature to be enamoured by a shiny star shaped sticky bit of plastic on my work."

"Then why should I even bother if not even you find solace in these.. stickers." He asks.

Harry puffs up his chest and looks at the potions master with the indignant pride of a ruffled owl. "I am the exception, not the rule Professor."

"Unfortunately so." Snape says long-sufferingly, though his tone contradicts the soft way he looks at the other. He brings his hand up to ruffle the boy's soft hair affectionately like how he used to do before. Harry looks surprised at the gesture, but quickly melts into it with equal affection, moving closer to the professor until his chest brushes against Snape's shoulder.

"May I hug you sir?" Harry asks with an embarrassed blush on his face, he's looking everywhere but Snape's face like he actually thought the professor was ever going to say no. "I mean, if you, no, never mind, that was a stupid-"

"Yes." The potions master blurts out, because apparently the self control he used to pride himself on is obsolete in the face of Harry Potter. "You may, well, if you still wish to."

The wizarding saviour did not have to be offered twice, tentatively pulling himself up onto Snape's lap until he is effectively straddling the man, slim fingers digging into his shoulders for balance. The boy curls up against Snape's chest and sighs contentedly at the warmth of contact while the potions master just watches him fold into his arms, marvelling at how petite Harry was, how perfectly he molds against him.

After a few moments revealing in the embrace, Harry murmurs a soft, nervous, "I really am sorry.. for everything I've said and well, just everything."

Snape hums tonelessly, truth be told, he's still viciously upset over this whole mess. Upset and jealous and so incredibly bitter. But he's not the emotionally driven teenager that he was, and he's definitely not going to go crying to the next dark cult that offers him a cuddle just because he's angry. "I know you are." Snape finally settles on, "And I can't say I've exactly forgiven you because I don't but... I have missed your presence here greatly."
"I've missed you too." Harry murmured, completely embarrassed now as he buries his face into the crook of Snape's neck, something that the older man was grateful for since like this the other wouldn't be able to see the flush rising from his cheeks. Then again, he wasn't able to see Harry's face either. Ah the pros and cons of this situation is truly as complicated as it is juvenile.

They stayed like that for a while, contented to bask in each other's presence until Harry spoke up once again.

"So…stickers?"

Snape sighed, he really had missed this, Merlin forbid.

"No Potter."

"It's a basilisk."

Ron and Harry looked at each other, than back at the stern, serious face of Hermione's.

"Oh, yeah. We, uh, know already." Harry says awkwardly.

"Harry figured it out ages ago." Ron added. "He only told me about it like a week ago though before he got sexually assaulted by giant spiders for me."

Hermione stared at them. "I… don't know where to even begin to question."

"The snake thing was obvious. The basilisk thing was just an obvious leap in logic." Harry answers blithely before delicately cutting off a bite-sized piece of steak and bringing it into his mouth with a strange amount of reverence. He has begun to appreciate the wonders of hot meat now that he has spent so long bereft of it. Harry will never understand those that would willingly give up such delicacies, he totally respects anyone with that sort of self control, but he does not understand it nonetheless.

The bushy haired girl made an annoyed noise. "No, that is not even, that is not, you kept this information away from us for how long?!” She turns to Ron, "Ron! You aren't annoyed he kept us in the dark like that?"

Ron shrugged, "S'not like we didn't do the same thing last year. Personally, I'm more annoyed by the way he's eating, seriously mate do you and that steak need a room or?"

Harry flipped his friend the bird and pointedly made a low, drawn out moan the next time he put some steak in his mouth. A student that had happened to be walking behind them at the time, tripped and fell onto his red blushing face. "I told the professors about my theory of the beast being a basilisk, it is honestly not my fault they're doing such a shitty job in finding it."

Before Hermione could ask more about the subject, a tense and agitated Ginny Weasley came over and sat down next to Ron.

"Wassup?" The freckled boy managed to garble out through a mouthful of mash potatoes. Both Hermione and Harry wrinkled up their noses at that. "Come on spit it out."

"Please Ron, for the love of god don't spit it out." Harry muttered.

"Here, here." Hermione agreed.

Ron opened his mouth revealing the chewed up contents of his meal before swallowing it down,
much to the other two's disgust. "Oh shut it, I meant Ginny and you know it."

"I've got to tell you something," Ginny mumbled, carefully not looking at Harry. Though that wasn't exactly new. Honestly, Harry wonders if the girl hates him or something.

"What is it?" He asks politely.

Ginny stares at her fiddling hands for a minute, looking like she desperately holds a terrible secret but can't find the words to say it.

"What?" Ron asks exasperated and annoyed. "Seriously, just say it already?"

Finally, when it looked like the youngest redhead had gathered enough courage to speak, they were interrupted by Zacharias Smith out of all the inconvenient people in the world.

"Hey, Potter! Hear your walking around, carrying a diary everywhere? How queer can you get?"

Ginny jumped up with a startled shriek, gave Smith a fleeting, frightened look, and scampered away. Zacharias gave the fleeing girl an equally startled look. "Okay, what's the deal with her?"

"Maybe she got scared off by your ugly mug and your shittier attitude Smith." Harry retorted snidely, "Seriously, she was just about to tell us something, something possibly important… maybe."

"More important than you anyway," Hermione added haughtily, Harry gave her a high five for that, because, yes Hermione. Yes.

"What do you even want Smith?" Ron backed up with a scowl. Smith and his cronies all sneered at the insults.

"I don't have to explain myself to the likes of any of you." The Hufflepuff scoffed, irritated. "I just wanted to confirm for myself if it's really true that Potter over here writes in a diary like a sissy little girl. I bet you wear a nightie too eh Potter? With pretty pink lace and ribbons?"

Harry bats his eyelashes mockingly and leans toward Zacharias flirtatiously, "Why Zacharias, you dirty minded Hufflepuff, is that what you do all day? Imagine me in women's clothing, how bold."

Smith's face goes a completely alarming shade of bright pink as he splutters incoherent denials. The green eyed boy smirks and resumes eating his meal, choosing to exaggeratedly lavish his cutlery with his tongue as he did so. Ron and Hermione, seeing this, began giggling into their food whilst the Hufflepuff group silently fumes, red-faced.

"I'll remember this." Smith seethes, Harry barely responds, just rolls his eyes as the other boy stomps away angrily.

Once they were finally a good distance away, Ron decided to speak up, "Dude, Smith is so gay for you."

Harry gagged. "Ugh, Ron, please desist in your jokes. That really isn't funny."

"No, I think Ron is right." Hermione nods sagely, "Smith totally has a thing for you."

"You could say it's-" Ron begins with a sly grin. Harry glares, having a very good idea about what the freckled Weasley was about to say.

"Ron, don't you dare-"
"-a weird Harry thing." Hermione finishes for her fellow Gryffindor. They then high-five in triumph as Harry groans.

"I hate you both."

Two days before exams and with the flurry of frenzied cramming going on in the school, it was almost hard to remember that there was a giant ass basilisk roaming the halls. The enforced escorting to every classroom is a good reminder though. And the constant night patrols of both prefect and professors going on. And the… still, even Harry had to admit he hadn't been putting as much thought as he should have about the whole Heir of Slytherin thing. He had kind of assumed the teachers were working on it or something.

You know, since they are competent magical adults with whatever high education standard they need to allow them to teach tiny children.

Then again, it wasn't like Lockhart had a teaching degree. And Hagrid got kicked out of school didn't he? Plus they've apparently been quite happy in complacently sitting with a potential beast of Slytherin under their noses despite like three centuries since its been stuffed in there… And no one has actually done anything about the fact giant spiders and centaurs are currently duking it out in the Forbidden forest for territory rights… Then there's Moaning Myrtle who, if Hermione's theory is correct, is actually the only real victim of the basilisk which brings up a whole bunch of other questions…

Holy shit, is this school even actually qualified to call itself a school?

Anyway, Harry had been busy. And also, if he thought about the Heir of Slytherin he would inevitable think of Tom and then Harry would be forced either to mope for the next few hours or be filled with immeasurably frustrated rage.

Harry has not made his peace with the confronting fact that half a soul, a teenaged soul, in a goddamn fucking diary, has managed to screw him over like some lovesick fool. Contrary to popular belief, time does not heal all wounds. Decapitation is one example. It's not exactly the most relevant example but it proves his point.

The point is, unless you had a trillion years, that sort of shit will stick with you if you don't do anything about it. Harry knows this. Hell, he's still a little bitter about the fact that the word orgasm basically translates to 'a little death,' like what the actual fuck right? And it took several centuries and him personally killing about sixty alternate versions of the person responsible for coming up with that term to allow his indignance to simmer to mild annoyance at best.

Unfortunately, Harry does not have the privilege for that sort of time to properly sort of his feelings before inevitably meeting the horcrux, and therefore has chosen to use an ancient mortal technique to deal with his incredibly confusing emotions in regard to the whole thing. Pushing them all deep down and trying his best to completely ignore everything that has happened. Usually this technique is strengthened by alcoholic beverages but Harry thinks he's doing a pretty good job regardless.

So it came as quite an unexpected, though in retrospect not really, surprise when McGonagall's voice echoed through the hallways midway through class. "All students to return to their House dormitories at once. All teachers return to the staffroom. Immediately, please."

Michael Corner and Justin Finch-Fletchley who were sitting next to Harry at the time looked incredibly alarmed. "Another student petrified?" The Hufflepuff wonders as they are hurriedly bustled out of the classroom.
"I don't think so," Harry answers thoughtfully, "the last time some of us got petrified no one did anything like this. Clearly something way worse has happened."

Corner shuddered, "Maybe someone finally died?"

"Or maybe the beast is finally loose in the hallways?" Finch-Fletchley hunched himself over and hugged himself tightly like that would somehow ward the basilisk away from him.

"Whatever it is, you guys should probably hurry up to your dorms." Harry sighed, it figures this sort of drama happens before exams. Fate can be such an inconvenient bitch sometimes.

The two boys exchanged worried looks before turning back to Harry, "Wait, you're not coming with us?" Finch-Fletchley asks worriedly. Corner adds, equally worried, "I mean, I'm sure no one will mind if you come over to either Ravenclaw or Hufflepuff for one night considering the circumstances."

Harry grinned at his friends confidently, "Please, if anything, it's the beast that should be worried that I'm loose in the hallways." His friends from Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff laughed at that, immediately relaxing under Harry's self-assured demeanour.

"Yeah right Potter," Corner teases, "You're good but not that good."

"Hurry up and go then," The Hufflepuff huffs good-naturedly, "The sooner you get back to your room the sooner Corner will stop fretting about you getting eaten by the beast." Corner flushed and lightly shoved the other boy who began laughing all over again. Harry blinked at the display, it seemed the two had become unexpectedly close friends since Valentines day. Interesting.

"Well, see you guys then." Harry finally said once they finally had to separate paths. The two other boys said their own goodbyes before hurrying off to their respective dorms with their respective Housemates.

Harry doesn't watch them go, instead he walks quickly to the staffroom hoping that he isn't too late to snoop for some prime information. Tom clearly has done something big and dramatic if classes were cancelled, and with any luck it'll be something that results in him being cornered in that Slytherin secret chamber that only individuals that speak snake can access. If that's all true, then Harry can easily track the horcrux down and proceed to beat the absolute shit out of that damn diary.

And by any chance he gets caught eavesdropping, he could just use some excuse on wanting to be safe and waiting for Snape to escort him back to their rooms. Honestly, his plan is so foolproof it's amazing.

The plan had started out so well. Disillusionment charm. Classic stuff. No one had even noticed him hanging about outside the staffroom.

"A student has been taken by the monster." McGonagall announces grimly. Harry could hear the gasps and 'oh no's coming from the room. He presses his face closer to the slightly ajar door.

"How can you be so sure?" Snape asks, he sounds tense.

"The Heir of Slytherin," The transfiguration professor McGonagall answers back quietly, she's clearly shaken despite the strong front. The green eyed wizard wonders if the student was a Gryffindor. "they left another message right underneath the first one. 'Her skeleton will lie in the Chamber forever.' "
There's sobbing. Harry guesses Flitwick. The half goblin was surprisingly the most emotional of the four House Heads.

"Who is it?" Madam Hooch questions weakly, "Which student?"

"Ginny Weasley." Oh shit.

"We'll have to send all the students home tomorrow," Professor McGonagall continues on, despite the obvious despair emanating from the room, "This is the end of Hogwarts. Dumbledore always said…"

Harry starts to slink away from the doorway, already armed with the relevant information he needs but he made the mistake of straying too long as the Defence professor takes this moment to rock up last minute and burst into the staffroom with a beaming flourish. Harry, surprised by the man's sudden appearance, accidentally stumbles into the room with him like an idiot. Luckily the charm holds strong enough for no one to notice.

Though it could possibly be because, Lockhart has once again captured the room's attentions.

"A thousand smiling apologies, dozed off for a bit there- so what did I miss?"

Harry has never seen so much disgusted hatred in a room before. And he had once attended the bi-century review meeting between Heaven and Hell. Picture corporate supernatural beings of opposing forces that haven't had nearly enough coffee to deal with each other's shit having to sit in a eight day meeting pointing out every mistake they made the last half century and fighting over every decision for the next half century. Never again.

Professor Snape stands up from where he's sitting and smiles at the blonde professor. It's so clearly faked, the entity slash wizard child is just frankly astounded that Lockhart fails to sense it. "Just the man," The potions master practically coos, "The very man. Lockhart, a young girl has been snatched by the monster, taken into the Chamber of Secrets itself. Your moment has finally come at last."

It seems it's finally dawning on Lockhart that things are about to go to shit for him.

"That's right, Gilderoy," chipped in Professor Sprout with a smile Harry did not think the sweet Herbology professor was capable of. This was either a testament to how little Harry truly doesn't know these people or just how much the professors have suffered having to deal with Lockhart for a year. Harry thinks its a bit of both, though one far more clearly than the other. "Weren't you just saying that you've known all along where the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets is?"

Lockhart blanched, "Well, I, uh,"

"Yes, didn't you tell me not to worry my- what was it?- tiny goblin head about the beast? How you were sure you knew what it was and was more than capable of slaying it?" piped up Professor Flitwick, a grin on his face and a grudge burning in his eyes.

"I-I mean, I wouldn't s-say I was a hundred percent sure," Lockhart tried to salvage desperately, "A- anyway, I really don't think-"

"I for one certainly remember you saying how you wished to have had a crack at the beast before Hagrid got arrested." Snape slid into the other's spluttering smoothly. "Didn't you say that if you had free reign first, that you wouldn't have botched it up like the rest of us had apparently done?"

The defence professor stared aghast at the hole he has managed to put himself into. The rest of the staff stares back expectant and malicious. Harry watches on with rapt attention. This, this is the sort
of dramatic stuff that really should be put in a movie.

"Y-you must have misunderstood, I, uh, I,"

"We'll leave it to you then Gilderoy," Professor McGonagall says with a stone faced expression that Harry honestly cannot tell was faked or not. "Tonight will be an excellent time to do it. We'll make sure everyone's out of your way. You'll be able to tackle the monster all by yourself. It's what you finally wanted."

Lockhart's lip trembled. The man certainly didn't look like he had won any beauty prizes now, he just looked scared and weak. Harry kind of felt a bit sorry for him.

"V-very well," He stutters softly. "I'll- I'll be in my office, get-getting r-ready." The blonde man leaves the room, far smaller than when he came in.

Once the door closes with a soft thump Harry curses himself for not taking the opportunity to follow the Lockhart out. Damn his weakness for dramatic television shows. Damn it.

The transfiguration professor huffs, "At least we got him out of the way now." The other teachers murmur their agreement.

If Harry is going to be completely honest, he is a little perturbed by these people's callous treatment for Lockhart. Sure the man is a complete douche and a liar, but it's a little overboard to send the guy to his death. They could just, oh, he doesn't know, fire Lockhart? Are they really just going to let him do this? Also, slightly more importantly, were they just going to let Ginny Weasley rot in the chamber just so they can spite some prick teacher?

Apparently they were. "So, House Heads should go inform their students what has happened. Tell them the Hogwarts Express will take them home first thing tomorrow and everyone else will make sure no students have been left outside their dormitories. Am I clear?"

Everyone agrees and begin to stand up and leave. Harry once again wonders why no one else was chosen to at least help rescue Ginny. Common sense dictates she's probably not going to survive the night if they do nothing about it. And Harry highly doubts Lockhart could even if he wanted to and hadn't most likely run off already.

The young wizard silently waits for everyone to leave before he can take off his disillusionment charm, however the moment he does so Hermione and Ron practically tumbles out of a closet filled with what seemed to be teaching robes. "What the fuck?!" Harry whisper shrieks in surprise.

Ron looks shaken, but then, it was his sister that's been kidnapped. Really, this kid wasn't getting much of a break, emotionally. Hermione gives Harry an equally shocked look. "What are you doing here?"

"I was eavesdropping!" Harry defended, then paused, "Wait, I mean, I, why the hell did I say that so indignantly?"

"Never mind that," Hermione dismisses, "What are we going to do?!"

"What do you mean we?!" Harry demanded, "It is way too dangerous for you two to go fight a basilisk and you know it."

"It's my sister," Ron croaks hoarsely, he looks at Harry with fear and resolve in his eyes, "You are not leaving me behind while my sister is.. my sister is.."
Harry closes his eyes and counts to ten. Then he looks at Ron's big pleading eyes and immediately crumbles. Damn it. Damn everything. "Fine, you can."

"If Ron can come so can I!" Hermione piped up.

Shit.

"FINE." Harry sighs loudly. "But I want you both to know, that I hate you and I just wanted you to be safe or whatever."

Ron and Hermione practically wrapped their whole bodies around him in what Harry presumes is a hug of immense gratefulness. "We know." They chorus. "Thanks."

Fuck.

"We'll do this in two hours." Harry tells them sternly, "We need to pretend we aren't going to, well, fight a basilisk. You guys should, uh, look I wasn't going to bring you guys but now that I am, I want you to try arm yourself best you can." If his friends are coming, he can't exactly do his usual entity stuff in front of them and even he cannot do much if one of them accidentally makes eye contact with the serpent. "I'm sure you can procure some useful potions and items from your dorms."

"How?" Asks Hermione, practically taking notes. The green eyed boy looks at Ron.

"McGonagall is going to tell your House about Ginny. Everyone is going to feel really, really bad for you guys so."

Ron nods, glumly, "I know what you want me to do mate."

Harry gives him a one-armed hugged, "Hey, you don't have to, I just,"

"You want us to be safe." The redhead gives him a brave but wobbly grin, "Seriously Harry, thank you."

Harry flushed, "No problem. Now- hurry up and go, I'll see if I can convince Snape to help."

"Don't forget Lockhart! We need to inform him too." Bugger, Harry almost forgot Hermione has a massive crush on the bloke.

"…Sure."

Plan. Wrenched.

Snape wasn't there. The potions master was probably trying to calm down his House in the Slytherin dormitories or something, which, was great and all but highly inconvenient right now.

Harry grabs his invisibility cloak, his wand and scribbles his new, incredibly stupid plan on a scrap of parchment for the professor to see and waits until almost two hours are up. Since the Slytherin teacher hasn't shown up, he sticks the parchment with his plan on the door just as he leaves and prays the man would find it soon.

Not wanting to waste time and energy running, Harry gingerly steps into a shadowy corner, letting the darkness quickly swallow him up and gently spit him out somewhere near the Gryffindor portrait hole. He looks around carefully and only when he was sure no one was watching, the boy steps out of the shadows and takes off the hood of the invisibility cloak. He waits a few minutes until finally, the portrait hole opens, revealing far too many people on the other side.
"Are- are you actually serious right now?"

"She's our sister too." The twins say in grim unison as they walk out behind a very sheepish looking Ron and Hermione. Even Percy is stepping out with a pale face and an angry look.

"There is no way we're just going to take this sitting down." Percy says stiffly, "Even if it does mean bending the rules a bit."

"If it helps Harry-" Hermione begins, but upon seeing Harry's irritated glare immediately switches gears, "Ron totally blabbed." Ron smacks her upside the head.

"Well it's not like you helped!"

Harry closes his eyes, and tries to massage the tension in his forehead away vigorously, "Okay," he breathes out, "Okay, this is still doable. Percy is competent enough to keep you all in line. We can still probably do this. I now loathe you all but we can, we can still do this."

"You, uh, repeated yourself there mate." Ron says, Harry just glares at him.

"I needed to reassure myself." He snapped, "Now Hermione and I will go under the invisibility cloak since we have absolutely no reasons to be wandering. You four will look sad and if anyone stops you, you guys are all just worried about Ginny and was looking for a teacher to ask for better confirmation about what's happening."

"Great plan," Percy praises with a fond look that Harry just melts over. He never was very good at getting mad at any of the Weasleys. It also doesn't help that the twins were smiling so appreciatively either.

"Where are we headed to?" Hermione asks.

"Lockhart's office first." Harry answers reluctantly, the Weasleys groan as Hermione does a quiet happy sound, "He's going to try get into the Chamber. We can tell him where it is, and we'll follow him down there. Okay?" Everyone nods in the positive and they all head off.

The sun is starting to go down once they reach Lockhart's office. Harry took off the invisibility cloak, and knocked on the door. It takes a minute but Lockhart cracks the door open warily, just enough to see a sliver of his face on the other side. "Oh, hello there," He greets as he sees the group of students outside, opening the door a bit wider. "I'm a little busy right now so if you could just-"

Percy coughs, "Professor, we have some extremely pertinent information that we think could help you find Ginny. If you would please let us in?"

Lockhart looks extremely uncomfortable but Percy stares him down with his prefect gaze. "I, don't, well, alright." He finally acquiesces, and opens the door for them to come through.

The defence professor's office looked like it had been robbed. There was three large trunks open in the middle of the floor where it was obvious most of Lockhart's things had been hastily stuffed into. Everyone stared at the trunks suspiciously.

"Going somewhere are you?" Fred asks accusingly.

The blonde man shoves one of his portraits into the trunk as an excuse not to look at them, "Yes, uh, just had an urgent call, got to go immediately, life or death, you know how it is-"

"And what about Ginny?" George questions, disgusted. Ron is staring daggers at the man, and
Hermione seems to have very quickly gotten over that crush of hers.

"That is… most unfortunate." The professor replies lamely.

Harry stares at him, "You aren't even going to try?" He had kind of expected it but still.

"What about all that stuff you did in those books of yours!?" Hermione shrieks.

Lockhart fiddles with one of his robes he's putting away, "Books can be misleading my dear."

The bushy haired girl gapes at that, "You bloody wrote them you absolute twat!" She screams.

"Dear girl," Lockhart looks pityingly at her, "Do use your common sense. No book would sell well if they all told the honest truth."

"Hah! I fucking knew those books were fiction!" Harry shouts victoriously, "I told Draco, I bloody told him!"

"Seriously not the time mate." Ron muttered.

"It isn't fiction boy," The fake professor huffs, "All those adventures were real, I just wasn't the one who did them."

"So you've just been taking credit for what a load of other people have done?" said Hermione in outrage.

"Please, you make it sound like I've done no work at all." Everyone stares at him incredulously, "I had to spend a lot of effort tracking these people down, have to convince them to tell me every single detail on exactly how they managed it and then I had to use a Memory charm on them so they wouldn't remember partaking on any such adventure. Do you know how hard it is to perfect something like that? Very is the answer."

During the explanation Lockhart finishes packing, closing the final trunk closed he lightly taps a finger on his chin thoughtfully. "Now I know I have one more thing to do, oh right, yes," He whirls around to face them, wand at hand, "Sorry boys and girl, but I simply must put a Memory charm on you all now. After all, can't exactly have you guys barbering out my secrets, I'll be absolutely ruined and--"

"Expelliarmus!" Ron yells, blasting the professor clean off his feet, wand flying in the air. George manages to catch the thing and shoves it safely in his robe pocket. "Arse." He spits as they all gather around a meek looking Lockhart.

"What do you want me to do now?" He asks plaintively, "I don't know anything, there's nothing I can do, I'm useless."

"I dunno," Harry muses as everyone else seethes and glares at the fallen professor, all pointing their own wands at him, "You look like a pretty good meat shield from where I'm standing."

"Hear hear." The twins both say.

"No objections." Percy scowls as he forces the man to stand up.

"You're not going anywhere." Ron tells him.

"Maybe you'll finally get to write an honest bestseller after this," Hermione snidely says as they march the professor down toward Moaning Myrtle's bathroom. "I'll certainly read it."
By the time they reached the bathroom, Lockhart was shaking like a leaf in winter. Harry is actually quite impressed the man has managed not to fall over what with the way his legs were wobbling all over the place. Fred and George unceremoniously shoved the man into the bathroom first, before pointedly walking over him. This time Harry doesn't feel any sympathy for the cowering coward.

"I'll go open the entrance," Harry states, "someone make sure our dear professor here doesn't make a runner."

"Don't worry," Fred assures with a sharp smile, "We won't." George finishes grimly.

The green eyed boy barely even glances at Lockhart who was now making sad whimpering noises and instead walks toward the sinks, surveying them all carefully until he finally found the one with a small snake painstakingly engraved onto the tap.

:Open.: He demands a little irritatedly, annoyed at how far his initial plan has strayed. This, this is exactly why he is the entity of death and not the entity of forethought and intricate planning. At least this tap will follow its original purpose and not somehow pick up five other snakes along the way.

Under his words the tap glows and the sink moves away slowly to reveal the entrance of Slytherin's secret chamber. Everyone but Harry is suitably impressed. Harry is on the lines of disgusted more than anything really. Because it turns out the entrance was a pipe. A very dirty and slimy looking pipe. Did- did the sink water from when you wash your hands just spill down this pipe? It must've right? That's just rank.

"Well, this has all been very fun but now that you found the Chamber I guess it's time for me to go."

Lockhart pipes up happily as he slowly begins backing away from the entrance. Almost immediately he found himself at the end of six wands held by five very angry wizards and a witch.

"You go first." Ron snarls.

"But why?" The professor whine piteously as he's shoved toward the entrance, "There's no point in me being here!"

"Uh, have you seen the condition of that pipe?" Harry says, "It's absolutely disgusting. There's no way I'm going first."

Lockhart wrinkled his nose as if only just noticing it's rather foul state, "Oh come oOoOOOoOH!" He screamed as Percy gave the professor a hard shove, causing the man to slide face first into the pipe. The prefect turns to face everyone else.

"If anyone asks, he fell in by himself."

Harry whistled. "That… was incredibly hot just so you know."

Ron shoved Harry. "You are disgusting Harry." He berates but turns to Percy shyly, "That was pretty cool though Percy."

Fred and George wrap one arm around the now blushing prefect with sly smiles, "Didn't know you had it in you Perce," Fred teases, with George making dramatic sniffling sounds, "I'm just," He sniffs, wiping a fake tear from his eyes, "just so proud of my big brother."

Percy coughs, embarrassed and unused to the praise, "Yes, well, shall I go next?"

The oldest Weasley turns to the pipe, only to be stopped by Harry. "Wait, let me just," The green eyed wizard makes a hand motion and suddenly the pipe entrance is completely cleaned out, no trace
of dirt of mouldy slime in sight. "That's better."

They can all just barely hear the faint echo of Lockhart cursing up at them on the other side. Everyone just laughed.

The twins were the last to come down. You could hear them whooping and cheering at every corner and drop until the very end when they tumbled delightedly onto a transfigured mattress. Clearly they had a much more entertaining time than Lockhart who was covered in slime and looked paler than any ghost haunting this school.

"That-" George breathed, "was smashing." Fred finished, equally as exhilarated. "After this is over we should sell this as a ride."

"We could call it Slytherin's slide."

"Three goes for six knuts."

"Uh, guys?" Harry crosses his arms impatiently, "Maybe let's focus on this first before we start exploiting ancient pieces of history?"

The twins look sheepishly up at Harry, "Sorry." They chorus.

"Come on then," Percy called out, already walking ahead of them with the others, "We haven't got the time to waste!"

The tunnel is quiet save for their footsteps and the occasional drip of water from above. Harry walks at the lead, much to the older Weasleys' chagrins and bruised egos, since the boy has brutally explained how no one else would be better at protecting them all in very crushing detail. Turning around a corner Harry stops and gestures everyone else to do the same. "There's something there."

He whispers before summoning up a ball of light to float in front of them.

The light revealed what was some shed snake skin of gargantuan proportions, strewn across the tunnel floor. "Bugger me." Ron swore.

"Language," Percy chided weakly.

"The basilisk must be twenty feet long at least!" Hermione exclaimed rather horrified. "That's far bigger than the average size."

"Which is totally weird since there is no way this thing could have eaten enough to grow to such a size." Harry observed interestingly.

Lockhart dropped to his knees.

"Oh get up." Fred sneered while his brother pointed a wand threateningly at the older man. The blonde wizard did as he was told, then he dived at George, knocking him to the hard floor and unconscious.

"George!" The brothers all shouted, everyone reaching for their wands but it was too late. The professor had George's wand pointed at the slumped Weasley's neck, arrogant smile decorating his face.

"Back up and drop your wands if you don't want me to obliterate this boy so hard he won't even remember which way is up after I'm done with him!" Lockhart barked. Reluctantly they all obeyed,
even Harry. He couldn't risk it after all, not with the way Lockhart has the wand pressed up against George's neck so hard it'll probably bruise for days. Harry's good with a lot of things, but healing is so very much not one of them. "Now, I think I'm going to take a bit of that skin with me up to school. Tell them all about how I heroically chased after you stupid Gryffindors trying to avenge your sister before you all tragically lost your minds with guilt once you saw her dead corpse."

"And how would you do that?" Hermione asked darkly, "It's five against one Lockhart, you really think you can take us all on at once?"

Lockhart visibly falters at that and that's when Percy, Fred and Hermione immediately yell out some sort of spell. At least one of them manages to separate the professor and George but since no one really coordinated this improvised attack, the resulting mesh of spells caused a small explosion. It was enough to rock the foundations of the tunnel to create a cave in, leaving Harry on one side, and everyone else on the other.

"HARRY!" Ron yelled, "Are you alright?!"

"I'm good!" Harry shouts back, "What about everyone else?!"

There's a dreadful wailing on the other side of the rock wall that's got Harry increasingly anxious.

"Everyone's fine!" Hermione answers back with a holler, "Lockhart may need to get a new leg though- and a face."

Ah. That explains why the wailing is incoherent.

"What do we do now?" Percy says desperately, Harry's not sure if it's aimed at him or the others. "We won't be able to get through, it'll take ages. Not to mention there's a chance the whole tunnel could cave in if we're not careful…"

Harry sighs, what a mess. Literally. "You guys need to leave." He tells them. The boy waits for the loud, and frankly, high-pitched protests to finally die out before continuing. "Look," he says firmly, "We're wasting time, Ginny's been down here for hours and George and Lockhart need medical attention. It'll take you guys over half an hour just to get back to school with them, and when you do you need to get any professor to come down to take care of this."

"But.." Fred sounds distraught, "What about you?"

"I'll see you guys in a bit. Don't worry," Harry replies with as much assurance as he can. He can hear Hermione crying. Clearly he was not doing a good job. "Seriously guys, go."

Then he sunk into the shadows and went to go find Tom.

Harry craned his neck up to look at the giant statue of Salazar Slytherin in the last room of the chamber. It was huge, tacky and suggested the man was grossly overcompensating for something but at least it wasn't a giant statue of someone else. Because that would be kind of weird if it was.

Though what was kind of weird was putting an unconscious Ginny Weasley between his stone feet like some sort of virgin sacrifice. Seriously, there was like twenty perfectly good pillars around the room to use. He kneels down by the fallen girl's side and silently surveys her status. Ginny is cold, limp and pale, but not dead. Not yet.

"Harry."
Harry turned around and grit his teeth. "Tom. I see you managed to get out of the diary."

Tom Marvolo Riddle smiled, and fuck, Harry forgot how utterly gorgeous his teenaged appearance looked. "In a way," He says in an intentionally mysterious manner, "but don't worry Harry, I'll soon be free from the diary in every way."

"And why would I want that?" The green eyed entity asked sharply. The horcrux had the actual audacity to looked hurtfully surprised.

"I don't understand, I thought you would be delighted. We would finally be together." Tom looked at Harry shyly, "I know I've been looking forward to us."

What a lying piece of shit.

"You tricked me, used me." Harry growled, fury rising in his chest like molten lava coating the inside of his lungs, boiling hot until it cools into something heavy and choking. "And I do hope you realise just the extent of what you've done Mr Riddle or you'll be in for a truly terrible surprise."

For once, the smug smirk on his handsome face faltered into confusion, "Tricked you? Harry, I may have done many things but I've never outright lied to you about anything we spoke about." He says and Harry almost felt like it was genuine. But then again, it seems like everything about Tom puts him off-kilter, he can't trust himself and he certainly cannot trust Tom.

"The compulsion!" The raven haired wizard shouts, and feels incredibly vindicated at the translucent teenager's widening eyes of surprise, "You put a compulsion charm on yourself so I would keep writing, so I would, so I would," Green eyes glow harshly as he stutters, too lost in his emotion to speak coherently, his cheeks grow hot and Harry feels himself trembling faintly as he remembers his humiliations, his naive mistakes, "So I would so idiotically think that we had something.. together, between us." By the end of it he is almost whispering, defeated and ashamed as the words spill out in confession.

So shamed he was at himself, Harry completely misses the stricken expression on Tom Riddle's face.

"No, Harry, that's not what, that's-"

"Shut up." The younger wizard snarls, red faced and eyes grim with resolve and dark inky shadows. "Shut. Up."

Tom shuts up.

There's fear in Tom's pretty blue eyes, icy and so easily breakable. It is hard to believe that the teen was not the victim when compared with the depths of Harry's eyes, acid bright green glowing through swirls of engulfing darkness. It doesn't help that the shadows of the basement seem to coil around the younger boy, making him seem something more and something far less than human. Something dangerous.

"You have played me a fool, Mr Riddle," Harry chides with a smile as thin and sharp as the edge of a razor. "Was your little game fun Mr Riddle? Watching me fall over for you? Watching me squirm for you? Even to go so far as deluding myself to possibly fall for you?"

"Now Harry," Tom starts nervously, he's smiling, the bastard, as he takes a step back from the foreboding figure Harry has cut himself. "Let us talk this through, whatever you think I'm sure if we speak calmly and civilised-like we could- :Now!:"

Harry stumbles and falls back onto the cold, damp floor, gasping in pain and shock as a gigantic
snake dives past him with a speed belying its immense size. The basilisk barely nicked him, just a brush of fang and scaled muscle, but it was enough to push him down, make him fall, and salt both his emotional and physical wounds as he finds his still fragile, healing skin drenched by sewage water. Disgusting.

Oh, now Tom was going to fucking get it.

"I don't want the hurt you Harry," Tom says softly, almost gently and the younger boy almost laughs at him. He would have laughed if he wasn't trying not to crush down his ever rising fury and disgrace. "That was a warning. Please Harry, don't make me do this."

"I'm not making you do anything Riddle," Harry spits, he drops the 'Mr' in his usually fond title of the other like it was garbage. Using 'Mr' implied respect. Something which he currently does not harbour toward the young man at the moment. "And while I doubt your intentions of not wanting me harm, please note that I most certainly do not share the same compassion."

The translucent teenager gives a put upon sigh, like he's the disappointed one in this messed up relationship, and Harry is so very tempted to try punch the pretty out of that face. "Harry, I could have my body back," Tom implores, "We could be together, don't you want that? Maybe I was using you in the beginning, but we have a connection you and I. A bond."

"See that's all very sugar coated roses and rainbows," Harry replies coldly, unforgiving and unbelieving, "But I can no longer tell if what you say is truth or lie anymore and frankly my dear, I don't think I give a damn." Then, he added, because he would feel like a dick if he didn't, "Also, that girl is a sister of a friend of mine or whatever, so I wouldn't be very happy with her being sacrificed for a lying jackass."

As if just remembering Ginny's presence, literally the sole reason they were all down here in the first place, Tom glances down at her still form, his face clearly unhappy. "Ah yes, Ginevra."


"That's not, I wasn't," Tom looked so clearly frustrated, Harry could almost taste it from where he was. He can't. Obviously. But he imagines it tastes like charred applewood, sweetened ash that is hard to swallow down, "Ginevra is a stepping stone. She is nothing." The horcrux insists vehemently, almost desperately in the face of Harry's cold indifference. "I played nothing but a simple confidant to her petty, shallow words. The most intimate thing we had ever shared was me being forced to listen on to her incessant nattering on you."

That got a reaction.

The green eyed boy's facade cracked a little at the unexpected knowledge, having to do a little double take at the information. The shadows cast around his silhouette seem to recede and the air seems far more breathable again as Harry becomes Harry once more.

"What? Ginny, towards me?" He asks incredulous. She certainly had a funny way of showing it.

"Yes, that little.. harlot," Translucent, defined features soured in expression as Tom tries to pick and choose his words, "was quite infatuated with you. It was always Harry Potter did this, Harry Potter did that. Annoying girlish gossip really but even I had gotten curious about who this great Potter boy was."

"Well I hope your curiosity was satisfied Riddle." The raven haired wizard curls his mouth
downwards, his skin trembled with irritation as he finds his mind twisting the other's words until they become sharp and hurtful, "Was that the plan then? Ginny would pretend to toss you away and you would play the good diary, the helpful little book, and maybe if you plant an innocent little thought or three into the mind of whoever picked you that's neither here nor there."

"Contrary to popular opinion Harry," And there was the frustration leaking through Tom's gritted teeth, "The world does not revolve around you."

"No, it just revolves around you," Harry shoots back curtly, "Tom Marvolo Riddle, Heir of Slytherin. It's a wonder how the sun still shines when you're around."

"It's a wonder how there's still water in the clouds what with the way you are raining all over my parade." Tom snaps back, and Harry couldn't help but let out a surprised laugh at the unexpected wit. It was short and stifled, but it was enough for any visible annoyance in the half soul melt off his face, instead looking regretful and fond.

"Harry, I, I don't know how to make you believe me but I do have.. feelings for you. Real ones."

Harry looks down to the ground, crossing his arms tightly against his chest as if that could protect him from the way his heart beats faster at Tom's words. "I... you hurt me." He finishes lamely, because there's so much he can say, so much he wants to say, but now that he's finally getting the chance to throw every single bit of devastation that's been inflicted on him back, he finds himself at a loss how to.

"I did." The horcrux says, "And I am sorry for hurting you. Not in the beginning no, I admit, but now- now I truly regret manipulating you like that." And then the teen proceeds to look so morose Harry has no choice but to believe him, even just a little.

"I guess maybe my anger is a little bit much," The green eyed wizard admitted softly, "Though this is rather the first time anyone has.. tricked me in such a manner, so I think my harsh attitude shall persist a little longer even after forgiveness."

Tom goes wide eyed and hopeful at the admission, and damn, anger was so much easier to hold on to when Harry wasn't actually face to face with this stupidly beautiful bastard. "That's, that's fantastic Harry!" He gushes excitedly, "I didn't expect you to forgive me so fast,"

"I mean, I'm still upset. And I haven't actually forgiven you." Harry clarifies, "I'm just saying that I'm not going to burn your bones to ash or anything permanent like that."

"Yes, yes of course." The teen agrees absentmindedly, there's a faint knowing smile on his face, "So will you.. move away from the girl now?"

Harry blinked, "What? Will I let you drain an eleven year old girl's soul so you could stop being intangible? Oh, no. Noo, no, no, I uh, definitely can't let you do that. Sorry that's a hard no from me."

Tom stares.

He looks completely blindsided, like he is genuinely surprised Harry wasn't letting him murder a little girl. "What? But, I thought..."

The younger of the pair closes his eyes and sighs, "Tom," Harry stresses, "Me being slightly less pissed at you for dubious consent and me letting you kill a person are two very different things." Harry tries explaining slowly, because there's really no good explanation for not killing little girls since the whole thing is already kind of an implied no-no. "Very different."
Now Tom looks like he was the one who was betrayed. Seriously. Harry's life. It's complete bullshit really.

"Please don't do this Harry." Tom whispers, "I don't want to hurt you."

"I'm sorry Tom," Harry says gently, "But I'm not letting you kill the girl. And also, you couldn't hurt me if you tried."

The translucent teenager's features hardened into something cold and determined, "We'll see about that, :Basilisk!:"

Summoned, the giant snake coils up behind Tom, hissing and overall looking very intimidating. :I'm here massssster.: :

:Now attack,: Tom commands, before quietly adding as a hesitant afterthought, :but don't kill him.: "Parseltongue, language of the serpents." Harry mutters, "Fitting."

Tom glared at him, annoyed, :Maybe kill him a little.: He acquiesced with a sneer. The younger of the two sneered back. :That will teach you to push my kindness.: The basilisk slithers slowly around the two, encircling the room and entrapping them all. The creature watches until Tom gets impatient with the inaction. :What are you doing?!: He hisses, furious at his order being ignored.

The giant snake shifts nervously, eyes flickering at Harry pointedly, :Tis jusst.. Isss thiss wise masssster?:

Harry looks down at his feet. Partly because he's aware that his human body would be most likely affected by a basilisk's gaze, but mostly to hide his vindictive amusement and glee. He just hopes the serpent doesn't give away the game too soon, after all, he's always had a bit of a weakness for dramatic reveals.

:You dare doubt my words?: Tom practically snarls, if he was human his pale complexion would surely have pinked from embarrassment. :As Heir, I demand you do as I say!: The basilisk hisses but positions itself in a ready to strike poise obediently. The giant snake looks forlornly at Harry though, beseeching and weirdly expectant. Harry, because even with his complicated emotions currently toward the horcrux the entity is still kind of a pushover, of course feels bad for the basilisk who has been placed in the unfortunately small space between a rock and death incarnate. It is not an enviable position for anyone.

He sighs as he feels himself caving in and calls out, :Fear not beautiful Basilisk, I will not hold it against you for what you are ordered to do.: The basilisk stills, and Tom looks at him, wide-eyed and a little aroused. "I knew you could speak Parseltongue too." He murmurs mostly to himself, "Ginny told me, and logically you would have to know it to get here but-" and now the translucent teen looks more than just a little hot under the nonexistent collar, "I didn't expect you to sound so good saying it."

Harry flushes despite himself at the odd compliment. Damn Tom. Damn him to every level of hell. "Shut up, we're fighting to the death here." Harry mutters, irritated at his own embarrassment.

:I thinketh thy am in love.: The basilisk hisses out of bloody nowhere.
Now both wizards were staring at the serpent. Well, Harry was more staring below the snake's head but still.

"Uh, what?" Harry says.

:What?!: Tom hisses angrily up at the basilisk.

The basilisk stares seriously at Harry despite the green eyed boy's unwillingness to give the snake eye contact. :We would produce the mosssst perfect clutch of eggss.:  

:Would we?: Harry says weakly. :I don't even know your name though.:  

:Tisss Belynda.: Belynda the basilisk answers enthusiastically, :Doth you sssee? We art perfect! None have asssked for my name for thoussandss of yearsss save you! My true love!:  

:I asked for your name.: Tom protests annoyed.

Belynda flickers her tongue at Tom, :Oh, what tisss in a name really?:

The basilisk was kind of crazy. Harry realised. Like the sort of crazy you could only get by being stuck alone in the darkness for a hundred years crazy.

:I gave you orders.: Tom says darkly, :As your master you will obey me.:  

The basilisk falters at that, looking as sad as a basilisk can be as she looks at Harry. :Alassss I cannot back down from my master's orderss, no matter how cruel they art for me.: The basilisk hissed mournfully, :It seemss my love, that we are just not desssstined to be.:  

Harry gave what he hoped was a genuinely apologetic smile at the area where he heard the giant reptile's voice. :I understand,: he lied, because obviously being stuck down in the sewage pipeworks of a girl's toilet for centuries will turn even the mightiest of creatures a little batshit insane and probably more than a bit suicidal. :But this man here is not your previous master, beautiful Belynda. He is but a shard between absolute nothingness and a shade of his past self.:  

Belynda the basilisk was silent for a moment. While he couldn't allow his eyes to look upon her face lest his human body cease to properly work, Harry does imagine she looks torn. Or as torn up as a giant serpent could look anyway.

"What." The horcrux of Mr Riddle just says. Harry ignores him for now. Even when the teenager repeats a louder more irritated, "WHAT."

It seems to snap the silence out of the basilisk though as she hisses and the noise of scale against hard floor is heard. :Masster tisss my massster.: She says apologetic but firm, and fair, Harry can respect such undying loyalty, he can. Unfortunate said loyalty is against him but that really just makes him all the more impressed really.

:I will personally make sure your next life would be far more fulfilling,: he promises seriously.  

:Thy shalt never forget thee.:  

Belynda gives a shaky hiss and the boy feels the flicker of tongue on his face, letting the deluded snake have her tragically romantic moment, Harry let his arms reach out above to touch the scales of the basilisk's face. :Goodbye Belynda.:  

:Farewell, my love.: She hissed before she struck.
The serpent was fast, even in her starved state. But no creature as simple as her could ever defy death, could ever have a chance. She barely even touched a hair on his vessel's head before she dropped to the ground lifeless.

Harry opened his green eyes to the fallen giant reptile's body, a young Mr Riddle's gaping face and a pale green orb in his hands. Then, staring at the translucent teen, without breaking eye contact, the boy smiled creepily as he let his jaw dislocate to swallow the green orb whole. He even made sure that his throat distended slightly so it actually looked way more disturbing than it was.

Riddle looked like he was about to throw up whatever spiritual contents in his stomach that he had.

Savouring the sour sweet aftertaste of green apples and salty lemons that was Belynda's soul, the child that was clearly not just any child bared his teeth in a facsimile of a smile. "Well, as the saying goes, it's all fun and games until someone dies, unfortunately for you Mr Riddle," Harry moves in close to the still, terrified form, his voice dropping liking an echo in the deepest cave, "Playtime's over."

Tom balks.

"Wait!" He protests, "I-I can give you whatever you want! I can give you your parents back- Ginevra told me all about your tragic childhood. You and I are more similar than you think."

"Doubt it." Harry deadpanned, his face completely unmoved by the frankly pathetic pleas.

Tom, seeing this, drops to his knees and grabs Harry's hand into his own in desperation, both unable to stop the electric jolts of pleasure that runs through both of them at their touch. Harry hates how he still loves the way sensation sparks between each other, even now when he was trying so hard to punish the young soul piece. "Can't you feel it?" Tom whispers seductive and hopeful and so very urgent, "Can't you feel us?"

And the thing is, Harry can. He can feel the pulse of that inexplicable desire that thrums between them, that magnetic pull, the heady scent of addiction and adoration and absolution. It's hard to resist, the idea, the temptation, especially when its right there, on his knees in front of him. But Harry can and he bloody will. In the grand scheme of things, Mr Riddle is just a slice of decadent chocolate cake in a French pastry shop, and Harry is more than aware that he not only has his pick of choices, he fucking owns that metaphorical shop damn it.

The entity on vacation looks down to firmly and utterly crush the impudent little human half soul's hope but then he is met with the frankly blinding force of those pretty baby blues on an even prettier face.

Fuck. His minions must never know about this. Or Lucifer. That smarmy devil already gets far too much leeway being a ruler of Hell, first angel created etcetera, etcetera- if that fiend ever realised the extent of his weakness toward a nice pair of blue eyes (something which a certain entity had insisted to add to a certain fallen angel's design), well…

Harry forces himself to look away, but the damage was done. It does not help that Tom squeezes the hand he holds, sending a terribly cruel reminder of the strange pleasure they hold over one another. "You're no use to me right now, not the way you are." Is all Harry says.

Tom, because he was Mr Riddle, albeit a much younger, angstier part of him, caught onto his wording like a lifeline. "Right now? So you do want me around." He grasps, relief painted on his translucent features. "I knew it, we can make this work Harry, we can."
Harry grinned, it wasn't a very pleasant smile, all teeth and no eyes. Hollow black sockets where vivid green eyes had been held stared horrifyingly at Tom, faint black shadows seemed to seep out of every crevice of the smaller wizard, from the curls of his wicked smile to the slits under his nails. Taking a step forward toward the translucent half-soul, Tom Riddle instinctively took a step back. As a soul piece he was drawn by the siren call of Death. As a being still clinging to the living world, he was terrified beyond words.

"Honestly, I should gut you where you stand for the crimes of what you've have done."

Tom whimpered.

"Oh don't look so scared Mr Riddle," Harry teased meanly, "I'm a very forgiving person you know. I can forgive murder and mayhem, destruction and cruelty. It doesn't really matter who you are, if you flirt with me, I flirt back, but it's always a dangerously fine line Mr Riddle- and what you did? Well what you did was frankly quite inconsolably rude."

Another step closer. Another step back.

"I do so hope you remember in your next life."

Green circles glow inhumanly from the dark abyss of his eyeholes, letting the monster of the night, the ultimate predator, the End of All, seep through. "That the things that you do can have consequences like you wouldn't fucking believe.

Tom cringes, raising his translucent arms up, instinctively protecting his face as Harry strides toward him. But Harry isn't aiming for him, well, not exactly. He walks straight past the quivering ghost with barely even a side glance as he hones in on his true target.

He knows what he will do.

Picking up the diary, Harry's pupils glow as he looks, really looks inside it. Tom has done a marvellous work sewing himself into the pages and as it is, it would be difficult to fully extricate but Harry is confident that with enough time he can do it. Or enough power.

Harry looks at his left hand, flexes it, before channeling his power through it until it forcibly changes into something claw-like and wickedly sharp. It's a pale comparison to his original form's hand but it will do for this. He raises it up, ready to strike but suddenly, blinding pain strikes his side.

The entity turns, only to see a desperate and crazy-eyed Tom stabbing him with the broken off fang of the basilisk. "I'm sorry," He apologises, like the fucking handsome psycho stabber he was, "but I can't let you kill me. I have too much to live for."

"You.." Harry hoarsely whispers as his human meat suit is very firmly rejecting the basilisk venom in his blood stream. With him being more Death than actual human right now, his powers are naturally thriving off his own dying state, further encouraging the poison to seep through, creating a seriously vicious cycle for him. His small body collapses on the ground, just barely holding onto the diary, "Bitch."

Then he plunges his clawed hand into the diary and rips Tom's half soul out of it, taking the last of his strength and swallowing the horcrux whole while Tom screams in the background. As Harry's vision darkens, the last thing he sees is a flash of fiery red and a blurry stampede of feet that stops in front of him.

"**HARRY!**"

"Don't... panic." He gurgles, it sounds like his mouth of something. Most likely his own blood. "But.. I think... I've been... stabbed.."
Worst last words ever.

And then Harry blacks out.
Death's alternative universes

The one where Death traverses multiple alternate universes and (in this order) saves two Winchesters, scares Captain America, fucks Thanos, sucks Loki, meets a little dragon, and finds some fantastic beasts

Or the one where the author indulges in her crossovers

What happens next is rather a very complicated clusterfuck if Harry would say so himself. Even he's a little confused at what happened what with being so brutally backstabbed and all, but essentially it goes something a little like this-

Scene: Slytherin's final chamber.

Harry Potter, lying splayed out on the cold floor, body cold and slowly dying from the basilisk fang still pierced through his side. A completely normal, if slightly battered, diary is loosely held on by the boy's hand. Blood is beginning to pool out from underneath Harry's body.

Enter Severus Snape. Clearly having just sprinted and was not used to the sudden need to exercise.

He sees Harry and runs to him, followed closely by most of the Hogwarts staff, the Weasleys and Hermione Granger. The majority of these people are yelling Harry's name in an incredibly unhelpful manner. Snape kneels down by the still body to check Harry's vitals. It's weak. Distressingly so. He too, ends up yelling Harry's name in an incredibly unhelpful manner.

Hermione starts to cry. The Weasleys are trying very hard not to follow. They are failing. Badly.

Madam Pomphrey has all but shoved Snape out of the way, using emergency medical spells to try slow down the poison pumping into the young wizard's veins while at the same time, stifling the
bleeding. From the sweat flowing down her face she is struggling to do even that. It feels like there is something in Harry that’s not responding well to healing magic. The situation looks grim.

Enter Fawkes.

The phoenix is majestic as he flies to the young boy’s side. Fawkes coos and shuffles closer to the wound, flapping his wings to encourage the mediwitch to shuffle out of his way. Fawkes looks beautiful beside the dying boy, like a fiery angel.

A fiery angel that was sneering down at a dying boy.

Phoenixes, were birds that defied death. With their ability to reincarnate unto themselves, death is not a natural state they will succumb to unless forced down by another’s hands. Therefore, they are one of the few species that do not care for, fear, or innately feel drawn to Death, rather it is Life that is their one and only true master they look to. Life and Magic and a little bit of Time would garner an almost equal amount of reverence but any other would be beneath a Phoenix’s standards.

Phoenixes, in Death's humble opinion. Were kind of pretentious, self-righteous assholes. Sure there was the occasional good one that doesn’t do that thing where they look down at you condescendingly and treat you like some cute charity case, but there’s a reason why Phoenix tears were so bloody damn rare. And it’s because phoenixes fucking suck.

So when Fawkes begins crying all over Harry’s body like it was the end of Titanic, it wasn’t because of some sentiment of grief. It certainly wasn’t for any genuine wish to heal him, no. It was because it fucking knew phoenix tears burned away any traces of death. And it would burn and burn until death is vanquished and the human would be brought back to the living.

Seriously Fawkes. Fuck you.

Because of this, because of that stupid chickenshit arsehole, Death found himself forced to, metaphorically, jump off the sinking ship if you will. Leaving behind an effectively healed but vegetative Harry Potter in its place.

Death looks at the still body, annoyed at how flawless his mortal form looks now. How ironic, the burns on his skin were now gone and all it took was him being set on fire from the inside out. Even now that his physical wounds have healed, Death can still sense the flickering flames from Fawkes’ tears running through his mortal’s blood, effectively sealing him from his own vessel.
The entity glares at the phoenix. The fucker stares back with the bird equivalent of a shit-eating smirk pointedly bobbing his head toward something. Death looks down to where Fawkes was looking at. One of his bone white hands was slowly reconstructing itself together, an injury for not reacting fast enough when he had realised what the damn bird had the gall to do. Death takes a long, slow breath and silently pleads for strength not to smite the bird where it stood. This, *this* is what happens when you favour a species and give them essentially eternal life.

Of course he has his dementors and reapers but that doesn’t count. He’s got them well trained… sort of.

Death settles his irritation by roughly kicking the mystical bird and telling the phoenix to go die in a shit hole. Fawkes squawks indignantly at the kick, flapping his wings up into the air so the two are eye to eye before he essentially tells the entity there’s no need for the phoenix to do that since Death’s technically already done it for him. And then the fiery bird vanishes in a burst of fire, which was a pity because Death was just about to grab the feathery fiend and wring it by its scrawny neck, Life’s protection be damned.

"I hope Colonel Sanders hunts you down!" He shouts at the empty space before gritting his teeth and glancing contemplatively down at Harry’s comatose body with it’s surrounding entourage of weeping wizards.

It would take a while for Harry Potter’s body to fully heal from the strain of housing an entity of death and even longer for the Phoenix tears to be pushed out of the body’s system, enough at least to allow his being to enter back into the body without too much strife. Death was a little bummed at that, how easily he has been thwarted. It seems living was much harder than it looks. He only made it to twelve years before he technically died, even Chaos and Magic managed longer than that, at least long enough to lose their human virginity.

Embarrassing.

So Death wallows in self-pity, if only for a moment before deciding to get over himself and take the opportunity for what it was. Another vacation... From his vacation... Again.

Being Harry Potter was hard work okay?

Plus, it would be admittedy quite nice to travel around in his usual constructed body. So much less limiting than an actual meatsuit, not to mention adaptable. He stretches his back, his neck, his arms,
gleeful at the absence of pressure that he had been forced to grow used to when he played mortal. It was akin to taking off a bra, but for his whole body.

He sighs happily at the freedom, and then alters his appearance to his fancy. Nothing too drastic, just making himself older, taller. His hair, after much contemplation, is longer, mimicking a certain Malfoy’s glorious hairstyle because why the fuck not? Death is immensely fond of his current eye colour so that’s obviously staying for a while. And finally, he’s all set to wander again. Maybe he’ll even pop up over to see how his fellow entities are doing.

He nods to himself, actually that doesn’t seem like such a terrible idea. Certainly better than the last few he’s made at the very least. He’ll regroup with his brothers and sisters, check to see if his paperwork hasn't done the impossible and killed them all, and maybe ask for some nice recommendations for universes to visit.

With a flimsy plan in place, Death takes one last lingering look at the frankly depressing scene around him before stepping into the nearest shadow and letting the darkness swallow him up.

"Brother!" Came an exuberant cry, Death looked up from where he stood to see he is back in his realm again. His office to be exact. His office with.. way less paperwork than he has seen in a very long time.

Oh my god, maybe he should just stay on vacation forever.

“Don’t you dare,” Life hisses right into his ear, causing the entity to jump in surprise. “I totally know what you were thinking just now, and once this holiday of yours is officially over we are going to have a good and long talk about the concept of delegating some of that simply horrendous workload of yours to your little minions of yours.”

“But,” Death protests, “My reapers aren’t exactly capable-“

A rather tired looking Knowledge walks up to him, “I’ve been teaching some of your more competent reapers and motivated gods of yours to handle some of your documents. As fascinating as it was in the beginning, I am… considerably unused to being forced to read such repetitive information.” She massages her forehead, her inky features are faded from overwork, “I have all the knowledge at my hand but for the life of me I do not know how one could sit here and do such dull,
mindless tasks for as long as you have. It is baffling how banal it all is.”

“Don’t you mean- for the death of you?” Chaos says with a confident smirk as he comes into the room with a small pile of papers. Papers that go flying everywhere once he sees Death. “Brother!” He yells gleefully, rushing up to hug a now sour faced Death staring disapprovingly at the fallen paperwork. “So you’ve finally kicked the bucket eh? A little soon isn’t it?”

“I haven’t technically died.” Death defended at the pitying expressions on his fellow entities’ faces. Honestly the lack of faith of them. “I’m currently hospitalised because someone’s favourite birds screwed me over.” He glares at his counterpart who is whistling at some documents she was holding, reading them with a renewed vigour that was fooling nobody.

“I thought it was your insane diary that did the deed. You know, the guy you wanted to mark your book if you know what I mean?” Chaos wiggled his eyebrows salaciously up at Death who he was still clinging on to. Not one entity looked impressed.

“Too soon man.” Life shook her head beside them.

“Also that was absolutely horrible.” Death deadpanned because now that he was back at full power, he could say with absolute certainty that he’s definitely moved on from it already. It still hurt, the betrayal, the humiliation, the seething black anger- but he’s Death now, and suddenly the whole conflict is less… significant. Humans can cling to their grievances like children with their favourite teddy bears, and Death was sure that if he had stayed as Harry Potter he too would’ve held onto his resentment against Tom Riddle for what he has done to him, twisting it to make it worse than it had ever actually been like most bad memories. But once he had shed his mortal skin, Death can feel the emotions he held, so bright and vivid, slip through his hands like water, leaving the pale shade of feeling he had always had.

It was enough to make him want to go back to playing human, pain or no pain.

Of course that doesn’t mean he still isn’t a little pissed at the soul.

Chaos, unaware of his favourite brother’s thoughts just snorted and rolled his eyes petulantly, “It’s not my fault you just showed up with no warning! And besides…” The entity looked sheepish and petulant, “…all the good puns were taken in that letter.”

Knowledge looks at the chaotic entity derisively, “There were plenty of decent puns and plays on
words you could have used in reference to this context,” She huffs, “Do not go blaming other people for their higher comprehension of the english language.”

“I can if they are literally the epitome of knowledge!” Chaos hisses, “And don’t say other people, I know it was you who helped out the others make the punny.”

“Make the… punny.” Death repeated. “It seems since I have left dear brother, your sense of humour has fled as well.” Chaos pouts.

“Aw, Death, baby, don’t be like that to your favourite, sexiest lil bro.”

“Aw, Chaos, honey,” Death mimics, “If you think you’re the sexiest one out of all of us clearly it isn’t just your humour that’s left the realm.”

Chaos hugged the entity of death tighter and shivered dramatically, “Oh, darling I do love when you get sassy with me,” he groans in half-faked pleasure.

“Are-are we interrupting something?” Time asks awkwardly at the doorway, fiddling with a pocket watch while his serene counterpart just smiles behind him.

It’s funny how obvious everyone’s counterpart is so obviously opposite to the other in some way or form. Death is awkward and sarcastically pessimistic while Life is a bubbly extroverted optimist. Chaos and Order were pretty self-explanatory. Knowledge was clinical and hard to please in the same way Love was emotional and easily attached. The other two pairs were a little harder to discern straight away but once you looked a little closer it was obvious enough. For one, Magic had an attention span smaller than the number of teens currently happy in high school, while Fate had enough patience and determination to continue writing Bella Swan’s fate. Though to be fair it did get kind of weird in the end, but hey, in another universe that story became a fucking franchise so Death really shouldn’t talk. And Space, well he has always been as calm and unflappable as much as Time is twitchy and anxious.

Death smiles at their arrival, “None at all brothers, we are merely catching up before I leave again.”

Chaos lifted his head up from where he had been rather inappropriately been nuzzling against the other’s chest with a shocked, slightly hurt expression. “You’re leaving so soon?” He asks a little plaintively.
The monochrome man looked at Chaos apologetically, “Apologies but knowing Fate’s works, my current mortal’s story is probably going to get quite busy after all this is over, I wish to take the opportunity to check out a few new universes personally.”

Life snorts, “Come on Chaos, this will be good for Death. You even said yourself that he needs to learn to get some strange in his life.” The chaotic man scowls and finally unlatches from his favourite brother to argue with Life.

Meanwhile Death decides to talk to Knowledge and his two eldest brothers. “So, not that I’m ungrateful that you all showed up, but where are the others?”

“Fate’s taken up most of your workload currently, with Order helping her. One is clearly having more fun than the other,” Knowledge states because she knows everything, “Love has… well she’s trying to manipulate your love life. Apparently she isn’t happy how quickly the whole Percy thing had ended and is re-evaluating the prospects.” Death shifts guiltily at that, he knew Love wouldn’t have liked him rejecting the whole squishy cute dating scene, he senses an embarrassing love potion in Harry Potter’s future courtesy of her wrath and need to satisfy cheesy love tropes. “They all send their regards and apologies by the way.”

Death waves it off, “It is fine, though I’m more than a little worried about what Love’s up to than anything.” He cocks his head curiously at Space and Time, “And honestly, I’m a little surprised you two showed up at all, usually you two can be as busy as me sometimes.” That or Time’s too immersed playing with clocks and being a recluse while Space is off galavanting around and-or getting high off the universe.

Well Space insistently calls it ‘absorbing the wonders and mysteries of the world around him’ but everyone else likes to call it ‘getting stoned as fuck’.

Time smiles sheepishly and even Space looks a little chagrined at the reminder of being the most constant absentees in the group. “Yes, well,” Time dithered, “we came to give you a little gift! So, uh, it would’ve been terrible of us not to have come to give it to you.”

“Also you don’t trust the others to take credit of your gift.” Death deadpanned with a faint smile.

Space smiled back amusedly, “Precisely.” Death laughed softly at the offended expressions on the other entities faces.
“That is so not true.” Life protested while Chaos bemoaned how old age has made his older brothers cruel and bitter. Even Knowledge feigns outrage as she huffs, “As if I would partake in simple-minded gift giving.” She retorts.

"Yeah, it's not as if you completely suck at it or anything.” The chaotic entity murmurs under his breath. Clearly still hung up on the last time they all tried to exchange gifts like the humans on Christmas. Death got slippers from her. Fuzzy blue ones with purple polka-dots. It’s some sort of reference to a universe or movie or.. something. Death wasn’t really that impressed by it but whatever, it was not as bad as what Chaos got.

"There are too many variables to take account of," she complains darkly, "Is it better to go symbolic and assume the subject would understand? Pick something personal to their interests but not personal enough that it would embarrass them if opened in front of friends and or family? Something homemade or something expensive to show the extent of your care for them? And what if you do not feel attached to the subject? The notion that I have to spend time and effort on someone who I don't even make any effort to spend time with in the first place feels rather illogical!”

There’s an awkward silence among the entities after that. Mainly because they were all thinking the same thing.

Was the last bit about me?

Space coughed for a lack of anything better to do as a response. “Well,” He says with his eyes averted from Knowledge, obviously remembering his own rather lacking present during the last gift exchange clearly as well, “Hopefully you will, uh, find this much less… less?”

From a pocket of space, Space reaches in and pulls out-

“Is- is that an apple watch?” Life asks dubiously. “Because those are kind of lame, like, just use your fucking phone people. Life is not that hard.”

“It’s actually a trans-dimensional planner watch.” Time jumps in before Space could object to the criticism. “We created it just for this moment in mind so Death can take the opportunity to travel to certain points in certain universes for a specific time in order to get a full and hopefully enjoyably experience in his limited vacation.”

Everyone ooh-ed impressed.
“Now that’s a thoughtful gift.” Knowledge acknowledged. “I’m almost jealous.”

“Oh my god, is that why you two made me compile those lists?” Chaos suddenly gasps, “Holy fuck I just thought you two were finally losing it, asking me to put down fun universes to go to.”

“Wha- they asked you?!” Life shouted in outrage. “They never asked me!” She turns to them. “You never asked me!”

Death narrowed his eyes at the pair. “Wait.. you knew I was going to get stabbed by a teenage diary?”

“Well, technically we didn’t know per say..” Time fiddled with his glasses. “We just sort of.. assumed.”

Now Death, just like his counterpart, gave them a look of both outrage and betrayal. “You assumed I was going to get stabbed by a teenage diary?”

“If it helps, Fate knew.” Knowledge tells him helpfully, while less helpfully Chaos adds with exaggerated mysterious flair, “She alwayssss knooOowssss.”

Space smiled wanly, looking like he is amused at his siblings antics but giving off that sort of vibe that implied they were all two steps away from being sealed in a suffocatingly tiny bubble of anti-space. Chaos, who has experienced a total of nine Space-related punishments in his existence and has been thusly scarred from them makes a rather unmanly sound and hides behind Knowledge in an equally manly way. Even Knowledge stepped back, while never having experienced it herself, it turns out knowing pretty much everything is enough for her to never want to poke that metaphorical bear.

Life cleared her throat. “So, it’s a very lovely little item eh? I’m like, super impressed brother.” She says in her non too subtle attempt at a subject change. Luckily it worked and Space’s smile shifted into something happier and proud. The entity squeezes his counterpart’s shoulder fondly, “Thank you sister for your kind compliments,” he says graciously, “Of course they would be no gift in the first place without Time here to help me construct my designs.”

Time blushed and looked at his counterpart like he hung the stars and moon. Which, well, he sort of did. “O-oh, thanks.. brother.”
Space smiled a little wider, his hand pointedly to leaving his counterpart’s shoulder. “No, thank you... brother.”

“Ugh, just kiss already.” Chaos mutters under his breath sourly. “It’s not like we’re actually related biologically or anything like the lower class flesh people anyway, I mean, come on, it’s been ages.” Knowledges jabs him in the stomach with her elbow pointedly as Space and Time immediately separate at his words.

“Brother Chaos,” Space tells him with a stern look, “Just because you lust for another fellow entity that I at least have the courtesy not to name here, that does not mean I harbour the same feelings for my counterpart. Time is just a brother to me.”

Chaos looks down, expression hidden.

“Y-yeah,” Time agreed, though his shoulders were a little slumped, “J-just a brother.”

There’s another pause. This has been a great start to Death’s second vacation in a vacation he must say.

Because Death is a mature, infinitely old entity who has recently learned the proper social responses befitting a twelve year old child, he walks up into the area between Space and Time, pecks them on the cheek before snatching the watch and let his shadows wrap it around his wrist. “Well, this has been lovely. Thank you for the wonderful gift and the reminder why we almost never have reunions without at least three of our own personal minions.”

Death personally likes to bring the original Lucifer and Micheal, partly because they’ve mellowed out a lot over the centuries but mainly because Death likes to continuously show them how petty their little fight was in comparison. His third usually is either a random individual who had captured his interest at the time or one of the deities who have been grossly, grossly misinformed about what happens up there.

It’s just so funny when they realise how wrong they were.

Death backs away from the pair to kiss the cheeks of the other entities present, though Chaos- who had already jumped back from his very temporary silence- had insisted on a very long lip lock. The entity of demise just rolled his eyes and gave his chaotic little brother a soft press of the lips against
his before he tapped the screen of his watch and disappeared.

Chaos sighed, half-annoyed before looking interestingly at Space and Time. “So where is he off to first then?” He asks the pair. “The wild west? Earth 616? Westeros? I don’t think he’ll handle Westeros, he hates learning too many names of people with short lifespans.”

The pair smiled, “Well,” Space says mysteriously, “Only time will tell.”

“….I fucking hate you.”

SUPERNATURAL (A very supernatural Christmas)

Death blinks blearily at his new surroundings, apparently all it takes was a few years in mortal body to get him to forget how to smoothly hop across dimensions and universes. It’s absolutely horrible. He wants a drink. And a deep tissue massage while he’s at it.

It’s nighttime, which doesn’t exactly help his blurry vision but from what he can tell he’s in some sort of suburban area. The upper-middle class sort. And if the obnoxiously festive decorations around are anything to go by it seems he’s made it just in time for this world’s Christmas. Oh god, he would absolutely murder for some eggnog right now. Such a delightful drink, to swallow whole unborn embryos as they drown in alcohol is a great bliss to the entity. Death cannot help but smile, giddy at the thought of such an indulgence.

He twirls around slowly, surveying the area like he has all the time in the world before he locks on to an innocuously bland house with some rather nice if a little gaudily large christmasy decorations on the front yard. It catches his interest immediately as he recognises the sort of presence that’s coming from in that building. Deities. Minor gods at best but still, gods none the less.

Curiously Death walks up to the front door, careful to avoid the whimsical snowman and other festive assortments as he crosses the yard. There’s even one of those wreaths hanging on the door. Upon closer inspection Death notes approvingly that the wreath is handmade, not any of that plastic shit people had taken to using, it even smells nice. Meadowsweet probably. Someone has a sense of humour.
He presses the doorbell. As expected a rather stereotypically cheerful ring echoes the house. Death waits a few moments patiently before pressing the doorbell a second time, more firmly this time, like somehow this was going to get whoever was in the house to come faster. The moment he pulls back his clawed hand, ready to press for a third and incredibly vicious time, the door opens revealing two rather kindly looking pagan gods.

Seriously, they looked like they could have been the poster couple for Christmas in the 1950s. The man was even holding a smoking pipe.

Death gave the shocked pair what he hoped was a very polite and friendly smile. Though by the way the colour was being drained from their rosy cheeks, he was failing rather spectacularly. “Good evening.” He tries, because he has spent twelve years as a mortal child and he refuses to believe his ability to socialise has not improved one bit. “Is this a good time?”

“O-oh my!” The woman gasps, “Oh fudge on a popsicle could it be?”

“Well this is certainly a christmas full of surprises eh darling?” The man jokes weakly, his eyes not leaving Death’s form.

“Oh my,” The woman repeats breathlessly, apparently not hearing her husband. She’s too busy staring wide-eyed at the incarnation of death in front of her.

The monochrome man waits on serenely for a moment, green irises glowing amusedly as he watches as the knowledge of exactly who was on their doorstep slowly sinks in to the pagan gods’ minds. Sometimes you don’t have to have a grand entrance to take the stage after all, and it’s certainly been a while since he’s felt completely empowered by a situation.

“C-care for some peanut brittle sir?” The man stutters out sudden and stiffer than a frozen corpse.

That seemed to strike his wife out of her stunned coma as she practically jumped at her husband’s attempt at manners. “Oh dearie me, you must be, uh, as cold as you can get just standing out there sir!” She says, once again the epitome of what an old-fashioned american housewife would be as she stepped a little behind the doorway with a little ushering hand gesture. “Please, come in, come in.”

The minor gods shudder in a mix of fear and awe and admittedly a little bit of desire as Death smiles before walking past them into their home. “You are most kind young ones.” He thanks gracefully, purposely ignoring how their eyes glaze over for a moment as they bask in such simple praise from
such a powerful being. The man even gave a little whimper as a tendril of shadow inadvertently brushed him, for to such a small god, the sheer touch of power in that one wisp of shadow probably felt like enough for the man to burn down cities.

The woman looked both curious and envious of her partner's reaction but quickly focused back onto her very important guest like a good host. "Do you want me to hang your uh, robe?" She asks, obviously unsure of herself and clinging desperately onto the rules that come with being a good hostess.

Death shakes his head, "Thank you for the offer but it is not needed." He rolls back his shoulders and like waves, the shadowy darkness coating him ripple down his body until they settle into the form of a fetchingly tailored suit that clung very attractively to his body. The couple stared admirably at his form. As they should. Death knows he's hotter than hellfire when he wants to be. "As you can see."

"Oh I see alright." The woman murmured appreciatively, forcing her husband to pointedly jab her in the side to bring her back to the reality at hand. "I mean, let me show you to the kitchen!"

Death nodded, "That would be lovely, if your food tastes as good as it smells right now, then I think we shall be in for having quite a wonderful time."

The couple gave strained, nervous laughter. "I told you we should have set out the good China." Death heard whispered furiously behind his back. "But no woman, you said only for 'special occasions.'"

"Well how was I supposed to know Death would show up for Christmas?!" The woman hissed back, "It wasn't like he sent us a letter or one of those electronic mails!"

"Electro- honey, he's Death!" The man flings his arms up exasperatedly and Death has to cover his smile with a hand. Honestly, humans may be refreshing but he's forgotten how cute these minor gods could be to play with as well. "We're astronomically lucky he actually appeared at all!"

Following his sense of smile, Death opens the door to the homely dining room to see a nice table with candles, a sweet-smelling pie- and two rather strapping young men tied up in chairs beside the spread. Death cocked his head at the two men who immediately stopped struggling from their bindings to stare at the newcomer.
“Who the fudge are you?” The shorter one asks incredulously.

The monochrome man stares back at him surprised. Not because of their presence though, no, Death had noticed they had been there since the beginning. “Can you not say fuck like a normal person?” Death asks back, curious, “Are you one of those, ah, man-children?”

The taller of the two snorted as the shorter just glares at him for the question. Death disregards them, choosing instead to survey the table and it’s contents, which, upon closer inspection, was filled more with tools that belong in a garage than any real food unfortunately. He picks up a bowl with some blood in it to look closer, ignoring whatever the two mortals are saying at the moment. He wrinkles his nose. “Is- is that a fingernail?” Inverted eyes narrow down to the two men stuck in their seats, ”Is this one of your fingernails?”

Gross.

“Listen man,” The tall one says, not at all answering his very important question, “I don’t know how you got here but you need to go, right now.”

“Yeah,” Short One pipes up, “The couple here are nutters, seriously you need to leave.” He struggles with his bindings for a moment before looking back at Death with a crooked, dark-humored smile, “And ah, cutting us free would be nice too. You know, if it ain’t too much to ask.”

“Now, now,” The lady of the house chides darkly as she enters with two cups of hot cocoa. “Don’t you go badmouthing us to our special guest dearies, or we’ll have to sew those pretty lips shut permanently won’t we?” She says with a sweet smile before turning to Death, “Cocoa?” She offers demurely.

“Madge makes the best cocoa.” Her husband boasts as he comes into the room with a platter of sliced raw meat, artfully done to look like flowers. The woman, apparently Madge, giggles and preens under the praise.

“Oh Edward,” She says, then loudly whispers to Death, “That man, a flatterer he is.”

Death takes the hot cocoa politely, “It seems you got a good one then.” He replies with a thin smile, earning himself a rosy cheeked pagan goddess looking both awed and delighted at his response. Edward seemed right chuffed as well. Death sips the cocoa, rich and boiling hot, just as he prefers. “Good cocoa, is there fresh blood in this?”
Tall One looks horrified at him while Short One tells the trio how ‘sick’ they all were.

“So what, is this guy your second husband or what lady?” Short One asks rudely, “Because, gotta say, he’s kind of way out of your league.”

Madge turns a rather furious red at the insult, either on behalf of Death or not, but Death just chuckles. The short one has moxy. He’s probably what Draco would have ended up like if Draco was American. And lower middle-class. Death looks at their rather shabby clothes. Super low-middle class then.

“I’m definitely above their league if that’s what your talking about.” The entity smirks as he sips more of the frankly bloody delicious hot chocolate. Heh, bloody. “Anyway, what’s with these two guys here? You’ve already got three sacrifices, five seems a bit greedy if you don’t mind me saying.”

“Yeah, what’s up with that?” Short One tacks on.

Death looks down at the pair, “Okay, it was cute the first time you spoke up kiddo, but I really can’t vouch for you guys if you keep this up.”

“Bite me Edward Scissorhands.”

"Dean." Tall One whispers furiously, "What are you doing?! He's helping.. I think."

At the same time, the pagan gods were practically spitting in their outrage at the insult and fear as they awaited the response. "How dare-

"-the disrespect in you whippersnappers-

"-in my day-

"-don't even deserve the dignity of being properly sacrificed-"
"-just gut you where you stand-"

Death looks self-consciously at his long taloned hands before willing them to a more human appropriate standards with a sigh. Everyone was a critic. "I quite like that movie," he comments idly, effectively silencing the pagans, "though I do prefer a happier ending if given the option."

Honestly, he's feeling incredibly uncomfortable in this whole situation and wishes desperately that he had just stolen some mortal shmuck's eggnog and check out Disneyland or something instead of the nearest friendly neighborhood gods. However since he's no longer playing mortal himself, there was no way Death was going to show any such weakness to lesser deities he barely knows, and instead takes on an expression of stone-faced boredom as looks at the occupants of the house. "So, are we just going to keep standing around or-?"

The couple jumped into action.

"Of course, of course sir, give me a moment,” Edward the pagan god promised hurriedly before dashing out of the room like the hounds of hell were at his heels. Madge the other pagan god- and really, these names, ugh- just looked flustered and offered Death the platter of sliced meat.

"Raw heart?” She offers eagerly.

"That will be lovely, thank you." Death accepts the bloody appetiser, delicately picking a piece with his fingertips and letting his inky black tongue wrap around the heart, pulling it into down his throat like a monster dragging it’s prey into an abyss. Death can practically feel the stares boring into him. "Not bad," he comments idly, "It's been a while since I've had properly prepared heart. Is that vinegar?"

"Tears of the owner mixed with lime and paprika." Madge corrects with a wide smile. Death tips an imaginary hat to her culinary skills as he reaches for another slice. Maybe he did make the right decision, awkwardness aside. Merry Christmas indeed.

Just as he's about to take a third mouthful of the chewy taboo goodness, Edward comes into the room with a rather ornately carved chair. There was streaks of actual gold that gleamed beautifully even under the artificial lights. "Here we go, please sit sir." The pagan god gestured respectfully as he placed, what could only be described loosely as a throne, across the table from the two gaping prisoners.
"What are you?" Tall One asks full of reluctant awe and genuine wonder. Death looks at the bound man curiously, using 'what' instead of 'who' was an interesting choice of words indeed, it meant these humans weren't just in the wrong place at the wrong time. They knew about the less worldly, probably was one of those self-sacrificing protector types that fought against the monsters.

He sits on the throne graceful and regal with a serene smile that hides the fact the gilded chair was uncomfortable as absolute fuck. Appearances were everything after all, and despite the reprieve from his duties Death has found he has missed being able to own the room simply by being there. "I..." He pauses dramatically, "am Death."

"Death." Tall One repeats.

"Like death Death?" The Shorter and clearly less intelligent one asks.

Death nods regally and sips his hot chocolate. “The one and only,” he pauses for a moment before amending, “Well, that’s not true, my son usually takes up my mantle around these parts.”

“You have a son sire?” The goddess of the house asks weakly after the room had fallen into a deep and unrelenting silence, apparently even the more supernaturally inclined in this household did not know what to do with such information. “He must be, uh, lovely.”

Death brightened up considerably at the topic of his brethren, “Oh he very much is,” he agrees enthusiastically, now looking more like a proud father than regal overlord, “He’s been doing so well managing this corner of universes I’ve assigned to him, I’m thinking of giving him some more, show him that I believe in his skill and whatnot.” The entity then frowns and sighs, sipping his drink pensively, “However I fear that I may be giving my son far too much to handle, just a couple of universes and their respective alternates is already a lot of work and from what I’ve been hearing in the reports, it is time for the apocalypse to arrive here soon.”

Edward and Madge pale at the casual confirmation the end of the world is coming. The two humans, while still looking confused and disbelieving, look just as uneasy.

“You’re fucking pulling our legs.” Short One accuses. Death shakes his head somberly.

“I am afraid not Short One.” a sound of indignation comes from Short One, “- I can feel the earth readying itself for the oncoming carnage, the wheels are already turning and the Apocalypse will not
be avoided.” He looks at the two humans thoughtfully. Now that he looks at them a bit closer he can sense the pair are special. And not exactly lucky sorts either what with the amount of death surrounding them. Past, present and future. Clearly there are worse fates out there than Harry Potter’s. “...Though it could be stopped.”

“Wait. What do you mean it can be sto-“

Death turns his back to the mortals, dismissing them in favour of the two pagan gods. The two pagan gods who looked ready to be rather severely ill as they clutched their hands tightly together. “I see you two aren’t taking the news well either.”

They shook their heads, looking extremely worried about their situation. Death didn’t blame them. He highly doubts the godly couple was significant enough to warrant any form of protection or even notice from the higher ups. The Apocalypse was pretty much the minor god equivalent of the Great Depression. They’re going to be starving, dying and possibly reduced to fighting each other in the streets over the last few places they could hide away from the oncoming destruction.

The entity looks at them, and he kind of wishes they didn’t look so much like sweet old grandparents because they had fed him and gave him cocoa and now he kind of feels obliged to not let them undergo the horrible experience that is the ending of the world. He sips his cocoa and massages his forehead with his free hand before the being of death decides on what he wants to do now. Fuck, this was a good cup of hot chocolate. Finishing it with a few large swallows, Death then points at the pair with the now empty mug.

“I’m going to give you my favour.” He tells them, immediately brightening the pagan gods’ expression, but before they could start falling over themselves with praises and thanks he finishes with, “But in return I want the two mortals.” Death glances at them. The two don’t seem like the brightest stars in the sky but certainly that whole telling him to ‘get out before it was too late’ thing was a very nice thing they tried to do. Useless and laughable. But very nice nonetheless. Also, he liked their faces. It would be a shame to kill people as pretty as them for something as juvenile as some pagan sacrifice on Christmas.

“Um, do we get a say in this?” Short one asks annoyed. Death hushes him much like an owner hushing their whining pup.

“If you do not mind us asking,” Edward begins tentatively, “what does your favour imply milord?” Madge nods in support.

Death faintly smiles. He notices there was no protest in losing the humans as compensation. Though
to be fair, Death is fairly sure a lot of individuals would give up more than a few mouthy meal tickets in order to gain a boon from Death himself. “It’s a generous offer.” He tells them, “Four centuries guaranteed immunity from all forms of death, no need to feed, no need to try gather power just to scrape by. I might even be kind enough to give you a little power boost to fight off any undesirables once you carve out your territory.”

“Holy shit.” Short One whispers, because apparently this one’s mouth just cannot be stopped, “Can we get that deal too?”

“Shut up Dean, oh my god.” Tall One groans.

“I’m just saying-“

“We accept.” The couple say simultaneously.

Death’s smile widens. “Fantastic.”

Then he’s suddenly right in front of them, arm raised and both their throats already effectively slashed.

“HOLY SHIT!” Short One, Dean, shouts while the other one is also cursing up a storm.

“Oh do be quiet, they’re not going to die.” Death tells them calmly as he slices his own wrists with careful concentration whilst the two gods lay on the floor, writhing and gasping wetly in agony as they slowly bleed out at his feet. “Now drink my blood, willing given, and rise stronger then ever.” He orders as oily black sludge bubbles up from his wrist and sloshes down onto the floor. In the light there’s a delicate silvery sheen to it, but the appearance of his blood is still off-putting enough for the pagan gods to hesitate before licking the liquid off the floor desperately.

“And I thought sealing a deal with a kiss was bad.” Tall One comments with no small amount of disgust at the sight.

“A mere demon’s deal would not be able to accomplish what just a lick of my blood could do mortal.” Death boasts smugly, “It is not as favoured as Life’s blood of course but it does have it’s perks.”
Madge gasps, her hair has gone visibly darker and her skin had lost her rosy vitality in exchange for something smoother and paler. She still looks old, but younger than before. The slash on her neck is still bleeding, but sluggishly now. “Oh my,” she breathes.

“I feel… great.” Her husband laughs disbelievingly, he is in a similar state of changed appearance. “No, better than great, I feel powerful again!”

The two look up at the entity, awe and respect and gratefulness colouring their eyes as their thanks and praises spill from their mouths. Death takes it all with awkward grace, he’s never been great with receiving praise after all. Like, language was not made to respond to that sort of positivity. He raises his hand, silencing the newly improved gods.

“I am glad you feel so.. strengthened.” He tells them, “I suggest that you both should probably pack up and leave to somewhere less… suburban. You may be invulnerable to death but I didn’t grant you enhanced healing or anything.” Then quickly he adds, “And if you have the chance, try and save as many people as you can.”

The gods blinked, clearly confused. “But,” the woman begins tentatively, “you’re Death.”

“And I have to oversee every single death, yes, it’s exhausting.” Well, more like this world is under his Horseman’s reign, not his, and he would like to minimise as much work as he can for his son. Apocalypses were a lot of work after all. The amount of paperwork and documentation put into one of these events is probably the absolute worst thing anyone could go through during an apocalypse. Just the worst thing. Like, he could not think of one single thing worse that could happen. “It’s not like I don’t already have immeasurable power compared to any of you sorts, and not to be rude, but I’m fairly sure your Apocalypse is pretty damn boring compared to most others.”

“Oh, well, gee.” Short One snarks, “So sorry the end of our world is so goddamn boring for you.”

“Dean!” Tall One hisses.

“Sam!” Short One, Dean, Death’s going to start needing to remember their names, mimics back. “He’s mocking us!”

“He’s recruiting help for the worst possible situation! How is that mocking us?”
“I don’t know, it just feels mocking. I mean…” Dean whispers like he wasn’t in the presence of those with supernatural hearing. Or normal hearing. Or even slightly worse than normal hearing. “He kind of seems like a dick.”

Tall One, aka Sam, started trying to kick Dean repeatedly despite them being tied back to back. Death and the deities just watched the whole thing for at least thirty seconds.

“Are, are you sure you want them?” Madge asks. Death sighs.

“Well, at least they’re still pretty.”

“I just don’t understand.” Madam Pomphrey says frustratedly, “The boy should be, for all intents and purposes dead- his lungs are barely moving, his heart beat is erratic, sometimes it stops altogether even, and I’m fairly sure there is little to no brain activity going on in there.”

Dumbledore’s face is unreadable but there’s no doubt he is as confused as the mediwitch in front of him. “But he’s not dead?” He asks, clutching onto the one part of the sentence that brings hope.

The woman’s mouth thins, more perturbed than happy at the news, “His heart is technically beating Albus, but nothing else is. It doesn’t make any sen-“

“Well that’s wonderful news!” Dumbledore says relieved, “Harry does have an odd way of recovering but I’m sure the boy will bounce back eventually then.”

“Albus no, that’s not how the human body works.” Pomphrey groans exasperated. The headmaster may be one of the most powerful wizards alive but like most wizards that don’t train in the medical fields, the man knows near nothing about even basic anatomy. Personally the woman blames their failing education system because this stuff was important.

“This is marvellous, simply marvellous!” Dumbledore continues, and if he wasn’t so genuinely relieved and happy, Pomphrey would have bashed his lemon drop dish onto his head. Of course she shouldn’t be too hasty, the day was still early after all. “I SIMPLY MUST INFORM EVERYONE OF THIS WONDROUS NEWS.”
Reaper number DUMBASS - because Mistress Knowledge has assigned him as thus after finding out what he has done- makes a soft breathy sound, something akin to a sigh really as his hand gently squeezes Harry Potter’s heart to mimic the act of it beating. It’s been weeks of tirelessly just sitting by the bedside, squeeze, release, squeeze. Sometimes it zones out, the sheer mundane repetitive boredom making even the task consume his every thought even while it’s hand goes slack. Only when the magic spell the nurse woman had cast beeps frantically does it jolt back to reality and try not to frantically overcompensate by accidentally exploding the soulless child’s heart. It’s already made the mistake of killing the boy once, it’s certainly not going to do so a second time.

Death sips his drink. It’s Autumn where ever he is now and pumpkin spice has become quite a popular fad in many earths. Death sips his drink thoughtfully again before standing up and going over to the nearest homeless person and passing it to him.

“It’s pumpkin spice.” He warns the hobo seriously, but the dirty man just smiles gratefully and takes the drink while Death tries to hide his pitying disgust. At least someone enjoys the taste.

“Father.” A deep but quiet voice says behind him. Death turns around, surprised at first, but now with a pleased smile.

“Son,” he greets, “How kind of you to drop by to see me.”

Death the Horseman smiles back, they had the same slightly crooked tilt to their smiles, and hands him a cup of something hot. “Though you might enjoy this.”

He doesn’t even hesitate to take a mouthful of the concoction, considering that the Horseman had been made from brought into this world with a slice of Death’s own eternal flesh, it is unsurprising that they both share many traits. Their sense of taste and gluttony is one of them.

Death let’s the dreadfully sweet hot chocolate concoction run down his throat, enjoying the faint sizzle that would have burned his Harry Potter body to the point that the inside of his throat would’ve matched the outside. “Delightful,” he compliments admiringly, “It tastes like melted gingerbread.”
“It’s a white chocolate ginger snap latte, extra chocolate, extra hot.” The Grim Reaper tells him as he takes a long swig of his own. “I heard from my Reapers that you’ve met the Winchesters.”

“I have.” Death agrees, “Cute kids. I see Fate and Life have not been very kind to them.”

“That is the life of protagonists isn’t though?” His son muses, the Horseman looks young, a lanky goth teenager in a suit instead of one of his usually preferred dapper gentleman forms. “Life’s always hard and never fair, and Death will always visit more than once.” The Grim Reaper looks almost shyly to his primary creator, his father, “Well, that’s what you used to tell me.”

“You’re first real protagonists,” Death sniffled a little, wiping an imaginary tear from his eye. He’s only half joking, because Death junior was his little boy and protagonists were hard work to deal with if you’re not careful (Hercules punched him in the face when he tried to wrangle the man into the afterlife, and he may be more powerful than any god could dream of but that had really fucking hurt) and it’s, it’s just a big deal okay? It just is. “You’re... really growing up.”

The Horseman smirked, it’s touch to dark to be amused and a little too bitter around the edges to be humorous, “I didn’t think we were capable of growing up.”

“Growing up isn’t something ruled by a lifetime,” Death says carefully, he steps closer to his son and squeezes his shoulder sympathetically. He remembers a period of time where he had felt resentment in who he was, in how easy his fellow entities had it compared to him. It was.. it was a dangerous time, and not one he wishes to see in his heir. “It’s how experiences molds us and and it’s how we learn what we are here for.”

“I already know what I’m here for.” His son points out, his irritation expressed by the sharp twist of his mouth. “I’m here to pick up what you cannot.”

“You are here to lead.” Death corrects vaguely annoyed at the attitude. A small part of him promises to try spend more time with his favored Horseman if this is truly the belief he has harboured in terms of his existence. “You are here because there is a system in this vast multiverse upon multiverse and not even I could stay on top on. You are here to reign in the other Horsemen, you are here to make sure every soul has paid its dues and that none shall lose their places.” Death’s hand on the younger entity’s shoulder slips down to clasp the Horseman’s own hand. “You are here because I needed help, and most of all, you are here because I wanted a child to call my own.” He squeezes the other’s hand tightly, “And I am so proud that I got you.”
“F-father.” Death junior chokes out moved. If he could cry, he probably would.

“Well,” Death coughs and shifts uncomfortably because he has no idea what to do now when figurative tears become involved. “Hopefully those Winchesters won’t be too much to handle, I mean, what’s the worst that can happen?”

The Horseman, pulling himself together easily just smiles fondly at his maker and raises his drink. “Hear hear.”

Severus watches the still body like he has been for days. Weeks. He feels hollowed out and worn down as attempt after attempt made to awaken the boy from this stasis he has put himself in works to no avail. There’s only so much even the top mediwitches and wizards in Britain can do, let alone a potions master such as he. Dumbledore and even Lucius Malfoy have sought out connections around the globe to ask for help- a shaman from the desert, a herbalist from the East, the best and brightest that American medimagic has to offer, are all heading to Hogwarts to diagnose this one child.

But Harry’s not just one child. He’s the child. He’s the Boy Who Lived. He’s Harry bloody Potter. He’s... breaking Severus’ heart every day he fails to awaken.

“Come on Harry,” he whispers to the comatose child. His voice feels painful and cracked. “Come on you selfish child, don’t you dare leave me now, not after twisting my heart so cruelly.” The man wipes the slowly accumulating grime and dust gently off Harry’s forehead with a cool damp towel, a task he had insisted he do for lack of anything else he was capable of helping. “I don’t know what is worse,” the professor murmurs sadly, “seeing the woman I’d love die because of me or watching her son slowly waste away while I do nothing but wish I told him I love him when I had the chance.”

God, he is such a fucking mess.

McU Avenger}s

The moment his feet touch the ground he knows this world was Trouble. Capital T. And that sort of recognition only came to worlds with one of two things; zombies, and other general undead species overrunning the planet like rats in the sewers, or-
A robot of red and gold came shooting through the sky, followed by what looked to be a massive mechanical flying alien whale. In their wake were many falling buildings.

-Superheroes. He’s in a world with superheroes. He’s probably still in America too, because of course he is.

"Ah fuck." Was all he very eloquently said. Another building fell somewhere close by. It's all the worse because he knew exactly which hero-verse he's ended up in. There's an infinite amount of universes out there but there's only a handful that had a flying red and gold robot as well as a giant green angry man.

"Uh, excuse me sir you need to evacuate underground." Death turned to see the concerned face of Captain America behind him. Damn the man was gorgeous. In a completely objective way. It was such a pity Life had claimed the man, Steve Rogers would look great as a frozen decoration in one of his office.

Actually, thinking about it now the uniform kind of clashes with the general color scheme of his realm. In that the uniform has color and everything in his realm as a general rule does not.

That suit of red and gold though...

"Sir? Are.. are you alright?"

"Yes, yes," Death huffs as he waves the man's concerns off irately, impatiently. He knows the watch is meant to let him experience various universes in a short time frame but his fellow entities knew of his distaste for goody-goody spandex clad heroes. He has a vague feeling this is payback for leaving them with his paperwork. "Now what are we dealing with here? Aliens yes? It's clearly not a robotic invasion so it's probably alien-based or magic."

Seemingly taken aback but the sheer attitude the entity is projecting, Big Blonde and Beautiful in Blue just kind of stares for a moment. "Um."

"You know what? It really doesn't matter, I've got a few hours to kill anyway." Death decides because what the hell. It's a vacation. He can literally stab Captain America right there and then and there would be no consequences. No… Consequences….
“Uh, why are you looking at me like that?”

“What’s it to you handsome?” The entity purred, leaning seductively over a thrashed burning and overturned car. Because even he wants to have a crack at Captain America given the chance.

Of course, maybe this was not the time to do some serious flirting with an American icon. Captain America must think the same because he was trying not to look like he was shuffling backwards and away from the crazy person. The blonde winces suddenly and touches one of his ears, Death’s gaze flickers to it and realized the man has some sort of earpiece communicator on.

"What's the hold up Cap?" Someone is asking through the device, Death immediately straightens himself at the voice and schools his face into something more serious. Inwardly he sighs, it seemed there's not going to be any red, white and blue in the future for him. At least in this universe. Which was a right pity, because, well, supersoldier strength.

"-civilian, think he hit his head-" Death heard him whisper into the earpiece in one desperate hiss. He's heard snakes less snakelike. Still, Death thinks he's heard quite enough from what he's gathered. It's a little insulting to see that his blatant attempt at flirting had been interpreted to head injury but the entity was magnanimous and willing to admit that he wasn't exactly the top of his game in that moment. And even then his best game was more instinctual attraction from the other party than any real work on his part. It's probably why every entity prefers humans who are so blissfully ignorant and arrogant of the big picture, these people make them work for what they want.

"My name is Death." Death offers kindly with a crooked smile as Captain America glances back at him. It's clearly the wrong thing to do because the man's expression gets even more perturbed. He's so distracted he doesn't even notice one of the grey soldiers running up to them with some sort of.. thingymabob.

Raising his hand at the offending creature, Death summons the thing's own shadow up from underneath it and encircles it like a very determined little tornado of darkness. It tightens around the now shrieking grey alien soldier, just enough to lift the being off the ground before Death makes a sharp clenching gesture and the screams immediately stop with a sickening final crunch. The now mangled, very dead creature lays messily strewn on the broken road, it's fellow comrades staring at their fallen soldier with something akin to absolute fear. And they weren't the only ones though.

"Holy- Jesus." Captain America says faintly. He looks a little sickened at the absolute twisted mess Death had made, and more than a little horrified. Death silently crosses out any chance of bedding Captain America today. Which was a damn shame because that man has the shoulder to waist ratio of a fucking corn chip triangle.
"No, I'm Death." He corrects blithely, "Jesus is currently trying his hand at engineering a river of wine for some ancient Chinese emperor or something." It's actually pretty cool, the trees are supposed to be golden and have fresh meat hanging off the branches, the king is obviously going to be overthrown in like a year but still. You could steal some river wine when no one's looking. You could also get executed for getting caught but it's not like it's not a pretty sweet gig overall. "Look Captain, why don't you go... help out with that giant portal, while I go clean up this place."

The alien creatures screech in fear as they realized the immensity in which they were screwed. The ones that had the ability to fly were already dashing back into the portal while others settled for running to anywhere but there. Death, because it's been a while since he's personally committed massacre and he's not going to let such a nice opportunity slip by his face, snarls at the retreating warriors, "Cowards!" He yells, "Come and be sacrificed like the cruxtiens you are!"

"Cruxtiens are the English equivalent of pigs." He tells Captain America, "But violent ones. With elephant sized tusks and blood that tastes like applesauce."

"Okay..." Captain America says before frantically whispering into his comm. Not wanting to interrupt a conversation, the entity busies himself by grabbing as many aliens as his shadows could- Chitauri, that's what they were, Chitauri- and cracking them open like freshly cooked crayfish. Some of the yummier looking souls he brought toward his person to personally consume.

Overall the Chitauri taste pretty darn good, there's the base of something earthy and copper like blood soaked mushrooms roasted over a fire. Which is great because the thing about mushrooms is they do well with balancing out flavor and enhancing the whole umami of it all, the spice of a rebellious personality is mellowed enough to truly savor the adrenaline from its time on the war zone, the creaminess of a milder soul tastes delicate and full of untapped potential, and the few drops of salty tears as they took their last breath perfectly seasoned the whole thing.

Freshly prepared hearts then souls straight from the battlefield? It's like a delightful culinary adventure.

He’s onto his fifth Chitauri soul before Captain America deigns to look at him in the eyes, he looks incredibly disapproving about the whole ‘eating your enemies’ thing Death has going on.

“Alright... Death.” The blonde starts off dubiously, “Is there anyway you can help with closing the portal with your, um, abilities?”

Death cranes his neck upwards and squints at the crack in the sky. It’s not exactly his expertise- that sort of task definitely was a Space thing than anything else. "Is there some sort of power source
behind it? I could probably destroy that easily.”

There’s a bit more talking in the comms before Steve turns back to the entity to confirm, “Black Widow’s on the top of Stark Tower with the machine powering the portal. There’s some sort of barrier protecting it.”

Oh god, please say Black Widow is a code name and there isn’t a giant spider on this team. Death is so sick of giant spiders right now. “And Stark Tower is-?”

Captain America grins, it’s breathtaking. Death had to stagger back a little.

“The tall ugly one.”

The Marvel Universe... IN SPACE~

Death throws his head back and hisses at the feel of his body stretching to accommodate the large girth of the male before him. Thanos grunts as he forces himself to stay unmoving on his throne as the entity had ordered him to be. Death gives the purple skinned conqueror a sly, mocking smile. Jagged and sharp like the finest blade. “You've been rather busy since I'd last saw you.” He hisses as he lowers himself a little lower onto the other. "Such a violent, terrible man.”

"All for you," Thanos groans, his hands clenching hard around the armrests of his chair. He’s been told not to move, not to touch, its torture for the mad titan but he wants to prove himself to the entity, prove his title, his worth. “It’s always, un, for you.”

“Well, can’t say I’m not flattered,” Death admits breathily, his legs are spread wide across thick thighs and his upper body is half plastered onto the much larger torso of the alien, dark shadows wrapped loosely around his body in a teasing manner as they just barely hid his nudity. The incarnate of death slowly, cruelly allows more of Thanos’ length to enter inside him, almost halfway there, and god, Death’s fucking Champion indeed. If he had a fixed form, Death’s sure that he would have been legitimately ripped open by the sheer size of the thing.

“Please,” The conqueror pleads in a manner Death is sure no other but he has ever heard. It's that clingy neediness and blind worship that both attracted the entity and drove him away, though right now he was far more inclined to feel the former.
Death smirks, a row of jagged black teeth under thin lips as he looks mockingly down at one of the most feared beings in this universe. There's just something about over-powered psychos that lights up his inner god-complex and sadism that he usually doesn't indulge in. "Beg." He commands, "Tell me what you want me to do to you, how much you've wanted this."

The entity can feel Thanos below him shift, shallow thrusting upwards into him despite his orders, unable to control himself. Death has to curl his sharp talon-like fingers into the nook of the other's neck to re-steady himself from the unexpected rush of pleasure from the stimulus. It's nothing like the vibrant firework of color he could feel as a mortal, something he thinks he shall always mourn when he finally has to bid farewell to playing Little Boy Potter, but it's still pretty great nonetheless. Still, he's not fond of being disobeyed in this headspace, so reluctantly he pushes himself up from Thanos' gigantic prick and in a demonstration of strength, adjusts himself so that the legs wrapped around the purple warrior effectively pin him to the throne. Completely immobile from the waist down.

Death tutted disappointedly, "Did I tell you to move Thanos?" He asks, to which Thanos, destroyer of worlds, shakes his head looking meeker than any kitten. "No, I didn't." Death answers for him, his eyes go completely, soul suckingly black, "I told you to fucking beg."

And beg he did.

"Death, my master, my everything," Thanos breathes sharply as a satisfied entity positions himself so the conqueror's cock is just barely brushing up against the monochrome man's entrance, "I want you to let me worship you, to prove I am your greatest follower. I've waited so long for you to come back to me. I've killed billions in hopes that you will answer my call, to notice me once more, only your attention is what I most desire."

Death blinks as he looks down at Thanos. That had been... unexpectedly sweet of him. It wasn't really the begging he was hoping for but it was certainly enough to effectively stroke his ego. As a reward Death leans in and kisses the being, it's hungry, violent, and much like many of the planets that had the misfortune to come across Thanos, the other had practically crumbled under such a sudden attack. "Such a sweet darling." Death murmurs into the kiss that the alien was frantically if a little clumsily trying to reciprocate, "you'll never betray me would you?" And okay so maybe he lied and was still a little miffed about the whole Riddle thing, sue him. The fucking diary stabbed him, he's allowed to be miffed.

"Never," The purple skinned being hissed as if the idea of doing so hurts his very soul thinking about it. The entity hums, pleased with the answer.

Letting one of hands travel downwards, Death guides his proclaimed champion's dick, hard and wet
with arousal, to his entrance. With a confident, sultry look the entity kisses Thanos passionately before impaling himself fully onto his erection. He devours and savors the sudden shout of surprise and pleasure, letting his long inky tongue down the other's throat, lightly choking the larger being, stimulating him further.

It doesn't take long, not with the way Death bounces himself on his champion's dick with the enthusiasm of a child on a trampoline- or with the enthusiasm of some other simile far more appropriate given the context. Thanos shudders, rolling his hips up against his love, his god, and causing Death to arch his back at the friction in a beautiful arc. The conqueror, unable to help himself anymore, reaches up to hold the entity in place and begins thrusting into the tight body of death incarnate with desperate ferocity. Death keens at the sudden shift in dynamics but quickly adapts with a small amused bark of laughter.

Thanos was never great at playing the submissive pet for long.

SOMEWHERE I don't know

“Rawr.”

Death stares down at the tiny chubby baby dragon. The crimson creature blinks, lazy and curious before trying to take a swipe at a stray tendril of shadow curling out at him. It disappears like foam under tiny claws, seemingly entrancing the little thing.

“What the, why the fuck was I even sent here?”

The dragon looks up at him in response and yawns. Death blinks as he realises there was an imperfection on the little thing’s tiny scaly head. Intrigued and with not much else to do in the empty meadow, he picks up the dragon and coos. “Now what do we have here little one?”

Squinting, Death sees it’s a rather odd scar. The design was weirdly familiar… and then it hits him.

Death almost dropped the dragon in surprised.

“Funny,” Death mutters once he gets over the surprise, “Real fucking funny Chaos.”
Harry the Hungarian Horntail licks his face.

Marvel Universe. Again. Just. I've really planned this out wrong okay?

"You know," Loki says rather conversationally for someone getting his dick sucked, "when I was forced into imprisonment for trying to take over Midgard, this wasn't what I expected I have to admit."

Death pulled his mouth from the God of mischief's aching erection, much to said god's displeasure, and grinned cocky and sly. "Well I didn't expect to end up in Asgard's prison chambers with you either but I've always found a way to make lemonade with what I've got. It was either this or eating your soul," He lets the tips of his sharp teeth graze the skin of the other's arousal, flickering his tongue lightly against the warm flesh pointedly, Loki groaned at the sensation, "and I rather like to think I've made the right choice don't you?"

"Yessss.." Loki hisses, his head banging onto the wall of his cell as he holds the most powerful being he's ever seen's head down to swallow his cock. Forget ruling a planet, this was the biggest power trip of all.

When he steps out, he's inside a way too familiar glass tower building. When he turns around, he sees the Avengers staring back at him. The archer has popcorn falling from his mouth. Death cannot suppress his annoyance any longer.

"What the actual fuck, why am I here, and why is it always these fucking characters?! This is getting repetitive, and they are getting dull!" He yells into the ceiling, because this isn't even the fourth time he's entered the Marvel multiverse now. This is the sixteenth. And the only times that were actually memorable was when he lived through Tony Stark's childhood as his imaginary friend, when he actually lived with the Avengers for two years after the Battle of New York and had a weird but interesting time dating Fury, and that one time he actually did go supervillain. Death's not gonna lie, it was kind of stupid easy. They. Always. Fight. He didn't even have to bring out the medium sized guns, with the exception of when he got double teamed by the Hulk and Thor. That was, that one kind of hurt.

"No, please," Tony Stark called out sarcastically, "continue standing in my tower and insulting us."
Death pauses and looks at the group embarrassed. This is certainly one of the worst first impressions he has made. Not the worst worst but pretty up there. "Apologies, let's just say I've been running into you guys a lot lately."

"Funny," the archer replies dryly, "I don't remember seeing you anytime in my life."

The entity huffs, "Look, I don't mean any harm nor do I feel inclined to interact any further with-" he pauses, "Is Captain America gay and single here?"

Captain America turned bright red and glanced at Stark for a second before looking pointedly at the ground. Ah, so it was like that. Death sighs defeatedly. The window of opportunity seems to be nonexistent in regards to this man, it’s either Stark or that Bucky character or that weird thing with his first love’s niece or whatever. What a bummer, and here Death thought that he could possibly be the third entity to, as his more chaotic comrade says, ‘tap that’.

“I see.” He says flatly, ignoring the sly looks on the two superspies, the embarrassed flush on the super soldier and the confused but calculating look on the super genius. “Well I don’t suppose you’ll just let me leave and allow me to hang around a Starbucks until I have to leave?”

They did not.

The healers were baffled. The shamans perturbed. Harry Potter wasn’t healing. Harry Potter was barely classified as alive. One spiritual doctor straight up accused Dumbledore of necromancy.

“At best the magic does nothing to the subject, at worst it damages the patient’s body and sets the healing process even further back.”

“The Phoenix tears seem to have caused this adverse reaction in the boy, this is the first time I’ve ever seen this response in a wizard, heck, in any living creature.”
“Survived the killing curse when he was a babe eh? Think that has something to do with it?”

“Fascinating, simply fascinating.”

Severus hated them all. He stood in the corner, glowering and glaring like Harry’s own personal gargoyle at these esteemed strangers putting their hands and spells over the comatose boy. He hated how they just swanned in here, so assured that they would cure the Boy-Who-Lived. He hated how he has to spend at least forty-five minutes explaining the situation, reliving how they had found Harry, dying from basilisk poison because some fucking bastard had stabbed him, how Fawkes’ tears had closed the wound but hadn’t truly healed him in the end. He hated how at least half of them just hnnm-ed and nodded and subtly prodded for more information, what they have tried so far, did anything work, anything go wrong. He hated how over half of them looked at him like he was useless and incompetent and clueless despite being one of the best potions masters in England. He hated how the other half tried to be sympathetic at his distress, at Harry’s plight, like by listening to a forty-five minute story has suddenly made them emotionally connected to Harry on some deep and spiritual level. One traveling monk actually had the gall to pat him on the shoulder and tell him ‘Not to fear, darkness always passes and light always finds a way.’

Merlin he fucking hates them.

“These imbeciles are all quacks.” He hisses to Madam Pomphrey as he watches some Swedish mediwizard, with what is clearly Arthur Weasley’s love for muggle objects, try scanning Harry’s brain with something called ‘X-rays’ while an Australian witch and a South African mystic argue about some ingredients nearby. Oh how he hates.

The Hogwarts mediwitch was eyeing the odd clunky contraption the Swede was using warily as she replies exasperated to Snape, “Okay so maybe this batch don’t seem to be prime examples of the height of medimagic but I hardly think it fair to call every wizard here a ‘quack,’ Severus. What about Joseph Bollhorn?”

The Head of Slytherin glowered at the fighting mediwitches harder, “Bollhorn made some interesting theories.” He grudgingly admitted, “But they were hardly useful in helping Potter.”

Joseph Bollhorn was a quarter veela French mediwizard who has dabbled in necromancy and minor dark lord-ship in his more tremulous youth. Like everyone else, he had been drawn in by the allure of saving the great Harry Potter from his curious condition but unlike the others, he had been a little less orthodox in his investigations.

“No one as we know other than Harry Potter has survived the killing curse, obviously there must’ve
been some repercussions to surviving such an ordeal or at least a reason for said survival.” Bollhorn had once calmly explained as he peered closely at a thin patch of flesh he had sliced off Harry’s forearm when no one had been looking. Even Dumbledore was pretty upset at that, so you could imagine how furious Snape had been at the time. “From what you’ve told me, and from what my more esteemed colleagues have summarized, I find myself believing that Harry Potter’s soul has somehow assimilated the killing curse into itself and has adapted to rely on its power to continue existing.”

“That’s...” Madam Pomphrey had looked dubious at best at the idea but had been too polite to say it to a stranger they themselves had invited over for their opinions.

“Preposterous.” Snape had finished bluntly for her because he has no such reservations.

“The theory is a little far-fetched I’ll admit,” the mediwizard admitted, “But you must admit it is the only half-decent explanation we have got so far for Potter’s strange inability to process healing magic, recovery potions and apparently Phoenix tears.”

“If that was the case,” Dumbledore began thoughtfully, “If Harry here really is, ‘dead’ in a sense, or has adapted to accept such dark magic, it would make some sense that his body and soul could have mixed up their signals and mistake light and healing magic as a threat to its health.”

“That makes no sense.” Snape growled, “Harry’s gone through a number of injuries and has suffered through abuse from his relatives, I hardly doubt even the Boy-Who-Lived could survive such sustained damage without healing.”

“Severus is right.” Pomphrey backed up, “While your theory, outlandish as it sounds, does allow some things to be explained,” The potions master mutters something deeply uncomplimentary at that, “It falls rather flat when we account all the other times Harry has healed.”

“Ah, but Potter hasn’t exactly healed well has he?” Bollhorn says knowingly and smug, the Hogwarts’ professors clenched their jaws and looked away, clearly unhappy at the slight jab to their failures of protecting one wizard savior. “No, he has exhibited stunted growth, slow healing even in muggle terms and a high resistance, even to the point of an allergic reaction to medicinal potions, light-affiliated magic and muggle drugs.”

“Interesting concept.” One of the previously fighting mediwitches observed, both apparently drawn to the conversation. “So what if, by assuming that Potter’s soul is supported by dark magic, we can attribute his slow natural healing pace to his own magic fighting against the foreign magic-“
“Which would possibly restrict the amount of magic Harry had needed to maintain a normal healing rate for his body!” The other witch finishes excitedly, the two grin and high five each other. Clearly whatever hatchet they had been swinging has been buried. God Snape hates them all.

Even Bollhorn looked a little irritated at his deductions being interrupted. As a former dark lord, he probably enjoyed long winded smug monologues more than he enjoyed sex in Snape’s opinion. “Yes, well,” The mediwizard coughs, “As mediwitch Janice and healer Cavadas said, I believe Potter’s magic, his own pure magic, is what truly allows the boy to continue living. His magic, as powerful as it is, must have sustained some sort of symbiotic balance between his body and the death curse. By tipping that delicate balance by injuring Potter, his magic probably would have to work overtime just to try maintain that balance and prevent the latent curse from overtaking him, physical healing would be a secondary focus.”

“Great.” Snape says, not looking at all as impressed as he was secretly feeling, “So do you have any way to prove this half baked theory or are we just stringing together tales by the campfire?”

Bollhorn didn’t. Nor was he able to provide much in the way of aid to help in Harry’s little problem other than the useless advice of the boy needing time for his magic to reestablish the balance. The Slytherin potions master had been so enraged by the shite advice he had practically thrown the man out of the castle with his barehands.

“We should ask him to come back.”

“Absolutely not.” Snape immediately says because he has done a lot of horrible things in his life, having to apologize to people he doesn’t like is definitely one of the worst, right alongside experiencing the cruciatus curse for the first time and about four steps below witnessing Lily Potter’s death.

Pomphrey rolled her eyes, “Oh do man up Severus, Bollhorn is a perfectly nice chap-“

“He used to call himself the Skull King, Lord of Despair.” Severus deadpanned.

“a perfectly nice, reformed chap.” The mediwitch repeated through gritted teeth, “and he and I have exchanged many letters updating me on his further research on Harry’s status in his lab-“

“Evil lair.”
“-his lab. And Bollhorn actually has made some strides that he thinks may speed up Harry’s recuperation.”

Snape gnashed his teeth as pride and jealousy fought against his concern and need for Harry to stop being in a goddamn coma. Obviously the latter won out but not without some serious side eye from the older woman as he took his sweet time trying to force the agreement from his lips. “...Fine. But if he starts monologuing again, not even Merlin himself will be able to stop me.”

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**Fantastic Beasts and Where to find them**

"Hm." Death looks around unimpressed by this new place. He's definitely gone back in time, nothing too far for earth standards but enough to know that there's little chance of him going to buy a hazelnut frappicino around here anytime soon.

He's in front of some sort of bank this time. It's a nice bank. For well, a bank. There's a crowd of people gathered right in front of it and a rather angry looking woman with some thin youths with flyers leading them all. It seems this era is the time when witch hunting became a thing.

Does this count as irony? Probably not.

"You friend," she points, thankfully not at him but at some startled red headed twink of a man with a rather nice blue coat, "are you a seeker? A seeker after truths?"

"I'm ah, more of a chaser actually," The man replies with a secretive twist of his mouth, and suddenly this world has gotten far more interesting. Death immediately zoned onto the wizard, and wizard he was. It seemed this world was going to be rather more intriguing than he had thought.

He blends into the shadows, shifting through the crowd as he tries to locate the red headed wizard, as he moves, Death casually adjusts his appearance to fit his surroundings. Instead of the usual black, the shadows on his body shift to a nicely fitting suit of the darkest shade of grey, his talons become well manicured nails and his long shadowy locks recede into something far more militaristic and slicked back. Once he finally makes his way to his target, Death looks more like one of those arrogant corporate douchebags than the all powerful entity he is.
"Didn't peg you for a quidditch player sir," he murmurs, startling the already skittish looking man. Death grins toothily at the reaction. The redhead's gaze flickers at his face before gaping rather rudely at his mouth. Death frowns at that but quickly realizes he's made quite the error when he had been shifting shape, he may have whitened his teeth but they still had retained their shark like appearance. "Fuck," he mutters, hiding his mouth with his hand as he quickly resolves his mistake.

"What are you?" The wizard breathes, completely fascinated and far less twitchy after seeing the interior of his mouth. Which was odd since usually people get twitchier when faced with rows and rows of wickedly sharp teeth. "Vampire? No, no, you have the pallor but you seem completely unaffected by the sunlight, not to mention those weren’t fangs, but it's the best I can come up with right now."

Death narrows his eyes at the blabbering, it's very cute but probably not the right time considering they were in the middle of a crowd full of scared magic hating people. "Let's take this somewhere else shall we?" He asks, the wizard looks down abashed before his eyes flicker somewhere else and gasps softly.

"Ah bugger," Death tracks the other's gaze confused until he sees a small little platypus like creature on the steps of the bank.

"A niffler?" He asks baffled. The young redhead actually looked just as baffled as he did, but for a completely different reason.

“You know what a niffler is?” The wizard asks amazed, except this really isn’t the time because the niffler is heading into the bank.

“Oh course I do,” Death snaps, “I also know that putting one of them nearby a building made solely for keeping shiny valuables is a disaster in the making, now come on man!”

It's frankly a mess what happens next. Apparently the redhead 'owns' the niffler and had been very remiss in his locking charms- something which Death rather thinks should have been considered priority number uno if you keep magical creatures for a living. They bump into some muggle almost as overweight as Vernon Dursley but far more friendly and down to earth. Still a muggle however, and last time Death had checked, them finding out about magic had been a big no-no.

So of course that totally happened.
Seriously, who the fuck just accidentally leaves a magical creature egg the size of a large fist and doesn’t notice? That guy.

“Hey! Mr English guys, think your egg is hatching!” The large man calls out from across the bank as Death and the redhead were trying to stalk a niffler.

“Is that your possibly very magical egg?” Death hisses angrily, “Are you bloody serious right now?”

The redhead hesitates for a moment before grabbing Death’s hand, pulling out his wand, summoning the egg with the muggle fucking attached, and apparated down some nearby stairs. Stairs which are still in pretty good view of the general crowd if any cared to walk over into that area. Before Death leaves this universe, he is going to deck the man. Hard.

And then it turns out the egg is hatching. It’s admittedly quite a beautiful moment. Until Death realises its an occamy egg and probably cannot be explained away so easily to the non-magical human.

“Wh-wha-wh-what…” Said non-magical human stutters after he gets over the moment. He peers up from the stairs to confirm where he had been previously standing before ducking back and looking for all intent and purposes, absolutely gobsmacked. “I was, I was just there, and now I’m here.” He says faintly.

Death makes a suitably sympathetic sound and pats the poor man’s back as the redhead walks down the stairs and out of view, presumably to put the newly hatched creature into that daft suitcase of his. “Look sir, you’re kind of in this now? Might as well see what blue coat over there’s gonna do next.”

It really does say something about how shock can make even the most stubborn of people quite compliant to suggestion as the American wordlessly nods and begins walking towards the direction the other had wandered off to. As expected, the redhead was squatting over his slightly opened suitcase and murmuring soft words into it. The muggle, who must have decided Death was the normal one of the two (and isn’t that a laugh?), gives him an incredulous look to which Death just shrugs in response. “Don’t look at me mate, I’ve only met him like five minutes ago.”

The large man looks like he very much wants to say something to him but then the redhead suddenly stands up, facing a vault with a determined and slightly annoyed look on his face. “Absolutely not,” he says and for a moment Death feared he was in the middle of some incredibly poorly thought out bank heist before he remembered there was a niffler on the loose in here. The thought was.. not better exactly. Blue Coat takes out his wand again and points it at the large vault door, “Alohamora.” He incants, opening it easily.
“So you’re going to steal the money huh?”

All three of them spin around and see some guy in a suit, a banker presumably, and not a happy one at that though that wasn’t entirely unexpected. Before Death could even move, the banker hits some alarm button and the redhead hits the banker with a petrification spell of some sort. Still too late as the alarm bells ring throughout the halls in a rather deafening manner Death’s enhanced hearing really rather not hear.

The American muggle whimpers what is presumably the banker’s name and woah, it is a good thing Death didn’t react or he would’ve totally killed the guy on instinct- and he would feel really bad if that was the thing that broke the poor muggle’s sanity instead of whatever nonsense the redhead had pulled so far. Seriously, Ron and the other Weasleys’ have never given him this much trouble before. Well, unless you count Ron’s part in turning him into an extra crispy Pottersticker or Ginevra technically bringing a Dark Lord into their school which effectively released a giant basilisk, but they’re like ten. Ten year olds get at least a pass for one incredibly dangerous and stupid thing they do. And something tells him that this particular redhead has used up all of those passes and more.

Blue Coat practically leaps into the vault and snatches the niffler up into his grasp. Death rolls his eyes and follows after him. The man at least knows what he’s doing as he tickles the upside down creature who’s now unloading a large amount of trinkets and shiny things from it’s inter-dimensional pocket flap things. “The guards are coming any minute now,” Death tells them both, he looks the thieving creature in the eye, “Unload everything. Now.” He commands, and the niffler immediately obeys, the rate of stuff coming out of it much faster now.

The redhead looks amazed, “How did you-“ he begins to ask before the muggle calls at them worriedly.

“Oh, guys?” And oh yes, the security detail has come. A little tardy in Death’s personal opinion but this was a time before google so he will not criticise. Everything was slower without google. Now it was Death’s turn, he grabs Blue Coat and American muggle and lets the shadows immediately envelop them and shift all three outside the building. Luckily he’s fairly sure no guard saw them disappear. Fairly sure.

“That wasn’t apparating.” Is the first thing out of the redhead’s mouth, it’s a little accusing but not in an angry way, just curious and assessing like when he had saw his teeth.

“You’re still holding the niffler.” Is what Death replies back with, because it was true and the little, admittedly cute creature was looking rather star struck at him. “Please put him in your little briefcase of yours.”
The thin man looks like he wants to press further on Death’s true identity but decides against it in favour of scolding the niffler and shoving it back into his case. As he locks the bag, he looks briefly up at the muggle apologetically, “Awfully sorry about all that.” He says.

“W-what the hell was that?” The muggle pants wide-eyed, which was a completely normal reaction all things considering.

“Look, we really shouldn’t compromise you anymore on this situation so maybe- woah hey, where are you pointing that wand pretty boy?”

“Unfortunately you have seen far too much, don’t worry sir this will all be over in a jiffy.” The redhead says, and gets hit with a suitcase for his trouble.

Death watches the fat man practically make skid marks with how fast he ran around the corner. He doesn’t do anything of course, partly because he was a little surprised at the attack in the first place but mostly because the entity kind of thought the response was totally warranted. Plus, you know, power to the muggles and all that jazz.

“Ow, Merlin that hurt,” The blue coated man muttered. Death snorted.

The entity grinned, not even bothering to hide his rows of razor sharp shark teeth. “No offense sir, but you could’ve at least tried to obliviate the man subtly.” He chided playfully. The red headed man glared at him for a second before it flickers away. Such a nervous little human. Twitchy but oddly resilient and clearly unafraid of bank robbery, Death’s charmed by the contrast. He wonders if the man would make a better meal or a pet. The being was this close to reaching out to ruffle the man’s fluffy looking hair.

And then some lady burst in only to apparate them both away.

“Who are you?” She demands as Death inhales and exhales noisily through his mouth. The nausea that hits him, hits fast but thankfully not long. Still, ugh, wizarding teleportation sucks.

“Uh, Newt Scamander.” The redhead, Newt, tries to give something like a disarming smile. “And you are?”
It is not effective if the frown on the woman’s face is any indication. “What’s that thing in your case?” She hisses.

“Oh, that, uh, that is my niffler.”

She frowns, confused and clearly wondering why whatever wizarding god she believes in is so cruel to her. Instead of continuing her interrogation with Newt- which was smart because that way may lead to madness- she turns to face Death, fierce and questioning. “And who are you?” Death in turn lifts his chin up, looking for all sorts and purposes like a defiant lawyer sneering down at his opponent.

“My name is really none of your business ma’am.” He retorts haughtily, his voice dripping with the cold disdain of nobility. Inwardly he despairs. This definitely seems to be the same universe where Harry Potter resides in, what with the level of sheer inconvenience they both share.

“Well, it doesn’t matter,” She sighs, “I’m taking both of you in. Honestly, this could not have been a worse time for you to release a creature out here, we’re kind of in a situation you know?”

Of course they are.

Newt does not look at her face, “I didn’t mean to let him out, you see he’s incorrigible and shy and wheneve-“

Death cuts him off, “Wait. When you say take us in do you mean..?”

She fishes out a wallet from her pocket and thrusts it at him triumphantly. “Magical Congress of the United States of America.”

Aw, shit.

Death stares at the identification of Porpentina Goldstein who works presumably as the magic police, then he stares at Newt in what he hopes accurately conveys his worry and pointed accusations. Newt, clearly more comfortable with him than the woman actually did look at his face and see his expression, his own freckled face twists apologetically before he looks back at Porpentina. He doesn’t exactly meet her eyes but it’s enough to tell he’s trying. “Look, this man hasn’t done anything, he was just trying to help me.” Newt explains pleadingly.
The police witch is unmoved, something Death secretly finds amazing because Newt has some serious earnest puppy dog eyes there. However in the end it doesn’t take long for her to look distinctly uncomfortable under the weight of that expressively pathetic gaze and tucks in her identification back into her bag just to have an excuse to look away, “Please at least tell me you took care of the no-Maj.”

Death and Newt both look at her blankly.

“NoMaj?” She repeats, before clarifying exasperatedly in a way that clearly outlined what she thought of the two men’s intellect, “No magic? Non wizards?!’”

The pair gave a soft ‘ah’ of understanding. “That’s a very boring way to classify them.” Death criticised.

“We call them muggles across the pond.” Newt adds helpfully.

“I don’t care!” The woman hisses, before looking intently at Newt, “You wiped his memory correct?”

“Uh,” Newt stammers as Death makes a humming noise with his mouth. Neither are looking in the direction of the increasingly incensed lady.

There’s a stifled angry huff of air before the woman turns to the redhead. “That’s a section 3a Mr Scamander, I’m sorry but you and your friend are coming with me.” She reaches to grab both of them and Death barely had time to blink before the woman apparates them away.

—

“Ughhhhhh.” Death groans. Fucking wizard teleportation. He has this numb ache at the base of his skull from behind he just knows is going to linger like a bitch.

“Come on,” Goldstein tells them both, practically dragging them by their elbows to a large building.
Newt looked possibly even more reluctant then Death to follow her. “Uh, I do have things to do you know?”

“Well you are going to have to rearrange them now don’t you hm?” The woman answers, unrelentingly firm. “What are you two doing here anyway huh?”

“My family sent me here for vacation.” Death hisses annoyed, “They are probably laughing themselves sick right now.” Goldstein at least gives him a pitying look, she probably has a brother or sister too then.

“I-I’m here to buy a birthday present, some Appaloosa Puffskeins. There’s only one breeder of them in the world and he lives here in New York.”

They finally arrive at somewhere called the Woolworth building and Goldstein wasted no time murmuring to one of the doormen about their current predicament before bringing them in. “And by the way,” She says casually as they walk in, “We don’t allow the breeding of magical creatures in New York, in fact we shut that guy down a year ago.”

Death shot Newt an arched brow. Newt just shrugged. This man. Seriously.

The inside of the Woolworth building was pretty damn amazing in the entity’s humble opinion. All polished, classic and tastefully done in one set theme of ebony and bronzed gold. The giant poster of the woman he assumed was the boss around here was kind of gaudy in his opinion but every design has some flaws. Some bigger and more self-absorbed than others apparently.

The only magical creatures he could see were house elves, and ones with far more sass than those back in Potter’s time. But then again they also didn’t have tailored clothing. He feels like there’s some sort of significance for that but that sort of information isn’t really in his jurisdiction.

Death blinked at the unusual sight of a house elf in a suit working the elevator. “Well, that’s new.”

“Hey Goldstein.” The house elf greeted.

Goldstein pauses a bit, it’s clear that she is not Suited House Elf’s biggest fan. “Red.” Is all she curtly replied before nudging Death and Newt into the elevator. Upon seeing the entity, the elf’s ears immediately twitch upwards as his jaw moves downwards.
“Wha-wha-wha-wha-“ he says rather stupidly.

“Do you two.. know each other?” The British wizard asks curiously.

Death winks down at the creature and presses his forefinger to his lips in a shushing gesture, “In a way.” He vaguely answers the wizards.

Goldstein coughs, “Yes well, that’s all very nice and all but we’re heading down to the Major Investigations department if you will?”

The house elf, Red, pulls his eyes away from Death to look at the woman confused, “But I thought you was-“

“Major investigations department.” She repeats firmly, “I’ve got a section 3a.”

Red stares at her like she just told him she had a contagious STD. “With, with him?!” He squeaks in a very high pitch as he points at the entity, “Y-y-you can’t be serious!”

The auror frowns, “Why, yes, of course I’m serious.” But she looks less sure, thrown off by the near hysterical reaction. Newt was also staring at Death assessingly. “Major investigations department.”

“Sure, sure, it’s your funeral.” The house elf replies darkly as he complies, closing the elevator door.

Goldstein leads them to interrupt what looked like a very solemn and important meeting between some incredibly stern looking wizards and a dark-skinned blonde woman who Death recognised as the lady from the gigantic fucking portrait hanging out in the main body of the building. They all turn to stare at the three disapprovingly.

The woman and a very handsome man walk out of the meeting circle to greet them rather icily. “We made your position here quite clear Ms Goldstein.” The woman says.

“Madam President,” Goldstein replies anxiously. Death idly wonders why she would go straight to
the president of the damn country for a section 3a. Surely this was not *that* big of a deal that the
president had to be called in to this personally. “I-“

“You are not an auror anymore Goldstein.” The President cuts in, her voice is quiet but cold, like the
first winter frost that slowly cracks on your window.

It’s super awkward.

Goldstein looks down in shame, “No, but Madam if you-“

“Goldstein.”

“But there’s been a-“

“This office.” Madam President interrupts in a tone which heavily implies this will be the last time
she will do so again. “Is currently concerned with more.. major incidents.” She turns her back to the
group, ready to go back to her meeting, though not without looking back to the ex-Auror, “Please get
out.”

“Yes ma’am.” Goldstein immediately answers. She’s trying hard to not look hurt and embarrassed by
the exchange and pushes her two not so convicted criminals out of the room. Death tilts his head
back to look at the handsome gentleman who hadn’t said a word, just stood there and looked
intimidatingly pretty.

The entity wonders briefly what the man’s true appearance was.

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The next floor they arrive on is far more familiar to Death than he would have liked. Paperwork
everywhere. Ugh. This place should come with a warning sign because he’s certainly triggering
some PTSD just looking at the endless desks filled with documents.

Goldstein leads them to a desk with the words WAND PERMITS labeled neatly on top. Seems like
someone had a very depressing downgrade in their career. “So you got your wand permits?” She
asks sullenly, “Every foreigner must have one.”

“I made a postal application weeks ago.” Newt informs her, setting his luggage down by his feet.

“I, uh, yeah, same.” Death tacks on lamely. “Postal application. Totally did it.”

The woman, who was in the middle of writing Newt’s name down in some book gives Death a look.

“I am going to need your name you know?”

Death hesitates, he’s done many things but surprisingly enough he’s never gotten in trouble with any form of mortal government law. Well, that’s certainly not true. He’s never gotten caught getting in trouble with the law is a better way to put it. Newt looks nervous for him, probably because he’s aware that at the very least he is not exactly human.

"My name is... Harry." He finally settles on, because he hardly thinks it would be a good time to declare who he actually is in this world. Humans were always disbelieving and judgmental, wizards surprisingly enough were probably even more so. "Harry uh, Mortimer." Hah, Mort-imer. God he was funny.

Goldstein squints her eyes at him like that could suddenly suss out his lies. Death does not feel too worried about her calling out his bluff, magic or not paperwork was a dull tedious task that could take ages to accomplish if you were any less than enthusiastic. The moment they realise there was no Harry Mortimer, he would probably not even be in the same universe anymore, or at least time period.

“I don’t see your name here.”

Oh fuck, turns out magic was less useless than he thought.

“Okay, fine, I didn’t send an application because…” Death wracked his brain for an appropriate excuse, then suddenly it hits him, “I don’t have a wand.”

“You don’t have a wand.” Goldstein repeats flatly.
“I prefer wandless magic,” Death tells her not untruthfully, “And this was a very impromptu holiday for me, I was going to try doing things the muggle way and figured that there was little chance of me getting arrested by the magical authorities around here.” He side eyes the British redhead not a little un-accusingly.

The woman looks like she wants desperately to question him but turns to Newt instead.

“And you were just in… Equatorial New Guinea?”

“I’ve just completed a year in the field and I’m writing a book on magical creatures.”

Goldstein looks a little bewildered at that, “Like an extermination guide?”

“No,” Newt says quietly but very judgingly at her, “It’s a guide that will help people understand why we should help protect these magical creatures instead of killing them.”

“OH MY GOD.” Death suddenly shouts, startlingly both of them. “You wrote Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find them!”

The wizard looks absolutely gobsmacked, “Tha-that’s the working title of my book, but how?”

“Fuck, okay, this just got way better.” Death says excitedly, whilst he tried not to rub his hands together gleefully. When he was Harry Potter and greatly injured he had a lot of reading time. That textbook was certainly one of his favorites to pick up. “Your book is so great, even I learned some things about creatures that I hadn’t known before.” Seriously there was some stuff in there about Dementors that he had never even thought to try to discover about his little creations.

“But-“

“GOLDSTEIN?” A male voice shouts somewhere which causes the woman in question to dive under her desk. Death nudges the confused magizoologist and whispers a quick “I’ll explain later. Probably. Don’t hold your breath though.” to him before watching the unfolding show.
“Where is she?”

A short but immaculately dressed man walks up, he looks irritated and unimpressed, much like everyone else in this building actually. It must be a government worker thing. “Goldstein.”

Goldstein slowly arises from her paperwork covered desk. Death has to look down to hide his bemused smile at the sight. She looked like a scared meerkat coming out of it’s hiding place. The short man takes a long inhale of breath, “Did you just butt in on the Investigation team again?”

She says nothing.

“Where have you been?” The man presses on.

“.What?” Apparently it isn’t just Newt and he that made awful liars.

The short man looked like he was going to say something to her, probably something cutting or lecture-y, but instead turns to Death and Newt, “Where did she pick you guys up?”

They look at Goldstein for guidance. She just shakes her head subtly. They look back at the man. “We…” They said slowly in unison, like somehow syncing up their voices would save them from mess up, “.. weeeeereee.. aaat… theee… strrr-” This was possibly the first time Death had gotten such intense eye contact from the British wizard. It seemed they were at a stalemate here. In the corner of his eye the entity can see Goldstein contemplating death by table corner. “-reee-“ He has no idea where this is going. “-eeep club.” The pair looked horrified at each other and what they had managed to come up with. This was the worst thing ever. And Death had once watched a chained human woman be lowered down into a whole chestful of cockroaches to be used as an incubation chamber and nutrition for the offspring.

“Strip club. We, uh, were at a strip club.” Death concluded lamely.

The short suited man just looked at them like they were idiots before turning back to the ex-auror, “You’ve been tracking them New Salem-er’s army again haven’t you?” He accused.

Goldstein glared at the pair. Death just shrugged. Well, they did try. Technically. “Of course not sir.” She lies.
And then the handsome gentleman from before shows up. God, he looks so good in that suit.

“Afternoon Mr Graves, sir.” The short man greets.

“Good afternoon.” The man greets back stoic with a little rough edge to his voice that makes Death swoon a little on the inside. Even his name was dashing. “What do we have here then?”

“Mr Graves sir,” Goldstein says, stepping out and away from her desk, she looks at Newt and Death pointedly, “This is Mr Newt Scamander and Mr Harry Mortimer. The crazy creature in Mr Scamander’s case got out and created havoc at a bank.”

Graves glances at Newt’s case and then back to Tina, “Let’s see the little guy then.”

Tina smiles smugly and takes the case before Newt can react, placing it on a clear table space. Graves and the short man follow while Newt and Death linger a bit behind. “Well this isn’t good.” Death murmurs to the redhead, “How important is that case of yours?”

“All my creatures are in there, it’s worth more than my life.” Newt replies immediately.

“Bullocks.” Death mutters, “I suppose we’ll just have to wait and see then.” Newt just agrees with a soft worried sound as Goldstein proceeds to unlock the case. Not one to build tension, the woman opens up the top of a case quickly, revealing..

“Is that?” Newt whispers as they creep closer to what is clearly not Newt’s case.

“Fucking buggering shit.” Death swore vehemently.

That poor fat muggle.
So the muggle’s apartment exploded. Everyone thinks it was a gas leak. Death kind of wishes it was as he runs after a surprisingly nimble Newt Scamander up the staircase. He would’ve felt bad for ditching Goldstein but to be fair, she really should’ve been keeping an eye on them. That’s just bad policing really.

The whole wall facing the city in the muggle’s apartment is gone. It’s actually rather impressive.

“I’ll start repairing.” The entity volunteers, “You should probably take a look at the unfortunate sap.” Newt nods gratefully before going to check up on the guy.

“Thanks for, uh, well, sticking with me.” The redheaded man finally says as he kneels down to examine the unconscious man’s wounds, “You didn’t have to really.”

Death snorts, “Please, what are friendly strangers who just met in a bank for?”

He barely takes any time to repair the building, maybe a bit longer than if Newt had done it but Death was never strong with reparations anyway. Once done, he turns to see Newt already staring down into his opened suitcase. The moment he re-shuts it Goldstein finally arrives, a little out of breath.

“Was it opened?”

Newt makes a little chagrined but darkly amused twist of his lips, “Just a smidge.”

Tina seems deeply unhappy at the news, Death wasn’t feeling so great about it either.

“That thing’s on the loose again then?”

“Might be.” The magizoologist replies rather evasively. Death narrows his eyes suspiciously at him while Goldstein frets over the muggle.

“Oh god, he’s hurt, wake up please Mr No Maj, pleas-“ The woman screams as what looked like a really fat cross between a naked mole rat and a porcupine attacks her. Even Death shouts in surprise. Newt however just grabs the creature easily and calmly. “Mercy lewis what in Merlin’s name is
that?” Goldstein gasps.

Death tries hard not to stare at the wriggling flaccid tentacle-like spines on it’s back with disgust. He fails. Ugh.

“Do not worry about that,” Newt tells them both, “That is,” He closes the case a little to cheerily for any occupant in the room’s taste, “a murtlap.”

“…What else have you got in there?” Goldstein asks, connecting the dots and finding the end result to be a most unpleasant picture.

Newt just smiles awkwardly. Thankfully for him, he was saved by the muggle regaining some semblance of consciousness. The muggle manages to introduce himself as Jacob Kowalski and after a bit of a verbal scuffle where Goldstein pretty much tells Newt off for trying to obliviate a key witness and injured victim despite the fact the whole problem stemmed from the British wizard not obliviating the man in the first place.

“It’s not that serious,” Newt dismisses a little too blithely, “I mean he’s showing a slightly more severe reaction than I anticipated but if it was really serious then,” he falters at that. Goldstein of course catches that and stands up from where she was kneeling and comforting Jacob.

“Then, what?”

The redhead looks at Death for help but Death just shakes his head furiously. He is very aware of what a serious reaction of a murtlap bite entails and he is not going to be the one to tell the angry ex-auror.

“It’s, well, the first symptom would be flames out of his anus-“ Jacob slowly sits up just to stare disbelievingly at Newt. Death quite likes Jacob. Jacob was funny. Ignoring what sounds like an escalating argument between magizoologist and a magical government worker with a no nonsense attitude toward the law, the entity decides to try his hand at comforting the muggle instead.

“Hey sir- Jacob was it? Long time no see.” He greets with a smile. Jacob just glares at him too.

“Yer..” He slurs a little. “Yer with.. him.”
“Kind of yes.” Death agrees. “It has been quite a little adventure so far, well, not really. We just went to a magic government building to watch Goldstein, that’s the cranky lady over there with Newt, get talked down to by like, three of her superiors.”

“Sounds.. Fun…”

“More cringe-worthy than fun but it did have it’s perks.” Death tells him conversationally, “The interior design was beautiful, I may replicate a few things in my own offices. Also, I swiped a doughnut from your suitcase, hope you don’t mind, it was delicious.” Jacob smiles widely at that, very pleased at the praise.

“Thankss… Uh…”

“Name’s Harry.”

“I know that you guys have some backwards regulations regarding non magic people.” Newt is meanwhile telling Goldstein.

“Hoo boy,” Death murmurs. He can’t see the woman’s expression but he’s sure she’s not exactly making goo-goo eyes at the man right now.

“You can’t befriend them, can’t marry them- seems mildly absurd to me.” Newt continues.

“Well who’s going to marry him?” Goldstein shoots back, irritated.

Jacob looks deeply offended. Death pats him on the back.

“Ugh, you know what, you’re all coming with me.” Goldstein says.

“I don’t see why I have to come with you.” Newt replies back rather shortly, it seemed the whole day had finally taken it’s toll on the British man and the beginnings of actual annoyance was seeping into his mannerisms.
Death rolls his eyes, “I think I should be the one saying that what with all things considered and all.”

“Just help me carry him,” Goldstein hisses. Newt hesitates but grabs the other free arm anyway. Death supported the large man from behind.

Jacob groaned, “Please tell me this is all some sort of nightmare.”

“I wish it was Mr Kowalski.” Goldstein mutters.

“Me too.” Death adds.

“Seconded.” Newt tacks on.

Goldstein’s apartment didn’t allow men. Which was super weird but Death was not going to comment.

“Well I guess we have no choice but to find other accommodations.” Newt began edging away, only to be grabbed once more by the American ex-auror. That woman had the reflexes of a viper.

“Ooh no you don’t.” She growls, “All of you are coming with me.”

“I really don’t think it’s really, I mean, Harry-“

“Please,” Death says in a distinctly feminine voice causing the group to immediately focus on the now rather dainty woman that had once been a handsome if shady looking gentleman, “Call me Harriet.”

“You can, you can swap genders.” Goldstein says faintly. Death looks at her, long black hair curling around her pretty face.
“You said that only women were allowed.” The entity explained, brushing down her knee length skirt and frowning at her lack of secondary sexual characteristics. One day, one day Death will figure out how to become a woman who’s chest doesn’t make washboards look voluptuous in comparison. “I figured I could walk at the end of the group, that way if your landlady does take a peek at us she’ll assume we’re all female.”

“Can all your kind do this?” Newt asks, peering closely at Death’s new appearance.

“Your kind?” Goldstein repeats sharply, “As in, not human kind?”

“Ah, yes they can.” Death answers the magizoologist easily, “Though, embarrassingly enough they are far more skilled in it than I. My female form is not comfortable for me, I rather shed it away as soon as possible, so, if you may?” She gestures up the building so the group can get on with it.

They shuffled quickly into the building, and like Death had predicted, the landlady had stuck her head out to check out the guests. Death had to distract the rather uptight older women with compliments on her home while Goldstein and Newt hurried the still rather disoriented muggle up the stairs. Once she finally managed to extricate herself from the landlady’s long winded rant on her terrible tenants, a good fifteen minutes had passed.

Closing the door behind her, Death sighs and shifts back into his more masculine form immediately, uncaring if anyone sees. He did enjoy certain aspects of femininity but overall it was just not for him. Women literally had the ability to form life in their bodies, is it no wonder he doesn’t feel as at ease.

“Fascinating.”

Death startles a little at how close Newt was to him, staring intensely at a stray tendril of darkness that was soaking back into his skin.

“I’ve never seen anything like this- do you happen to be distantly related to Dementors?”

“More than a vampire certainly.” The entity says with a bemused smile. He turns to the rest of the occupants of the room, Jacob was already sitting at the dining table, looking dreamily at a pretty blonde that was making food float. The blonde woman makes a complicated swishing motion at the dish before wiping her hands on a towel as she walks over to greet the entity.
“Hello there, you must be Harry.” She greets cheerily, “I’m Queenie, Tina’s sister and—“ she trails off as she looks into Death’s eyes, her own glazing alarmingly. For a moment Death had no idea what was happening until an odd feather light itch in his head festered quickly into a purposeful scratch against the surface of his mind, threatening to try dig deeper in a way that cannot be interpreted as anything else. The woman was a natural mind reader, and she was trying look into his.

The being isn’t sure what to do to prevent the prodding from going too far, the few mind readers he’s ever met that had been both a) alive and b) audacious enough to actually try delving into his head, were few and far between. All of them had gone insane or just straight up died, looking too deep until they realize that the darkness in his head isn’t an abyss but a hungry ocean that would rise and swallow them up. It’s something akin to a failsafe since he’s never taken up to protecting his thoughts nor does he have a natural barrier against such attacks like a few other entities (Order, Fate and Magic), however in this case, Death’s fairly sure neither option would be very beneficial for him right now.

He can feel the moment when the barrier between shallow thought and his true consciousness is breached if only the slightest crack and Death just shoves the blonde woman, hard enough for her to finally break the moment.

“Queenie!” Goldstein, Tina, yells, as Queenie falls in on herself, panting heavily.

“Tina, your friend is very..” the blonde struggled for words to describe the sheer vast depth she had managed to accidentally push into, like peering through a sheet of plastic down an abyss, “unique.”

Death gave her a sympathetic smile, “My mind is not meant to be delved too deeply into lest you be consumed by the darkness inside it.” He tells her kindly, “As long as you don’t delve any deeper darling, you’ll be fine.”

Queenie nodded shakily, it seemed after that glimpse of sheer inhuman vastness in his head she had chosen to maintain a distance, both emotional and physical, with the being. Understandable, if greatly unfortunate. She seemed like she could be wonderful company.

There was also the downside of having Tina becoming more suspicious of Death as a response to her sister’s wariness. Which was unfortunate for a completely different reason.

“So..” Death clears his throat as he cuts a wonderfully smelling strudel into small bite size pieces. “How was law enforcement Tina?”
“Wouldn’t you like to know?” The brunette shoots back as she chews her pastry aggressively.

“Well not anymore now.” Death muttered sullenly while Newt quietly stifled his snicker.

It had been a good, hearty magically cooked meal. Though the conversation was sorely lacking what with Newt refusing any eye contact with anyone and Tina giving far too much, glaring at everyone. It seemed only Queenie and Jacob were managing pleasant conversation. And Jacob wasn’t even physically participating. Not going to lie, Death was a little jealous.

“Oh, so you’re a baker. I think that’s just swell.” The blonde lady cooed seeming genuinely interested in the man. Jacob was the very picture of besotted.

Jacob must’ve thought something humorous because Queenie giggled coy and blushingly at him. “Oh you,” she says with that little hand wavy gesture that people do when they’re abashed and pleased. So maybe less of a joke and more alongside a very flattering compliment then.

The lighthearted onesided banter however, breaks off abruptly as Queenie catches her sister’s disapproving eyes.

“... I wasn’t flirting.” The blonde mutters, her own gaze now ignoring everyone else’s.

There’s more silence after that. You could probably cut the silence with a knife and then eat it. It would probably taste like bitter uncomfortable despair.

Overall not the worst meal Death has been part of.

....

“I’m sorry we only got two beds here.” Tina grudgingly apologizes.

Death shakes his head, “Don’t be, it’s not exactly like you planned for this sort of scenario after all. I’m fine sleeping on the floor really. You’ve even transfigured a mattress and such, I’m fine. Really.”
“Well... if you’re sure.” The ex-Auror mumbles because apparently trying to imprison, wrongfully he might add, him was no big deal but not letting him sleep on a bed was far too much for her sensibilities. Wizards. Honestly.

“He’s fine.” Newt tells her assuredly before quickly faking a yawn, “Well, you’ve been lovely for taking us in-”

“And making this wonderful hot chocolate.” Jacob butts in with a wide grin, hot beverage in hand as he looks very comfortably settled into his assigned bed.

“-yes, and providing us with hot chocolate. But now we really must rest, Jacob especially so, considering.” Newt finishes.

Tina still looks suspicious at the three, but her eyes soften sympathetically at Jacob who was nothing but a victim of circumstance than anything. “Of course.” She agrees with a sharp nod, “Good night then.”

Once the door closes, Newt practically jumps out of the bed he’d slowly slid into and rushes to his suitcase with a singleminded focus. Death nudges his mattress with absentminded disdain while he watches. Thank god. There was no way he was going to sleep in such a low quality lump of a mattress. He may not be the most pretentious of the entities (that title proudly belonged to Fate) but he was still better than a god, and therefore deserved to be treated as such. His time as Harry Potter notwithstanding.

“So we’re finally seeing what’s in that coveted briefcase of yours?” Death asks as he lets his dark suit shift into something more loose and comfortable. Newt stopped his fidgeting movements to watch the process with sharp eyes and a keen gaze. Frankly it was a little uncomfortable. “Uh, Newt? My morals may be a little looser than you humans but that doesn’t mean I’m totally on board with letting you watch me change like this.” Death then smirked slyly and pushed his black shirt down just enough to reveal a pale shoulder, “Well, not when you could have just asked after all.”

Jacob laughed when Newt’s pale freckled face went a bright pink as he began spluttering apologies about his behavior.

“Relax wizard,” The entity drawled, “You’re hardly my type anyway.” He can sense the amount of Life and Love’s hold they had in the man, two attributes that almost completely clash with his own. It would be like kissing a unicorn or getting courted by a phoenix- Death wouldn’t say it wouldn’t
ever happen per say, but if it did, it would be most definitely awkward and possibly with some dubious consent happening in the contextual background. Unless it was like, a serial killer unicorn or something but those situations are pretty rare.

Just to be clear though, serial killer unicorns? Fucking hot.

“Well,” Newt huffs a little flustered and quickly snatching up what little decorum he has left, “We’re wasting time fellows, are you coming or not?”

Death shrugged, “What the hell, we’ve already almost gone to jail together, I’m sure I can make time for a night rendezvous with two men in a tight place.”

Newt’s face was blushing furiously at the implication and he clearly wanted to argue something about that but decided against it, instead settling on nodding and turning toward Jacob. “And you?”

Jacob looks mournfully at his cocoa. “I, uh, don’t know if I feel right comfortable doing this to the girls after all they’ve done.”

“You mean you don’t feel comfortable doing this to Queenie.” Death jibed with a smirk. Jacob, the sap, didn’t even look even a little embarrassed at how obvious he was.

“She made us cocoa,” he argued.

“Jacob, your going to be obliviated by those girls in the morning.” Death tells him slowly, with Newt nodding his head in solemn agreement, “I suggest you take this twink’s offer and get in the magical briefcase.”

“What’s a twink?” Newt asks curiously. “Is that another magical creature?”

The entity smiles secretively, “Well that’s one way to put it.”

The magizoologist looked so giddily excited at the notion of another undiscovered beast Death almost felt bad for leading him astray. Almost.
Once Jacob finally shoves himself into the case, it was Death’s turn. He takes two steps toward it before he immediately takes three steps back as he finally zoned on to the containment magic in the briefcase. It was... much larger than he had anticipated. And oh my god, there were a staggering amount of souls in there. He didn’t realise the ‘zoo’ in ‘magizoologist’ was so literal.

“Come on then, what are you waiting for?” Newt asks a little impatiently at the entity. Death hesitated. He’s been to the muggle zoo before. He’s very aware it will be nothing compared to whatever he’s going to face in that suitcase. Especially with what he’s seen on Newt’s non too strict regulations on the subject. Death just hopes there isn’t like, a giant fucking acromantula in there—because that whole thing with Aragog was certainly enough to last at least three human lifetimes.

“Harry,” Newt says, a little more concerned, “Is something the matter?”

“Uh, magical creatures tend to flock to me.” Death finally confessed. “To many I can be seen as rather... attractive.”

Newt stared at him. “Excuse me?”

Death stares up at the sky, silently begging his brothers and sisters to give him strength. Though they were probably laughing at him up there so he sends a silent ‘fuck you’ glare at them as well, for good measure. “Creatures, they find me... attractive.” He repeats flatly.

Newt stares some more. Then his eyes lit up with the fire of scientific curiosity. “And this is a hundred percent natural? Do all creatures exhibit the same behavior or are there certain levels of attraction you find to be the receiving end on? When you say attractive do you mean that they enjoy your presence or...”

“A mate.” Death finishes before adding casually, “Or maybe more of conquest considering my inability to produce offspring.”

“Oh,” Newt looks awkward, “I’m, so sorry.”

The entity laughs, “Don’t be, I’ve come to terms with that long ago. Besides, I have been gifted a brilliant son so I hardly think myself too bereft of the opportunity.”
The magizoologist fidgets, clearly wanting to press on at everything Death has and has not said, yet at the same time aware of the unfamiliar ground he has stepped on. Death let’s him stew for a bit before gesturing for the man to ask his questions.

“Is there a reason for your infertility?” Newt bursts out before immediately slapping his hand to his face, aghast at his lack of decorum. Out of all the questions he had, it seemed he had picked the most offensive one.

Death shrugged, “My... kind cannot reproduce per say. We can create beings under our name but they will never be as immense as we are. I myself have major difficulties in producing life, there is nothing environmental or external effecting me, it’s just how I was constructed.”

“I see,” Newt nodded seriously, his face serious, “And when you say constructed, does that, uh,”

“Mean I was not biologically conceived?” Death finishes amusedly at the other’s struggle for words. He hums thoughtfully, it’s always interesting seeing the different responses he gets when trying to explain himself. “Now that’s a tough one. If I did have some sort of parent I certainly am not aware of it, one moment I wasn’t and the next I simply was.” If you really want to think deeply into it, Life did bring about Death so maybe... no, that is too weird to even contemplate, even for him.

“Huh,” Newt says, but not in the ‘huh wow I would never have guessed,’ sort of manner, more like ‘huh, well that confirmed my hypothesis.’ Which implied that this man totally had written down somewhere in his observation journal about the possibility of Death being one of those species where nurture clearly wasn’t established when young. Which, rude. Not exactly untrue though. “And how old are you exactly?”

Before Death could respond vaguely to that can of worms, Jacob popped his head out impatiently. “Come on then, what are you lads waiting for? A tea party invite?”

“I mean if you’re offering, yes I would enjoy a spot of tea right about now.” Death smirked, “Isn’t that right Newt, old chum?”

Newt looked a bit unsure for a moment before straightening up and replying, “O-oh yes, verily my good sir, a cuppa now would be a b-bloody right good time.”

Jacob rolled his eyes, “Honestly, you people across the pond baffle me.”
Once in the suitcase, and after being suitably impressed by it’s wondrous contents, Newt realised he was not missing just one but around three creatures from his case. The first it turns out, because this was Death’s life and he totally blamed each and every brother and sister he had for this, was a horny erumpent looking for a mate in Central Park.

Newt had come prepared with only some musk and a weirdass, frankly embarrassing mating dance to attract the creature back in. However the giant rhino like creature was less than interested in Scamander’s odd mating ritual, well, not as much as the presence of a certain entity. Once Death realised what exactly has caught the creature’s attention, his eyes widened and he took an instinctive step back. “Fuck me.”

“W-what’s happening,” Jacob whispers loudly, “Why’s she eyeing you up like a Sunday roast?”

“I have to leave,” Death whispers back seriously, “I-I have to leave right now.”

But it was too late, the moment they had made eye contact it was probably too late and Death begins to sprint away from the fragile squishy human with a horny erumpant chasing him with a determination most battle hardened warriors would falter at.

He runs for about a few hundred meters before he stops to mentally hit himself on the head. What was he thinking, he's fucking Death. Gathering up the surrounding shadows to weave around himself Death twists and disappears right before the erumpant crashes into his person, and reappears next to Newt. ”Where’s the blasted suitcase?” He growls impatiently as he warily watches the confused creature in heat try catch his scent again.

“I don’t understand..” Newt mutters, but it’s more the zoologist in him trying to figure out where he had went wrong than anything remotely in context right now. Which is unacceptable because Death needs the magizoologist on the case like yesterday.

“The suitcase, Newt!” Death snaps impatiently, “What’s left of my virtue depends on it!”

That spurs the man into action, with powerful, confident motions Death could’ve really used during the whole bank fiasco in the very beginning, Newt runs up to the creature and the momentum of both in motion was enough to shove the erumpet back into the suitcase. Thank the fucking lord.
“Wait.” Death says after a minute of nothing but heavy breathing and silence after the suitcase was closed with an underwhelming click of its clasps. “Doesn’t this mean your giant arse erumpant is making a mess out of your magic herb office right now?”

“Uhm, no?”

Fucking wizards.

——-

So because it turns out, yes, since the erumpant was still not properly contained into her enclosure she was still running rampant. The large hole in Newt’s ‘office’ was very much evident at that. Grimm, being veritable creature bait, and Jacob, who had the gift of common sense, were tasked reluctantly with the quest to find and re-capture the erumpant while Newt re-did his room. Death would’ve gladly volunteered to do it but the place was filled with specific poisons, herbs, animal bits, etcetera that only Newt knew where they went.

“Wow, you really weren’t kidding about that whole animal attraction thing huh?” Jacob comments as a third pink owl creature swoops in to nuzzle at Death’s cheek to pay its respects to the entity and hint to its openness for affection. Death would scowl at the amused muggle but he was afraid that would only make the disjointed picture he portrays even worse. Instead he humors the adorable feathery creature by patting its head once before sending it off its way.

“It has its perks.” He stiffly replies back. “They can sense my higher status in this world and therefore treat me very favorably, if a little too aggressively at times.”

Jacob gives him a considering side eye, “So... yer some sort of god or something?”

Death smiles blandly down at the man, “Perhaps.”

The muggle raises his hands, “Hey, totally get it, no further probing. Though I wouldn’t be surprised if I was talking to a literal angel after all this nonsense.”

Death barked a startled laugh, “Hah! Well you’re actually closer than Newt ever guessed, so kudos to you sir.”
“You’re an angel?!”

The entity rolled his eyes and petted a doe-eyed mooncalf who strayed from its herd for some attention from Death. That little thing is going to be a reckless troublemaker, he can see it now. “I said you were closer relative to Newt’s ideas, Jacob. Not that you were right.”

“Are angels real then?” Jacob looked up at the being, eyes wide with curiosity and wary fear, like he was half afraid of the answer.

“Would it matter if they were?” Death asks back.

Jacob laughs nervously, “Well for starters, if they were, I’m going to have to start going back to church again.”

Death waves that answer back dismissively, “Please, church is a human construct. The ability to drive to the same building every Sunday and listen to an over glorified lecture may say something about your perseverance in your beliefs- because that shit is so boring oh my god- but it’s hardly the glowing endorsement that people seem to think it is.”

“Oh,” Jacob looks absolutely fascinated, “Then what is?”

Death shrugged, “You know, common sense stuff. Helping people when you see them need it. You can have your prejudices and beliefs about stuff but don’t go actively out of your way to attack people against them. Respecting that no means no. Don’t be a dick essentially.”

“What about murder?”

“Why?” Death smirked, “You planning something I should know about?”

Now it was Jacob’s turn to give a short bark of laughter, “You got me. I’m secretly stupid rich but in order to get my fortune I must kill my twin half-brother James.”
“Well if you’re killing for greed I’m fairly sure most angels consider that a flaw in your soul than anything.” Death tells him dryly, “Revenge is understandable though. And self-defense and accidents don’t really count.”

“So is there like an angel courtroom or something then? You know, to judge the souls and so on?”

“It’s a complicated system that really depends on the universe they oversee really.”

“The universe they- there’s more than one?!” Jacob looks like his mind is very close to being literally blown. Death enjoys the man’s genuinely earnest responses.

“Well picture this-” he begins, readying up a very Space-esque metaphor to explain the general concept of alternate universes with alternate timelines, until a loud bellowing sound and the thumping of heavy footfalls could be hear coming toward them. “Oh fuck, it’s the erumpant.”

There was a lot of running and cursing as the pair realized Newt had forgotten to tell them where the erumpant enclosure even is but eventually they got there. Exhausted and cranky. But still.

“Could you just,” Jacob panted as he slid down to the ground, the man was particularly sweaty and red faced, “I don’t know, magic the thing here in the first place?”

“Not in this form no.” Death admits, “Not unless you want to explain to Newt how I inadvertently killed his magma rhino creature because we were too lazy to run around like headless chickens for a bit.” The magic he still has from Magic is too closely intertwined with his own power now that there is no mortal barrier to separate them, there’s no telling what may happen should he use too much of it.

The default usually results in some sort of dementor. And Death is not interested in making another mutated Dementor army again. He has a Dementor that is part spider, part octopus that he can never look directly at. That thing, among other monstrosities, has been banished to guard the very edges of his realms. He feels a little bad for the discrimination but to compensate he gives those guys a nice work environment and a sizable amount of souls to consume to prevent mutiny.

That’s happened more than once Death is ashamed to say. It’s hard being the big boss.

“Yeah okay,” Jacob pouts, “we wouldn’t want that.”
“Oh thank Merlin!” Newt cries as he jogs up to the pair. “I only just realized I forgot to tell you where the erumpent enclosure was and I panicked, and then I heard the noise and-“

“Peace Newt,” Death intones, effectively shutting the British man up and preventing what sounded like the beginnings of panic attack to form. “We got the creature in its habitat safe and relatively cranky. And I’m fairly sure we incurred minimal damaged.”

“It was amazing,” Jacob agreed, “Harry just had to shout for everyone to get out of the way, and they did! Even the blowfish cheetah thing!”

Newt looked intensely at the entity, “He did, did he?”

Death shrugged, “What can I say? It’s a natural allure. Though don’t expect much from me if I’m faced with a Phoenix.”

“My headmaster has a Phoenix.” Newt says for lack of anything else really to say. The entity scowls.

“Fawkes, yes, I’m very aware of that damned fucking bird.” Then in a low, annoyed mutter, he added, “Undying piece of shit fire fucker.”

The magizoologist and muggle blink at the entity, as if genuinely shocked at the change in demeanor and string of obscenities that followed. “I.. see you and this... Fawkes... has some bad blood?” Jacob asks tentatively.

“He attempted to kill me, yes.”

“Intriguing.” Was all Newt, the damn unsympathetic arse said. Clearly Death isn’t the only one in this group that needs to take a social study lesson or two. “Is this related to how you have Dementor ancestry?”

“Dementor.. you mean, like, a berserker?” Jacob asks tentatively, trying hopelessly not to look too lost at the flow of the conversation.
Newt smiles at him, looking pleased just to have the muggle man’s interest at all, “A Dementor is, well, I’m not much of a fan of the grouping terminology but it does fit, a terrible dark creature that feasts on souls and can drain happiness in the very air around you, if you get too near for too long, they’ll suck out every good memory and happy thought and leave you haunted with your worst.”

“That’s.. that sounds absolutely horrible.” Jacob says aghast.

“They’re very misunderstood creatures,” Death defends petulantly. “I mean, if you get past the soul sucking and their nightmare inducing presence, they’re actually, uh, quite docile and sweet. Like a cow really.”

“You’re comparing a Dementor.. to a cow.” Newt deadpanned incredulous.

“Yes.” Death says half seriously. “A big fat mooing cow.”

“I.. see.” Jacob says, even though he clearly does not. “Hey, maybe we should all get out of here yeah? So we don’t get caught by Miss Porpenstein and Miss Porpenstein?”

“Sounds like a smashing idea Jacob.” Newt agreed.

“Yeah, that ex-auror one seems kind of nosy,” Death comments, “Wouldn’t put it past her to double check our rooms for this very reason really.”

“Uh, guys?” Newt looked at them worriedly, his hand pushing at the entrance from where they had come from. Death has a terribly foreboding feeling. “I think we’re locked in.”

Fucking Newt Scamander. Who the fuck has a magical suitcase that holds a fucking magical zoo filled with magical creatures that can be considered magically illegal and doesn’t have a magical back up escape route if someone flips closed the stupid suitcase latches? Seriously. Fucking wizards.

—-

So when they finally get out of the suitcase, they come face to face with the boss lady from before, the intimidating hot guy and like, a bunch of other wizards with an equal lack of expression on their
faces. Ugh. Death has seen his dementors show a greater range of emotion. And the room they’re in, ugh, was it originally a gothic church? Why did it look so grim? As they all cautiously step out of the suitcase, Death looks at the floor and sees a circle with a star design in it. It looked like a summoning circle. Of course that’s what this place needed.

Also, also, speaking of Boss Lady- that women is wearing just the most ridiculously unnecessary headdress he has ever seen in this situation. Was it just something that cam with the role? He doesn’t see any other witch or wizard looking like that in the stands and he’s assuming they must have some high status to be here. Though admittedly a few had quite tacky stuff on as well.

There’s a bit of a murmur among the crowd as the three of extricate themselves out one by one. “Scamander?” A strong voice rings out, Newt who was in the middle of closing his case looks up and smiles nervously.

“Oh, hello minister.”

Fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck. Whatever’s been happening right now must’ve been pretty important if the British Minister of Magic and what Death assumes is the wizard equivalent of the UN are all here.

“You mean the war hero Scamander?” An african wizard minister asks disbelieving.

“No, this is his little brother,” A presumably french wizard minister replies back, causing Newt to grimace a little and avert eyes from everyone else’s.

The British minister doesn’t look the least bit sympathetic, “And what are you doing here in New York Newt?” He asks stern but not unkindly.

“I, uh was just here to buy an Appaloosa puffskein sir.”

“Right,” The British minister squinted his eyes knowingly, “Now what are you really doing here?” Newt looked a little lost for words, clearly thinking he wouldn’t have been called out on his lie by his minister- who he apparently knows personally on some level- in front of all these people. Death felt bad, he knew personally what it was like to be put on the spot like that and this must not exactly feel good for the rather anti-social redhead.

The Boss lady turned to Tina, asking her about their presence. Tina’s voice wavered a little, either
from nerves due to the pressure or some feeling of guilt of betraying them like this. Which, well she should be. This was a bitch move. When she revealed Jacob’s no-Maj identity, that’s really when the governmental wizards and witches began showing their taste, muttering about obliviations and such. Jacob curls up, trying but failing to look smaller than he is.

Death just looks forward, chin held high and looking as confident as he isn’t. In doing so he notices the hologram of a dead man floating above their heads and nudges at Newt to do the same. The magizoologist does and gasps softly at the sight, recognition lighting his eyes. An asian witch in the front row notices. “You know which of your creatures was responsible then, Mr Scamander?” She asks.

“No creature did this,” he denies, moving forward, closer to the image, “just look at the marks…” Newt bit his fist before finally declaring softly, “It was an obscurus.”

Whispers move faster than a wildfire in the room, everyone there knew what was an obscurus, what it meant, what the American government had failed to do if this was true. The Boss Lady, Madam President, furrowed her elegantly shaped brows slightly, “Mr Scamander, do not be absurd,” she tells him confident and with just enough heat to know how truly angry she was, “There is no obscurial in America.”

“Well that seems like a rather shallow promise.” Death snorts, before regretting it immediately as all attention turn to him now. “Ah, damn.”

“And who may you be?” Madam President asks icily. Death bows slightly.

“I am-“ The french minister gasps suddenly, as well as one or two others in the room, clearly there’s some strong creature blood running around here. “Harry.”

“You know this young man?” Boss Lady asks the frenchman who weakly nods.

“Oui, he is… not to be defied Madam.”

“Yes,” Another witch with a less recognisable nationality adds on hurriedly, “You could say this… being has diplomatic immunity from where we are from, please, do not anger him.”

Madam President frowns, “Yes, well, he may have immunity where you are from, but he holds no
such power here. This.. Harry will be treated the same as the rest of the group.” She turns to the hot intimidating man, “Impound that case Graves, and arrest them.”

Graves does just that with a flick of his hand, summoning the case to him while bringing all three, surprisingly four actually since Tina was included too, to their knees. Death knows he probably should resist, but he kind of wanted to see what magic prison was like.

“Please don’t hurt my creatures,” Newt pleads, “They’ve done absolutely nothing wrong, nothing.”

“We’ll be the judges of that.” Madam President tells him, her cool, unsympathetic voice making Newt struggle further from where he was. “Take them to the cells.”

Tina whimpered. Bet she never saw this coming when she decided to do this.

“No please, they’ve done nothing wrong,” Newt begged desperately, as they began being hauled away, “Don’t hurt those creatures, not-nothing in there is dangerous, please, please don’t hurt my creatures, please, please they’re not dangerous!”

Newt looked almost near tears when he looked at Death, and fuck, Death had really grown to like the stupid animal-loving man. He can always check out magic prison when he’s Harry Potter anyway, knowing his luck he’ll get there at least once. “Right.” He says loudly as soon as they were far enough away from the room filled with very important wizards, “Well you guards have been lovely but we have a dinner appointment and we really must leave.” Death turns his arms to dark smokey shadows, letting the handcuffs fall before turning to grab all three- even Tina- and warping away before the guards could even pull out their wands.

He brings them to Tina’s apartment, the only place he really knew, where he dumps them all onto the ground easily and none too gently. “You’re lucky I like you guys.” He tells them, “because I’m fairly sure it was going to be the death penalty for you all at this rate. Which feels a little drastic since we are all capable of obliviation.”

“My case,” Newt gasps, teary eyed and panicky, “Wha-we need to go back Harry! My case is still, still-”

“Looking for this?” Death grins, shark-like as he summons a dark hole where Newt’s suitcase falls out from and into his waiting hand. It was a piece of cake to get, it’s not often you see so many souls all condensed into one suitcase sized shape after all.
The magizoologist gasped in wonder and joy as he leapt up into Death’s arms and began hugging and thanking him profusely in gratitude. Everyone let it be a for a bit, since it felt a little embarrassing to be the one to interrupt, finally though, Jacob came through.

“So, uh, is anyone going to tell me what the hell an obscurus is?”

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“The goblin’s not bad looking.” Death muses, tilting his head to get a more flattering angle of the criminal.

Jacob looks at him funny. “Look, I ain’t really got much of an opinion bout fairies like you, but you’re kind of funny in the head aren’t ya?”

Death smiles devilish and crooked. “I get that a lot where I come from as well. But as they say, everything’s fair in love and war.” He loosens his tie and unbuttons his top two buttons as he starts to walk a bit faster over to where Newt and Tina were negotiating with the goblin, “And this, this is war.”

“Uh, I don’t think that was the right optio- and he’s gone.”

“Aw, leave him be Jacob, the guy’s surprisingly a flirter.” Queenie smiles amused behind her glass, “It’s cute how confident he is. Even if his taste is a little... unique.” Jacob stares at her like he can’t believe a women like her could exist and Queenie just giggles demurely.

“Wait,” Gnarlak stares intently at Newt’s chest, “That’s a bow- that’s a bowtruckle right?”

Newt immediately covers Pickett protectively, “You’re not having him.” He protests.

“I see,” The goblin give a cruel smirk as he begins leaving the table, “Well good luck getting back alive, what with the whole of MACUSA on your back and-” his face slackens into one of surprise and awe.
Newt and Tina look up as Death joins the table with an easy smile. “Harry, what are you-“ Tina hisses but is cut off by the gangster, suddenly and firmly sitting in his seat across them.

“Shut up,” He hisses through his sharp teeth, “Don’t you know who that is?! This is, this is,"

Death sticks his hand out with sly smirk and just enough fang to warn the guy to stop where he was going lest he regret it severely. “Harry Mortimer, a pleasure.” He greets with a silky soft tenor that has the two wizards gaping in a rather unattractive fashion. Which, rude, he always sounds this inviting.

The goblin falters for a second before visibly picking himself together to take the pale hand and kiss the back of it reverently, “Greggoric Gnarlak, milord,” he murmurs as Newt mouths ‘milord’ like silently saying the word would unlock the other’s mysterious identity while Tina mutters ‘Greggoric’ as her hands twitch. Probably wishing she could write it down somewhere. Gangsters weren’t exactly known for giving out their full birth name in front of cops, this was probably the first time she’s gotten verbal confirmation that he had a first name at all.

“Greggoric,” Death smile softens and his hand curls a little into the goblin’s own hand in a flirtatious manner, “a handsome name for a handsomer creature.”

In the background the female Auror snorts but Newt hushes her, taking the incredibly strange interaction as the distraction he needed to shove Pickett deep into his pockets.

Gnarlak, he, for the better word, swooned. Just a bit. “Milord you’re tongue is slicker than any partner, business or pleasure, that I’ve ever met.” He praises smoothly. Death smiles slyly.

“If you help my companions here, I may show you how slick my tongue really is gorgeous.”

The goblin blinks, and then he turns looking deadly serious at the two wizards, “There has been some talk about something going on around Fifth Avenue, I suspect it’s one of your creatures.” He looks at the entity, clearly awaiting any response to signal he has done a good job.

“Thank you Greggoric,” the entity tells him when it’s clear no one else was going to, “Your kindness is greatly appreciated. I’m sure if you have any free time right now we can-“

“Fuck.” The goblin suddenly says, his face that had been slack with overjoyed disbelief had
tightened in anxiety and stress, “Fuck, you all, you all have to leave right now.”

“What? Why?” Tina demands sharply, her back straightened as she searches her surroundings subtly.

Gnarlak coughs, “I may have, blabbed, a little. To MACUSA. In my defense—“

Jacob punches him in the face as everyone begins to walk quickly out of the place, trying to draw as little attention as they can while they give the goblin dark looks. Death lingers back a little, taking a quick moment to grab the goblin’s collar and lifts him up so they’re eye to eye. “Backstabbing? That’s not very nice is it, Greggoric?” He tuts.

“I, urk, didn’t know you would be here.” Gnarlak coughs out.

“No, you didn’t,” Death agrees, his eyes flickered assessing the criminal, “And you did tell us before the aurors came. So,” the entity hums for a moment before he kisses the creature passionately. Gnarlak made a startled sound before he melts into it, enthusiastically giving it all he had before Death drops him back onto the ground, dazed and a little dopey. “Call me hot stuff.”

Death licks his lips, tasting the faint secondhand tobacco and alcohol before following his companions out of the speakeasy with a self-satisfied smile. It was a nice kiss.

Death didn’t leave a number.

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It turns out there’s not one but two creatures hanging around Macy’s or whatever shopping mall building this is. That’s not really the important part of the sentence here.

The important part of that sentence was that there were two creatures instead of one of no one was paying attention, though maybe it wasn’t that important since the whole situation was finished ridiculously quickly. Death barely had to step in before the demiguise and the occamy practically jumped into his arms, cooing and touching his chest. The occamy even had the gall to slip under his clothing to curl around his torso possessively.
“Seriously, are you the magical creature whisperer?” Jacob demands only half joking. “And here I was expecting some big trial with dramatic orchestra music in the background.”

——

The wild obscurus turns out to not be a child, but a teenage boy, arguably a young adult male even. It’s the same lad from in the beginning with the anti-magic woman. With what Newt has told them about Obscurus’ this human must be powerful, strong in both mentality, physicality and magically to not have degraded from the strain of abuse and self suffocation of his abilities.

It’s honestly just a very sad thing all round.

Such a young man with absolutely nothing to live for. No friends, no family, an incredibly unsupportive household and no future. Even if he did somehow gain control of this whole obscurus business- unlikely- at best he’ll be shunned by the magical community anyway for what he’s already done, at worst he’ll be constantly used and experimented on. Maybe Newt could help his situation but let’s be brutally honest here, this is the guy couldn’t keep his suitcase in check, Newt ain’t exactly the most reliable wizard this side of the state.

To be fair towards the red headed British man, he was very close to soothing the savaged beast if you will, the boy, Credence, seemed to be reforming himself back to something resembling his original form before hot but potentially evil Graves shows up to ruin it all. It seems that the two had shared history, which, super weird if you look too much into it. An abused child seeking the comfort of an older man in the dark of the alleyways, probably when it was raining for added dramatic effect, really, it all sounds either like the start of some messed up dubious porn or the very twisted start of a Charles Dickens-ish type novel.

There’s a nice fight, which Death decides to stay out of because he feels the battle may be just a little too one sided if he joins the fray. There’s a lot of lights and Credence screaming and so much talking, oh god, wizards and their incessant need to talk. Everyone was trying to get Credence on their side and honestly, Death kind of wonders why. Clearly the child has lost all control once he released the dam, expecting him to collect back all that metaphorical water and shutting it all back in to manageable levels seems nigh impossible at this point. Credence is damaged and abused and the type of broken that takes hell of a lot more than some glue and duck tape to fix. One day, with time and love and a good dash of miracle magic, maybe he would have come out of this ordeal a strong, powerful wizard, but this world is preparing for war soon ahead and a time for war meant no time for poor little orphan boys in need of a good hug.

So Death watches quietly, easily ignored in the shadows. He watches them fight and plead and coax. And then he watches the MACUSA aurors swoop in to decimate the unfortunate boy’s wraith form. Death wonders the semantics for this obscurus creature as he is faintly surprised at how little the
creature acknowledges his existence. He’s never heard of an obscurus until today, and this being has certainly never crossed over to his realms before. Though, maybe unlike werewolves and vampires, obscurus can still be considered at their heart humans.

As Newt had said, it is a result of raw magic previously restrained, so in a way it makes sense that the obscurus, both alive and not truly a different magical creature altogether, would not truly recognize the innate power of an entity. Even if it was able to, it would probably fall more under Magic’s purview than anything anyway.

It’s only when, after withstanding the attacks of the American magicals, the obscurus was near death did Credence finally turn to Death. He’s barely a wisp of the looming storm of darkness he had once been and his soul is beginning to bare itself, ready to be reaped. Credence just seems resigned to it rather than fighting back like the caged animal he had been before.

Death tuts sadly as he looks down at the small wisp. Not even a body to be buried. Tragic.

“Don’t worry child,” he whispers, soft and sympathetic as he twitches his fingers and summons the remnants of Credence Barebones to his hand, “I’m going to make sure all that pain you feel goes away now.”

Without anyone seeing, noticing, Death deftly rips a soul from its barely tangible body. He’s tempted to keep it alongside Riddle’s twisted shards in his mind, but decisions made solely out of pity would benefit neither party so instead he just swallows the little soul down and let’s it be swallowed up into the darkness. Credence tastes like salty tears and the bittersweet burnt caramel taste of lost hope.

——

Death blinks at the newly revealed Dark Lord unimpressed. Don’t get him wrong, the man is roguishly handsome in a way that reminded the entity of those charismatic pirates of the caribbean back in the day. Cocky and confident with the magical power and skill to back him up. Honestly, if it wasn’t completely inappropriate given the context, Death might’ve tried his luck in seeing if the wizard’s carpet matched the drapes if you catch his meaning.

But what is so underwhelming was the fact that clearly this guy could have easily completed his tasks without all this convoluted Obscurus nonsense.
“Seriously man,” he tells the dark wizard, “If you just wanted to make enough mayhem to make the muggles aware of magic I’m pretty sure you could’ve done it yourself. Like, it isn’t that hard.”

“What are you doing?” Tina says through gritted teeth, “Why are you teaching the enemy how to do better?”

“I’m just saying, this guy fucking manages to kidnap and masquerade as the head of MACUSA security or whatever. He could have loosened the rules, could’ve introduced his own loyal men into the system while flushing out the good aurors. Hell, you people regulate magical creatures, he could’ve just set those free instead- they would’ve been injured and angry, chaos was guaranteed. But no, instead he chose to lurk around an orphanage like a creep as he hugs underage boys in alleyways.”

Grindelwald and the other aurors just sort of stared, part irritation, part stupefaction and part impressed.

Death shrugged, “I’m just saying, the whole plan of his was weird and vaguely pedophillic.”

“It was not pedophillic!” Grindlewald protested, clearly unhappy at that accusation. “Credence was of age and nothing I did could be construed as remotely sexual.”

“He looks like he’s less than twenty.” Death tells him seriously, “That, in my opinion means teenager.” Of course there is a chance that Credence’s young appearances was due to poor upbringing stunting his growth like Harry Potter’s. Still. Not cool. “By the way, where is the real Graves? That fellow was quite dashing, it would be a pity for him to die from neglect.”

Seraphina Pickery did a double take at the man’s casual question like it had completely slipped her mind to go find her kidnapped, very likely tortured, subordinate. Which, to be fair, was understandable given all the other far more pressing subjects pressing for her attention at the moment. Still, Death would feel pretty shit if he found out he hadn’t noticed his boss slash friend slash subordinate had been replaced by a psychopath for however long. The least you could do would be to find and free the poor sap as soon as possible. And maybe try to salvage the guy’s reputation as well because who knows what other creepy ass stuff Grindlewald had been up to in that body.

Death tilts his head toward Grindelwald as he acknowledges the Head of MACUSA’s attention, “I suggest legi-lega-oh just take it out of his pretty head of his.” Fucking magic terminology.
Grindlewald laughs then, it’s not the laughter of a defeated man but a man confident that the cards are still in his favor. He’s amused despite the situation, and Death wonders how far exactly has this man managed to get his claws into the American Magical government. “What is your name?” The Dark Lord asks slyly, loudly, “Not that Harry bullocks you’ve fed these sheep, I want to know who you really are.”

He’s managed to gather everyone’s attention, Picquery was now staring at Death with outright suspicion and his companions were looking at him warily. Newt was looking worried for him, sweet kid that one, not that the entity would invite the guy to tea anytime soon. The man would probably steal his Dementors or something.

Death straightens himself and smiles, “Not as incompetent as I had assumed.” The entity chuckles, “Though you know, you were a little off,” the color of his eyes invert as he flashes his sharp teeth, but that wasn’t what catches Grindlewald’s eye. No, it’s the Deathly Hallows mark slowly searing into the skin of Death’s neck that truly caught the Dark Lord’s breath. “It’s not who, but what.”

And that’s when he disappeared.

Fucking nailed it.
Guys. Check out zombu7's amazing fanart for BtDoM on tumblr! So good! Or just find it on my account hweianime haha. Seriously, it's awesome :)

The one where Death wakes up.

Or more accurately, Harry rejoins the living.

It's not like in the movies where the comatose patient immediately opens his eyes and there's some lover right beside them, crying all over the place as they had just conveniently spouted off their undying love that the patient, equally conveniently, has overheard. No, instead the awareness of his body comes slowly, a step at a time. Harry first feels the thin weight and warmth of the blanket that covers his body. Then it's the sound of his own blood pumping through his ears. The clean but stale smell of the room. It all washes over him slowly like lazy waves of sensation which settles under his mortal skin.

Finally he feels comfortably integrated back into his human flesh, enough so that he can control his breathing at the very least with some relative ease. Unfortunately that seems like only one of the few things he can accomplish with such.

He's not sure how long exactly it's been since his human body finally recovered enough to allow itself to, well, 'reboot' for the better sense of the word. But from the stiff, uncomfortable numbness that Harry feels in the meat suit, he's not exactly optimistic about the timeframe. Just opening his mouth is difficult, and he tastes dry and horrible. Like someone stuffed cotton balls soaked in the blood of tiny dead animals in his mouth while his body was left unattended.

"Beh." Is what he musters up to say. Because well, there's really not much to comment on there. Ugh, even his witty mental commentary feels sluggish.

His muscles had definitely atrophied, okay maybe not drastically, but enough that Harry roughly estimates a month at the very least. He's never exactly been on this side of the coma before and he has to say, not fun. Of course it could be equally as likely that it's only been a week thanks to his... 'natural affinity' which certainly wouldn't have done him any favours.

Harry deeply envies his fellow entities who probably could have woken from a nine year long coma with a spring in their step smelling like daises. Life was probably incapable of such an injury in the first place even when suited in mortal flesh. Hell, his counterpart could slip into the meat suit of a man with stage 4 brain cancer, bleeds out buckets while someone blows dynamite up his arse and Life would still be able to come out of that with barely a bruise. Jealous.

The room from where he can see, is empty, but not for long. There must be some sort of monitoring spell or something because about forty seconds after he's awoken Snape bangs open the door in legit the most dramatic way possible, the first actual noise heard from Harry Potter's ears in whatever time and it's the loud slam of heavy wood against even heavier rock. Marvelous. Literally the one time the Slytherin doesn't glide in all ominous and quiet and slick like oil. The one bloody time.
Harry side-eyes him, the most he can apparently do since his body refuses to work. It's like his mortal flesh is punishing him from returning to this living world and not dying like any decent individual who got stabbed by an insane half-soulless bastard. "Ss've." He hisses out with great concentration.

The potions master, well, he doesn't look great. It's not the messed up hair, or the fact that clearly the man's newest ideas on pyjamas was snake inspired monk-wear. No, it's the crazy frantic haunted look that hangs off his face, coupled with a sallower, sickly complexion and tired panicked eyes. Tired panicked eyes that immediately lose their panic as the settle finally onto Harry's green ones. "You're awake." He says redundantly. Then again, it looks like the man hasn't slept for a year so Harry will graciously ignore the man's current lack of brain to mouth filter.

"You're awake." Snape repeats again and this time Harry has to roll his eyes. 'No, clearly I'm still sleeping.' He wants to say sarcastically. What his mouth manages to produce from that is, "Nnnn, mnananm shweep nmamnnaa," and a dribble of drool from the side of his mouth.

Sometimes, even Harry is just blown away with how attractive he can be.

The potions master doesn't seem to care though. He just approaches Harry's bedside with a look of dazed relief on his tired face, dropping down to his knees so they were face to face and even going so far as to wipe the younger wizard's drool with his bare hand. Which, Harry's not going to lie, is kind of sweet, being taken care of to the very least detail and all, but still. A little gross. Though thinking about it now, it's not exactly like he hasn't done worse things in front of the man. God, it's a wonder the professor isn't sick of him really, what with the constantly needing serious medical care and attention every five steps. Seriously this man is either secretly the nicest man in the world, the most guilt-ridden man in the world or in love with him.

"You've been in a coma for forty-eight days, almost seven weeks." Snape tells him quietly, and wow straight to the heart of it. Harry's eyes flutter shut at that. He's not sure about wizards, but he knows normal humans that lie in a vegetative state for over a month would not be considered to wake any time soon, and if they did, they would most likely come out of it with some sort of temporary disability or form of amnesia. Seven weeks was a long time when you were technically brain dead.

Severus continues his recap, each word he speaks let's the tension in his shoulders loosen a little bit more, letting the task at hand push away his tiredness for a while longer, "We don't know what happened back in the Chamber, however we did recover the diary." The older man squeezes his hand gently on Harry's nape and lets it stay there in an act of comfort as he continues quiet and angry, "Harry... There was no damage to the book at all, physical or otherwise. It is like there had never been anything residing there at all." Another squeeze. "Tom Riddle has disappeared."

There's a brief moment, small, minuscule even, where Harry thinks what the fuck is this man on about before he remembers. Oh, right, Riddle, the hot teen in a book who Harry almost thought he was in love with before realising that most of his feelings could be attributed to some bullshit compulsion charm. Most meaning at least half. Maybe a bit less. Charm or no charm that kid was still smoking fine. Like damn, that hair? And his facial structure? To die for. Not to mention Harry still found him witty and rather interesting and such a good kiss- wait, what was he doing again?

"Harry?" Ah. Now he remembers.

He smiles shakily at Severus, just the simple pull of facial muscles feels Herculean, and whispers to him vague and confident, "On't thi- thingk Tom'll be probwm no mowre."

"Wait, what do you-"
And then Harry went to sleep. It was high time he made a long awaited visit inside his head again.

"So," Death says conversationally in his head as he looks coolly at the glowing form of Tom Riddle's soul. "You're more... sentient then I remember."

The soul dimmed fearfully.

It should not have been so surprising, considering how the shard in the diary seemed to constitute at least half of Riddle's soul itself, but nonetheless Death was surprised. Then again he did sort of forget about the whole 'collecting Tom Riddle's soul and keeping it in his head' project he had going on so maybe it shouldn't be so surprising that he was surprised. He's like a bajillion years old, he's pretty sure he can play the old age card here.

The crimson shard, dark as blood mixed loosely with ash, was still there. But now So was the large piece that came from a younger Tom's soul, baby blue with swirls of purples and greens with just a few budding signs of the dark red he will slowly become. They've merged a little. Shattered souls need time to coexist and find the right way to realign themselves together. Too much time has passed after all, too much has changed. But for now, Tom Riddle's slightly less broken soul just looks like it's kind of got an unfortunate pimple on it.

And now Death can't get that image out of his head.

"Well, you seem stable-ish enough." He observes, "Clearly aware of your surroundings, I think we can afford to make your appearance a little more... comfortable."

The entity stares intently at the soul, the little glowing thing moving tremulously with the waves while Death stays firmly in place like he was standing in the calmest place in the world. It looks so small and vulnerable like that, it's hard to believe that something so insignificant could sway him as much as it did. Now that most of the rage of the moment has faded, curiosity and interest once again replaces it with a fervor, Tom Riddle, every part of him, seemed to stir Death in ways that truly fascinated the being.

He flicks his bony hand upwards and gives a sharp twisting movement, causing the sea of pure black to rise and cocoon itself around the soul. There's a moment of silence as the cocoon of darkness just twists and pulses before there's a scream and the surrounding shadows fall away like wilting flower petals to reveal a rather naked, huddled Tom Riddle.

"Wh-what-what-what-what-" Riddle stuttered, looking frantically at his body, the ocean of shadows he's somehow still a float on like there was glass between him and the fathomless pit of darkness. "I-I-I- am I... dead?"

"You are bodiless." Death tells him, "But technically not dead. Well, I mean, maybe technically is a strong word here."

"Not technically dead?!" Tom shrieks, looking up at Death before visibly catching his breath, "Who-who are you?" He asks in fear and awe. Death smiles and walks closer, bending down so they are both at around the same eye level.

Scooping a handful of the darkness underneath them, the entity lets it drip onto the curve of his ankle. They both watch as it slithers upward, covering the wide eyed young man's body and forming into a rather simple but elegant black suit that hugged his figure perfectly. Death whistled lowly, "Not bad if I say so myself."

"Wha-" Tom's eyes are bulging, clearly not coping well with this whole dying not dying thing going
on right now, "Wha-wha-wha-wha-wha-"

Death slaps him in the face, feeling an inappropriate amount of vindictive satisfaction, and an even more inappropriate blip of arousal at the action, "Get a hold of yourself Mr Riddle, I told you I wasn't going to kill you yet."

"But you didn't... the last thing I remember... Harry was the one who... Harry was the one... who... said..." The young man looked at the entity warily and the clouded look of confusion in his eyes were beginning to fade to something clearer, more Tom, "...Harry?"

Death grinned toothily, proud at Tom's intelligence, once again he is reminded of why he had chose to save the guy. Not many would've made such an incredulous leap, especially the humans, they are a species that just adore the whole 'ignorance is bliss' thing. Seriously, he's seen the shit some people do- or not do really- when confronted with some form of horror-esque theme. Idiots. The lot of them.

"Got it in one darling."

"But you, you, you aren't-" Tom stuttered, overwhelmed.

Death tilted his head creepily, "What? A boy? Human? Beautiful?"

The young man flushed a little, it's easier to see, to feel the mortal's emotions here, in his realm where the soul is stripped bare to Death's eyes. It's a little odd, after being so used to a more closed off teenager instead of this more flappable older version. Though to be fair Tom Riddle was probably not having the greatest moment of his life, what with the whole waking up in a black abyss with disjointed new memories of his past and future trying to hold together despite having an incredibly large blank of time between them. "...You're still beautiful," he mutters looking mortified at himself for even admitting it.

The entity actually gives a small double take at the compliment, it must be a genuine one too because souls don't lie to Death, not when they're so stripped bare like this. "Wha- really?"

Riddle doesn't answer, just looks down at his new clothes and fiddles with the hem of it. The silence was probably more telling than anything really. Death fights the urge to coo or kiss the mortal again, it seems in term of personality, the younger Diary Tom Riddle has dominated and the result is rather adorable. He is intrigued at how much more Riddle will begin to alter the more 'whole' he becomes.

Gotta catch 'em all and all that jazz.

Death clears his throat in an attempt to dispel the awkward mood that has begun settling between them, "Well anyway, you're currently trapped in my mind. It was either this or you finally succumbing to death under these black waters here."

Tom looked down at the liquid floor he stood on horrified, only fully realising how precariously close to death he actually is right now. The teen scrambles up to his feet, like putting the minimum amount of contact between him and the shadowy sea was going to make less of a difference. Death tries to hide his raspy, soft laughter behind his clawed mouth. From the unamused look on Tom's face, he would say it hadn't worked.

"Why aren't I dead?" Tom asks, only a slight tremor in his voice to suggest how truly frightened he was, "If, if you don't terribly mind me asking of course."

Death smiles soft and enigmatically, he stands up, feeling a little smug at how much taller he stands in his favoured form against the young Riddle and leans down to kiss the soul's forehead. "Because you're soul intrigues me my darling little mortal."
Tom, who had been looking breathless during the chaste pressing of lips grimaced slightly at the mention of his mortality. Death tuts and kisses him again, this time gently on the lips, this time he is the one in control here.

"Everyone is mortal Mr Riddle, it's just some take far longer to succumb than others." He tells him fondly. Death straightens his back and starts to back away from the young man. "Now, not that this has been charming or anything, but I should probably go." He begins to summon his shadows to rise up and take him away.

"Wait!" Death turned around, Tom was standing, his arm half outstretched like he wasn't sure whether or not to reach out to the entity. "Don't leave m- I mean, who, what are you really Harry?"

The entity grinned sly and mysterious, "Didn't I tell you Mr Riddle?" His eyes go completely black, no glowing green in sight, Tom looks both fearful and entranced, "The name's Death, my dear darling Mr Riddle. And we are going to have quite some fun together."

When he awoke again, Lucius Malfoy was sitting in front of him. He looked a little haggard, a little rumpled, and hair a faintly dark stubble showing on his face. So all in all, he looked kind of roguishly hot. Tired. But roguishly hot. "Mmer Malfoil?" Harry slurred.

The older Malfoy startled at his voice visibly, "Merlin." He muttered to himself, rubbing his temples with his hands.

"Wha-wha arrre yooou-"

"Oh damn, I thought I was imagining things, no, you don't speak Potter, please. Save your strength." The Head of the Noble House of Malfoy took a deep breath, "Look, I.. just want to say I'm sorry."

Harry gave him a curious look. He would raise an eyebrow, but he's fairly sure his muscles are incapable of such fine tuned facial movements right now. "Shorrey?"

The older man grasps for words for a moment before nodding to himself, more resolved than before, "Yes. I am.. Sorry. I'm sorry for what happened to you, Draco does too- he has been fretting this whole time you've been asleep, though he's got nothing on Severus and those Weasleys who've practically slept by your bedside much to each other's consternation."

Harry huffs a breathy laugh, imagining Snape glaring at the whole Weasley family across his bed until they all went to sleep. It's both amusing and strangely warming to imagine the extent everyone has gone to keep him company. Well, not him, his soulless body really. But whatever. The thought still counts.

Lucius smiled wanly at Harry's pathetic wheeze of laughter, though even that looked a little strange. "I never expected this," He tells the half conscious boy, "I really didn't, I hardly think anyone did to be honest. If I had known… If I had known… I would have tried to prevent it."

The Boy Who Lived just replied with a simple, yet eloquent, "Uhm?"

The Head of Malfoy nodded regally, as if Harry actually had said something clever or coherent. He stands up from his seat, and the green eyed boy can't help but admire how long Mr Malfoy's legs are. He wonders if it's just the expensive tailored pants or if the man's thighs were as really as toned as they seemed.

There's a faint ache in his head at his thought, for a second Harry thinks its the whole coma thing acting up before he realises the pain is much more centralised in his forehead. Specifically the soul in
his forehead, radiating disapproval and a lot of other bad vibes. Shit. This was *not* something Death had anticipated when he decided to anchor the half soul to his mind realm palace place. His body is very complicated.

However, in hindsight, it's, uh, something he probably should have considered. Either way, Harry was not enjoying the second hand angsting he's getting from the soul. With a roll of his eyes, he mentally tries to quiet the protesting Riddle inside his head by agitating his own ocean of darkness. Thanks to Death's 'blessing' that allows Tom to stay buoyant in the not so metaphorical sea of death, Riddle is practically ensured that he will not perish, however that doesn't mean he won't feel nauseated when the waves start to roll him around like a kitten's ball of yarn. Can souls even get seasick under these extenuating circumstances? Whatever, as long as Harry can stare at Mr Malfoy's legs without his own peanut gallery judging him in his head.

What? It's literally the only thing in his line of vision right now, fucking sue him.

Lucius must've said his goodbyes while Harry had been mentally reconstructing his usual relatively calm mindscape of death into something akin to one of those wave pools you find in waterparks, times fifteen, because he pats the bedridden child on the head twice awkwardly before leaving. "I really am genuinely apologetic at how things came out." He said right before leaving the room, "I assure you that in the future that any similar situation will not come to pass unless it is out of my hands."

Harry just kept staring as Lucius Malfoy left. Had the man just assuaged his own guilt by apologising without admitting to his own crime of endangering a whole school via giant magical Basilisk and Dark Lord diary? The Boy Who Lived let out a small dreamy sigh. He couldn't decide what was hotter, Mr Malfoy's slick cunning way with words or his hair.

*Spoiler alert. It's still his hair.*

*His beautiful, beautiful hair.*

…

Rehabilitation sucks.

Harry vehemently blames Mr Riddle and takes great satisfaction mentally hurling him around like he's in a washing machine when he's in the middle of a particularly painful exercise. It's oddly soothing. Well, for him at least.

'I think I'm going to be ill.' Mr Riddle mutters in his head, 'Is this hell? It feels like hell.'

The entity disguised as wizard saviour grins, but that quickly turns into a grimace as Madam Pomphrey instructs him to do another stretching exercise. 'Fucking deserve it asshole.' He grits out in reply as his human muscles are practically screaming obscenities at him as he bends down and tries to touch the floor. This was humiliating, and rather tragic as his fingers barely brush against the soft magicked carpeting underneath him. Potter's naturally flexible body was probably one of his more favored traits. And now he's gone and bullocks that up by getting stabbed and poisoned and technically dying for a week or six. This was why he can't have nice things.

"Poppy I have the vials of-Merlin's fucking tits!"

Harry, too tired to bother standing back up and enduring all the pain of the action, looks between his legs. There, the resident potions master stares back with an undignified open mouth and a slight flush on his cheeks. From the looks of it, and the sounds before hand, the man must have bumped himself
terribly on the nearby desk or something. One of his potions was even smashed onto the floor so the
man really must have been distracted.

"Severus," Madam Pomphrey scolded, though their was an air of amusement there behind all that
mighty, mighty disapproval, "Please keep that mind of yours out of the dirty cauldron and pay more
attention to your surroundings."

"I was, I, just, was, just," Snape spluttered a little, trying to defend himself while still gawping a little
at Harry, "Exactly what are you doing to Potter?" He finally accused.

The mediwitch huffed, "Well now that we know that general basic healing spells and recovery
portions are pretty much ineffective against Potter's... unique system. I'm implementing muggle
methods to help restore the boy's basic motor functions."

"And the muggle way means bending Harry over like, like-"

"Like what Severus?" Madam Pomphrey asked in a way that, if Harry didn't know better, sounded
awfully like a dare, a taunt. Slowly he tries to move back up again, straightening out his back and
completely missing the way the potions professor's face reddens. "Like what?"

"Like, like, like," It was odd to hear the usually cuttingly eloquent man at a loss for words. In his
haste to stand up properly to take a look at what expression his favorite professor was wearing, his
stiff muscles begin once more to rebel against him, Harry groans low and throaty as his spine seems
to realign itself via painful yet pleasurable 'pops' all down his back.

It actually feels... really good, like what a butterfly must feel after cracking open its chrysalis. Harry
arches his back further, throwing his head back and letting out a hissing sigh of satisfaction as the
crick in his neck temporarily departs. "OoooOoh, that feels good." He breathes out happily.

He's never been a fan of the whole cracking your knuckles or neck sort of thing that he's seen the
older kids do. Personally Harry always thought the foreign concept rather disgraceful, especially
since too much of it can cause serious health conditions like arthritis and such in the future. But now
he understands. It's a faster relief than medication and more intimately satisfying as you feel the joints
release the tension in one swift motion. Harry can feel himself groan in the ecstasy of this new
strangely amazing sensation.

"...I have to go." Professor Snape says, his voice strangled, and go he went.

Harry blinked, then looked toward a disapprovingly amused mediwitch for some explanation. "He
does th't a lot eh?"

Madam Pomphrey raises an eyebrow at him and pats him on the head like he was some stupid, but
adorable nonetheless, puppy. "Oh, dear, well aren't you quite the innocent little flirt?" She pats him
again, "Unfortunately there's no cure for that sort of nonsense." The mediwitch ruffles his hair before
clapping her hands, "Now that, that distraction is over with, let's see if you can walk to the bathroom
without help."

Pushing the last minute of weirdness out from his memory, Harry decided to just focus on his
recovery for now. Internally groaning at his new arduous task set out for him this time.

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Dear Death,

Fate here. I get to write because apparently no one had the decency to tell me when you were
coming back to your realms for a spot of tea. Seriously, I'm not Time, I shouldn't have to keep track
Well, anyway, I've heard your undergoing mortal rehabilitation? That's not fun, I know, I tried my hand at the whole broken leg thing a while back. I got sick of it after, like, a week and just healed myself right up. Honestly, I'm like, totally proud you're going through the whole painful god awful thing- though I guess it's not like you have much choice in the matter anyway. Lol.

Lol means laugh out loud old man ;)

I don't have much to say really, other than uh, I see you're collecting Tom Riddle's soul. That's.. well surprisingly not that surprising of you considering your collection. So, you should probs know that there's like, another shard in Hogwarts. It's covered by quite a lot of magic which may throw you off a bit but it is there nonetheless. I mean, Harry's fated to acquire it anyway so if you're feeling lazy (which, let's face it, you kind of are when you're off duty) then I guess you can wait a few years or whatever.

Also, and this is a little more important than some Dark Lord's soul, I saw a brief glimpse of Love's plans for you. There's a potion and I think lace or something? I, uh, didn't get much of a look of anything but I got enough of it to tell you one thing-

Run my brother. Run far, run fast.

LOL

But seriously.

Run man. Your dignity kind of depends on it.

Toodles,

Fate

Severus and Pomphrey watched the wizard saviour slumber. He looks so beautiful despite it all, maybe even because of it all. There's something strange about how well ill-health suited Harry Potter- the sullen cheeks, the sickly pallor, the darkness around his eyes, it's made the young teen hauntingly elegant and strikingly delicate. Madam Pomphrey cannot help but think of the fairy tale of Snow White when she lay in a state of half-death, her beauty preserved, and how similar it seems to apply in this situation. Or was that the Sleeping Beauty tale? Honestly they were pretty much the same thing anyway.

"I feel like I should be envious on how Potter looks like an ice carving of a sleeping nymph despite being comatose for six weeks. But then again, Potter's been in a coma for six weeks." The mediwitch comments, she looks at the potions master and blithely adds, "Still, I guess I do sort of see why you're so infatuated with him despite… well literally every reason you shouldn't."

The potions master nearly fell out of his chair. He stared at the older woman with shock and nauseaed fear, "What?" He asks, voice cracking whether from lack of use or the raw terror of being found out. Snape quickly composes himself, his face shutting down into that cold sneer he so loves using. "Has all the potion fumes finally gotten into your head Poppy? Because what you're insinuating is simply preposterous and disgu-

"But it's true isn't it?" Madam Pomphrey interrupts, her voice betraying nothing but the question, "You love Harry Potter."
"He is my student!" He hisses furiously back, "He is barely thirteen, a child for Merlin's sake! How dare you even suggest-

"That you want to bend over said child and plough him like a cornfield?"

"Poppy!" Severus gasps, scandalised, his sallow skin reddening at the crude words, "How could you?"

The mediwitch scoffed and rolled her eyes, "Oh come off it Severus, I'm not blind." She stares hard at the man who looks ready to be sick, "Nor am I particularly happy with this knowledge mind you. You're right, Potter is barely considered a teenager, never mind an adult and that does certainly make you a pedophile. Honestly, I should report you right here and now."

Snape grits his teeth, chin pointed upwards defiantly but his gaze refuses to look directly at the older woman. He says nothing. There's nothing he can say.

"But," And the woman softens her demeanour slightly, she sighs, "I won't."

"...Why?" The potions master finally says after a minute of silence.

"Because you're a good man." Snape snorts derisively. Pomphrey gives him a look. "Shush, you are. And even if you aren't, I know you genuinely love the boy. If you didn't, I hardly think you would have spent all this time by his trauma-prone side taking care of him. Both times. I watched you spend every waking moment fretting about him, more than any one of us here has. And I know you would never deliberately hurt or… force yourself upon him."

The wizard stares at her, he looked a lot more like that helpless student he had been than the seemingly invulnerable man he is now. "You don't know that." He whispers. "You can't."

"I do." Pomphrey replies firmly, "Severus, I'm old, I've seen a lot of things. Like, a lot. Seriously, I've seen some shit Severus. A binding spell between two students in a rather unfortunate position. Some fifth year who wanted to have sexy cat ears to impress her boyfriend but ended up with the mind of one instead of the body. The results when someone skimps out on well, any sort of potions. Oh merlin, there was this one defence professor that mistook glue for basic lubrica-"

"Get on with it woman." Severus snapped, his previous meek demeanour apparently just a very temporary temperament that had quickly dissipated under the woman's nattering. Sometimes the potions master forgot how old the woman was, especially considering he had always considered her one of the most stern, stoic characters alongside him and Minervra. Actually, the Head of Gryffindor was pretty old too.

Merlin, it's hard to remember he was the youngest of the professors by far. That does make Severus feel a little better in hindsight, not that he'll ever admit that aloud. McGonagall and Pomphrey would hex him to next New Year's.

"The point is, I've seen a lot of things in my life Severus." The mediwitch looks at the professor seriously, "And I know what true devotion looks like."

Severus swallows. "Th-thank you Poppy. That.. that really means a lot, what you said." He looks at his hands, "I, am at a loss for what to do with these.. feelings Poppy. It's even worse than when I was a foolish child-"

"Because you are infatuated with a foolish child?"

"Yes." The potions master grits out, clenching his fists, "Thank you so much for interrupting my
confession of emotions to summarily dig into my wounds."

Madam Pomphrey looked like she was trying not to smile, "I'm sorry." She gestured to her fellow colleague, "Please, continue."

Snape scowls, "No. The moment has passed. You no longer can access my torrid inner workings."

"I think I will survive." Madam Pomphrey answers dryly. This, *this* is why Severus doesn't hate her. The mediwitch turns back to look at Harry, "You know, if it makes you feel any better, I do think Harry adores you. Maybe not in the deviant, perverse, sexual-"

"I get the picture Poppy, again, thank you." The potions professor growls.

"-illicit way that you harbour. But he adores you nonetheless."

Snape looks fondly at Harry, "And I, him." He admits as he reaches out to touch Harry's sleeping face, only for his hand to slapped harshly away by the mediwitch. The wizard looks at her incredulously, "You *just* gave me your blessing."

"Yes, but that doesn't mean I'm going to make it easy for you." Pomphrey smirks, "He's *thirteen* for Merlin's sakes, honestly, keep it in your robes Severus."

This, *this* is why Severus hates her. The bitch.

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"So this is just going to be a thing now?" Death asks half-curious, half-annoyed. "You're just going to take over my dreams now are you?"

"I would hardly call this a dream." Mr Riddle points out. "I'm still standing on liquid death and everything is still blacker than tar."

"Hey!" Death protests indignantly because fuck him and his ability to properly dream. "For your information this is a slightly lighter black than usual. And look-" he points at a faint purple swirl floating in the air. Mr Riddle had to actually squint to see it despite his soul state giving him perfect vision, the twat.

"... What the fuck is that?"

"You've gotten more crass since I killed you, combined your most recent soul shard together and dumped you into my mindscape." Death complained, "That," he pointed at the purple swirl, "is proof it's a dream."

Mr Riddle was giving the entity an odd pitying look, "That's what you consider a dream? Colors?"

Death looks down and rubs his arm self-consciously, "Death isn't exactly associated with rainbows Mr Riddle." He replies a little too shortly, "I *do* apologize if my inability to properly dream is such a hindrance to your delicate sensibilities."

Sensing he's stepped in a sensitive area, the young man tried verbally stepping back, "I should be the one to say sorry, I didn't mean what I said in a bad way per say, I just... Well, I was a little surprised at your, er, limitations."

The entity huffs, but his ire has lessened under the genuinely inquisitive furrow in Riddle's brow. The soul looked genuinely interested and intrigued, it was easy to see how such a curious creature had eagerly devoured the forbidden knowledge of soul breaking. "Death is all powerful but it is not
the most flexible concept, and thus I am more restricted in certain traits and abilities. For example,"
Death conjures up a rather delicate looking rose. He passes it to the soul. "What does this bring to
mind?"

The young soul could not help but admire the rose's beauty and yet he felt oddly uncomfortable with
it in his hands. Upon closer inspection though, Tom realized how strange it's appearance was, with
wicked sharp thorns, a stem that could've been carved out of charcoal, a scent not of sweetness but
earthy like on the cusp of decay, and petals the exact shade of freshly spilt blood. It's a rather
intimidating looking flower all in all.

"Death." He finds himself saying, he looks up to the entity who is also adorned with an elegant but
darkly intimidating beauty, "it, this reminds me of you." Tom steps closer and presses the rose back
into a waiting clawed hand. His own hand tentatively brushes against one taloned finger before
quickly retreating back.

Death smiles, "Very good," he praises, causing Riddle to duck his head modestly. The being of
death pauses at the involuntary action of the soul, poor little thing, probably wasn't praised nor
hugged much as a child.

Which, thinking about it now, is probably the reason why most people end up in villainy anyway-
that or some really awful tragic circumstances that somehow link to the main protagonist of
whatever. Either way, maybe now that Tom's sentient and aware of his surroundings
Death shouldn't just ignore him like he totally did the whole of last year.

He clenches his fist holding the rose and when he opens it again its gone. "My affinity to death is
infinite in all things related to its concept. While that may have looked like a rose, it's clear to anyone
that it was not. I can only create such a thing because of how widely roses are used to decorate
corpses and such to be honest."

"That seems.. complicated." Tom murmurs.

Death shrugs, "It is and it isn't. Look, I feel a little bad ditching you alone.." He looks around into the
surrounding blackness save for that one purple swirl, "..in the infinite darkness that is my mind..
again. So I'm going to summon some books focused on the concept of death for you to pass the
time."

Mr Riddle raises a brow, "You're giving me books about yourself? A little narcissistic don't you
think?"

"It's that or giving you books on how to kill people." The entity smirks, "And given you're uh,
penchant, I figured that wouldn't exactly be wise."

"It's not like I can do anything here anyway." The mortal soul points out petulantly.

"Yes well, I feel like that's just bad sense." Death comments, "I didn't give Magneto his stupid ugly
helmet until like, his twentieth year as my paperweight. I mean, not that he really noticed after I
placed that Xavier bloke next to him but it's the thought that counts I guess."

"I have no idea what any of that means but I'm fairly sure I'm not getting a murder book."

"No Mr Riddle, I'm not giving you a murder book."

"Draco." Harry greets, his voice still a little rusty but healing much faster in comparison to the whole
potions 'accident' that happened last year. The young Malfoy heir grinned wobbly before rushing up
to his bedside.

"Harry!" The blonde boy cheered, giving him a light hug before hitting Harry harshly on the thigh.

Harry raises an eyebrow. Luckily, unlike his previous horrible injury his skin wasn't sensitive from healing itself, instead his nerves were more numb from stiffness than anything so the assault barely registered. "Um. Ow?"

"DON'T YOU EVER DO THAT AGAIN!" Draco shrieked with the shrillness that could rival a fucking mandrake as he continuously kept hitting his friend's body. "DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME POTTER?"

"YES. TOTALLY. WHY ARE WE SHOUTING?" Harry screams back vindictively because he shouldn't be the only one here to suffer from this interaction.

"BECAUSE I'M DEEPLY UNIMPRESSED BY YOUR ACTIONS." Draco yelled back.

The Boy Who Lived fidgets, "Yes, well, get in line my friend. Se- I mean, Professor Snape, Madam Pomphrey, Professor McGonagall and even Dumbledore had all given me some version of this lecture." His green eyes roll, "It was like, twenty minutes each of 'What were you thinking Potter?', 'Why didn't you wait for help Potter?', 'I told you that diary was no good Potter,' 'This is what happens when you get overconfident and rely too much on your magic Potter.', 'Potter, wha-"

Draco raises his hand, silencing Harry. "Okay," he says impatiently, "I get it, everyone's pissed off because you're more a Gryffindor than anyone realised."

Harry shrugged, "Pretty much, yeah. To be fair though, I totally would have gone through this unscathed if someone," he mentally prods at Mr Riddle's soul, "hadn't stabbed me in the freaking back."

'I'm never going to hear the end of this am I?' Mr Riddle grumbles in his mind. The soul is crafty, it's only been just over a week since Riddle's been pretty much given free reign to wander around the mindscape and he's managed to somehow figure out a way to breach the gap between mindscape and shallow thoughts, enough to verbally communicate with Harry. If, a little quietly anyway.

"Still," The Malfoy frowns a little, "I can't help noticing, you know, that every weird adventure you get up to is always with a Gryffindor, and like, three out four times you usually get the short end of the wand.. sooo," Draco shuffles a little closer to Harry, fiddling with the hems of his sleeves, "I was thinking, maybe I should join you next time round. To, well, help you reign in all that Gryffindor in you. The Wealeys and that Granger chit are clearly horrible influences on you."

Well Harry couldn't exactly argue with that one.

"Wait..." Harry smiled slyly, "Are you saying... you're jealous that I'm always spending time with Ron and Hermione instead of you?"

"Wha-" Draco's pale face reddened as he began to splutter, "Me? Jealous? W-what nonsense." He crosses his arms, "I just think maybe, if you spent time with me and the other Slytherins more, you wouldn't get int these ridiculous Gryffindor antics. If anything I'm doing you and your health a favor here."

The green eyed wizard grinned, god Draco can be so easy to tease. "Suuuure."

"I-it's true!"
Harry reached out to pat Draco's cheek, "Hey, I overheard Pomphrey, Dumbledore and the Head of Houses talking before. They think it would be best for my recovery if I keep in one place for the rest of the year, and guess which House I'm supposed to be in this term?"

Draco gasped, "Seriously?" He asks visibly excited.

"Yes," The wizard savior nods solemnly before sighing tiredly and shrugging, "I'm afraid you Slytherins are going to deal with my- what did you call it? Ridiculous Gryffindor antics for a whole year."

The young Malfoy wasn't even listening at that point, too excited at the prospect of Harry being his dorm mate for the whole year. His mouth was already nattering various plans and ways to make up for Harry's lack of holiday due to his.. unfortunate circumstances. "-and we can play Truth or Hex with the guys, and oh, I cannot wait to rub this in that shmuck Weasley's face! I definitely need to get father to buy us some extra sweets and we can bring out the Monopoly set you gifted us and we can try out that card game you insisted we try-"

"Uno?"

Draco snapped his finger and pointed at him enthusiastically. "That's the one!" His smile is excited and childishly bright, Harry cannot help but mirror a similar giddiness just watching him. "Oh Harry we are going to have such a blast, and unlike those Gryffindorks, we are not going to send you to the medical bay."

Harry laughed, "Yes, well, the year is still young isn't it."

"Mate, oh Merlin you are awake!" Ron cried out joyously when he caught sight of Harry trying to eat jelly. It was unfortunate timing because Harry's jelly filled spoon was halfway to his lips and the unexpected yell was enough for his already weakened grip to slacken, causing his jelly to fall to its death.

The raven haired teen mourned at the loss. It was grape flavoured. The good fucking kind too with peeled grapes preserved in there as well. Professor Snape got it for him. Fuck. "Ron you arse." He hisses. "I should kill you where you stand." Ron just looks even more relieved.

"Oh Harry it really is you!"

What the fuck was that supposed to mean?

Harry scowled. "Wanker."

"I've missed you too buddy." Ron says and then hugs him. He gets grape jelly on his shirt as well. Fucking good.

With a sigh Harry returns the hug, "Yeah, yeah," he says fondly before adding a bit more seriously, "You totally owe me another jelly cup."

Ron laughed, "Still with the jokes."

"But I'm not-"

The redhead tightened his hold, "Such a joker."

"Ah..haha." Harry fake laughs, a little weirded out by how apparently Ron's psycho switch is easily
flipped by having to pay for food. A little weirded out but ultimately not surprised in retrospect. "Yes. I was totally joking."

Ron lets him go, goofy big grin on his face. He looks like he was going to say something but was ultimately interrupted by the rest of the Weasley family barging in, followed by a very sulky looking Professor Snape. "Harry!" The twins, Percy and Ginny shouted, running toward Harry and joining Ron's side. Professor Snape, the Weasley parents and another redhead that's probably one of the older brothers Harry's yet to meet, all lingered a little further back.

Which was just as well because Harry was practically bombarded by questions and demands for attention. Seriously, he needs like, three headache potions after this.

It takes a few minutes before everyone calms down enough for Harry to properly make sense of what the hell they were all going on about. Apparently Mr Weasley had won a bunch of cash and subsequently spent it all on Ron's new wand and a family trip to Egypt to visit the other older brother- Jesus Christ does contraception not exist in this place- Bill Weasley. They've only just touched back down to England yesterday before finding out that Harry had awoken from his state of half-death and practically apparated right then and there.

"Mate it was amazing over there," Ron gushed, eager to spin his tales to entertain his friend, though more than a little annoyed at his family's need to be there to interject and interrupt his stories, "Bill took us around all the tombs and you wouldn't believe the curses those old Egyptian wizards put on them. Mum wouldn't even let Ginny come in the last one."

Mrs Weasley from the sidelines tutted as she sipped her tea, "Good heavens I certainly wouldn't, not when you could clearly see the remains of those muggle burglars who had gotten cursed. After what happened last year, I certainly won't be letting Ginny near anything cursed ever if I can help."

"Muuuum." Ginny hissed embarrassedly, eyes flicking over to Harry. The wizard saviour tries not to look at her, remembering Tom's words about how the girl had a crush on him and feeling a little awkward himself.

Instead he turns to Percy who looks ready to explode with whatever news he had been impatiently trying to spill. "What about you Percy, any highlights?" He asks.

"I'm Head Boy!" The prefect, now Head Boy, blurts out.

Harry grins widely, good for Percy. Harry knew how much the older teen had wanted it, and he knew how much Percy worked for it as well. "Oh my god, congratulations Percy!"

Without thinking he pulls Percy in for a short sweet kiss, which the other reciprocates happily into before gently pushing Harry away with a dazed blush on his face. "Wow." Percy says before muttering under his breath, "Thank Merlin I didn't tell you via letter then."

Harry chuckled bashfully, "Sorry bout that, I was just so proud that i just, well," The bedridden teen shrugs. Percy smiles, though the blush on his cheeks hasn't fully faded yet.

"I guess I forgive you, but only if you forgive me for this," Percy leans back down to kiss Harry, however it was far more passionate than Harry's had been. The Boy-Who-Lived moaned a little as the newly crowned Head Boy tugged on his hair, knowing full well how much he enjoyed that, and slipped a little tongue in. A you can imagine, it took a far bit longer and a lot of background vomiting noises courtesy of Ron, George and Fred, for that kiss to end.

"Holy shit." Harry gasped breathily, now it wasn't just Percy's face that was red that was for sure.
Damn, had Percy gotten a new girlfriend or boyfriend in Egypt? Because, because he got good. Really good. "Not that I'm complaining but why?"

"Well," Percy began to fidget, apparently whatever casanova confidence he had been possessed with in that moment had quickly faded now that the heat of their intimate exchange had, "I figured, you deserve it for getting yourself stabbed and scaring me like that."

"That, that's great." The wizard saviour says a little faintly, "Kind of wish everyone else did that now."

"Yeah, no mate." Ron said, looking a little queasy, "I was scared but not that scared."

"I was totally that scared." Fred pipes up, "Can I get a kiss too?"

"Me too, me too!" George adds, "I was absolutely terrified."

"Traumatised really," Fred nods to himself.

George grins cheekily, "In fact, I think we deserve two kisses, right brother?"

"Well as delightful as all this.. cheer was, visiting hours are now over." Snape stepped out of his shadowy corner and sneered. For some reason he looked more irritated than usual.

"It's barely two in the afternoon!" Ron argued, his arms flung around Harry's body as if those scrawny things could hide his friend's form from the hated potions professor. "I haven't even given Harry his birthday present yet!"

"Severus, maybe we should let the kids have their fun?" Mr Weasley tries to convince, it's not half as effective as it should be considering the very obvious distance he has maintained between the two adults. Apparently Mr Weasley wasn't unaffected by how intimidating the other wizard was, especially in the sour mood he seems to be right now.

Snape glowers at the man. "Don't you all have some unpacking to do?"

"Severus," Mrs Weasley scolded, because Harry has found the woman around here rule the fucking community. Seriously, if the whole premise was a Dark Duchess instead of a Dark Lord, the wizard saviour was fairly sure there would have been no wizard saviour in the first place and Britain would have been overthrown ages ago. "I think we deserve more than ten minutes with the sweet boy who sacrificed himself to save our precious Gin-Gin."

Ron and his brothers snickered while Ginny groaned quietly, during her face into her hands. The potions master clenched his jaw but sneered an annoyed, "Do what you wish."

The Weasley children, save for Percy and the other older one, cheered at that. Quietly of course. They were cheeky, not suicidal.

"Oh, right! I haven't introduced you to Charlie." Ron said brightly, he turns to the adults and gestures his older brother over, "Charlie, this is Harry. Harry, Charlie."

Harry looked up and just froze. Jesus. Did the Weasleys just get hotter with age? The twins were charming, Percy was cute but Charlie was fucking hot. Like, athletic hot too, something you don't see a lot in the Wizarding world unfortunately. God, the biceps on him. If this is what the second oldest son looks like, Harry cannot wait to see this Bill fellow.

"Harry?" Ron was side-eying him hard. Sometimes he hated how weirdly perceptive his red headed
The green eyed teen blinked, before letting his face relax into a sweet, enticing smile. "Hey." He murmurs bashfully, fully aware of how well it fits with the faint blush that he can't help stop from crawling up his cheeks. Charlie seemed suitably charmed at him.

'I don't like him.' Tom complains. Harry mentally shoves him off, the soul's constant presence flittering around the back of his mind was going to be quite the nuisance in the future, he just knows it.

"Hi," The older Weasley says a little shyly, his eyes darting to his brothers a little guiltily before focusing back on the pretty young teenager before him. He raises his hand to shake, and marvels at how small and delicate the other's own hand was in his own. "Charlie Weasley."

"Harry Potter, but you can call me Harry." Harry squeezes the older man's large hand, both end up staring up into each other's eyes. Their hands still lingering together.

"Oh hell no." Ron firmly says, effectively interrupting them. "No. Harry you cannot do this to me."

The wizard saviour lets go of the older Weasley's hand to look innocently at his friend. "What?"

"Charlie's not even gay mate!"

"Actually.." Charlie coughed awkwardly. Ron and the others stared at him. "Mum and dad already knew about me a while back, I was going to tell you all eventually but, uh, figured there was never a right time."

"Well now certainly wasn't exactly the best moment either!" Ron shrieked before turning back to Harry, "Harry, for fuck's sakes please don't sleep up my family tree."

"Ron, I don't know how to break this to you but all your older brothers are incredibly attractive. If anything, you should be happy that there is clearly hope for you in the future." Harry pointed out bemused.

Ron spluttered, "Wha, attractive?! Are you seriously say- wait. What was that last thing you just said you wanker?!!" Harry laughed.

"Don't worry Ron, I'm not going to work my way up your family tree or whatever nonsense anytime soon anyway. Feel better now?"

"Not exactly reassured that you just said 'anytime soon' instead of 'at all' like I was hoping for but I guess that's really the best I can hope for at this point huh?" The youngest Weasley son sighed exasperatedly, "Merlin, are you sure you ain't part veela or anything?"

"Fairly." Harry smugly replied, before wisely changing the subject, "So where's this birthday present you haven't given me?"

The twins, who had been rather uncharacteristically quiet piped up before Ron could. "Consider it a present from all of us." Fred said cheerily as George handed Harry a vibrant red wrapped object from behind him. Ron squawked indignantly at having his moment stolen quite literally from him. "Happy birthday Harry!" George cheered as the younger wizard began ripping apart the gift.

"Cheers guys." Harry thanked as he unveiled his present, "Erm, what is it?"

Ron opened his mouth but Percy was the one who replied faster, much to the other's ire. "It's a
Pocket Sneakoscope. It's purpose is to light up and spin if there's someone untrustworthy nearby." Harry 'oohs' appropriately.

Charlie even contributes a little, "Bill, that's our oldest brother, had said it was unreliable trash to trick wizard tourists into buying it, because it kept lighting up at dinner last night." He winks at Harry as he whispered loudly and not so secretly, "What he didn't realize was that Fred and George had put beetles in his soup that night." They all had a nice little laugh over that. Even Percy who was usually quite uneasy around his family sometimes.

"Hey, I know you've only been awake for a few weeks now but have you heard that Sirius Black escaped?" Ron asked excitedly. In the background Snape, who had been steadily looking more and more aggravated, jerked suddenly at the Ron's words. His face a mix between pure fury and, well, more fury. "Pretty messed up right?"

Harry, intrigued, leaned forward, "No, who is this Sirius Black?"

The Weasley boys looked confused, "You don't know who Black is?" Percy asked, "How could you not? He is your-"

"ENOUGH." Professor Snape shouted, silencing everyone. Shoving open the door, he gestured to it with a face that not even Molly Weasley was going to argue with, "Visiting time is over."

"Boys, I think we should go." Mrs Weasley says, looking at Severus' infuriated expression. Clearly the adults have an idea of what made Snape snap, and whatever it was must've been to do with who ever this Sirius blog was. "Harry, sweetheart, we're planning to maybe go buy everyone's school books in three days. Do you think you might be up to joining us?"

Before Harry could agree, Severus snarled out an, "Absolutely not Molly. I will not have you ruining Ha-Potter's hard won recuperation so close to the beginning of term."

The matriarch of the Weasleys looked disapprovingly at the black-clad wizard, "Severus, the boy needs a day out of this castle! You don't think just confining him here in the infirmary forever is going to protect him from-"

"With all due respect, do not even presume to know what I think." Severus hissed. Molly Weasley looked ready to fight back but Harry decided it was up to him to diffuse this already tense situation.

"I think," He says, loud and clearly, "That maybe I should be the one to decide how I'm feeling."

"Potter," Professor Snape still looked angry, but gratifyingly calmer now that his attention is on the younger wizard, "You don't understand."

"Maybe we can discuss this later then Professor," Harry implored, because, fuck, Mrs Weasley was right. He feels a little like he is imprisoned in this place, stuck with medicinal herbs and a rather colourless interior as company at night. He needs sunlight or at least some fresh air. Even as Death, his realms have, well it has a moon. But it's a very nice moon okay? "Make me understand."

He turns to Mrs Weasley, "Is it okay if I owl you a response later Mrs Weasley?"

"Of course dearie, take your time," She gushes, then with a sly smile that someone as motherly as her should not have adds, "Maybe I can convince Charlie to stay an extra day or three to accompany you all. Or maybe you could get reacquainted with Percy? He has a lot of rather interesting-"

"O-kay dear," Mr Weasley laughed awkwardly as Snape's glower intensifies into something that could be loosely described as visual evisceration. "Maybe we can, as the muggles say, 'pimp my
sons' at a later date ey?" He gestures to the kids, "Come along guys, let's not risk your professor's patience anymore."

The Weasley kids all 'aw' in disappointment collectively but begin leaving anyway. As they say their goodbyes, Ron whispers a quick promise to tell him about this Sirius Black character next time, something Harry finds himself grateful for. Severus may be more open towards him than most, but Harry has no illusions that the secretive man will tell him the truth about such an, apparently touchy, subject.

Finally it was just Harry and Severus left alone in the room. They look at each other.

"So…" Harry starts. Severus stares at him for a moment, he opens his mouth, then closes it and with an irritatingly dramatic swirl of his robes, he leaves.

"…Okay, that has really got to stop."

And here's zombu7's amazing artwork!!
Death's argument

Chapter Notes

This is the most smutty thing I've done up to date. Tbf, I haven't exactly done much, tell me how it goes haha.

The one where Death argues with a potions master, goes shopping with his friends and has a relatively nice nighttime chat with an acquaintance. Not much really.

Or,

The one where Severus Snape fights with the Boy Who Lived, adds accidental voyeurism to his growing list of sins, chases down a rat and gets shooed out of his own quarters by the Minister of Magic. It's not been the best day all things considered.

"Harry," Professor Snape began for the nth time, his voice edging from exasperation to irritation. Harry folded his arms, waiting, face defiant. "You are being foolish, going out to buy your textbooks for this year at such busy time will only serve to be detrimental to your recovering health. As one of the individuals responsible for said health, I ban you from going with the Weasleys."

"You ban me." Harry says flatly. "From book shopping."

"I ban you." The older wizard repeats smugly, like he actually thinks he is going to win this battle. Hah. Snape may be interesting, intelligent and have a charmingly desert dry wit but Harry would be damned if he manages to get fucking banned.

"How am I going to get my textbooks then?" He complains, "I haven't even gotten to choose my electives or whatever you wizards call those extra lesson subjects."

"As I'll be your Head of House for the year, you can easily inform me of your elective decisions."

Snape replies loftily, sidestepping the first question like the sly prick he is.

"I want to do Care of Magical Creatures and Divination." Harry immediately says, because argument aside, he kind of needs to submit his choices in weeks ago.

Snape raises a very disapproving eyebrow, "You want to do Care of Magical Creatures and Divination." He says in a manner where Harry might've just told him he wanted to drop the wizard saviour sh*t altogether and pursue his true dream of being a tap-dancing, opera-singing rodeo cowboy.

"What, are you going to ban me from those too professor?" The younger wizard sneers defensively. It wasn't his fault that Ancient runes and Arithmancy sounded completely and utterly dull. Not to mention Harry already knows pretty much all about them anyway, making them an even more redundant subject than they already were to him. Honestly, it might as well be a Killing for Dummies class for all it was worth. At least meeting up with some of the creatures will be interesting, and he's always had a slight interest in whatever Fate does.
"You-" Snape pinches the edge of his nose, clearly his limited patience even for Harry, is reaching its end. "For Merlin's sakes Harry, I am doing this for your own good!" He shouts.

"My own good is seeing some goddamn sunlight that doesn't come through a window!" Harry shouts back. "How am I going to get my books?! How am I going to see my friends?! You might as well chain me up by your bed and watch me every single time I sneeze!"

Snape rears his head back as if Harry had slapped him, his usual pale pallor reddening. He looks absolutely furious. The older wizard pulls Harry's face harshly toward him, his large hand painfully gripping the younger boy's jaw and his fingernails digging slightly into the flesh of his cheeks. Harry glares, tired and in his own way, just as infuriated as Snape. He was going stir crazy stuck in Hogwarts, and the young wizard hardly thinks a nice trip to the bookstore would warrant the amount of injury the potions master had been describing for the past twenty minutes.

"You seem to forget your place, Potter." The man spat out, "I am your professor, your superior, and I will not condone you talking to me in such a way. No matter how much I- no matter how I favour you so. You may be Harry Potter the Boy Who Lived, but here you're just an impudent little boy who needs to learn to listen to their teachers and gather some proper decorum along the way."

Harry inhales sharply, it takes all of his willpower not to let the darkness bleed into his eyes but the rage that takes him at his professor's insulting words practically slapping him on the face. His throat feels clenched, and to his humiliation Harry can feel the stinging warning of involuntary tears threatening to fill his eyes. Fucking humans and their stupid hormonal prepubescence and their sensitive feelings. Harry opens his mouth, ready to yell out words just as harsh when the door to the medical bay opened, letting Dumbledore, Madam Pomphrey and Professor McGonagall in to peruse the scene in front of them.

"Have we come at a bad time?" Dumbledore asks innocently.

Snape releases his grip on Harry's face, straightening his back to his usual height and looking back at his colleagues like nothing of great consequence had just happened. Following his lead, Harry quickly wipes his eyes and also pretends he hadn't been this close to cry-screaming at his professor. Stubbornly he looks at the trio, completely missing the brief flicker of concern on the potions master's features.

"No Headmaster," Snape replies, "Me and Potter were just having a slight… disagreement."

Harry snorted quietly, "It's 'Potter and I,' professor. Clearly you're not my superior in the english language." He muttered, earning him a sharp glare from the man.

"Yes, well," Dumbledore coughed, he summons up one of the nearby chairs for him to sit on. The others quickly do the same, "Harry my boy, how do you feel about living under Severus' supervision when the school term starts?"

Harry stares. Snape stares. McGonagall and Pomphrey, who apparently hadn't had any idea why the older wizard called them over here, also stared.

"Excuse me?" While normally Harry would be completely amenable to such a decision, hell, even ecstatic, somehow he wasn't exactly feeling very enthusiastic at the idea right now. "Why must I have to continue staying under his watch?"

"So sorry, do you have a problem with my way of care?" Snape sneered, "Because you certainly were not complaining the last few times I had to suffer through your drug addled presence."
Harry clenched his jaw and wiped the prickling sensation away from his eyes again. Fucking Snape hurting his fucking sensitive human sensibilities. Harry's not hurt, he's absolutely seething, it's just his mortal eyes are very weak. To hurt feelings.

"Severus!" Both McGonagall and Pomphrey chided at the same time, both looking insulted for Harry's sakes. Dumbledore also looks faintly disapproving but it's hard to tell with that natural genial attitude he always projects and that gigantic beard of his.

"Harry, I understand that there seems to be some sort of.. rift between you two right now." The headmaster starts seriously, "But please remember the times Severus has helped you when you were weakest, he has done a lot for you my boy, an integral part of your recovery, and I think Severus is trying to hold your best interests at heart okay?"

Harry flushes, maybe his temper was getting a bit ahead of him when he puts it like that. Still, Snape didn't have to be such a fucking prick about it. Deflating slightly, green eyes look at his lap as he concedes a little sulkily, "I guess I understand. But I hardly think Professor Snape would be happy with me imposing for so long, what with him suffering so much the last time-"

"Nonsense Potter," Pomphrey practically purred, her hard gaze staring into the potion professor's own infuriated glare. Honestly, she doesn't know what conspired between the two before they came, but she knows that it will be the potions master who'll suffer if the misunderstanding caused by his own callous remarks continues any longer. "I'm sure Severus would be simply delighted."

"Oh." Dumbledore says after a brief silence, his eyes darting to the two smirking women, the embarrassed Chosen One who was pointedly not looking at a rather sour-faced potions master. "Oh-ho." He smiles gleefully like this revelation was the most fun since setting up those obscenely redundant traps in Harry's first year, stroking his beard and raising his eyebrows bemusedly. "Well isn't this interesting?"

Severus shoots Dumbledore a warning glare but gets easily waved away by the old wizard. "Yes," The headmaster says smugly, "I think it would be in Harry's best interest to keep living under our potions master's residency. Keeping him protected from.. current circumstances and all. It's decided then. Poppy and Minerva, let us adjourn and talk elsewhere yes?"

"Of course Professor." The transfiguration teacher smiled, patting Harry's head as she stood up to leave. She can't help but feel a little jealous of Harry, being able to live so closely to his crush, even if that crush is the dour faced Severus Snape. But hey, after all that the young wizard has gone through, McGonagall figures he could use some fun. Of course, she wasn't condoning any real 'fun' between the two until Potter was of proper age but Severus was always quite the stubborn, romantically-oblivious git. That man would probably need all the convincing and seduction Harry could dole out for next three years before he even realises the child's feelings. What Severus would respond with is anyone's guess really.

"I would be delighted." The mediwitch smirks at a glowering Severus, practically vibrating with his restrained emotions. It's almost funny how the usually unflappably stoic man gets into all these knots just for one boy.

Not that she should really laugh, she wasn't lying about not seeing the appeal in Potter. There was just, something about him, it's nothing as simple as his maturity or wisdom or beauty or anything like that. It was all of it and somehow more, like her very soul wanted to reach out to the small child and never let go. All things aside, it was obvious that Harry Potter is going to grow up to do great things in his future. With Severus by his side of course. After all, the mediwitch would like to assume that the man by then would finally sack up and act on his obvious feelings for the young wizard. How Harry would respond is anyone's guess really.
It's awkward, moving back to his quarters. Refusing to give in, Harry, the stubborn fool, had insisted he walk down like a normal person and not the invalid he obviously was. Snape, because admittedly he wasn't that much better, had let him. He watches with a mask of impatience as the young boy leans against a wall, panting and exhausted as if they had run a marathon and not walked a mere hallway and a half.

It's worrying. How little he has recovered.

"Potter, just let me bring you there. No one will judge you if you can't get there. What they will judge you on is if you die by falling from the stairs or bleeding out because you leaned too hard on one of the large vases." He sighed, unfortunately the younger wizard seemed to take that as a challenge. Baring his teeth like some animal before tottering toward him like a three legged hippogriff. Snape hates how he finds even this irritating display of bullheadedness oddly endearing. "Come on, I'll cast a floating charm if you really don't want to be near me."

"I… can do this." Harry gritted out before he half stumbles and nearly crashes himself into the opposite wall.

"Right." Severus finally says, striding over to the short teen, "Clearly I can't put faith into anything you can say right now. Now we are going to go to my quarters and we are going to get there before the time for dinner generally finishes."

Harry looks up at the professor suspiciously, "What are y- woah! Hey! Put me down Severus!"

With barely a please and thank you, the potions master grabbed the young teen up and hefted him into his arms. "You, you, yo- oh my god why are your arms so muscular and toned?"

"I lift very heavy cauldrons constantly." Snape says, feeling incredibly smug at the surprised awe infused in Harry's voice. It takes a lot of willpower not to actually break into a smile as Harry tries to subtly squeeze his forearms. The wizard saviour was so entranced by this new discovery, he barely even noticed they had made it to the dungeons until Snape had to re-adjust his hold to open the door. "We're here Potter."

Harry blushed embarrassed, but the potions master noticed that the teen hadn't exactly let go of his hold onto Snape's bicep either. It gives the man a small flutter of hope that maybe Harry's attitude toward him isn't as purely platonic as he had previously assumed, though he squashes the thought quickly down. It would do no good to put hope over reality, that path only leads to heartbreak and dead bodies in Snape's experiences.

There wasn't much to unpack, Harry's room in the quarters had been untouched since he had last been save for the potions master running the occasional cleaning spell through. The most they had to do was unpack what the young wizard had already put into his trunk when he had started getting ready to leave for the holidays.

Dinner was a short rather unpleasant affair. Harry refused to even answer Snape's attempts at banal chit chat, not with the fight still looming over them, stagnating and suffocating them with the tension. It's made even worse with how fondly the older wizard had remembered their usual dinners together the year before, how they seemed to be able to discuss near anything and how Harry's unique, if a little callous, views were always refreshing and interesting. The inside jokes they had shared together. The smiles. The contentment of companionship. Snape had promised himself that he would get that back when Harry was still in a coma, and now that he was awake, the memories felt mocking and cruel.
"I'm done." Harry says mulishly, before adding a lot more politely, "Thank you for the meal." Sometimes Snape forgets how horribly Lily's sister and her awful husband had treated Harry. But every time they have a meal the young wizard reminds him all over again as he never forgets to thank him for providing him with food.

"No need to thank me every time Harry." He tells the other, trying to go for lighthearted but his words had come out more scolding than anything. The professor internally winces as the wizard saviour's expression falls a little.

"Fine." Harry replies shortly, a scowl on his usually serene face. "Excuse me then, I think would like to have an early night." 'Away from you' was heavily implied.

"I'll see you in the morning then." Snape murmurs, not that the younger male heard, the door to his room already slamming. The professor sighs, standing to go up to Harry's door and quietly casts a monitoring charm so he could listen in just in case the green-eyed wizard exhibited any signs of pain. Occasionally Harry had trouble sleeping due to phantom aches and itches in his body, and the teen didn't exactly have the fine motor skills to accurately pour out an appropriate potions dosage for himself. Also, he gets irritated and careless depending on how long he had been sleeping before his body wakes him up.

When the charm properly settled into place, Harry's irritated voice quietly filled the room.

"Shit, fucking arsehole." Harry swore angrily, "I'm not invalid, should at least have the courtesy to pretend to consider it, god, doesn't have to be so fucking rude about it. Prick."

The potions master sighed again and continued finishing his meal as he listens to the sound of his favourite student's furious mutterings about his person. It's painful, but the insults were relatively tame compared to the sort of verbal abuse he's used to. There's a brief lull in Harry's rant on how unfair Severus was where the sound of rustling fabric instead filled the room instead. In a way, listening to that was harder than listening to the insults.

"I'm not being selfish right?" Snape perked up curiously at the question, how odd. Venting his frustrations to empty spaces were one thing, but voicing actual questions like there was someone there to answer them seemed a little bit more worrying. "No, yeah, I guess you're right." Harry laughs like someone just told a joke, Snape can't help but feel a little wistful at the sound before his more sensible side kicks in.

Talking to himself never seemed like Harry's thing, then again, the potions master guesses it wasn't exactly something one would advertise. He remembers when he was younger, when he didn't have the wealth of friendship others seemed to take a hold so easily, sometimes he would catch himself talking to himself without even noticing. So maybe it wasn't too hard to believe considering the teen's isolated childhood. Snape shouldn't feel concerned.

"Wha- for god's sakes, is murder always your solution? I don't care how annoying he is right now or how easy it would be!"

Okay, maybe Snape should feel a little concerned.

After a while, the noise on Harry's end had died down as the youth began to get ready for bed. Snape, far too awake to even contemplate sleep, decided to move to his study and finalise his plans for this year's curriculum. Being the only professor in one subject most definitely had its pitfalls. There's a rustle of what he assumes are bedsheets, a soft sigh before Harry seems to slowly lull
himself to sleep.

Taking comfort in the quiet rhythm of Harry's breathing Severus continued to write his plans for this curriculum. He's not sure how long he's been at it, but his ears instinctively perked up at the soft gasp that was picked up in the spell.

The potions master looks up from his paperwork with a worried frown. Was Harry in pain? A nightmare perhaps? It would be unsurprising considering the wreck that was last year, and the year before, and just his entire childhood history. God, its hard to believe at one point he had thought the boy to be spoiled.

Harry moaned and the professor froze.

That was definitely not a pain moan. Or a nightmare moan. That was more like, like-

"Mmn, yessss." Harry sighed.

*Merlin's testicles dipped in fish batter.*

Severus felt his face burn as he heard sheets shifting and another quiet moan. "Oh, god, yes." Harry breathed, the faint but inexplicably sloppy sound of lubed skin sliding against skin. "F-fuck."

Distantly Severus wondered if that stuck up pervert Percy Weasley or that accursed notebook taught Harry about such deplorable ways to satisfy his needs. Or if Harry figured it out himself. Exploring his own body with those curious young hands… Experimenting with nothing but innocent curiosity and sly fingers…

Severus looks down at the bulge in his pants. He's not even shocked at his body's vulgar reaction to his corrupt thoughts anymore. He is so far past that now it's just moved onto horrified resignation. Like a prisoner on death sentence.

He can see it so clearly in his depraved mind too. He can't help it, not with all those times he had to help redress and change him last year, there was no way he hadn't gotten an eyeful despite his best efforts.

Harry lying back on his bed. The blanket kicked away leaving the boy exposed and aroused with his hands on his cock. Maybe his head tilted into a pillow, his mouth half pressed up against the soft object in some half heartedly polite attempt to stifle the noises. It's terrible how dreadfully erotic such an image imposes in the man's mind. Gritting his teeth, Severus picks up his wand to dispel the monitoring charm, initial worries for the boy's health notwithstanding, but then Harry whined, such a needy, demanding little sound that the professor had never heard before and now could confidently say he would kiss Sirius Black just to hear it again. He drops the wand.

Cursing, the Slytherin dropped down to his knees, crawling under his desk in order to search for his blasted wand and end this madness before he is forced to do something drastic. Like bashing his head against the corner of the desk in attempt to either knock himself unconscious or to kill himself. Or, something less physically violent but far more morally dubious. The man pointedly tries to avoid thinking about the stiffness of a certain part of his anatomy practically begging for attention right now.

It seems the wizarding saviour isn't much of a talker, small mercies really, and the charm recording him is mainly projecting breathy sighs and groans and quiet drawn out moans, interjected occasionally with those greedily slutty whines that was Severus' new favourite noise that's ever existed _ever_. But then Harry spoke again, and Severus had banged his head on the underside of the
"Sh-shirt, shit, S-Severus, please."

The professor does not even register the throbbing pain on his head, not when something further south was throbbing far more insistently. Severus was surprised he still had enough blood to rush into his ears as he can hear his own pulse thumping wildly. Clearly his own lust was boiling his mind to insanity. Because obviously he must not have heard correctly. He couldn't have.

"Please, please, deeper Sev, harder. Severus, professor, so, uhn, good." Came the almost frantic pleas through the spell, damning the older man's doubts and lighting a fire in his nerves like witches on a stake. So much for not being a talker. "M-more, I need," Harry pants and Severus has the sudden dawning realisation that not only was Harry stroking himself, he was, he was fingering himself too. Thinking of him. Of him. The Slytherin could feel his erection leaking heavily, just begging to be touched. Severus harshly pressed the palm of his hand against his prick, groaning in pained pleasure at the pressure it brings but refusing to do more. Not when he was so grossly violating Harry's privacy like the deviant he is.

'The deviant that Harry apparently wants.' A dark part of his mind whispers eagerly, dripping with lust.

As Severus struggles with this, frankly, mind-blowing revelation of Harry's apparent feelings, or at least desire, towards his person, the younger wizard seemed to be reaching closer to his.. completion. It was now just a near incoherent string of hushed words and vulgar sounds. "F-uck, yes Sev, deeper, deeper, uhhnnn, please, I want, I need, Severus, please, t-touch, ah, me, oh god, god, Severus," was rushed out and, Merlin, whatever Harry was doing it sounded so messy. The fantasy of the young wizard, legs spread wide to allow slick fingers push in and out of his sensitive virgin hole which would be so wet from the sloppy frenzy Harry had worked himself into as he called out for Severus' name, surged up into his mind.

"F-finite incantatem," He gasps as he grabs his wand, and Harry's private verbal commentary on his wanton acts is mercifully silenced off from the room. Leaving him nothing but the echoes of deliciously demanding whines ringing in his ears and a heavy aching arousal between his legs.

Severus unbuttons his pants and fishes out his cock, uncaring about how distasteful he must look right now, too overcome by his lust. A stronger man would have refrained, but then again a stronger man wouldn't have any such thoughts as he does and Severus never really thought himself much of a strong man anyway. Furiously he begins jerking off, rough and dry and painful in hopes that maybe that could ward of his lust, his climax afterwards was unsatisfactory at best but it was exactly what he deserved really.

And what's worse, now he knew Harry looked at him with at least some modicum of sexual lust. How was he going to keep his hands off that damned underaged siren now?

It's like he honestly can't sink any lower.

Harry wakes up in a far better mood than he has been since waking up from that coma. His bed is familiar and comfortable. His mind is clearer. His muscles don't feel like its been tenderised with a steamroller. And he had an absolutely fantastic wank last night.

Seriously, it's true what they say, sexual release really is the best type of stress release. And here
Harry had thought it was the high that comes from ending another person's life with your bare hands. Boy, was he wrong...ish. It still feels pretty darn good either way.

Honestly, it wasn't like he could do anything with one of those heart monitor spells Madam Pomphrey always cast on him, nor was the idea of playing with himself on a hospital bed in an empty infirmary as erotic as some people may find. So for the past few weeks he hadn't had much of an opportunity to well, 'release' his stress. Which, wouldn't have been so bad except if you add on the weeks his body has been in a coma and an extra two before that coma, Harry's body has been technically been pent up for like, eleven weeks. Now he's not an expert on living biology, but he's fairly sure that's not exactly the healthiest situation all in all.

He stretches his back, before licking his dried lips. Ugh morning breath. One of mortality's finest gifts to the world.

Going up to brush his teeth, the young wizard decides maybe a nice long shower would help improve his already great mood. Maybe he can even fit another bout of self-pleasuring before breakfast. His prick throbs a little at the idea, cementing his decision.

Taking off his pyjamas Harry gingerly stepped into the magical shower booth, which by the way, definitely one of the best things wizards have to offer what with it's sensitive heat and water pressure control and the fucking rain option, Christ, you can even choose what type of rain from spring shower to summer storm.

Immediately he picks one of his favourite setting, waning waterfall, sighing happily as a pillar of perfectly warmed water hits his head, running down his back like a river god was gently massaging the aches in his back. It's official, he's definitely going to have to steal this before he goes back.

Once properly cleaned, he sets the shower setting to spring shower, letting the torrent of water dwindle into a light spray. Harry bites his lower lip in anticipation as he leans his back on the shower wall. The young teen doesn't waste his time in grabbing his half-hard cock, stroking it to full hardness, its not like he has anyone to impress with his stunning strip tease skills anyway.

Harry softly groans as the combined feeling of his hand squeezing his length and the warm, random pressure of the water showers him with electric drops of pleasure. With his other hand, he begins to play with his balls, squeezing them gently and lightly scratching the sensitive skin with his nails.

"Shit." He hisses, accidentally banging his head against the tiles of the wall, too immersed in his fun. "Fuck, that is not the type of pain I usually like." He mutters, annoyed that a bit of his arousal was dampened by this setback.

The wizard saviour looks down at his erection, still going strong. God, teenagers really were resilient in all the strangest ways. "Fine." He tells his prick long-sufferingly, "I'll continue, but only because you probably won't leave until I finish."

Maybe more blood went south from his head than he had previously thought.

Huffing a bemused breath at his own ridiculousness, the youth decided to try going about it a different way. This time facing the wall, chest pressing against its cool smooth surface, Harry stuck out his ass and reached behind to tentatively graze between his cheeks. He teases himself for a moment before letting his finger dip further in, nail brushing the sensitive rim of his hole.

Harry has to grin at the sensation, yup, nothing can beat the responses of a true mortal body. It's honestly confounding to him why he had waited this long to attempt masturbating from behind until last night. Though to be fair, he had used a lot of transfigured lubricant to get just two fingers into his
tight little body.

The teen spreads his ass with one hand, hissing incoherently at the feeling of the shower's hot water hitting his puckered entrance, it's amazing but not even close to enough. Tentatively he uses his other hand to slowly push a finger inside of him. Just as he had suspected, his body was still a little open from last night's intense activities and with a little bit more twisting and a fair amount of warm water, Harry had managed to slip a finger in. He moans at the burn of something moving inside of him, it's painful yet satisfying yet still agonisingly unfulfilling. He wants to be stretched with something bigger, thicker, but Harry's body is still unused to even this single finger and he's not willing to rush into too much too soon lest he really injure himself.

And that is not an injury he wants to go to Madam Pomphrey for.

It's not enough but it would have to do. Harry begins to slowly pump his finger in and out of his asshole, his free hand now traveling toward his leaking prick to do something about it while he lets his mind wander. His mind ends up to a similar space as where it was last night, dark eyes, dark hair, tall build, strong arms, gorgeous hands with spider-like fingers and a frustratingly cruel sneer Harry would very well enjoy turning into a flush of surprised arousal and embarrassment.

Gods, he wants to absolutely ruin Severus, teach him a lesson or three for being so callous and unreasonably horrible to him. Maybe chain him up and use him as nothing but a plaything for Harry to do as he sees fit. Yes. He can just imagine it, the man cursing until his curses become groans and his groans become whimpers as Harry bounces on his cock, letting his hands map his exposed body like un-plotted land, tugging and twisting cruelly at the man's chest until his nipples become so wanton they'll immediately go hard at the slightest brush against his robes. Of course the potions master wouldn't be able to stop any of it, his limbs splayed humiliatingly apart by Gryffindor red ropes, he'll quickly become a writhing horny mess, especially when Harry makes sure the man won't cum once throughout the whole time. A cock ring maybe, or better yet, some sort of potion of Severus' own making he had been told to drink, a torture of his own delicious making.

Of course Harry wouldn't be that cruel. Once he's proper satisfied, he'll let the professor have his orgasm- after he apologizes and begs of course, and even then, if he's feeling particularly cruel, Harry would make him masturbate himself to completion with his own hand, making Severus' completion far less satisfying and far more humiliating than it could have been.

"Sev... fuck... yesssss." Harry breathed out harshly against the wall, his finger rubbing strongly against his prostate and his other hand around his cock tightening and twisting around the head before finally cumming. His hips thrust erratically up against the tiles, the tip of his dick brushing against the cool surface as it ejaculates on to it, dirtying the wall and his dick as well as his stomach. Sighing at himself for the mess he made, the young wizard quickly waved away the evidence of his... activity, and made his way to get dressed, feeling boneless and a little high. It was a little strange how he's suddenly thinking of Severus whenever his mind begins to wander off the less than pure path. Sure, he hadn't masturbated often until he had become mortal, but every time he had, it wasn't exactly like he had a proper image of anyone whilst doing the do. Just savouring the sensations and coupling them with brief snatches of different but equally arousing scenarios.

But these last two times were clearly different, vivid really. The first one was rather mind blowing, he had been angry and upset with the potions master and the resulting stress had somehow coerced him into trying to release itself via sexual means. He had imagined Severus walking in on him right there as he started stroking his cock, ready to apologize but instead getting an unexpected eye full. He would've been shocked at first but then he would fall over himself to try help work through Harry's horniness with a perverse eagerness. Just imagining those long tapered fingers rubbing inside
him was enough to make his dick throb again.

Harry wonders if that says something about himself.

'It says you have terrible taste.' Mr Riddle scowls sulkily in his mind, he sounds quieter, which makes sense since the soul had promptly receded to the back of his mind since last night and hadn't exactly been willing to play voyeur to Harry's shallow level thoughts since then. 'I mean, not that I'm offering or anything but I am right here.'

"Good morning professor," Harry chirped.

Professor Snape turned to him, mug of freshly brewed coffee in hand. He looked, well, the complete opposite of what Harry was feeling actually. Horrible was one word to describe. The man looked like he hadn't slept all night. Clearly he hadn't wanked recently. "Morning." The man grumbled.

The youth, in an attempt to extend the proverbial olive branch, smiles and nudges the older wizard's side playfully with his shoulder. "You, uh, feeling okay Severus?" He asks. The potions master just makes a noncommittal noise, eyes glancing at Harry's face before pointedly looking away. So it was like that then. Someone was clearly still holding grudges about their argument yesterday and it seemed Harry had to be the one to make the first move.

Granted, he wasn't exactly pleased with the idea, after all he still maintains his argument had been both valid and perfectly reasonable- but Harry has grown as a human being. Also, once you get screwed over by a magic diary, you tend to learn to let things go a little faster in retrospect.

With a sigh, Harry nudged Snape again, this time a little harder. "Look, I'm sorry about.. lashing out at you before. But, it wasn't like you didn't say some pretty shi- awful things as well. I mean, I realise you probably didn't mean it but still. I just," He looks down at his hands, twisting them a little anxiously as he tried to sort out his thoughts, ",I just want to go out and see my friends for once this holiday. Like, a normal kid."

"Harry," Snape says quietly, "You don't understand…" Harry looks up at the professor, his gazing staring into the other's.

"Then make me understand Severus." He demands, "Tell me what you're so scared about, because this fight seems unnecessary at best and I don't like being at odds with you."

The older man says nothing for a moment, his eyes searching for something in Harry's face. He must have found something he could agree on, or maybe Harry's face had nothing to do with it and it was just the place he had been staring at as he finally came to a decision in his mind, because finally Severus says, "Sirius Black has broken out of prison."

Harry stares. "…And?" He prompts because while that was something, it wasn't exactly clearing much up.

"And," Severus intones gravely, "He's after you."

Harry stares at him again. "Um, who isn't?" Because let's face it, he's one of the most famous, richest, prettiest and most powerful wizards alive in Britain. Constant medical attention needed aside, he's quite the catch to very much.

The potions master glared, "Please put aside your hormonal addled brain Harry, despite your attractiveness-"
"You think I'm attractive?"

"Despite that, it was not what I meant by 'after you'," Snape hissed, "When I said 'after you' I implied it in a brutally murderous manner than.. sexually. Besides," He adds snidely, "You should be aware he's just as old as me."

"Psh," Harry waves off, "That doesn't bother me at all, the age thing, not the murder thing obviously." Well, maybe a little of the murder thing too. Semantics.

"I.. see." Snape coughs, "Nonetheless, this is why you cannot go out with the Weasleys. It is far too dangerous when their is a crazed prisoner wanting to kill you somewhere out there, especially in your weakened condition."

The wizard saviour scoffs, "Severus, no offence but I've literally faced a literal two-faced defence professor who was being parasitised by an actual Dark Lord, a soul possessed diary as well as his pet Basilisk. An escaped murderer who, I assume has had his wand snapped or something, does not sound as bad as you make it out to be."

"Harry, no offence," The older man mocks, "But you couldn't walk down two hallways without needing my assistance. Forgive me if I don't think you're in any shape to fight Sirius Black."

"Then you come with me." Harry declared.

"..Excuse me?"

Harry grinned impishly, "If all you're worried about is my safety then all I need is a bodyguard to scare off my pursuers, yes?"

Snape looked at the youth, disapproving and annoyed at the point he was making, "You assume I have so much free time that I can just spend a whole day doing nothing but look after you?"

Harry's grin widened, "I mean, don't you do that anyway?"

The potions master's silence was a clear sign that Harry was totally winning right now. All he needed now was just one more push to sway Severus' resolve.

He moves close to the older man, clinging to the front of his favourite professor's robes much like he has seen Dudley do when he was still spoiled and really wanted something from Aunt Petunia. He looks up, wide eyed and pouting as his presses against Severus' front, "Please Severus?" He pleads softly, "We're going to the apothecary to pick up potions supplies, and I know that you need to restock for classes anyway."

Severus stared down at Harry. Just for good measure, and because he was that desperate to see proper civilisation outside these goddamn walls again, Harry even went so far as to rub his cheek on the man's chest like an affectionate cat. Dudley and even Draco had told him that sort of childish display can be endearing enough to make their mothers soften to their whims. Well, he's fairly sure its during a cuddle or something but whatever. "Please?"

The older man rumbled out a rather choked sound, probably because of the sheer cuteness Harry must be giving out. "...Fine."

Harry practically purred in his victory.

With only around a week away before term started, Diagon Alley was stuffed to the brim with
familiar faces and new students. Harry had to constantly hold onto the potions professor's arm for support against the crowd, but he couldn't help but grin at all the smells from the store and the warm wind on his face. He's not much of an outdoors-y individual, but even as an entity he needs to get out of his rather dreary realms at least once every five decades or he would go absolutely insane. There is only so long one can go staring at walls, and as impressive as Hogwarts is- it's made of fucking grey stone. Not the most exciting of walls to look at, even with talking paintings.

"Potter!" Another upper year greeted enthusiastically, alongside his family who also suddenly looked incredibly interested in meeting him. "Mum, dad, this is Harry Potter- he saved the whole school from closing down last year!"

Harry smiled weakly, this was the twelfth time something similar had happened since they've stepped in Diagon Alley. The novelty has since then worn off. "Please, it wasn't much." He says modestly. To his relief Severus stepped in, intimidating and tall and striking as usual, with a sneer on his face. "As delightful as this is, Potter and I have a rather pressing appointment to be at."

Waving goodbye to the disappointed family, Harry happily let himself be whisked away by the professor. "Thanks again Severus. You really saved my hide back there."

"Maybe if you weren't being so sweet and nice to them, I wouldn't have to swoop in." Snape snapped, irritated that another besotted student once again was trying to wriggle his way clumsily and ham-handedly into Harry's good graces. How many people must this damned little incubus seduce before he is finally satisfied?!

The younger wizard smiled as Snape pointedly manoeuvred Harry away from a group of rather excitable looking wizards with his body and murderous glare, proof that despite all the irritation the man does care for his protection. It makes his heart beat flutter a little as they press up against each other's body in an almost possessive display. Harry bit his lip a little, worrying it as he contemplated the odd feeling, sure he's fantasied about the potions master a bit recently, but this didn't exactly feel like the usual bout of lust he feels. It was definitely something more self-conscious, bashful even, maybe it's because of how close Harry's gotten to the man? So much so that he's actually hesitant to even think about the idea of them together in reality?

Maybe he should talk to Professor McGonagall about this. She seems like the sort of woman who'll be totally unbiased and all no nonsense about this sort of thing.

"Harry! HARRY!" The Boy Who Lived turned at the familiar voice, previous thoughts discarded as he grinned and waved at one bushy haired witch being followed by a small stampede of freckled redheads behind her.

"Oh goody, it's the Gryffindor parade." Snape says sarcastically. "How I have missed this."

"Everyone!" Harry cheers, waving vigorously as they finally joined the pair.

"Oh goody, it's Professor Snape." Fred smiles cheekily. George, with an identical grin adds, "How we have missed you sir."

The older man's expression doesn't change one iota but somehow Harry just knows how annoyed he is that somehow the Weasley twins of all people had managed to mirror his own words right back at him without being in proper hearing distance. Was it coincidence? He'll never know.

"Mate, I almost didn't think we would get to see you till the Feast." Ron giddily said.

"Well you have to thank Professor Snape for finally letting me out of my cage." Harry joked, gently
brushing up against the man.

Hermione, ever the girl with the bravery of a Gryffindor and the respect for professors of a Ravenclaw, steps up and smiles at the adult wizard, if a little nervously. "Thank you sir." She says politely, and is followed with a more mumbled chorus of half-hearted gratitude by some much less enthusiastic Weasleys.

"The condition for Harry's 'freedom' was for me to personally accompany him around." Snape informs them aloofly, "Your thanks, while kind, is unnecessary and unneeded."

There's an awkward pause. Someone in the pool of redheads coughed, "..Wanker."

"SO, Ron!" Harry hastily intervened before Gryffindor House started the year in the negative, "I see you all have some shopping done! Whatcha got there?"

The distraction, thankfully worked.

"Look at this," said Ron proudly as he pulled out a shiny new wand. "Fourteen inches, willow, one unicorn tail-hair. We weren't sure what you were doing this year so we just bought most of our extra subject stuff first if that's cool with you," He pointed to a large bag under his chair. "Good thing we did too, those Monster books? The assistant nearly cried when we said we wanted two."

"Monster books?" Harry asked curiously. "What's wrong with them?"

Snape, listening to the whole conversation while glaring at the twins- the most likely of the group to insult him to his face- swivelled his head down like some sort of owl, "Don't worry about it Potter, Hagrid had insisted on getting your copy the moment he found out you're interested in Magical Creature Care."

"You're going to be in Care of Magical Creatures." Ron says flatly. "Merlin."

"Yeah, what of it Ron?" Harry asks, offended by his dubious look.

The redhead looks torn between saying what he's thinking and staying silent since a a bunch of people, including one of his least favourite professors, were in eavesdropping distance. "Never mind. Just, for the love of Merlin, don't kiss a hippogriff."

"Wha- you mean for a grade?"

"A gra- no, Harry for anything!" Ron hissed, "I don't care if you suddenly gain magical life giving kiss powers and it was the last of its' species, you kiss it away from me okay?"

"Well that seems a little cruel-"

"AWAY FROM ME."

Hermione rolled her eyes as her friends begin to bicker all over again. "Honestly, boys." She sighed as she bundled up her bags and began lifting them up with a soft grunt.

"Hey," Harry says slowly, attention quickly dwindling from his friends rant on kissing a minotaur, "Hermione, what's with all those books?" She seemed to be carrying way more than the others combined.

"Well, I'm taking more new subjects than you, aren't I," Hermione tells him.

"Are you taking all of them?!" The Boy Who Lived asks incredulously. Hermione grinned proudly.
"Yup! These are all my books for Arithmancy, Care of Magical Creatures, Divination, the Study of Ancient Runes, Muggle Studies."

"Aren't you a muggle-born?" Harry asks, mystified about why she would take so much work onto herself. Especially considering those end of term tests and exams, that was just asking for pain. "What's the point of taking that?"

"Mate, that is totally what I said!"

"I'm taking it because I'll be studying them from a wizard's point of view," Hermione tells him earnestly, "Wouldn't it be fascinating?"

"I… guess?" Harry's fairly sure he would be fascinated, but more in a distanced horrified way, like watching a horror movie, the slasher kind with a bunch of stupid people. The whole thing would be just one awful train wreck that he wouldn't be able to look away from. "But how will you make time for it all? I'm fairly sure that some of those classes overlap with others."

Hermione smiles a little secretly at that. Harry frowns and looks up to Severus who was also frowning contemplatively at the witch. But since the professor didn't voice any of his opinions to this, Harry decides to let the subject be for now.

"Well, do you need some help?" Harry asks.

"Oh, no, I shan't impose on you Harry, not when you're still recovering." Hermione gasps, "Don't worry, they're only a tad heavy. I'll be fine."

"No, no," Harry brushes her concerns off easily, "Please, you can't just expect me to watch you carry what looks like five times what even Percy is carrying."

"Well," Hermione says doubtfully, "I mean, if you insist."

"Of course I do." The bushy haired girl hands over two bags, Harry looks up at the potions master expectedly. "Professor, if you would?" He gestures to the bags.

The Slytherin raised an eyebrow, "You are not serious." He says flatly.

"Of course I am," The Boy Who Lived replied loftily as the Gryffindors broke into nervous laughter at the scene, "C'mon professor, we can't just leave a girl hanging like this."

Snape glares at the boy but gives in with a put upon sigh and a hidden crooked smile. "You're gall really is astounding Mr Potter." He says as he picks up the bags of, assumably, books from an increasingly nervous looking Hermione.

"Thank you sir," Harry jokes.

"Don't worry professor." Percy assured, though he looked distinctly uncomfortable with the man for some reason, even compared to his more mischievous brothers, "Our parents are at the ice cream parlour, we'll just drop our bags there before we continue the day."

The potions master sneered at the Head Boy but nodded anyway. "A decent idea Mr Weasley, then again, you wouldn't be much of a Head Boy if you couldn't even do that much."

Percy bristled but said nothing despite how desperately he must want to. Surprisingly, it was the twins who calmed their brother down, whispering things that made the older teen reluctantly smile. It was nice considering how ostracised Percy had been before, by the twins especially so. Still, it hardly
made up for the rather unnecessary backhanded compliment Severus had hit him with, Harry looked at the man disappointedly.

"What?" The Professor harshly asks him, Harry turns away unwilling to get into another argument again so soon.

"Nothing," the wizard savior says sulkily as they walk over to some eagerly waving Weasley parents plus their second oldest child. Ignoring the older man's gaze he quickly trots up to greet Mr and Mrs Weasley as well as smile shyly at Charlie.

"Hi Charlie, I thought you had to leave for-?"

Charlie chuckled, god, puberty is clearly more than kind to the Weasleys. No wonder they have so many children. "Romania. I'm currently helping out in a dragon reserve."

Fuck that was hot. Harry was always a fan of the dragon in those white knight saves damsel stories. The only thing better, in his opinion, than a dragon, was a dragon tamer- because then he gets to tame the tamer, if you know what he means.

Harry gulped, "Wow, dragons you say? That must be…" God, so fucking hot, take me now, "… awesome."

'Dragons are overrated,' Mr Riddle complains his head, 'If you remember, I had a bloody giant basilisk.'

"I'm not going to lie Harry," Charlie leaned down a little and winked, "It totally is."

"O-KAY." Ron yelled, suddenly in the middle of the two. In the background Molly Weasley slumps over her large sundae with visible disappointment at her youngest son's apparent cockblocking tendencies. "Well as fun as this is, me, Mione and Harry should go get our stuff before everything gets sold out. We'll meet you back here in a bit, okay? Okay."

Harry was about to protest when the potions master slid in smoothly, "The youngest Weasley boy is correct," He agrees easily, like he hadn't just spent the last two years berating said Weasley's mental facilities. Ron was actually gaping like a fish at his words, "It would be a shame if Potter had gone so out of his way to come here, only for his one errand to be uncompleted merely because he had been too busy… chatting."

"Uh, yeah," Ron says awkwardly, "What Professor Snape said I guess." Clearly the young teen was uncomfortable with the idea of his most hated professor actually agreeing with him for once.

"Sounds like a plan, sir" Hermione agrees easily. "Come on boys, let's get a move on then!"

It takes a bit to get their core texts and supplies. Mainly because Flourish and Botts was practically filled to the brim with children and their exhausted parents. Not going to lie, being Harry Potter helped a lot, also Snape had this amazing ability to scare off everyone in a one metre radius. He was like a goth Moses, and the people were the terrified Red Sea. Together with Harry's fame and Snape's strikingly intimidating appearance, they all managed to get their things relatively quickly.

"I've still got ten Galleons," Hermione tells them, checking her purse. "It's my birthday in September, Mum and Dad must have given me some extra money to get myself an early present."

"Let me guess, you're going to get yourself a nice book? Ron asks oh so innocently.

Harry moaned. "Please don't," he begs, "We just got out of that store."
"No, I don't think so," Hermione says slowly, "In fact, I think I want a pet. A nice owl like Harry's Hedwig. Or you're Errol."

"He ain't my Errol." Ron groused, "Errol's the family's owl. All I've got is Scabbers." He pulled Scabbers out of his pocket, Harry instinctively takes a step back. Scabbers loved Harry, but Harry wasn't as fond of the rodent, well, more the rodent's almost constantly unhygienic state than anything. But seriously, how long has that little guy been in there? "I want to get him checked over," The freckled teen adds, stroking the rat's head with a finger. "I don't think Egypt agreed with him."

Scabbers was looking thinner than usual, and there was a definite droop to his whiskers.

"Well, there's a magical creature shop just over there," Hermione suggests. "You could see if they've got anything for Scabbers, and I can see the owls."

"Sounds good." Harry agrees. "I should probably get some owl treats for Hedwig too." He has been ignoring her a bit lately, and he does feel rather terrible about that. "Maybe a toy for her to play with as well."

The Magical Menagerie didn't have much room inside, what with every inch of wall practically hidden by cages and cages of animals. It was smelly and noisy. Something which Harry sort of expected considering all these animals in one place but, everyone here was fucking magic. Couldn't they have, oh he doesn't know, a magical incense that takes away the edge off that stench?

"I'll.. be waiting for you outside." Snape suddenly declares the moment he steps in, subtly covering his nose.

"Coward." Harry mutters, the man just smirks.

"They aren't my friends Harry. Now have fun. Don't brain yourself on one of those cages."

Harry silently hopes the man trips on his way out. He doesn't. The prick. The three all look around, and, upon realising that the only help was a witch already busy talking to someone behind the counter, they all went around to examine the cages. Harry of course, had attracted every animals' attention, emphasis on attracted. The birds all began singing as he looked over, there combined songs clashing into a rather headache inducing cacophony, toads started croaking, there was a rabbit in one of the bottom cages that changed it's fur into a heart pattern. That last one was pretty cool.

"Ooh, I like this one." Harry says, peering in to see a jewel encrusted tortoise preening under his attention.

"It's a bit... ostentatious." Hermione pointed out, "Also it says here that it eats gold Harry."

"But look how she shimmers! I'm rich, I can probably afford her."

"Mate, no." Ron laughs, "Even Malfoy wouldn't even buy something as gaudy as her. Now come with me, I think that witch over there is finally free."

"I'll just keep looking for my pet." The bushy haired witch tells them, "Probably do it better without trying to peel Harry off that tortoise."

"I would've named her Gemma. Get it? Gem-a?"

Ron and Hermione sighed.

"Excuse me, I have a problem with my pet rat," Ron tells the witch on the other side of the counter
they had approached. "He's been a bit off-colour since I brought him back from my holiday in Egypt."

"Bang him on the counter," the witch tells him as she pulls out a pair of heavy black glasses and adjusts it onto her nose. Harry quietly snickered next to Ron.

"Didn't think Scabbers was your type Ron." Harry whispers earning him a shove from the redhead.

"Oh come off it mate, don't be so disgusting." The freckled boy smirks, "Besides, out of the two of us, you're the one most likely to have sex with a rat."

"You leave a guy in the Forbidden forest at night to make out with a centaur one time..."

"Umm.." The witch says uncomfortably. "The rat?"

"Oh, right, yeah." Ron hands over Scabbers.

Ron lifted Scabbers out of his inside pocket and placed him next to the cage of some other rats, who stopped their assortment of, admittedly, very impressive skipping tricks in favor of scuffling to the wire for a better look at the rat that came from Death's entourage. From the angry chittering noises, it doesn't seem like they were much impressed.

Not that Harry could really blame them. Like nearly everything Ron owned, Scabbers the rat was secondhand and it definitely showed. It was almost embarrassing comparing him to those glossy rats in the next cage.

"Hm," said the witch, picking up Scabbers. "How old is this rat?"

"Dunno," muttered Ron. "Quite old. He used to belong to my brother."

"What powers does he have then?" said the witch, examining Scabbers closely.

"Erm..." Ron stalled, "...the ability to sleep for three days straight?"

"Dude, I would love that power." Harry whispered, Ron fist bumped him in agreement.

Meanwhile, the witch's eyes moved from Scabbers's tattered left ear to his front paw, which had a toe missing, and tutted. Loudly. "Poor old thing, been through quite a wringer it has."

"He was like that when Percy gave him to me," said Ron defensively. Harry supportively nodded by his side.

"An ordinary common or garden rat like this can't be expected to live longer than three years or so," said the witch. "Now, if you were looking for something a bit more hard-wearing, you might like one of these."

She gestured toward the black rats, as if waiting for that cue, the creatures once again started skipping and doing cute little tricks. Harry 'ooh'ed a little at one rather amazing rodent who was doing backflips like a pro.

"Bunch of show-offs." Ron muttered.

"Aw come on, that back flip was impressive."

"Harry whose side are the you on here?"
"The one with the back flipping rat Ron, look, oh my god is that a matchstick?!"

"Well, if you don't want a replacement, you can try this rat tonic," suggested the witch, reaching under the counter and bringing out a small red bottle.

"Ron! He's lit the matchstick, he's going to do a fire dance, pick this one!"

Ron glared at his so-called friend before turning to the witch offering the bottle.

"Okay," he says, "How much is- SONOFA"

Ron screamed as something huge, orange and furry came soaring down on top of him with inescapability of a tidal wave. It landed on the Weasley's head, using it to propel itself at Scabbers.

"NO, CROOKSHANKS, NO!" cried the witch working there. Scabbers shot from between her hands like a bar of soap, landed splay-legged on the floor, before making a beeline toward the door. Harry watches, frankly amazed that the little guy was even capable of such speed. That fat rat hadn't even moved that fast when Harry tried to bait it with a piece of chicken parmigiana- and he's once got a shark to jump out of the water just from showing him a half chewed leaf of lettuce.

"Scabbers!" Ron shouted, racing out of the shop after him; Harry, because he is a supportive good friend and also this was kind of hilarious, followed if a little slower. Snape, who had been waiting outside, startled when the pet emporium doors burst open with Ron and Harry running out of it.

"Merlin give me strength," he mutters darkly as he too is forced to chase after the group. "That boy can't be left alone for ten minutes. Ten minutes."

It took them all almost twenty minutes to catch Scabbers, who, in the end had taken refuge under rubbish bin outside a Quidditch Supplies shop. Ron stuffed the trembling rat back into his pocket whilst everyone panted and groaned in the background. Harry was leaning against a very dirty wall and he didn't even care. God, at least he had the coma thing as an excuse for his lacking physical prowess, but seriously, they all needed to work out more.

"Can," Snape grunted unhappily, "Can someone please enlighten me to why we had to run so long to get this mangy rodent?"

"I-It's, ugh my sides, it's Ron's rat."

"Your point?"

Harry groaned tiredly, "The point is, is, uh, the point, shit, the point is I need a long bubble bath after this and Ron's paying for my goddamn bubble soap."

The potions professor chuckled, "Now that's more like it."

"But seriously, Ron, you have any idea what jumped you?" Harry asks his friend.

The Weasley shrugged, "Could've been a small tiger or a really big raccoon. Either way, I hope they muzzled that beast by the time we get back to see what owl Hermione's picked."

They made their way back up the crowded street to the Magical Menagerie. Harry felt a little bad about slowing them down, both physically and with the fact that every second wizard wanted to stop and talk to him. By the end of it, even Ron was giving him extremely pitying looks.

"Mate, not gonna lie, I get a little jealous about that fame of yours but it's obvious that it has its
"downsides huh?"

"Ugh, tell me about it." Harry sighed as he wiped his now wet hand onto his robes. Honestly, what was the last wizard doing before he shook the teen's hand? Swishing it in a toilet bowl?

"Here," Professor Snape passed him a handkerchief, a surprisingly plain looking thing with a simple green border as decoration, Harry took it gratefully, "It's charmed to disinfect any.. dirt."

"Cheers professor." Harry thanked.

Hermione was already waiting outside for them, but she wasn't carrying an owl. Her arms were clamped tightly around a frankly ginormous ginger cat.

"You bought that bloody monster?" said Ron, his mouth hanging open, clearly he recognised his attacker.

"He's gorgeous, isn't he?" Hermione glowed. Harry forced what he hoped was his most genuine smile that he could muster at the moment. It's not like he could talk with his own preferences or anything but even he has to say, Hermione clearly doesn't have the best aesthetic tastes in the world. Sure the cat's fur was fluffy but it's face looked like it had run into a wall. Repeatedly.

Though at the very least, now that the cat couldn't see Ron's rat anymore, the cat didn't look too much like a feral beast. Instead, it was purring happily in the girl's arms and looking in awe at Harry. Harry awkwardly waved at it, causing it to purr harder.

"Hermione, that thing nearly scalped me!" claimed a very justifiably unhappy Ron.

"He didn't mean to," The witch defended before turning down to the cat and saying in one of those 'baby' voices, "did you, Crookshanks? No, no you didn't."

"And what about Scabbers?" said Ron, pointing at the lump in his chest pocket. "He needs rest and relaxation! How's he going to get it with that, that awful thing around?"

"That reminds me, you forgot your rat tonic," Hermione chided, rummaging one-handedly through one of her bags before finding and slapping the small red bottle into Ron's hand. "I got some owl treats for Hedwig too, Harry." She adds as she hands a bag to Harry.

"Cheers Mione."

"Also, do stop worrying Ron, that's my job here." She tried to joke but it fell a little flat at Ron's anger.

Harry, sensing an impending fight, decided to quickly step in, "Hey, Crookshanks will probably be kept in the girl's dormitory and Scabbers is already always sleeping in yours, Ron. So there's no problem right?" The pair hesitated but finally both nodded. "Right then, let's go meet up with the others and get some ice cream eh?" Harry suggests, "You would not believe how tiring I found it just walking around here."

Ron grinned, bad mood instantly evaporated, honestly its just so easy to read him sometimes, "Mate, I like how you think."

Hermione nodded sympathetically, "Of course Harry! You must be exhausted, I read some stuff about rehabilitation and people can take up to and over a year to fully restore their movements!" The cat meows and she begins patting the large feline and cooing over him enthusiastically. "Poor Crookshanks, you know that witch said he'd been in there for ages. No one wanted him. Can you
"Even imagine?"

"Wonder why," Ron asked sarcastically.

"Oh my god, finally," Harry whined, his legs buckling a bit as they finally trudged their way to Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlor. The potions master was immediately by his side, steadying him.

"I did tell you not to push yourself." He tells the tired looking teen disapprovingly, "If you can't move tomorrow morning because of overexertion, I refuse to help aid you in getting out of Madam Pomphrey's daily rehabilitation exercises."

"Ugh, that's harsh sir." The green eyed wizard groaned between pants. "Ron, help me."

The Weasley raised his hands, "Uh-uh mate. I ain't fighting against Madam Pomphrey, rather try my hand at facing Hermione's ugly cat again but covered in barbecue sauce."

"Hey!" Hermione shouts.

Harry shot him a betrayed look, "I ran for you Ron. I ran for you."

"And I shall never forget your bravery. Now why don't I help you put your bags in the booth eh?"

"I suppose that's sufficient." Harry huffed before turning to Professor Snape. "So I guess we should go pick out our ice creams then?"

Snape straightened, "We shall do no such thing, I will be the one going up to order your frozen dessert for I fear that you will not make it that far."

"It's like, twenty-five feet!" Harry protested, "I can totally," he takes one step forward and nearly falls onto his face if Snape hadn't caught him mid-fall. "...May I please have a strawberry vanilla ice cream in a cone Professor?" Snape snorts.

"You may." The potions master says smugly as he helps Harry up in a more stable position. Harry has to once again wonder at the musculature of the man's arms. He's never seen Severus bare-chested or shirtless before and now more than ever he finds it such a crying shame.

With the help of his friends, Harry managed to flop himself onto one of the seats as the older wizards of their group went to the front to order everyone's ice cream. "Hey," Ron suddenly said, "I almost forgot," he shuffled through his shopping bags before finally taking out a rolled up piece of newspaper and handing it to Harry. "Dad got it for me to show you. Turns out, he's like this horrible Death Eater bloke who helped off your parents or whatever."

"Wow Ron." Hermione deadpanned, "You are so subtle and sensitive, thank you for bringing up the death of Harry's parents in those exact words."

Ron flushed, chagrined, "Oops, uh, sorry mate?"

Harry shrugged, "I've heard worse, so he's related to my parents' death huh?"

"I think he was one of their friends or something."

Hermione gasped, "How awful."

Harry just begins reading the page.
Sirius Black, possibly the most infamous prisoner ever to be held in Azkaban fortress, is still eluding capture, the Ministry of Magic confirmed today.

"We are doing all we can to recapture Black," said the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, this morning, "and we beg the magical community to remain calm."

Fudge has been criticized by some members of the International Federation of Warlocks for informing the Muggle Prime Minister of the crisis.

"Well, really, I had to, don't you know," said an irritable Fudge. "Black is mad. He's a danger to anyone who crosses him, magic or Muggle. I have the Prime Minister's assurance that he will not breathe a word of Black's true identity to anyone. And let's face it - who'd believe him if he did?"

While Muggles have been told that Black is carrying a gun (a kind of metal wand that Muggles use to kill each other), the magical community lives in fear of a massacre like that of twelve years ago, when Black murdered thirteen people with a single curse.

"Wow, so this year is already looking great." The Boy Who Lived mutters, but then he sees the photograph of this serial killing madman and whistles lowly.

"Hellooo daddy."

"What." Ron says. Hermione too, does not seem impressed by the reaction either.

"What?" Harry defends.

"Merlin's hairy balls on a plate," His redheaded friend mumbles, before turning to Harry and swiftly smacking the green eyed boy's head, repeatedly for emphasis, "Get. your. head. out. of. the. gutter! You cannot keep doing this!" Ron kept smacking his head just to drive the point home.

"Ouch! I was just- seriously stop- just- Jesus, ow- joking- dammit- maybe- fuck-STOP."

"It's like you can't be physically attracted to anyone normal." Ron despairs, "I have like, a million brothers and you choose the worst one out of them all-"

"Hey," Percy says as he conveniently passes by with two ice cream cones in his hand, he passes one to Hermione who thanks him politely. Ron ignores him. "-and then you make out with a centaur, twice, which by the way, pretty sure counts as beastiality, yes it does, shut up Harry. Then, then, there's also apparently your little crush on Mr fucking Malfoy,

"I just like his hair." Harry protests.

"Oh I'm sorry, you have a crush on Malfoy senior's hair. That's waaaaaaaay better." Ron sarcastically replies. "And let's not get me started on Snape..."

"Okay that's not fair, Snape is clearly the hottest of the professors."

"Who says you have to be attracted to any of the professors in the first place?!" Ron burst out, "They're all at least four times our age!" Blue eyes look deeply into green, "Harry, mate, is- is this like a messed up childhood thing? Because I know you went through some seriously tough shit at the Dursley's but you know that you can, uh, you can always find love in other places right?"

Harry stared at Ron, not really comprehending. "…What the fuck Ron." He says slowly. Judgingly.
Ron threw his hands up, exasperated and embarrassed, "I don't know! I overheard mum talking some nonsense like that a few nights back with dad. Something bout you desperate to be loved and in need of human touch."

"I think she meant that in the most platonic, friend, family way." Harry says slowly, then paused thoughtfully. "Or at least, I hope she did."

Thinking about it now, that woman had been weirdly eager when she heard about him and Percy getting together during the holidays. And getting Charlie to accompany them. And then insisting on Percy again. If this is all some weird form of thanks for saving Ginny, that is pretty messed up.

"The point is," Ron says wearily as he pokes his friend in the chest, "I've looked past a lot of disgusting things you've said- and I mean, a lot- but that man betrayed your parents and killed like twenty people mate."

Harry put his hands up in surrender, "Okay, okay, Jesus Ron. It wasn't like I was planning to go ask him out the moment I saw him or anything."

The Weasley raised an eyebrow.

"I wasn't!"

"Sure mate," Ron says in a manner that clearly held dubious surety at best, "and you're also not going to call him handsome or sweet cheeks either?"

"One, I have never called anyone sweet cheeks arsehole," Harry glares, "And two, asking a murderer out for butterbeers and calling them a stud muffin are two very different things."

"You couldn't be anymore disgusting," Ron wrinkles his nose, "Stud muffin? What the hell Harry."

"It's a muggle thing." The Boy Who Lived defended.

"Really." And when did Ron get so sarcastic? This was like, Draco levels of sarcasm. Oh god, his two judgmental friends were melding into one super judgmental super friend, this cannot stand.

"You sound eerily like Draco right now." Harry points out seriously, immediately distracting his friend's next scathing remark on Harry's apparent promiscuity to look at him with horror.

"Mate, don't you ever say that. Ever." He grabs Harry's face and mushes it close we to his as he whispers, "Ever."

"This ice cream is really good." Hermione says in the background.

Harry sat down, feeling goose bumps rising up his arms despite the glow of the fire. It's nine o'clock and he's tired from today's day out shopping. He wanted to have a nice long shower, some dinner, and then finally go to sleep. Having midnight snacks with the Minister of Magic wasn't exactly what he had planned.

Fudge took off his pinstriped cloak and tossed it aside, then hitched up the trousers of his bottle-green suit and sat down opposite Harry. Snape glowered in the corner, clearly also displeased at having his night ruined by the unexpected guest, his scowl deepened further as the stout man waved him a way like some servant. Once finally alone, the Minister turned to face Harry.

"I am-"
Harry smiled and extended his hand, despite the inconvenience, it would't do for him to antagonise a man who currently has the most powerful standing in the community. "Cornelius Fudge. The Minister of Magic." He finishes for him, "Don't worry sir, how could I forget when you helped me so much during, well, before."

Looking both surprised and pleased at being so quickly recognised and thanked, the Minister of Magic shook the young wizard's hand enthusiastically. "Quite, quite, awful business really. It's a shame how I can't speed the process of your adoption as fast as I could that."

Harry laughed, he can relate to that at least, "Yes well, I'm sure that there is a reason for the delay."

The overweight man grimaced, "It's terrible really. We're all contractually obligated to read every single submission that comes from any wizard or witch who wants to adopt the Boy Who Lived."

Harry laughed again, homely it doesn't sound as vindictive as he feels, it's not every day someone is suffering through loads of paperwork just for his sake after all, and the novelty of it was entertaining. "Well I'm glad I'm not the one going through that nonsense, all I had to do was fight a bloody Basilisk!"

Fudge laughed nervously, "That's, uh, that's true then Potter?"

The young wizard shrugged, "Please, call me Harry, and of course that's true. Ridiculous I admit but it wasn't like I could've benefit in lying with something as outrageous as that."

"That's true indeed," The Minister gulped, he tugged at the collar of his robe, "A-and what about those rumours in first year?"

Harry quirked a curious brow. "Excuse me?"

"You know," the man leaned in, wetting his lips nervously, "with He Who Shall Not Be Named?"

Harry looked blankly at the older wizard. There's a soft poking sensation in his mind before Mr Riddle sighs irritatedly, 'He obviously means me you goddamn fucking'.

'Language.' Harry mentally chided. And ugh, he seriously forgot about the He Who Must Not Be Named bullshit, like, really, who makes up a fucking fancy ass French admittedly clever name and then bans everyone from even saying it. Narcissists with self esteem issues probably.

'FUCKIN'.

"Oooh," Harry clapped his hands as if he had just remembered, "Yeah, that's all pretty much true."

"But how can that be possible?!" The man spluttered, "Are you sure it was really him and not some farce masquerading as him? A former servant of the Dark Lord perhaps?"

The wizard savior looked at the overweight man, it seemed Fudge was going to insist on denial, denial and more denial when it comes to this topic, no matter what Harry was going to say. Was there no proper male role models in this world? Maybe the men over here should, as a whole, learn to grow a pair. Of breasts. Because the ladies here really have their shit together, Harry must say.

"Maybe your right Minister Fudge." He conceded. Fudge looked relieved, then smug.

"O-of course I'm right Harry, I am the Minister for a reason after all."

"It's just," Harry pretended to hesitate, looking down to his shoulder like he was really thinking hard
over something. "It's just, maybe you should be careful sir. I mean, that may not be He Who's Not Named back then but it proves that at least two of his followers had managed to infiltrate Hogwarts."

He bites his lip and looks up at the man through his lashes, "I'm worried sir, something big is coming and I, if you don't mind my opinion, think you should be prepared for the worst."

"Hmmm..." The Minister looks thoughtful, his cheeks flushing a little pink at the look the younger wizard had given him, internally Harry smiled. He may not be the best at the finer points of socialising, but he's watched enough universes in shitty situations and met enough politicians to know that the best way to go about things right now is to flatter him, point out the logic of his argument and then make it seem like it was all their idea. "I haven't heard much chatter about that sort of thing but I suppose that attack on Hogwarts does suggest something might be happening in the shadows."

"Sir, if I may," Harry suggests quietly, submissive but earnest. "Maybe you should focus more on your defence force. Hire a few more police wizards, train them. Maybe put more funding in Hogwarts."

"I don't think... I mean..." Since the word 'funding' came out of his mouth, the older wizard's interest in his ideas went from a hundred to the number of times Hufflepuff has won the House Cup in the last century.

'Nice one.' Mr Riddle chuckles.

Harry refills Fudge's tea and gives him a bashful smile, "I know, I sound right silly don't I? My aunt and uncle used to call me a stupid little liar all the time you know, I guess if even you think so-

"No!" The politician looked appalled at the implications, for Harry and what would happen if word spread about such an awful comparison. "Harry, your muggle guardians were monsters to say the least." He shuddered, remembering the photos the aurors investigating that horrid place had taken as evidence. "Sure I personally think that the lengths you're suggesting are a bit.. financially stressful but I do believe you're on to something."

The teen beams brightly, "Really sir? You know, if you just make a statement about your hope to protect us all, especially since You Know Who's reign of terror, I'm sure everyone will definitely feel much safer knowing you're being so proactive about it all."

"Yes..." Minister Fudge rubbed his chin musingly, "I guess people would like to see me take a more active role in security, especially what with..." He flickers at Harry. "Well. I think we can arrange some extra protections."

The wizard saviour, triumphant at his successful manipulation and hopefully ensuring a much less stabby future for himself, offered the other man some sugar cubes. Fudge took two. Absentmindedly, Harry wondered how come wizards have managed to summon slugs out of someone's mouth and yet somehow they haven't figured out how to make a healthy artificial sweetener alternative. Like, priorities.

"I can even donate some money." Harry says idly, "For the funding of the auror department only though. It's my paranoia and I do feel a little responsible if you become too stretched thin because of me."

Fudge's eyes lit up at the idea, "Oh Harry what a generous little boy you are!" He practically grovelled, "Yes, how could I refuse such an offer?"

"The Potter fortunes may be immense but they aren't infinite sir, if I choose to put money into the
department, if I choose to associate my name with the Ministry, I insist that it be used well and those benefiting to be of a certain high standard." Harry tells him seriously, partly because he's not sure how much the man may plunder for his own benefit and also because he's not been the biggest fan on relying on throwing some strangers' money at a problem and hoping it would go away. But getting favour with the government would be extremely beneficial, at the very least it wouldn't exactly hurt him to not make an enemy of them.

Grabbing the older wizard's hand with his own, Harry looks pleadingly at the Minister, "Please sir, promise me you'll make sure the money I give will serve the people well. I... don't trust a lot of adults these days, but I want to put my trust in you sir."

"O-of course." Fudge stutters a little, he's clearly unsure what to do with him. But then his expression clears a little and suddenly the man straightens confidently, sometimes there's nothing like the feeling of someone in need relying on you to make you feel powerful. He clasps Harry's hands with both of his and says more firmly, "Of course Harry, I won't let you down."

Harry grins, "I know you won't sir. I just know you won't." He glances at the tea set on the nearby table, "Now maybe we should finish our tea sir? I think it's getting cold."

The man laughs, but lets go of the other's hands anyway, "You sure get distracted easily don't you?"

"It's really good tea." Harry says defensively, picking up his cup and sipping from it. It wasn't that great, the stuff from Filch's was way better but Fudge's hands were sweaty. "Actually, I've never asked by why did you pop in anyway? I hardly think you came here to complain about my adoption mess sir."

"Quite right Harry, I didn't." Fudge amiably agrees with a chuckle, the man smiled at Harry over the rim of his teacup, rather like an uncle surveying a favourite nephew. "Now I'm sure by now you've heard about, well,"

"Sirius Black?" Harry queried, Fudge spluttered into his coffee but nodded anyway. Harry shrugged, disinterested, "Only that he's broken out and looking for my blood. But honestly sir, I don't see what the big deal is."

"Don't see the big deal?!" Fudge sent Harry a pitying look, "Harry you are the savior of the Wizarding world! A symbol of hope to us all- we can't exactly have that hope dying out before he can even lose his virginity!"

"Uh, okay..." the Wizarding savior says, a little creeped out by the choice of phrasing, "So you're going to post some aurors around then?"

Fudge looks thoughtful. "I guess I could also add some aurors around Hogwarts... Better safe than sorry after all." Harry narrows his eyes suspiciously.

"Wait. What did you mean by also-"

"Oh my, this late already?" The Minister downs his tea and stands up. "Awfully sorry Harry, it's been rather lovely meeting with you again but I have a meeting I simply must be present in."

Ruffling Harry's head like he was somehow close enough to the teen to actually do that, the Minister waved and left. Harry scowled. That could not have been a coincidence.

Whatever else is guarding Harry better not fuck up his year again that's for sure.
Death's dementors

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

The one where Death meets some runaway dementors, causes a food fight and does something a little unplanned

So, those guards stationed in Hogwarts?

Dementors. Fudge stationed Dementors. It was stupid of him, foolish, idiotic-

"Awww," Harry cooed happily as the ghoulish creatures all surrounded him with equal happiness while a bunch of professors and a handful of aurors huddled a safe distance away from the, the, they weren't even sure how to properly describe it really. Their reactions were disbelieving at best, as Harry Potter, the wizard saviour and golden child of Britain, had run up to these fiendish monsters and hugged them like they were his long lost children. "My lost little lambs." Harry cooed, "So this is where you bunch have gone off too huh? I'm surprised you're working for a bunch of wizards."

Actually, what he was more surprised with was his initial reaction to his dementors. Harry had actually had a flash of memory the moment he got near the creatures scenes of Voldemort killing Lily Potter, and, for some even odder reason a dead rabbit. He had near frozen in shock at the unexpected recollection of something he shouldn't have before he quickly pushed it away. It's intriguing, the human brain. Even with the soul gone that doesn't necessarily mean the memories stored in that particular organ would leave too. There's always a science to the magic of it all.

Though that really doesn't explain the bunny. Maybe he had a pet? Oh my god, did Voldemort kill his pet rabbit just because he could? What a fucking dick.

Harry pauses, waiting. Huh. Usually Mr Riddle would come out and object to an insult like that.

A dementor nudges at his hand, like a puppy hoping for a cuddle and effectively distracting him from his musings. Nonetheless, he indulges his creatures, submerging into the nostalgia of some of his first creations he'd made with the help of Life, Love, Magic and a little bit of Space. Granted, they weren't exactly the angels Death had originally envisioned when they tried creating them, not as intelligent as hoped, as good looking as he wished, a little more soul sucking than originally intended but he was fond of these silent nightmares nonetheless.

"Well aren't you all cute and domesticated? The dementors in my realms could learn a few things from you guys." Harry commented as one dementor, who had been patiently waiting for his turn immediately took the place of the one before it, lavishing under Harry's attentions and head rubs. He turns his head, the only thing he can truly twist what with the sheer amount of dementors swirling around him excitedly like a small black whirlpool, and grins manically at Minister Fudge, the aurors and the professors.

"Headmaster Dumbledore, we simply must keep them around!" He informs them happily as a more impatient dementor nudges the one under Harry's hand away so it could have its turn. Harry gently whacks it on the head as a reprimand but still continues rubbing it's head gently nonetheless.
"Precocious little thing. "Maybe just two would be easier. Hey Headmaster may I keep two?!"

"Is uh, is Mr Potter right mad?!" Minister Fudge whispered to the Headmaster loudly. And Harry was such an adorable boy the last time they met, a little crafty but who doesn't have a little bit of Slytherin cunning anyway. Was it those awful muggles? Did they drive the poor child to insanity. Oh yes, clearly Potter had been holding himself together alright since then but to treat a pack of dementors like some, some basket of puppies?! There's obviously got to be something wrong with him somewhere.

"I, uh, uhm." If this was any other time Fudge would have died not having a camera to take a picture of Dumbledore's speechless face. He had always loathed how this powerful man with a vague answer to everything had the potential to over-seat his place. Hated how wise and unfazed he always was. At least now Fudge knows that no one, not even the Great Albus Dumbledore had no weakness. It was oddly settling. Well, as settling as it could be with about a hundred dementors nearby. "Uuuuhhh…?"

"Let me go woman!" A deep voice snarled, the Minister turned to see the sternly aloof Professor Snape looking quite feral indeed as he struggles against Professor McGonagall and one of his aurors who were restraining him by the arms. "H- Potter is, Potter is!"

"Harry Potter is fine!" McGonagall shouted before grunting as her frantic coworker's sharp elbow hits her in her stomach, she still doesn't let go. Briefly she wonders why she didn't use magic for this but she's half afraid that once she reaches for her wand now, the crafty psycho will take the chance to run straight into the crowd of soul-sucking dementors. "Well, obviously not mentally but Potter doesn't seem like he's in any danger-ow! Fuck! Merlin, calm down Severus!"

"Do you think it's one of the side effects Headmaster?" Madam Pomphrey whispers, Fudge's Head snaps up at that.

"Side effects?! What side effects?!" He demanded, any personal opinions aside, Harry Potter was a symbol for Magical Britain, he was the torchlight of hope, the Golden Boy, the Boy Who Lived, if anything happened to him while Fudge was in charge... "Dammit Dumbledore, tell me this instant!"

"Harry has shown some unfortunate... quirks that we believe are because of his miraculous run in with the Killing curse when he was a baby." Dumbledore admitted uncomfortably, it's not like a grand number of Wizarding researchers and medical professionals don't already know by now anyway but Dumbledore never liked revealing his cards until absolutely necessary. "An incredibly poor healing factor is the most prominent one, worse than a muggle actually."

Fudge paled. The Boy Who Lived, so powerful yet so easily breakable. "Are you serious?!" He hissed.

"Potter can heal fine with minor scrapes and bruises. It's heavy wounds to his person that causes something in him to slow the healing process." Madam Pomphrey stepped in reassuringly but not before glaring irritately at the Headmaster's rather generalized explanation to a very complicated situation, "We believe Minister that somehow elements of the Killing Curse have latched onto the boy's soul and have created a sort of symbiotic balance. Growth is slowed and healing potions don't work as well as expected because of that aspect of Harry, when the balance is tipped most of his magic is spent re-configuring it to its original state rather than healing the body as it's meant to."

"And you think it's this, this preposterous explanation that causes Mr Potter to be immune to dementors?!”
Dumbledore shrugged as he watched with perturbed disbelief as Harry cuddled, cuddled one of those horrid nightmare beasts like some plush teddy bear, "If you have a better explanation Cornelius than go right ahead, because not even Grindlewald would mess with a dementor."

And that, that was pretty damning wasn't it?

"PROFESSOR SNAPE I WILL USE FORCE!"

"YOU BLISTERING MORONS, HARRY IS OUT THERE SURROUNDED BY-

"FUCK'S SAKES SHUT UP SEVERUS HE'S FINE."

When Harry wasn't spending time with his dementors, he was hanging out with the aurors. It seemed they've heard about what Harry has done in terms of contribution to their rapidly dwindling funding and were all immensely grateful, initial fear aside of course. There were eight of them, four newbies and their respective more experienced partners. It's a good system, Harry was almost doubtful he was in the right universe.

"Merlin, your skin!" A young female auror, Auror Jewelfin, exclaimed jealously, her hand already reaching out and pulling up Harry's sleeves to reveal his milky pale skin, stroking it reverently. "It's like, like-

"-the first spun silk of a baby acromantula soaked in honeyed milk." An older female auror, Auror Steinblak, gasped as she too began feeling up Harry's arm. "Jameson, Carterwheel, stop being pussies and come over here!" She snaps to the two male aurors lingering around them like nervous butterflies. Quickly she looks back to the bemused teen, "Excuse my french Mr Potter."

Harry waved her apology off, "I'm thirteen, my ears are hardly so virtuous to bleed from that sort of language Auror Steinblak."

"Isn't this, uh, a little inappropriate ma'am?" The younger of the two, Auror Carterwheel, hesitated, his face heating up as a pair of vaguely entertained green eyes looked at him. Merlin, Potter may only be thirteen but he has an odd ageless beauty to him that seemed seductively unfair here.

Auror Steinblak rolled her eyes, "Mr Potter had said it was fine Carterwheel, honestly you men are acting even odder than usual aren't you? Auror Ruble and Auror Callouse wouldn't be acting like such a timid unicorn."

Carterwheel and Jameson looked at each other and scowled, of course they weren't. Those two were too busy acting more like starving werewolves around Potter to be anything but timid. It was almost pathetic how they had insisted on practically serving the young teenager hand and foot. That scary professor Snape had to actually ply those two off the boy like they were some sort of lust-driven moss on a very enchanting tree. Well, it's not like Carterwheel wouldn't half mind if Harry had asked him to get on his knees but that's completely different. It is. At least he's not being a complete and obvious prat about it.

See, this is what happens when you let people with creature blood in as an auror, even the half breeds were animals.

"I don't see why those untrained idiots must linger if we already have overkill in the form of those dementors around." Severus Snape grumbled as he bit angrily into his soup soaked bread.

Harry laughed, "They're enthusiastic at least." He lightly defends.
"Yes, in protecting you." The potions master scowled harder, "Honestly it's like they've forgotten that there's an actual serial killer they're supposed to find. I would like to say at least Aurors Finklewicks and Baysides are doing a half decent job but they're too busy mooning over each other than to do anything else."

"To be fair, they were just recently married." Harry pointed out with his soup spoon before quickly pushing the spoon back into his mouth. It was a really good mushroom soup, and he'd be damned if he wasted it.

"Then they should go be married somewhere else more useful than here." Snape grouches.

The wizard saviour grins and playfully nudges the older man's long legs under the table with his feet, "Is Severus grumpy that I've made new adult friends?" He teased causing the man to glower. "Don't worry Sev, you're still my favourite."

"I better be considering all that effort I put into you." Snape humphed but secretly he felt incredibly pleased at such a confident statement. 'I'm his favourite,' was his heady thought. Merlin it was like pathetic had dug itself a grave just so he could sink to a lower level of sad.

Harry chuckled, "If anything I should be saying that about you sir," he joked, now that he's getting out more, he's feeling far less, how would one say… like he would cut a bitch. It's odd how something so simple as a change of environment could improve his mood so very well.

Severus raises an eyebrow but from the way his knees gently pushed against Harry's feet, the teen could tell he was amused. "What is it with those dementors anyway? Generally the correct reaction to one of those is fear and crying."

The Boy Who Lived shrugged, "Not going to lie Severus, I occasionally get these brief flashes of.. well, not great memories, but it's like a moving photograph- easily ignored." But seriously, that dead bunny keeps popping up and that is really, really weird. How much did this baby Potter kid love that rabbit?!

Snape leans in, interested, "So you can just dismiss your own worst fears like that?" He sounds fascinated and a little jealous.

'Well it's not like they were my own fears,' Harry thought but said instead, "It's not like that. It's just, it's more of a muted, blurry memory which quickly fades if I don't pursue it. The connection I have toward the dementors are far stronger."

The professor leans back on his chair, eyes never leaving Harry's form. To have something to do, Harry's feet keep tapping against the older man's own, it was a good gauge of Snape's emotions right now as he was fairly sure an irate Snape would not have allowed such whims. It's.. cute. How surprisingly amenable the usually strict and taciturn man can be in a one on one environment. Though he's probably just as tolerant to Draco as well considering how close the two can be.

Harry frowns a little at that. He wonders why that last thought felt like it was underlined with something sour.

"And what do you feel towards those… things?"

Harry's frown deepens, but for a different reason this time, "Oi, dementors aren't things. They're creatures, with feelings." He defends.

"Feelings." Snape deadpans.
"Delicate feelings." Harry nods confidently, "Though their comprehension could use some work." He admits because all things considered, they were quite primitive in their designs. "Hunger is predominately what drives them."

It's true, dementors were constantly hungry. It was a point of deep guilt for Death as these were some of the first creatures he could claim as his own and they 'live' in constant suffering. They were made to collect souls, essentially what the everyday Reaper does, but something had gone wrong. In hindsight they had probably should've called on Space to consult more in their creation. While dementors were meant to feed on the energy of souls, wiping the slates blank before passing them off to the afterlife via their 'digestive system,' they were too inefficient. It resulted in the souls swallowed down be completely broken down and destroyed in order to properly satisfy them, something that essentially wrecks the rather delicate balance of things undead.

Since then they had been ordered to mainly take power from less than happy memories, but even the most traumatic of recollections would not satisfy their hunger as much as even half a soul. As such, the species had become withered in appearance, malnutrition causing their less than attractive forms. Which sucks. Because originally they were actually quite pretty.

Unfortunately the only way to reform them to their natural state permanently was… expensive.

"- Harry? Harry?"

Harry blinked, "I'm sorry Severus, I zoned out a bit."

The potions master gives him a faintly concerned look, "Maybe you should go to bed, it is nearing your usual bedtime."

"I'm thirteen going on fourteen," Harry huffs annoyed, "It's demeaning how it seems like every year I get older, the earlier my bedtime is."

"Yes," Snape drawls, "So sorry my worry for your health is so humiliating for you." The man pauses before adding, "And please, let's not talk about your… age until you hit sixteen."

That seemed like a weird request but Harry nodded anyway.

"Hey," Harry says quietly, his feet brushing tentatively against the older man's knees, Snape moved his legs to push up at the movement. A good sign then. "You know I didn't mean it like that right?"

The older wizard sighed and lets one of his own feet tap at Harry's thigh, trying not to feel too guiltily happy at this freedom of inappropriate touches. "I know Harry, and I do apologise at the things I had said when I had been feeling.. incensed at you. I find your company very pleasant and enjoyable."

"Oh." Pale cheeks warmed at the compliment, it felt like there was a hot buzzing in his ears and Harry felt the corners of his mouth lift up into what felt like a stupidly wide grin. "Thank you Severus. I, well, I enjoy your presence immensely as well." He confesses shyly.

Severus looks at him, his eyes dark and assessing. Harry startles a little at the movement the older man suddenly makes, a small surprised 'eep' was all he could squeak out as the potions master stands up abruptly, and leaves the room with a hurried goodnight and a faint flush on his cheeks.

Harry just stared. Did, did Professor Snape really just caress up against his inner thigh with his foot?!

"Well… that's new." He finally settles on. It seems this year, there is going to be far more interesting things than some stupid serial killer on the loose.
"Harry, why is this Auror bloke sitting at our table?" Ron asks far too casually to be actually casual. It's like Harry has unlocked a new level of exasperated rage in Ron. He senses he should thread cautiously here.

"Auror Callouse is just looking out for me Ron, you know, what with Black lurking around." He explains slowly, carefully.

"Yeah, but does that really mean he has to HAND FEED YOU RIGHT HERE."

"I'm okay with it." Harry shrugs as he opens his mouth again.

"Same here." Auror Callouse, a part vampiric wizard, sighs dreamily as he tilts the teen's chin up and feeds him a grape, his hand lingering a little too long considering it was just a grape he had fed and not like, chocolate sauce or anything. His younger partner, Auror Ruble, a part veela wizard, was off to the side silently fuming while trying to politely fend off the young witches attracted to his looks.

Ron rolls his eyes and huffs his displeasure, "Figures we leave you alone for a week and you have the aurors eating out of your hand."

"Well, technically its the other way round." Hermione corrects bemusedly but still a little perturbed as the auror with skin almost as pale as Harry's own hand feeds the young wizard with the reverence and lust as if one was feeding a god. "Anyway Harry, you will not believe what happened on the train ride over here!"

"Did Ron and Draco fight again?" Harry asks, "Because that happens like, all the time, tell me if one of them dies though. That would be interesting."

"I am so proud to call you my best friend." Ron tells him less than sincerely which was very rude of him. Harry was the Boy Who Lived, wizard saviour, a magical genius and a rather gorgeous specimen of humanity. Harry had an auror hand feeding him grapes like a roman emperor. Harry was cool as hell. Ron should be proud as fuck.

"Well, yes, but no that's not what I was talking about." Hermione says with a smile, "No, see there was this guy sleeping in our compartment-"

"Was he hot?" Harry interrupts curiously.

Hermione looked at him derisively, "Ron. Please answer this for me."

"Why do I always have to respond to this?" Ron complains.

"Because I handle smart Harry all the time. You handle the other side of Harry."

"I like how you're implying that I consist solely of genius and sexual desire." Harry snorted. "Ta Hermione."

"You forgot snarky, there's snarky too." The Weasley piped up helpfully. Hermione nodded in agreement.

"How could I forget," She says solemnly, "Harry does have many complex layers."

"Oh fuck off," Harry grumbles before opening his mouth for another grape. "What's the story then-also you didn't answer my question."

"He's.." Hermione and Ron looked at each other, "Passably cute?"
Ron shrugged, "Your standards are kind of low Harry. He looked kind of young-ish but had bits of grey in his blond hair. Also he looked kinda like a homeless person."

"Ah." Homeless people were not at all his type. Harry generously waved them to continue their tale. "Continue then."

The bushy haired Gryffindor rolled her eyes, "Anyway, so on his case was the inscription Professor R. J. Lupin and we figured he must be the new Defence Professor."

"Wait. This guy is a professor?" Harry suddenly says. "There was a grown man just sleeping in your magical train compartment? A magical train compartment for children? Where I'm fairly sure there are only students there and no professors slash grown adults." Harry looks at them doubtfully. "That seems.. suspect."

"Well yeah if you put it that way it does." Ron muttered under his breath, "Then again, not everyone has an inner perv in them that tells them that it's okay to smooch with anything that has lips."

"Hey!" Harry protested, "You don't need lips to kiss, I mean snakes-"

Ron groaned. "Merlin Harry, you just, you just suck." Harry opened his mouth but Ron, with the reflexes of someone who could be a skilled seeker, struck his hand out to cover the green eyed wizard's words, "Don't you dare Harry, I swear to Merlin."

"Jeez you are no fun since you hit puberty." Harry grumbled. Auror Callouse patted Harry's head sympathetically. "So did the creepy old man do anything?" In a lower voice, he added with a mischievous grin, "Do I need to conjure up a doll so you can show me where the bad man touched you?"

Hermione smacked him across the head. Meanwhile Ron muttered how rich that was coming from Harry of all wizards.

"Ow!" The Boy Who Lived scowled, "You know I'm injured and very delicate right now."

"I know," Hermione moans half regretfully, "But it's like you come out of the coma twice the… Harry you were."

"Like a perverted butterfly." Ron swooned.

Harry stuck his tongue out childishy, "Let's just say, I had a lot of… interesting food for thought when I was in that coma." Yeah, there was nothing like fucking an evil purple space conqueror, a god of mischief and a few more gorgeous villains to be more self-confident and more in tune to yourself. God, he should write a book.

"Is that what the muggles are calling it these days?" Ron said under his breath while Hermione laughed. Harry gave his friend the evil eye. Sometimes he's surprised at how okay Ron was about certain sexual matters at such an immature age, then Harry remembers he is in a family household of over six kids and decides to no longer think too closely on the sort of sexual education they get.

"Anyway," Hermione huffs, but not looking as put out by the lack of direction this conversation was taking as she usually would've been. Seems someone also matured a little during his coma. "There were no more empty compartments so we kind of ignored the guy and just sat there and chatted. Ron got prissy over Crookshanks-"

"You mean the Hell Beast." Ron whispers darkly. The girl ignored him.
"-and then the sky begins to darken, like it was very obvious that there was a huge storm approaching. The train began to rattle and the rain and wind was so loud!"

"Yet the professor still slept." Ron chuckled, causing Harry to chuckle too.

"Really? Even I saw the storm in the distance, thank god I was here sitting pretty waiting for you guys instead."

Ron nodded in agreement, "Yeah not the best ride for you all things considering. Mione, you want to continue telling the story or should I?"

"You can continue it for a bit," Hermione tells him amicably. "But for Merlin's sake don't exaggerate anything, I will correct you." Ron grins.

"Right, so outside looked like, pitch black right? So we couldn't see nothing and the train began to slow down, so I was all, 'Must be nearly there' right? But Mione insisted that it was too soon for us to arrive there and Mione's usually right, right?"

"Right." Harry says with a smile.

"Anyway we both went out to look at the corridor, see what's going on, then all of a sudden all the lights went out! So it was dark as the inside of a boggart's arse in there."

"Charming." Hermione says, clearly impressed by the simile. "I think I shall take over this story now Ron." Ron shrugged unperturbed, "Well Harry, that was when I decided we had to go ask the driver what was going on but we bumped into Ginny who had come here looking for Ron, with Neville lagging behind. So there all of us were, in our compartment trying to figure out who's who and suddenly Professor Lupin hisses, 'Quiet!' at us and lights up the room a little with his wand. Lumos it was. He tells us to stay where we were and begin to head to the door."

"But then the door opens!" Ron interrupts, apparently far too excited not to say this next part. Looking a little annoyed at having Ron jump into her tale, Hermione glared and shoved the boy.

"Dammit Ron, we agreed to take turns."

"Sorry?"

Hermione sighed, "Fine, finish it off then."

"Wicked! Anyway, so the door opens and BAM, there was this horrible cloaked figure that was so tall it's head hit the bloody ceiling! At that point we only could see it's hands, awful looking things, looked like a person's hand burned alive then decayed in slimy swamp water but like, grey. It draws this long rattling breath, like it hadn't breathed air in forever and was trying its hardest to take in as much as possible and the room went from cold to tit freezing in a second."

Harry blinked, suddenly in understanding, "Oh." He says a little stunned, "You guys met a dementor then?"

The pair stared at him.

Harry stared back. "You... guys were aware I was in the castle right?" He said slowly, "You know, the castle the dementors were sent to protect me and defend against Sirius Black?"

They kept staring. God, he loved them like the incessant children he never technically had but sometimes it's just a wonder why humanity as a whole hadn't just all keeled over and died at one
The Boy Who Lived sighed at the continued staring, he can practically hear Ron reboot and Hermione rearrange her mind palace to make way for this apparently mind-blowing revelation.

"Well…” Ron finally says, "This story no longer seems as cool now."

"Awwwww, no, don't say that." Harry says encouragingly, "Please, continue about this amazing, fascinating story that I just know will enrich my life and future choices."

"You're a dick." Ron tells him, "Just for that we will finish this story." He turns to Hermione, "Go ahead Hermione."

Hermione smirked, "No, no, let's keep the turns equal." She insists with faux innocence, "Please Ron, I insist."

"Both of you can go eat a poisoned vomit flavoured Bertie Bott's jellybean." The redhead groused, "So anyway, Professor Lupin walked toward the Dementor, and pulled out his wand and said something like, 'We ain't hiding Sirius Black, get the heck away.' But the Dementor didn't move right? So Lupin muttered something, and a silvery thing shot out of his wand and the thing just glided away. Then Lupin gave us chocolate." Ron tilted his head thoughtfully, "Lupin's a pretty okay guy for someone who looks like he's lived in a dumpster."

Hermione scoffed, "You would think He Who Shall Not Be Named is okay if he gave you free chocolate."

"Well maybe he should," Ron shot back jokingly, "That could be his new recruitment campaign- Our Blood is Pure and so is our Chocolate, Join the Death Eaters."

They all burst out laughing.

'That's not funny.' Mr Riddle sulked in Harry's mind.

After Dumbledore said his bit about the dementors, praising their amazing ability to see past any disguise, illusion and invisibility cloak which made Harry puff up a little in pride before frowning as the headmaster continued by adding how it was not in the nature of a Dementor to understand pleading or excuses.

"That's not true." Harry hisses annoyed. Sure the dementors had a faulty grasp on a lot of things but expecting them to understand the cries of humans was like expecting humans to understand the pleading of cattle. It's hardly a fair comparison.

'Fascinating.' Mr Riddle murmurs, seems like someone had decided to crawl up from the mindscape and set up camp in Harry's thoughts. 'Do you see us as cattle too?' He's not as fearful nor indignant as Harry had thought him to be. Just clinically interested with a healthy normal sized dash of wariness. It seems hanging out in his mindscape of rolling oceans of tar had given the half soul a better perspective on the matters of the dead.

'Obviously not,' he thought a little derisively. 'You are all more like... insects.'

There's a pause, and then Harry could just feel Mr Riddle's fury. It seemed his pride was still taller than any man made building then. The wizard wasn't surprised, it was more than a little obvious the man had some anger issues. And daddy issues. And status issues. Really, Tom Riddle just had... issues. Period.
The anger seemed to grow even hotter, which makes sense because Mr Riddle probably picked up on the whole issues thing Harry had been totally not on purposely thinking loudly about.

'An insect?' The voice hissed, 'I am no mere inse-

'Oh do get over yourself,' Harry sighed. 'Of course you're not an actual bug, god aren't you tetchy today. I meant in terms of population and like, how quickly you all die off and the resilience of your species.'

'Still,' Tom mutters petulantly. 'It's rather a degrading comparison.'

Harry tutted, Insects are only treated as disgusting things because they're small, squashable and fail to conform to your standards of beauty. If the sizes were reversed, and they held similar morality and conscious thought, I'm sure they would think it far more of an insult than you would take it.'

'... Oh?' Mr Riddle's voice was subdued and quieter now, must have retreated a little further back then. Thoughtful it seems. Harry feels sympathetic for the young man. If only he had learned a little more, been encouraged to focus on things he had been interested in instead of shunned like he had been, he's fairly sure the poor mortal would’ve been set off on a far better course in life.

'Insects are a fascinatingly diverse organism Mr Riddle, cruel as well. You would be interested in some of the more morbid stories about them I'm sure.' Harry tells him supportively.

'Huh, really?' Mr Riddle says tentatively, Well I guess it wouldn't be too bad to be forced to endure your nattering on primitive life form-

"I am pleased to welcome two new teachers to our ranks this year, first is Professor Lupin, who has very kindly consented to be our Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher."

'Damn,' Harry internally whistled, 'He doesn't clean up too bad for an apparent homeless guy. Still a bit shabby though.'

'-aand, I've lost him.' Mr Riddle muttered annoyed and maybe a touch bitter. 'Hussy.'

Harry mentally pulled Mr Riddle back into the deeper parts of his mindscape with a hushed promise of continuing the conversation later when the other was in a better mood. After all, he does not appreciate such old fashioned language in his head. Harry's trying to get with the times. Also, Mr Riddle gets really pissy whenever Harry's mind wanders to anyone else Harry had deemed attractive for some reason.

"Look at Snape!" Ron hissed in Harry's ear, distracting him from Mr Riddle's farewell swears.

Following Ron's instructions, Harry looked up to see Snape staring along the staff table at Professor Lupin. And yeah, the young wizard saviour was aware of how much the potions professor wanted the Defense Against the Dark Arts job, was common knowledge really. But the look on Severus' face was rather, well, bewildering to say the very least. His expression was beyond mere anger, it's crossed furious, jumped over fury and had wandered comfortably in the middle of the territory between downright loathing and outright hatred. It's the sort of look that suggested someone was probably going to die very soon.

"Whoa, seems like someone pissed in Snape's cereal." Ron muttered half gleefully.

"Ron!" Hermione and Harry hissed. Ron just snickered at their scandalised tones.

"As to our second new appointment," Dumbledore continued as the rather half hearted clapping for
Professor Lupin died quickly away- poor sap. "Well, even though I do feel sorry to have to inform you all that our dear Professor Kettleburn, Care of Magical Creatures teacher, has decided to finally retire to enjoy more time with his remaining limbs, I am delighted to say that his place will be filled by none other than Rubeus Hagrid, who has agreed to take on this teaching job in addition to his gamekeeping duties."

Everyone took a second to be stunned, trying to take in the new information. Then they all burst in applause, Gryffindor table in particular was the loudest. Harry felt a little bad at being so enthusiastic right after he had barely clapped for the other guy but Hagrid, the half-giant had to live in a shack outside a school. The bloke bloody deserves the damn raise.

Then again, the homeless looking guy probably needs the job as well. Huh. It's like this school was looking for new ways to look even worse than they already do.

Harry wonders what the other magic schools were like if Hogwarts was considered and he quotes, 'the Best.'

In the back of his mind, Mr Riddle scoffs.

Hagrid was blushing under the thunderous applause, his wide grin visible even under his gigantic tangled up beard. The large man was even wiping his eyes with the tablecloth. Aw.

"We should've known!" Ron cried happily, pounding the table loudly because apparently clapping just wasn't enough to show his support. "Who else would have given us a biting book?"

"Well, I think that's everything of importance," said Dumbledore as the clapping, far longer than Lupin's had been, finally quieted down. "Let the feast begin!"

Golden plates and goblets, which by the way, seemed rather gaudy and expensive for a school that can't afford proper flying brooms, filled with food and drink and the hall began to bustle back to excited talking and chittering as everyone began their meal. Auror Callouse easily banished the unfinished bowl of grapes in his hand in favour of picking up Harry's plate and looking eagerly at him, "May I, Mr Potter?"

"Merlin's tits." Ron grumbled, rolling his eyes as he started piling a generous amount of gravy on his mashed potatoes.

It seemed this was the final straw to Auror Ruble's patience, pushing himself off the wall he had been leaning and sulking over, he strode to where Harry and his superior officer was. "Sir, maybe I should take over your uh, current duties?" He asks, his handsome face strained under his smile.

The half vampire smiled easily back, "Auror Ruble, you should be grateful that I'm letting you properly experience auror work. After all, hadn't you complained that you hadn't needed, hm, what was the word again? Training wheels?"

The half veela flushed a little, torn between his pride at wanting independence in his career and his base desires calling out to please the clearly powerful boy in front of him. "I- uh, while I appreciate you're concern sir," He sneered at the 'sir' part, clearly there was some unwelcome tension between the two half breeds. "I do think it is time for our break and I deserve to do whatever I see fit now."

Auror Ruble finished smugly.

Auror Callouse scowled, "Fine, then I too shall see to do whatever I see fit." He turns to Harry with a seductive smile and summons up some chips onto Harry's plate. "Of course, as long as you wouldn't mind Harry?"
"He has not given you permission to use his name!" The half veela practically shrieked, earning the attention of not only the entire Gryffindor table but a lot from the other Houses and professors as well.

The older Auror smiled, it was not a very nice one, more like Professor Snape's smile when he was about to take a load of points off a particularly irritating student. "I think if you had put some of your Auror skills to some proper use and not into styling your hair everyday you would find that Harry here has given me his permission to refer to him as such."

Auror Ruble froze, his handsome face thunderous and red. And then he jumped the half vampire auror with a screeching war cry of an indignant veela.

"BLOODY HELL!" Ron shouted as the two half breed aurors began fighting on top of the table, Auror Callouse's fangs were out and Auror Ruble's talons extended. Despite their more intimidating forms, the fight mainly consisted of fisticuffs and smooshing food into each other's faces. Everyone was watching entranced at sight.

It got even better as the other aurors jumped into the fray to try seperate the two, or at least try save some face in front of the school. Except Auror Carterwheel and Auror Jameson apparently had some less than kind reservations towards the half breeds so they ended up fighting as well. The teachers had to get into it then. Professor Snape especially seemed to be taking great pleasure in hexing the Aurors, clearly his displeasure about their bumbling incompetence as he had so often described them as being, had finally bubbled over like a overboiled potion.

The whole mess took twenty five glorious minutes. It didn't help that the twins were throwing all manner of random colour changing spells, adding to the havoc. Chaos would have been proud of the pair. Harry needed to introduce the three someday. Or never. Never sounded more and more appealing the more he thought about it actually.

Once the aurors were sent out to run their patrols food covered and grumpy, the hype for violence had simmered down and all there was left was the sad remains of the Gryffindor's share of the feast. In the end they all had to go sit with the other Houses to finish off the meal with, luckily there was more food and space than they all really knew what to do with so it was only met with some grumbles and glares toward Harry.

"Great going Harry." Ron grouched, "Now we're sitting with the Slytherins."

Harry shrugged and nibbled on a cob of corn. "Ain't my fault I'm so bloody irresistible to creatures. It's a curse, really."

"Yeah, a curse to food. Dammit I was really looking forward to the roast beef."

"Hey, now you can still steal Slytherin's roast beef." Harry suggested compromisingly magnanimous. Ron at least perked up at that.

"Mate that does sound great," The Weasley says, cheered and with a hungry look in his eyes.

"Gee Potter," Draco drawled across from them, apparently unimpressed with how Harry had misdirected Ron's attention. "Thank's so much for bring the bottomless stomach of a Weasley here. We were just absolutely dying to eat only a quarter of our usual meal tonight."

Harry acknowledged the sarcasm by holding up his half eaten corn with a smirk, "No problem Draco, it was my pleasure to help control those growing thighs of yours."

"MY WHAT?!"
In retrospect, maybe Harry shouldn't have lied about that to someone as vain as Draco. It took him a month to convince the teen he was joking.

"Harry." Snape sighed though internally he wanted to scream and throw a patronus. "Please, if you have any respect or affection for me at all, take that damned creature out of your room."

Harry pouted. "But Davian's very docile and sweet."

"... I'm almost afraid to ask, but, Davian?"

"In Christianity the name means, one with a lovely heart and soul."

The potions master sighs again. Figures, he was a pedophile in love with a crazy half-dead person who emotionally bonds with soul sucking monsters. He's sure his mother would've been proud. "Of course it is." He says blandly, "Well Davian needs to leave. Right. Now."

Harry mutters something to the dementor curled up on his bed like some lazy cat, it makes a wispy yet guttural sound before getting out of the bed and floating out the door. It, or most likely, he, purposely ignores the potions master like that was some sort of punishment for the older wizard or something. Still, Snape had to shudder as the creature passed by him, images of his worst memories, of Lily dead in his arms, of being so thoroughly humiliated in school, that fucking werewolf, filling up his mind like a grossly unwelcome flooded sewage pipe.

He likes to think he's gotten better at dealing with the dementors thanks to Harry's need to treat them like pets- something Snape would like to point out, that not even bloody Hagrid does- but there's no escaping that sort of trauma, no matter how dulled it's starting to feel after these constant reoccurrences, the guilt just lingers, heavier than ever.

Once Davian had left, the potions master slammed his door shut firmly and soundly. He turns to a pouting Harry. "Do not ever bring a dementor into my quarters Harry." Snape warns menacingly, "Unless Sirius Black is here butt naked and erect, there shall be no business for dementors to be here understand?"

Harry made a 'pssh' sound. "Please, if Black was naked and erect, I hardly thinking I would be asking for a dementor to come ruin the mood." The teenager had joked blithely.

That joke had fallen flat. Onto a spiked floor. With lava.

"You! Don't you, don't you dare-" Severus was both furious and disgusted beyond words. The idea that Harry was attracted to Black of all people was just, just! Harry, realising he had tripped on some sort of very sensitive landmine, began quickly backtracking.

"N-not that I would!" He laughed nervously, "That man is a serial killing prisoner for god's sakes Severus! I just, well, you said those things and I couldn't resist. It's just a lark Sev, come on."

The potions professor took a deep calming breath. That didn't work so he took five more. Harry, green eyes watching nervously, bit his lip uncertainly. "Why don't you go sit on the couch to calm yourself?" Harry suggested soothingly, "I'll go get some tea."

Feeling a little foolish and more than a tad childish at getting a teen one third his age to comfort him after what must have seemed like an incredibly irrational hissy fit, Severus just silently nodded. The only thing he could think of that would've been worse is if he had begged for Harry to never look at another man, especially that prick Black, and to allow him the privilege of showing the young wizard the pleasures of being plowed against his office desk.
And now he's thinking about bending Harry over against a desk.

"English breakfast with two squeezes of lime." Harry flourishes, setting the cup down in front of Snape who takes it with a wry smile. Perversities aside, it was rather heartening to be liked well enough to have the younger man remembering how to make his favorite cup of tea.

"Thank you." Snape takes a sip. "It's perfect." He comments like he is pleasantly surprised despite the fact Harry has brewed tea for him before and they've never been below an exceeds expectations range of mark at the very least.

Harry smiles before sitting down next to him, putting down his own cup of tea on the coffee table. Milky tea with far too much sugar than there should be in Snape's personal opinion. It's okay, everyone had serious flaws.

"Now," Harry says primly, and Snape almost has to snort at how... professional the youth seemed, it suited his elegant appearance but clashed horribly with his recent less than stable mood swings. Not that he could hardly fault that what with the coma and the blasted book's influences, but still. "I know you aren't, well, the most fond of whenever I joke about sexual matters. Especially recently."

Snape scowled, "Because if those aurors that surround you like planets around the sun, overheard your crass suggestions, I'm fairly sure that they would hardly take the joke as casually as you would think." And also because the potions professor was starting to realise that maybe Harry was far more.. lustful than he had originally speculated, it must be an unfortunate side effect of being the offspring of that gigantic manslut James Potter.

The Boy Who Lived smirked a little, the older wizard once again thanks the stars at how little Harry seems to resemble both his parents. He's not sure how he would feel if that sly upturn of the lips that caused his gut to clench in arousal had reminded him of the Potter senior. Not to mention the downright mischievous and sultry look would have just looked so wrong on Lily's features.

As if realising whatever train of thought the teen had been having might not be the most appropriate thing to voice out loud to his professor, Harry coughed, using it as an obvious excuse to quickly rearrange his features into something more serious and innocent. "I don't know what you mean Severus." Cunning little tart.

Hiding his own fond smirk, the potions master sips his tea and waits for Harry to blurt out whatever it is he will blurt out. Another problem with the young wizard, while usually quite comfortable with silence, he becomes immensely less so with it once in conversation. It's almost like Harry's treating conversations like a game, but not one of wits and politics, more along the lines of manners and social niceties with his intense need to fill in the lulls in conversation. For Harry it's a weakness, one that Snape is shameless enough to exploit. He is a Slytherin after all.

"Okay maybe, I did encourage Auror Callouse and Ruble a tad." Harry finally admits bashfully. "And to a lesser extent Auror Carterwheel and Jameson I guess."

Snape raised an eyebrow, waiting. Harry shifted uncomfortably, clearly feeling some sort of guilt over the whole Great Feast debacle. "Anything else you would like to confess Harry?"

"It's just..." Harry blushed as he fidgeted with his teacup whilst struggling with his choice of words, "I couldn't help but screw wi- I mean, I couldn't help myself when they were piling me with so much uh, attention."

Severus nods slowly like he actually understands the concept of being attractive enough to garner so much attention in the first place. He supposes with a childhood with so little affection gained from his...
guardians, the young wizard must crave the affection he has so much of now yet only on a superficial level. Which is rather sad if you really think about it.

Then again he could've ended up like Severus who also craves affection but is bitter and untrusting enough to only satisfy that craving with only one or two individuals. Which makes him incredibly vulnerable to their praise and scorn. So that too, is also rather sad.

"Yes. Well. I would ask you to control yourself but since you are a wizard on the cusp of teenagerhood I rather doubt that you could if you tried." The potions professor said stiffly, "Though maybe do make an effort to not sabotage what little competence our first line of defence against Black has."

Harry chuckled before sipping his tea. "So, speaking of Black," he said slyly and Severus had to smile regretfully at how smoothly, if a little obviously, Harry had transitioned the topic, "what's with the reaction sir? If you don't mind me asking of course."

"I knew Black personally," said Snape stiffly. "He was in the same year as me alongside Professor Lupin and, your father."

The young wizard savior leans against the older professor, looking up at him interestedly. His face is far too close for comfort, if Severus just leaned a little further... the Professor looks away and hastily takes another sip of his tea.

"The three along with a fourth, Pettigrew, made up a group self named the Marauders."

Harry tilted his head thoughtfully, "Sounds... noble?" He said, clearly threading carefully.

Snape laughed into his drink bitterly, "Hardly. They were nothing but horrible bullies who enjoyed pranks and humiliating all they didn't like." He spat out.

"They bullied you." It wasn't a question. The potions master found, to his dismay and horror, he was blushing quite terribly. He tries to wrench his gaze away from those glowing green eyes, glittering with fury. Merlin he was so beautiful it hurts. "It's in the past." He muttered, no longer in the mood to bash his tormentors in front of Potter's scion.

"It's not," Harry defied, "That's why you looked ready to murder Professor Lupin before, why you're so worried about not catching Black, why... you refused to like me in the beginning." The younger male sounded less biting and a little more mournful at the end. Harry stares up at Snape, eyes big and woeful, and woe certainly be it to Snape if he did not look back.

"I would've thought you would have at least tried to defend your father." Snape admitted a little confused and touched. Even he would have lashed out at such blatant accusations and he had absolutely loathed his own father.

"Oh Severus," Harry breathed, his lips shaped into a wry smile, "I never knew my dad. He's nothing to me but the stories we tell and the people he knew. But you, you're far more to me than that."

Harry seemed to hesitate before his eyes narrowed in some sort of resolve. Tilting his head upwards, the Boy Who Lived moves up and presses a chaste but determined kiss onto Severus Snape.

"I think you need a little more air," the older professor muttered darkly and Harry, feeling rather stupid at this point, reached up to pull the younger male away. "I'm sorry. I'm not used to you being... so... approachable."

Snape inhales sharply at the unforeseen action, his heart breathing a mile a minute as his mind
blanks. It's only when he finally reboots he realizes he's kissing Harry back.

Chapter End Notes

Buy me a coffee? I mean. You don't have to. No pressure or anything man.

https://ko-fi.com/hweianime
I'm not great with the serious talking stuff so the writing isn't my best. Hopefully you'll enjoy it either way :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The one where Death gets rejected gets some resolve and gets humped.

Harry gasped as Snape- Snape!- kissed him back. Firm and hungry and passionate. He hadn't expected the man to actually reciprocate but when Harry had seen him so vulnerable, opening up to him, it was like he couldn't help but follow the rush of want and need that had filled inside of himself.

It felt good. Amazing actually. Well, the more precise term would be mind-blowingly woah to be exact but who's writing this down anyway? The point was Harry loved it, the giddy rush under his skin, the way his heart pounds like a frantic war drum and the spark ignited by the pressure between his lips and Severus'. Harry's not going to lie and say that it feels like it's the first time he had truly kissed someone or some other such bullshit nonsense- because he's kissed a ton of different individuals okay, literally a ton, like so, so, sooo- but he will confidently say, he's never done this feeling the way he does now.

This, this must be what Harry had been missing this whole time. God, he was dense. Affection. Compatibility. Friendship. Attraction. Trust. Love had always tried to explain herself to him, but Harry thinks that maybe he understands it now. Just a little bit.

He likes Snape. Really, truly does.

It's different from what he felt for Tom. Very similar, but not as well. Mr. Riddle was, lust and intrigue and the rush you get when you run toward something potentially life-threatening. But somehow Harry thinks it wouldn't be like that with Snape. It was something a long time coming now and if he looked back on the past, he was sure it would have been as obvious as a slow-moving train in the desert.

The professor had been right about how strange it had been that the young wizard had rushed into his declaration of love so soon, he had been muddled a little by the charms and intoxicated by Riddle's own natural ones.

Explains a lot on why he had dealt with all that shit between them with relatively good humor. The fighting, the arguments, the insults. Sure he was a fairly laid back pushover of an entity generally but his sole existence is about ending lives, and disrespect from mere mortals can really go either way here.

The young wizard pushes himself further up against Snape, panting a little too loudly like some dog in heat as he tries to touch as much as he could with his body. It's excitingly novel just how much he
wants this. It's like he's waited for forever without even knowing how much he desires this. Even more than he wanted Captain fucking America dammit. And that man was fine. Fine as all the hells.

"Severus," He breathes before sliding his arms up the older wizard's chest and around his neck, taking his time to try to savor every curve and bump he passes. His face must be pinker than a peach because it feels like his face is simmering in liquid lightning, especially at the tips of his ears for some odd reason. And the tips of his fingers. And toes. Affection was a strange thing. "I, uh, um, I think I really-"

Snape, who had been touching Harry just as eagerly, stopped abruptly. His posture that had been languid and relaxed now had gone stiff and rigid at Harry's tentative words. The younger wizard had a sinking feeling that, like every other vaguely sexual encounter he's had with the man, Snape was about to bolt again.

'But not this time,' Harry thought determinedly because this time he wasn't oblivious. This time he's perfectly aware of his wants and what he wants is for Severus to stay with him, maybe even until his life as Potter is finished. Resolved, he stretches up to kiss the other wizard again, less chaste this time, filled with intention. Chasing the retreating lips, until he had captured his prize and devoured it eagerly, sucking and licking and moaning.

For a second Harry thinks he's managed to break through when the potions master pushes himself harder against his lips but then the young wizard is suddenly shoved onto the floor with a startled yelp. The Boy Who Lived looked up to see Snape still sitting, his arms still raised from shoving Harry away and his face pink and blotchy. Harry's really hoping it's at least half because of his amazing kissing skills and not mainly due to anger and or disgust at him.

"Don't.." The professor was actually vibrating, like his restraint could only hold onto so much and he was going to explode any second. This did not bode well. Because Harry does have a fairly good self-preservation instinct, despite certain previous events that contradict this, he scoots a little away from kicking distances of Snape and remains quiet.

The older wizard tries to start another sentence but only ends up spluttering, it was almost comical how much the usually eloquent Snape was struggling. Well, it would've been comical if it wasn't so distressing and anxiety-inducing.

Unable to wait, for fear that his already frail health would collapse onto itself from the stress of it all Harry gathered his Gryffindor courage and stood up. "Severus, I know this is a little abrupt but-"

Snape slumped in his seat, covering his eyes with both his hands. He looked so tired, "Merlin please, just... don't."

Incensed Harry snapped an angry, "I haven't said anything yet!"

"As if I don't know what you're going to say, Potter," The potions master sneered, "some deluded little lie about me being the love of your life just so you can sleep with the greasiest professor in Hogwarts and tell the tale."

Harry stiffened, "Is that really what you think sir?" He hisses furiously, "That the only reason I would snog you was for a lark?" He shook his head and stepped closer to Snape, who immediately tried to shuffle further into his couch like a frightened animal. "Severus, I think you're a witty, intelligent man with striking good looks and a gentleness you like to hide." Harry smiled fondly at the man, the inside of his chest felt like the frantic beating of a thousand butterfly wings as he realized how true his words were to him. "I find you attractive despite how frustrating you can be, and while I may not be in love with you or anything I do know I love spending time with you. You
make me smile and feel... things."

God, how did he not see this before? Fuck he was blind. And stupid. Stupidly blind.

His smile widened and his cheeks burned as he says quietly, "Severus, I really do like you. I, well, I think we-"

Severus closes his eyes, "Stop." He says hoarsely and stands up, gently pushing Harry away from his person, "I don't want to hear any more of this."

It felt like someone shoved cold slime down Harry's back, the icy realization of Severus' words doesn't hit him fast but cruelly slow, sliding down and clinging to every crack and hole in his head. He was rejecting him. He was rejecting him.

_Snape was rejecting him._

"...what?" Harry croaked weakly. He's never been rejected, not like this, and certainly not feeling what he does now. It hurts.

It hurts. It hurts. _It hurts._

"You're young Harry," Snape says quietly, his eyes refusing to meet the younger wizard's. "You're young and too warped to understand, but this is wrong." The professor states firmly.

"I," Harry was speechless. Harry was confused. Harry was being rejected. Turned down. Pushed away. "I," What does he say? What should he say? He feels dizzy and his throat feels like it's collapsing onto itself. "I am not a child." Is all his wobbling voice manages to protest. Which, really ruined the whole point of that sentence.

The older man just gave him a forlorn look of what Harry assumes is pity. "You are a child, a mature one I must admit, but a child nonetheless. Did you really think I would actually say yes?" It's like Severus was looking for new ways to make the metaphorical wound in Harry bleed faster. "Grow up Harry."

"How," Harry was mortified to find his breath catch in his throat and all the warning signs of a quickly impending breakdown blaring in his mind. The young wizard bit his lip and turned away. He can't help Snape brutally rejecting him, but he'll be damned if he bloody cried in front of him too.

He has some pride. Not a lot recently. But still.

"Fuck you." Harry spat before walking purposely away.

"Where are you going?" Snape demands, and Harry almost turned back in his sudden irrational rage at the fucking gall of the man. Can't he see how stung Harry was? The professor had done his damage, the least he could do is leave him to brood and lick his wounds however way Harry deemed fit.

"A walk." he hissed shortly before adding venomously, _"Don't look for me."_

Ashamed and angry at Snape as well as himself, Harry ran out of the quarters before he could burst into tears like a child who had just lost their favorite toy. And Harry refused to shed a single tear in front of Snape, further demeaning himself and proving the other's point on his lack of maturity. Snape didn't call for him to come back. He shouldn't have expected the man to, but somehow just that inaction really salted the wound.
God, Snape. He didn't realize how much he wanted the professor till now, and now that he's more aware of these... emotions he's already been turned down. It's all a horrible hex to the face is what it is.

So there he was, sniffling like some pathetic heartbroken asshole while wandering the halls of the school aimlessly at night. The night sky was cloudless and beautiful and Harry wished it would break and fall down onto the earth and it's muck just so it can look even a little like what he was feeling right now.

"Mr. Potter?" Harry looked up, eyes blurry from his tears and realized in his angst that he had failed to pay attention to his surroundings and now must pay the price.

"Professor McGonagall," he croaked out weakly, wincing at the way his voice shudders and wobbles like the final leaf in fall. It's embarrassing and the prickle of this last act of humiliation on top of everything that completely topples over his pride as he bursts into tears.

"Oh Severus." Poppy Pomphrey sighed, "Tell me you didn't say those exact words you'd just said to me."

Snape stayed sulkily silent. He didn't know what possessed him to firecall the mediwitch when Harry had stormed out in near tears. He had been.. frazzled at the unexpected turn of events that was all. Yes, frazzled. An apt if rather understating description to his heart beating faster than a snitch's wings when Harry had confessed to him before Snape had brutally strangled it to silence as he turned him down.

Merlin, who says being good is rewarding? Snape has been trying to do good for years and all he has to show for it now is frown lines, grey hairs, cohorts of students that despise him and now a broken fucking heart of his own making. He loathes his life.

"Severus," A sympathetic Pomphrey hands him a cup of tea. He takes it and sips it, uncaring of how hot it burns his mouth. "Maybe it wasn't as bad as you thought."

"Yes Poppy," The professor sneered, but even his caustic tone was half-hearted at best, "Because running out of a room crying is always the best sign for one's continued friendship with the other."

The older woman winced before drinking from her own cup. "I see..." Tentatively she asks, "And how are you feeling Severus?"

He glares at her but then he sighs, what anger he could manage to gather slipping through his fingers like water. It wasn't like he hadn't invited the witch for possibly this very reason anyway. She already knew his less than pure feelings toward the boy. "Possible worse than when I ruined my friendship with Lily." Snape confesses begrudgingly. He may be willing to unload his feelings onto the woman this time but that doesn't mean it won't feel like vomiting out his own teeth to do so, "But Harry's young. Extremely underage to be precise. Not to mention a history of abuse and far too many murders to be even remotely healthy mentally."

Poppy hummed into her tea, "Yes, he does seem to be pretty blasé with injury, death, and sex from what I've been hearing through the Hogwarts grapevine. It's why he broke it off with Percy you know?"

"Do tell." Snape says, self-loathing pushed away for the moment in favor of his piqued interest, he may have ruined his own chances at the young Potter but it's nice to hear how someone else has done so too. Schadenfreude and all that.
Eying the potions master's glittering intrigue disapprovingly, the mediwitch started talking. "I overheard them, back then. Not one of the worst breakups in the hospital wing but certainly rather painful nonetheless." She sighs, "It's clear to me that Harry, Mr. Potter, has issues with understanding the softer emotions of life. He seemed to have it in his head that sex was important if the whole reason for a romantic relationship. It's, not the sort of thinking I would expect from a child."

"Yes, well, if he had both the mentality and body of a child I'm fairly sure I wouldn't have had the unfortunate realization of me being such a depraved pervert," Severus replies droll and self-deprecatingly for lack of anything else to say.

"Get over yourself Severus, we've both acknowledged that you're a sick pedophile who apparently believes in the muggle phrase 'Go Big or Go Home.'" Madam Pomfrey sighed. Because Harry Potter may only be thirteen, but he's one of the most sought-after individuals in the magical community, a wizarding celebrity and since a few months ago, a globally recognized medical anomaly. Witch Weekly had a poll and Harry had ended up usurping Lockhart's title of Best Smile while also gaining a few new ones such as Number One Wizard to have their First Kiss with, Number One Wizard to want in their Family, and Nicest Eyes.

(Unbeknownst to the mediwitch, some of the less savory wizarding magazines too had done polls with Harry Potter in them. Recently he had unknowingly won an Honourable mention for Cutest Twink, Third Nicest Arse, and Number One Guilty Fantasy About.)

"The point is, in my professional opinion-"

"Of general practicing medimagic." Snape snidely mutters. Madam Pomphrey bravely ignores the urge to strangle.

"Mr. Potter is less inclined to romance than to sex, whether it's upbringing or just the way he is, I fear that the boy's heart is wary of true emotion. I believe the muggles can tentatively label this as demiromantic." The potions master says something very uncomplimentary about Pomphrey's professional opinion under his breath. Oh, she was going to enjoy her next words. "I think your overly romantic to the point of obsessive nature might do some good for his stubborn heart really."

Snape choked on his own saliva.

"I'm sorry, what?"

The older witch smirked, "All I'm saying is, in most cases I would frown at such a relationship, but I also think if you don't scoop the goldfish up sometime soon, you'll find that someone else will scoop up that goldfish and then you wouldn't have the goldfish. Understand?"

The potions master stared. "...No."

They both decided to resume this conversation at a more reasonable time. Snape quietly resolves to never bring it up again.

Madam Pomphrey, unfortunately, had made no such promise and had taken to leaving books of wizarding homoerotic fiction nearby his person as well as guides to the art of pleasurable homosexual relations.

And maybe Severus might have read a few chapters. Maybe he studies them a bit too intensely late at nights in the comfort and privacy of his bedroom. It's not like he doesn't know how much of a horrible human being he already is. At least he'll be a prepared one.
From realizing he was, well 'in love' was a strong word but the most fitting one at this moment, and kissing the subject of his desire to crying in front of one of his more respected teachers in a deserted hallway at night. It's amazing how quickly and how far one could fall in a span of fifteen minutes.

"Oh, Harry," the transfiguration Professor gasps, more than a little befuddled at the sudden tears. She's never even seen the young wizard shed a tear when the topic of his abusive childhood came up, just a nonchalant embarrassment at best, so the sight of a sobbing Harry Potter in the middle of her patrols startlingly unexpected. Admittedly she was a little at a loss on what to do. "Shhhhh... Harry, shhhh. Why don't you tell me what's wrong?"

What she got in response was rather incoherent blubbering, though she suspects that the teenager was being overdramatic and inserting random words in there to make himself sound incoherent. Because she's fairly sure that a 'jellyfish' and 'quackers' do not belong with 'Snape,' 'git,' 'reject,' and 'spineless'. Fairly sure. Actually, spineless jellyfish would make sense and, what was she doing? There was a crying student in need!

"Let's go to my office," McGonagall says soothingly, Harry just nodded as he tried to wipe his constantly falling tears. "Come along then."

It doesn't take long, thank whatever Harry's god is. It's almost unnerving how sad Harry had been the whole time, he had stopped crying for the most part but there was still a few weepy sniffles interjected in the somber silence.

"Now," The transfiguration professor says once they had finally settled into their respective seats- her in her usual chair and Harry across her office desk. "From the top please Mr. Potter."

Harry sniffled again. Merlin his eyes are so big and watery and adorable. Minerva almost feels bad for thinking that it was possibly one of the boy's cutest expressions she had ever seen. She could shove Harry in front of He Who Shall Not Be Named with that teary-eyed face and the woman was fairly sure the evil psychopath would have keeled over from the sheer pure pretty of it all.

"I… I kissed Professor Snape."

The transfiguration professor silently screams in her head. "….I see." Is all she says outwardly.

"You… have to promise not to tell anyone," Harry says, his voice still wobbly and scratchy from his previous weepy outburst.

"Of course I will," McGonagall promises seriously while cursing inwardly. She so wanted to tell someone. Dumbledore maybe. Or one of the other female teachers. Poppy had this ridiculous idea that Severus was going to be the one to make the first move. Damn teacher-student confidentiality. Damn it to wizard hell.

As if sensing her inner conflict, the teen wizard raised a brow. Awkwardly the older witch coughed. "Yes, so, you kissed Severus you say?" She says, effectively moving back onto the very, very interesting subject at hand. This was so much better than her novellas. Maybe she should write her own? She certainly had a lot of material.

"He-" Harry looked suspiciously at her, "Okay, look, you really have to swear on, well not your magic but something okay?"

Damn the Slytherin in the boy. Damn it to wizard hell.

"Fine." She sighs irritatedly, taking out her wand and saying monotonously, "I swear on my catnip whatever you say shall not leave this room without your permission, so mote it may be."
Green eyes, still a tad watery, glittered in amusement, "Catnip professor? Really?"

"It's very expensive my stash." The older witch defends, her catnip is exported from Brazil and of the highest-class dammit, "Don't change topic Mr. Potter."

The wizard savior slumps in his seat, his faintly amused smirk sliding off into something more forlorn and embarrassed, "I, he was talking a bit about how… he was opening up to me, see? And it was like my lungs were twisted around my heart and I just, just... couldn't help myself."

Harry looks away, shifting uncomfortably. "I thought, maybe, well," He laughs a little bitterly, "Obviously it doesn't matter what I thought, I was wrong anyway."

McGonagall gives her student a sympathetic look, it wasn't like she hadn't had her fair share of rejections. Then again, she didn't exactly have the same background as Harry did either. "Humor me, tell me what you thought."

"I thought he wanted me." Harry confesses, "He kissed back a little you know? And why else would he have put up with me and all the trouble I made the past two years?"

"Oh Harry, that's not why, that's not tru- wait, what did you say in the middle there?"

The teen blinked, "He kissed me back?"

McGonagall blinked, "Huh." That did explain quite a bit actually. And made things exponentially more complicated. Interesting, but complicated. "Well, either way, just because an adult person takes care of you or treats you nicely, doesn't necessarily mean that they are looking for, well, that with you."

Merlin, she's taught students for decades and never had she found herself in the position of explaining why nice people don't expect sexual favors from minors to a student. Harry narrows his eyes.

"Well, I certainly wasn't going to give them eternal life." The teen muttered petulantly. McGonagall chose to ignore that overdramatic statement as typical teenage snark. She sighs and massages her forehead.

"You don't have to give them anything." She tries again, "Not everyone does nice things because they want something Mr. Potter."

"Obviously, that's why some people do bad things to get what they want," Harry scoffed, rolling his eyes irritationally. The transfiguration professor felt the reaction rather unfair since she was the one who wanted to do that to him. "Really professor, I know how the world works."

"I'm trying to help you," She says in a strong show of patience despite it not exactly being much of a strength of hers. That was more Pomona's expertise. Everything about this was Pomona's expertise. Where the fuck was the Hufflepuff when Minerva needed her? "Are you saying I'm trying to get something out of you?"

The Boy Who Lived leaned back on his seat, now that the tears were more or less dried the curling of ire and anger was creeping in his eyes. It doesn't help that the teen was probably exhausted from the whole thing. "Let's see," Harry hisses, "You're getting paid as a professor for this, you could benefit even without telling people by sidestepping the truth a little to circulate new gossip and betting material, you could get satisfaction from gaining weaknesses of the Boy Who Lived, you could blackmail me, you could blackmail Snape, you coul.."
"OKAY." The witch says forcefully, a headache coming on as well as a sick feeling in her gut. Harry has hidden his cynicism well it seems. Dumbledore got off too lightly with his shattered bowl of stupid lemon drops. "I get it Mr. Potter. The point here is, I could gain all those.. things you had just artfully described but I won't. Because this is what being a good person is. I'm sure you do nice things all the time without expecting repayment from your friends."

"I expect my friends' continued friendship for the nice things I do." Harry states so blandly the professor didn't know if she wanted to laugh, cry or pull her hair out. Harry just gives her a Look. The sort she usually gives to impertinent young students who should really know better than to tease the Giant Squid. "Everything has a price Professor. The exchange may not necessarily be equivalent but the exchange is there nonetheless."

"You... make me sad." She finally says defeatedly. Harry grinned crookedly, though it wasn't a very victorious smile, just one of steady acceptance. Which, is probably worse. "Okay, maybe you have a point, but Harry, I think we both know you're straying from the subject at hand again."

"Fuck." Harry muttered petulantly.

"Five points from Slytherin," Minerva says because she, like Severus, finds great pleasure in the expressions of students when they dock points. "Potter, please, it's almost midnight, we've been talking for at least twenty minutes and the only thing that's happened is you said you kissed your professor and I've lost a little faith in the world."

"I don't know about you Professor but that sounds like a rather productive conversation if you ask me."

"Potter." Oh, Merlin, she was getting flashbacks. It's hard to remember that Harry was James Potter's son what with his great academics and only a few disruptions to the classroom under his belt- they weren't really even his fault! Then he goes and says these things and she remembers.

The teen sighs, looking older than he should be, "What do you want me to say, professor? I got rejected because I'm childish and immature and just saying it out loud is like shrapnel dancing up my throat."

"I know you're hurting Harry," She says softly, carefully, "But Professor Snape is a fully grown wizard, the same age as your father even, while you are a child under the eyes of the law. I think you may have been a bit too hasty if you do not mind me saying."

Harry bites his lip, as if he wanted desperately to argue with that but didn't know how to. Well unless he brought up the whole immortal being of death thing but he rather used that only for actual dire emergencies. And as dire as this was for his squishy little heart, it wasn't exactly a 'reveal your true identity now' emergency.

"I really do like him, Professor." He confesses softly, he looks so small and vulnerable and confused as he does, as if he still couldn't really believe it himself. "I've never, I don't think I've ever felt this way about anyone."

"Do you.. love Severus?" Merlin just the concept was mind boggling.

The young wizard hesitates before carefully replying. "... I don't think I've ever known love to be perfectly candid Professor. Not personally. I know attraction, affection, and lust well enough I guess. Comradeship and friendship I get, more or less. But love is, well, it's a different beast to me. I know it's out there but I don't know if it's for me." Briefly, Harry thinks of his past, Death's past, before he pushes it violently away. He doesn't think his new sensitive human emotions could take that sort of
trip down memory lane. Not without a ton of chocolate at least. And one of those cheesy romantic
comedies that he does not secretly sometimes watch in his realms when he feels a little grey.

He lowers his eyes to his lap, fingers twisting against each other as he says, "All I know is, I feel..
warm with him Professor McGonagall. It's like," He waves his hands vaguely as if that would help
properly convey the emotions he barely understands much less voice, "Like choking on electrified
fairy dust while being pierced in the heart by boiling unicorn blood."

The woman furrows her brow, clearly not expecting that metaphor.

"That was meant in a good way," Harry insists.

"I'll take your word for it." She replies dryly before going back to looking serious. "Harry, I
appreciate your honesty with me, and to be perfectly candid, I do not disapprove the idea of the two
of you engaging in romantic relations, even though I really should be." It helps that she now knows
that Severus has the morality and self-control to resist Harry's charms and push him away. "But if the
man has turned you down, I think you should respect his wishes. Maybe wait until you're of less..
objectionable age."

Harry was about to nod sadly because that made sense but then he stopped, a thought struck him.
Did Snape explicitly turn him down? Now that he thought about it closely, he realized that the man
never said that he, well, maybe he had, but. But.

But the man had kissed him back. That meant something right?

"No," now that tears were dried, Harry could feel his thoughts unfog and clear from the haze that his
emotions had clouded him with. Green eyes glittered calculatingly as he began to think a little more
logically, "I mean yes, I was rash. But I don't think he had outright rejected me. Not in like, complete
disgust or anything. Professor Snape is a cautious man and I scared him off." The last part was said a
little disbelievingly. No one's ever rejected Death, not really. And even less have rejected Harry
Potter, save for the Dursleys of course, but they hardly counted as flobberworms in his opinion. The
idea that someone he genuinely desires, especially so strongly, does not like him back is, and
probably will always be, a little baffling.

Then again, Harry's fairly sure Snape wouldn't have been half as intriguing as he was to Harry if he
had just rolled over and begged like the rest of them. Harry smiled wickedly, Professor McGonagall
instinctively shuffled further away from him. "Potter? You have a very… concerning look on your
face."

"Oh, this?" His wicked smile turned into a full-fledged manic grin. "This is my idea face Professor,
and I've just had a very delightful one indeed." He cackled. Yes, he couldn't afford to waste time
being mopey and angsting like some sniveling human teenager. He was Death. Powerful, feared and
yet desired by all.

Harry's going all about this the wrong way, he shouldn't have expected such a stubborn human like
Severus to bend to his will so easily, to fall onto his knees eagerly like everyone else. Severus would
fight, armed with his sharp tongue, his self-loathing and his odd yet strict morality, and it was up to
Harry to rise up to the occasion this time.

He's let the soft gooey parts of Potter take far too much control these last few months. It's all well and
good to play the human but there was always such a thing as getting too deep into your role after all.
Romantic affection for Snape, even Mr. Riddle in hindsight, has made him soft, submissive in a way
that really he usually only prefers in matters of the bedroom. But not now, not for this.
Harry's not going to wait for the damn man to change his mind, he's going to change it for him.

With patience, understanding-

and seducing the fucking socks off the man.

Harry cackled again. He's never had to really hunt for his meal before but the idea is lighting up his blood like a match to a straw house. Oh, Harry dearly hopes Snape was ready because the young wizard was going to make the man regret fucking with him. By fucking him.

In a far much better mood than before, Harry hugged the deeply perturbed Gryffindor Head of House. "Thank you, Professor McGonagall," He gushes, "I know what I must do now."

"Yes, well," The older witch says a little weakly, "Let's not kill anyone shall we Mr. Potter?"

Harry laughed, McGonagall really was funnier than most people gave the stern woman credit for, "I'll do my best," He says before strolling out of her office with a skip in his step and a jaunty tune to his whistle.

Professor McGonagall watches him leave quietly. Only once the incredibly haunting whistling was tuned out did she shake her head, "Goodness, I do hope that boy never decides to go for world domination or anything like that." She mutters, shuddering at how, for a second there, when the young teen had looked at her with that grin on his face, he had looked… Powerful.

The wizard savior was a god, a mighty beast, a king and something far greater at that moment. Chilling and yet terrifyingly comforting, like a heavy blanket suffocating her. Suddenly she felt far less concerned for Harry in this possible relationship and much more worried for Severus.

"Well better Severus than the entire wizarding world." She sighs as she summons a cup of tea. "Merlin help that stubborn git though."

The morning after was not as awkward as Snape had feared. More baffling than anything as it turned out.

Harry 'Casts shield charms around his potion cauldron at all times' Potter, Harry 'I will burn every diary in my sight' Potter, Harry 'Smith will earn my forgiveness the moment every coin in his vault is unwisely spent and the meat on his face melts from his bones' Potter was making him breakfast. Well, that little house elf so enamored with Potter was doing most of the work but Harry was cooking the omelets so the potions master figured it counts. They did look like very tasty omelets.

"…Harry?" The older wizard calls out warily because he is now convinced that somehow this is a trap. Even if, best case scenario Harry had flung himself onto Snape as some sort of sick joke- which the man immediately feels a little guilty about thinking- the young wizard would still not have taken such a harsh rejection so lightly. Not many people would. Especially ones with pride as high as Harry's. Snape expected the silent treatment at the very least.

Harry turns around and, well, Snape's heart can't help but stop a little. The young wizard's eyes are still red-rimmed from his tears last night but he's smiling, smiling like he had just heard the best news in the world and wanted to tell everyone about it. And here Snape was, in the middle of his sitting room in his dark green nightgown and matching slippers like an asshole, wishing fervently to be the one Harry told it to.

"Severus." Harry greets warmly if a touch too intensely. The Slytherin picks up on the odd note in his voice but fails to do anything about it as he's quickly ushered into one of his seats on the small
round dining table he has and flourished with a rather delectable looking breakfast feast. "Sit. Eat."

He sits. Then he watches Harry plate the omelet he was cooking and placed it in front of him. There was Italian chorizo and feta with a sprinkle of finely chopped spring onion. It was his favorite. Clearly, Harry was going to poison him.

"It looks lovely." The professor compliments because one should never reveal when one has suspicions of being poisoned. And it did look rather lovely. There was a decorative design made with ketchup on it. Snape would like to assume it was an attempt at some type of flower but it could have as easily been an artistic interpretation of what his impending doom looked like. Still. Call him biased but he still thought it quite charming.

Harry beamed brightly at the praise, and that was rather lovely and charming too. Maybe Snape was already dead. Maybe Harry had killed him in his sleep and somehow he had made it to heaven. "Cheers Severus, I hadn't done much cooking for a while so I hope it's not too runny or anything."
The young wizard rolled his eyes pointed toward the house elf in the kitchen who was cleaning the dishes whilst making waffles. "Dobby over there almost cried when I insisted to help out, so if they're anything less than perfect I doubt I'll be allowed back in there again." He half-joked.

"I shall do my best to be a generous critic then," Snape drawled despite his confusion at the situation. Maybe Harry wasn't going to poison him? Tentatively he takes a small bite out of the hot eggy dish, it's delicious if a tad runny like Harry had worried about.

Luckily for the other wizard, Severus quite enjoyed his eggs a little runny. He had decided this very thing just now. With a smile that felt odd belonging on his face, the Slytherin swallowed and scooped up a noticeably larger mouthful to savor in his mouth.

It's hot and gooey and deliciously salty. The older man enjoyed it immensely. And that's when Potter struck.

"Is your cock proportional to your height?" Harry asks casually, all the while staring intently at him with those glowing green eyes of his. "Because I would think I would greatly enjoy gagging on it."
Snape choked on his omelet. His face burning both from shocked mortification and a genuine lack of oxygen.

The sly little vixen smiled superiorly at the reaction, though after a full minute of Snape continuously coughing up egg, Harry began to look more concerned. "Um, Severus? Are you-you're not actually dying are you?"

Well, at least that confirms that Harry had been purposely trying to murder him via choking. Oh, how that warms his shriveled deoxygenated heart.

"Oh shit, shit! I'm sorry, water, where's the- here drink this."

Snape gratefully took the glass of water and drank it all. "I'm sorry," he choked out sarcastically because his head was a little dizzy from all that hacking and coughing. "I don't think I quite caught that."

Harry burst out laughing. It was breathy and a bit nervous but it was a wondrous sound nonetheless. The older Slytherin wanted to bottle it up and listen to it on his darkest of days. "Dobby, more water for Severus please?"

Dobby clicks his fingers and the cup in his hand slowly refills with water. Huh. The potions master wasn't really aware they could do that. He drinks the water, slower this time. This time he is more
prepared for whatever Harry has to say.

But fuck, now his mind is going to be putting the memory of Harry saying the word 'cock' and 'gagging for it' on repeat for probably forever now. The punishment is cruel as it is unusual. It oddly suits Harry's style.

"Well, I wasn't lying. About, well, what I said before." Harry sighs, slumping back in his chair and taking a bite out of his waffle. He looks at Snape seriously, determinedly, "I'm sorry for startling you, well, not really, I am sorry for making you asphyxiate on your food though. But I will not retract my statement, sir. I really do like you."

Marvelous. A repeat of yesterday and a confirmation that Potter thinks about sucking his dick. Just what he needed. Snape points at the young teen with his fork. "You are still a child." He sneers like he hasn't been fucking his fist over said child for a very inappropriately long time considering. Snape thinks the only person who could be a bigger hypocrite than him is if the Dark Lord ended up being a half-blooded muggleborn or something.

Harry tilted his head up defiantly, "Children grow up." He sneers back, looking regal even in his rebellion. "Don't you worry professor, by the time I hit sixteen you'll be fucking me on this very table." The boy confidently predicts as he shoots pointed glances down at the sturdy old piece of furniture. Snape could not help but helplessly stare at it as well, imagining a sixteen-year-old Harry spread out naked and bare just for him, coaxing him with a smirk.

It's… definitely an image.

"As cocky as your father I see." Is all he can croak out. Damn that whore James Potter. He hopes the man is turning his grave knowing that his stupid charms and general low morals were being utterly wasted on his son.

"Wouldn't know, never met the bloke." Harry shrugs, "But I have met you, and I must say, anyone who had the stupidity to think you deserve to be bullied is probably a right wanker and certainly not anyone I would've liked half as much as I like you."

Fuck. Severus was not going to last until Potter's fifteenth birthday if the boy kept saying things like this.

Quickly he tried to change the subject, lest he falls any further into his depraved, maddening affections. "And this breakfast? Don't tell me this is your cunning master plan." Never mind that it was working. Snape snorts derisively, "Hardly would call it a plan really." More like an ambush of domestic temptation.

For the first time, Harry blinked, confused. His brow furrowed in a manner one might consider adorable if one was not Severus Snape. "But... the books always say stuff like a way to a man's heart is through the stomach." Green eyes look plaintively at the potions master. "And it doesn't mean by dismemberment or physically maiming someone- I checked."

Poppy's words about Harry's lack of ability to understand the softer emotions rang through Snape's head like warning bells. And yet here Harry was, trying, like some ham-handed awkward fool to woo him in the most cliche of ways.

"Bloody precious boy," Snape muttered irritatedly fond under his breath because he was above making cutey cooing noises like a second year Hufflepuff at the sight of a baby puffskein.

"What was that?"
"...nothing."

Merlin, forget fifteen, Snape would be lucky if he lasted a month.

Heyy big brother,

While Snape is not who I would pick (because damn that Lucius bloke seems fine as hell, also the twins, or Draco considering how his father turned out to be, even that Lupin fellow—never mind, getting off topic as usual lol) I shall have to take your word for it. Also, if you were hoping for some advice on how to woo your professor in this letter, I'm sorry but I am shit out of stuff. Mainly because I can only offer you love potion recipes and apparently that's a huge no-no.

Not that I would know. After all, it's not like I have to work for my dates ;P

Chaos has given some very interesting suggestions but I hardly think doing what he wants you to do with a milkshake on the couch is a great start to a romantic relationship. Or any relationship really.

Presents are always nice—Love says they gotta come from the heart but I think if it comes from a deep enough wallet that works just as well. I say get him some nice rare potions ingredients, check out the Forbidden Forest since it's always brimming with stuff, oh and take some basilisk scales and such from the Chamber. The Black Lake has some pretty goodies too and now Fate is saying I'm going to inadvertently spoil next year for you. That is so unfair, my words should literally come first considering the world you're residing in right now! Honestly, she is soo annoying, always acting like the mature older one, as if she knows so much.

I do hope you come back soon, she listens to you. They all do. And Chaos is especially grumpy recently, even I can't keep him entertained for long. He's just all snippy and mopey. It's rather sad.

Life says the food and present ideas are very good for courting. You already have a high social status which works in your favour as an attractive individual, but she suggests maybe the problem is that your human does not see your viability considering your young physical age. Showing the man that you have many other potential mates should help in that regard. Also mating dances and feats of strength to show that you can protect your future offspring.

... There's a whole essay about reproduction and mating tactics here. Life gets pretty damn enthusiastic about all that stuff, though I'm sure you know all about that. Though Love gave her thumbs up for some of the stuff, she laughed about the rest but that's still a positive response right?

Yeah, a grain of salt may need to be taken.

Cheers and good luck with your attempt at a love life brother, hopefully, it doesn't become as a big of a train wreck as Knowledge's last attempt at a harem. There, there was a lot of tears that Knowledge was not emotionally equipped to handle.

xoxo Magic

Harry waves goodbye to the Slytherins to see Ron and Hermione for breakfast. It wasn't like they weren't going to see each other in ten or so minutes anyway, despite what Draco says. And it turns out since Harry's in Slytherin for the whole year, the professors' decided to save all that hassle about Harry's unique House-less situation and just put him on the usual Slytherin time table for the core units. Which usually meant he shared time with the Gryffindors too.
His choices of Care of Magical Creatures and Divination were apparently quite popular, mainly because they were considered rather easy to pass so Harry wasn't that surprised to see Draco and him matched class for class practically, though the Malfoy heir was doing Arithamancy instead of Divination.

Fucking nerd.

"Wassup?" He greets.

Ron grins and gestures for Harry to sit by him, "Not much, Hermione here's hogging our schedules."

"We're starting some of the new subjects today," is all she said happily. Ron looks over her shoulder and frowns.

"Hey. They've messed up your timetable. Look- your down for about ten subjects. There isn't enough time in the day."

Harry frowns as well, he cranes his head to see the girl's timetable and sure enough, the thing is filled with black ink of a lot of writing. "This morning at nine o'clock you have Divination and Muggle studies and..." He squints.

Ron laughed, "And Arithmancy?!" He finishes for Harry. "Seriously how are you going to be in three classes at once?"

"Don't be silly," said Hermione shortly. "Of course I won't be in three classes at once. Now pass the marmalade."

"But..."

"Ron, what's it to you if my timetable's a bit full?" Hermione snapped, Ron looked startled at the sudden aggressiveness, Harry narrowed his eyes. For someone as eager to explain literally everything, refuse to do just that meant secrets were afoot. "I told you, I've fixed it all with Professor McGonagall."

Before Harry could begin his own subtle interrogation- for he had no interest camping out in the hospital wing for the third year in a row- Hagrid entered the Great Hall. He was wearing a long overcoat made out of what seemed to be moleskin, an odd choice in Harry's personal opinion but not as odd as Hagrid's choice of accessory- a dead polecat that he swung absentmindedly in his hand.

Not that Harry should really talk. He remembers a time when he had thought it the height of fashion to be draped in dead animal remains. Furs, teeth, bone. Nowadays he prefers a more modest, sleek shadowy appearance but occasionally he took out a few claws and fangs for a wilder look. God, he had the cutest necklace of eyeballs Chaos had given him that really brought out his own lack of them.

"Mornin'" Hagrid greeted them eagerly on his way to the staff table. "Yer in my firs' ever lesson! Right after lunch! Been up since five getting' everthin' ready... hope it'll be okay... wot with me bein' a teacher... hones'ly..."

He grinned broadly at them and bid a cheery goodbye, still swinging the very dead polecat. Harry cannot judge. He used to keep revive dinosaur skeletons and keep them as pets. He named one of them Bones, and another Skeletor. Harry cannot judge. He cannot... but... it's so tacky.

Damn. He judged.
"Wonder what he's been getting ready with?" Ron murmured to Harry with an audible note of anxiety. Clearly he still hasn't fully forgiven the half-giant about Aragog. Harry can't blame him. He still gets the occasional plate-sized spider literally dropping in on him. Draco, Nott and even Zabini shrieked like a bitch the first time it happened. It was probably the only thing that got Ron back on speaking terms with Hagrid again.

Divination was in the North Tower. Like the most north tower to ever north. Despite two years at Hogwarts none of them had ever been there, and Harry would like to point out that there were plenty of closer empty towers to have placed the class in. Goodness knows Harry's been thrown off of several by the damned castle. The journey to North Tower was a long, arduous one, especially for his weak body. Well, everyone's weak bodies. God they all needed to do some serious cardio because Quidditch and study marathons just do not cut it.

"Fuuuuuuuuuuuiiiuuuuuuuuuuuck," Harry whined as another staircase appeared, disrupting their short but sweet horizontal platform they had been walking on. This was the seventh staircase. Seventh.


"Where the hell is Voldemort when you need a psycho?" Harry grouches as they begin their assent once again.

'Right here.' An amused Mr. Riddle pipes up. 'Oh, wow that is a lot of foul language, you kiss those dementors of yours with that mouth?'

"I think- it's- oh Merlin- this way," Hermione groans as they finally reached the landing, peering down an empty passage to the right.

"Can't be," Ron complains breathily. "That's- uh, south. Look- ow my sides- you can see a bit of the bloody lake outside the window..."

Before they could start to bicker, Harry takes out his wand, places it flat on his hand and growls out an impatient, "Point me, Divination classroom."

'Smart.'

'Shut the fuck up Riddle.'

The wand jumps into action, as eager as any house elf, arguably more so since Harry actually uses house elves more than he does his wand. The green-eyed wizard would feel worse about that if the last time he had tried using that magical piece of wood had involved an explosion of glitter than Seamus and the Weasley twins had been jealous about. You could still get smudges of the shiny dust onto your robes if you leaned on the wrong wall sometimes.

"That way," Harry grunts, pointing at the direction of his wand and wondering if it wasn't too soon for him to change subjects as there in the distance was another staircase. Ron and Hermione groaned.

To make matters worse, apparently, this was the area of the castle Sir Cadogan was painted in.

"My dark maiden!" The knight greets boisterously as they pass by his painting.

"What did he just call you?" Hermione whispered.

"Ignore the crazy painting," Harry grits out, because he was tired and cranky and has no desire to play any fair princess unless someone literally sweeps him off his terribly sore feet. "Come on."
"Ah, how you wound me my delicate black rose. Your thorns are as sharp as your words indeed."

Hermione and Ron giggled at the knight's dramatics, even Harry could feel his mouth quirking a little in a smile. It's a nice reprieve from everyone's whining and complaints anyway.

"Listen," Harry says, taking advantage of his brief good humor to find his politeness that's been hiding under all his muscle pain, "we're looking for the Divination classroom. A brave adventurous knight such as yourself must know the way yes?"

"Yes! A quest!" Sir Cadogan yelled victoriously, he clanked his metal feet in joy, "Come follow me my evil queen and servants, for we shall find our goal, or else perish bravely for the sake of the journey!" He jumped on a comically fat pony. Harry really has to wonder about wizard painters sometimes. "Onwards! To adventure!"

And then the knight ran out of the portrait frame and to another.

"I am not evil." Harry says offended as they began chasing after the very inconsiderate knight. Cadogan hasn't looked back once to check on them the wanker.

"I see you're not denying the queen part of that statement." Hermione observes, earning a two fingered salute.

"Why were we called the servants?" Ron complained as they ran, "We could've been knights too!"

"Yeah, from the, ugh, way you're puffing I'm sure knighthood was clearly the obvious choice."

"Cheers." Ron sarcastically says while gasping for air.

"This is it!" Cried, Sir Cadogan. The trio moaned as the painted knight brandished his sword toward some very tightly spiraling steps, "Venture forth and you shall find the treasure you seek! Till we meet again my shadow maiden and her slaves!"

"Great, we got demoted." Ron muttered sourly. "Arse."

Finally, finally, they began to hear the voices above them and knew they had reached the classroom. They climbed the last few steps and emerged onto a tiny landing, where most of the class was already assembled. There were no doors, but a circular trapdoor with a plaque on that read, 'Sybill Trelawney, Divination teacher'.

As if sensing the students, the trapdoor suddenly opened, and a silvery ladder descended right at their feet.


"After you." Ron grinned, seeing Harry's obvious distaste.

"You just want to see my arse." Harry shot back, causing the redhead to immediately make a face.

"Not bloody likely mate."

Hermione and Harry both giggled.

"Suuure," says the wizard savior with a flirtatious wink, "I get it, we'll keep it on the down low."

"Wha- what does that even mean?!" Ron spluttered red-faced as Harry began to climb up the ladder.
"Wouldn't you like to know?" The Boy Who Lived to Harrass pointedly wiggled his hips as he did, causing Hermione to shriek in laughter at Ron's expression.

"WELL I BLOODY WELL DON'T NOW!"

Professor Trelawney was like this sparkly, scarf covered praying mantis wannabe gypsy. Like, Harry wanted to know if the woman realised her glasses made her eyes ten times bigger than they should be. Because they do.

"Sit, my children, sit," she tells the still panting, sweaty trio.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione awkwardly sat themselves around the same round table as the other students there seems to have already taken the other spots. Harry needs to ask how everyone else got there before them because fuck, he will cut open a goat and stuff a squirrel in it's stomach to never go through that again. He assumes he would get used to the exercise later, especially when his body stops being such a weak bitch about everything but the point still stands. At least the chair was comfy and plush.

"Welcome to Divination," Professor Trelawney intones in a suitably mysterious manner, who had seated herself in a winged armchair in front of the fire. A fireplace and armchairs? Divination must be a good subject to warrant all these luxuries damn. "My name is Professor Trelawney. You may not have seen me before. I find that descending too often into the hustle and bustle of the main school clouds my Inner Eye."

Intriguing. Harry couldn't see if a person has an inner eye or the 'sight' like Fate could but he has met a few people with the gifts.

"So you have chosen to study Divination, the most difficult of all magical arts. I must warn you at the outset that if you do not have the Sight, there is very little I will be able to teach you... Books can take you only so far in this field..."

Harry nodded in agreement, well at least she won't garner any false hopes or anything. Though it is quite questionable on how they manage to examine this subject if this is the case.

Hermione, in contrast, seemed absolutely startled at the news that books would not help her this time. Ron snickered quietly.

Trelawney then honed in on Neville,

"You boy, is your grandmother well?"

"Um, I, uh think so?" he answered wide eyed. The woman tuts and looks at him pityingly.

"I wouldn't be so sure if I were you, dear." Neville gulped and tried to ask for more information but the professor had already moved on to address the class again. "We will be covering the basic methods of Divination this year. First term will be devoted to reading tea leaves. Next we'll progress to palmistry, fire omens and then finally the crystal ball. Unfortunately, classes will be disrupted in February by a nasty bout of flu. I myself will lose my voice. And around Easter, one of our number will leave us for ever."

"Yes, me." Hermione muttered under her breath, "What's the point of even coming if not all of us can learn from this?"

"Because some of us can get an easy O?" Ron whispers back with a grin while Trelawney terrifies
Lavender Brown with some prediction about something.

"Now, I want you all to divide into pairs." She tells everyone after telling one of the Patil twins that a redheaded bloke would bring them misfortune. "Collect a teacup from the shelf, come to me, and I will fill it. Then sit down, drink, drink until only the dregs remain. Swill these around the cup three times with the left hand, then turn the cup upside down on its saucer, wait for the last of the tea to drain away, then give your cup to your partner to read. You will interpret the patterns using pages five and six of Unfogging the Future. Oh, and dear," the professor catches Neville by the arm as he begins to stand up, "after you've broken your first cup, would you be so kind as to select one of the blue patterned ones? I'm rather attached to the pink."

Harry looked a little impressed as Neville immediately broke a cup. Either she was the real deal or she was good.

"I'll pair with Neville," Hermione tells them, "It looks like he needs some support." They all looked at the trembling boy staring at the dustpan the professor had summoned for him.

"Um, maybe I should pair up with him." Harry volunteers. Because while the two were on better standing now, one does not just lightly forgive another for trying to body bind oneself in first year completely, no matter how nice one is. Ron, as if reading his thoughts, nodded in agreement.

"Yeah, besides, I forgot where I put my Unfogging the Future text Mione." Ron says, which effectively got the girl's attention before she began to argue back. As she began to nag the redhead about responsibility, Harry went down to Neville and patted his shoulder sympathetically.

Wandlessly summoning two blue teacups, he passes one to the boy. "Come on, compared to the messes we get up to in Potions, this is nothing."

The Gryffindor smiled weakly at that, "T-that's true huh?"

"Yeah but the professor in potions is way hotter though." Harry couldn't help but sigh wistfully.

Neville gave him an odd, slightly grossed out look, "You're.. a strange bloke aren't you Harry?" Harry shrugged. At least the other boy wasn't shaking like a tiny leaf in a storm now.

With their teacups filled, they went back to Neville's table, right next to Ron and Hermione's and drank the scalding tea as fast as they could. Well, Neville drank it down like it was an ice tea. Harry had a sensitive tongue okay. "Harry I think you can stop blowing on your tea now." Neville comments amused as Harry blows tiny, delicate puffs of cool air into his tea.

The Boy Who Lived tentatively stuck his tongue in the hot liquid before immediately retracting it back. Secretly Neville thought it was rather cute, it reminded him a bit of Trevor. Not that he would say that out loud. He wasn't suicidal.

"Does the tea have to be hot when drunk?" Harry asks irritatedly. Neville shrugs.

"I don't think so, as long as you drink it I guess it should be okay."

"Thank god." The raven haired wizard sighed and waved his hand over his teacup. Neville could see the steam dissipating from the drink and felt a pang of jealousy at the casual show of power. "Huh, this is pretty good tea." Harry says, surprised, before immediately downing the whole thing.

They swilled the dregs around as instructed, then drained the cups and swapped over.

"Okay," Harry squints at Neville's tea leaves. "I… don't know what I'm seeing."
"Merlin, good, I thought I was going to be the only one with not a clue." The other wizard sighs in audible relief. They both grin at their shared befuddlement.

"Broaden your minds, my dears, and allow your eyes to see past the mundane!" Professor Trelawney cried through the gloom and smog of the class.

"Um, okay, broaden my mind or whatever," Harry repeats a little doubtfully, "It's triangular which means," He flips to the pages in the text, "Oh! A fortunate meeting and good luck. That sounds nice."

"I could definitely use some soon." Neville chuckles a little self-deprecatingly, "Right, yours looks like a…" He frowns and turns the teacup the other way round, "A cat or something I think. Apparently, it means that you've got misfortune coming your way but you'll land on your feet eventually."

The wizard saviour hummed, "Not the best fortune ever but not the worst at least. Do you think we can get more tea?"

"I don't think there's enough time in this class for you to finish blowing on a second cup."

Harry laughed and pointed at the other with his cup playfully, "Mean." He accused and Neville grinned shyly back. Then Professor Trelawney came up, looking disapprovingly at the pair and snatched up the cup Harry had been holding out.

"Let me see that, my dear." Everyone went silent, waiting for her verdict. She swishes the cup and peers in as she announces her prediction. "An acorn, unexpected but good fortune ahead my dear." She proclaims, causing Neville to look incredibly pleased, Harry sent him a thumbs up. Good on him. He certainly needs the confidence.

"Now, yours Mr. Potter," She declares, placing the teacup down and taking the one in Neville's hands. The woman looks into it and furrows her brow. "Oh my, yours is far more complicated, more dire, the falcon I see… my dear, you have a deadly enemy."

The room breaks into hushed whispers, but the loudest of them all was none other than in the table next to them.

"But everyone knows that," said Hermione, not even trying to hide her voice. Professor Trelawney stared at her. "Well, they do," she defended. "Everybody knows about Harry and You-Know-Who."

Harry and Ron stared at her. They've never heard her speak out to a position of authority like that before, it's like if she doggy eared a page of a book or something. It just wasn't done. She didn't even speak out to Snape when he was being obviously unfair and biased in docking points. She set him on fire sure, but she didn't talk back.

Professor Trelawney wisely did not reply or give any attention to the defiant student, instead focusing on Harry's cup.

"The club... an attack. Dear, dear, this is not a happy cup... The skull... danger in your path, my dear..." Trelawney gave the teacup a final turn in her hands, gasped, and then screamed.

"Well clearly my year is going to go just fabulously," Harry sarcastically said.

Professor Trelawney sank into a vacant armchair, her hand clutched around a scarf nearest to her heart and her eyes closed as if the visions were too much for her to handle. "My dear boy- poor dear boy- no- it is kinder not to say- no, don't ask me..."
"What is it, Professor?" said Dean Thomas at once, because he's kind of a shit that way. Everyone had got to their feet, and slowly they all crowded around Harry and Neville's table, pressing close to get a good look at the cup.

"My dear," Professor Trelawney's huge eyes opened dramatically, every professor was so fucking dramatic, seriously, what the fuck, "you have... the Grim."

"Huh." Harry says blandly. "Well, that's not great."

It seemed that was a rather big understatement, nearly everybody in the class had clapped their hands to their mouths in horror. Only the muggleborns seemed puzzled and confused.

"The Grim, my dear, the Grim!" cried Professor Trelawney, who looked shocked and appalled at Harry's nonresponse. "The giant, spectral dog that haunts churchyards! My dear boy, it is an omen- the worst omen- of death!"

Harry had to fight very, very hard not to laugh in her face.

Well, she wasn't wrong.

Everyone was staring at Harry wide-eyed and with fearful pity, everyone except Hermione, who had gotten up and moved around to the back of Professor Trelawney's chair. "I don't think it looks like a Grim," she said flatly.

Professor Trelawney surveyed Hermione with a mounting dislike that could only be compared to Hermione's own. "You'll forgive me for saying so, my dear, but I perceive very little aura around you. Very little receptivity to the resonances of the future." She replied, her usual misty tone sharp and scathing.

Now everyone was trying to see the grim in the teacup. Seamus Finnigan was tilting his head at increasingly awkward angles while squinting. "It looks like a donkey from here," he announced in all his thirteen years of wisdom.

"I still think that's a cat." Neville pipes up, looking at Harry supportively.

Harry grinned and winked back at him, causing the other boy to flush slightly. Then in a loud voice he says, "I don't know, I think the professor is right. It does look a bit like a grim." He puts on a 'woe is me' voice and sighs mournfully, "It's such a tragedy that a beauty such as mine will be gone so soon after being graced on this earth. I think the only way to distract me from my impending doom is if all my Christmas and birthday presents for the next ten years came to me early. You know, since I may die and all."

There's a silence, as no one really knows how to react to the blasé way the Boy Who Lived had handled that. Then Ron snorts, "Yeah, I think I'll pass on letting a teacup dictate the amount of presents I'm giving you next Christmas mate."

Everyone burst out laughing, shoving a mock outraged Harry around playfully.

"I think we will leave the lesson here for today," said Professor Trelawney in her mistiest voice. "Yes... please pack away your things..."

One of the worst things about life was that you could produce so much damage in a second, in a single movement- a raised hand swinging down, a push of a button, a well placed word- but you couldn't do the same in reverse. Healing was a long and arduous process that could not be counted in
A good example of this was; it takes only a moment to stab someone with a basilisk fang but it takes about three month and counting to slowly get over it.

'Oh come on! You're still upset about that?!' Mr. Riddle complained. 'Aren't you a god?'

'If you think gods as a whole are forgiving, benevolent and don't hold grudges to irrational extents then you have clearly not read any mythology of anything ever.' Harry points out amused. He's more or less over the stabby thing, no matter how annoying recovery was, but it doesn't hurt to keep the soul in check now and again. 'You're lucky you didn't do this to Hera or one of the Norse ones.'

'I... are they here too?'

Harry paused and squintingly looked up at the sky. It's hard to feel out the world while he was still anchored to the mortal flesh of mankind but there's definitely something godlike out there, he wouldn't say it was a pantheon or anything though. 'No, there might be a God but I'm fairly sure this time it's one of those Christian types that just watch and complain about the world and mourn about how it's headed whilst doing nothing about it.'

'Familiar with those types I see.' The hocrux comments with a cool interest. 'What do you mean by 'this time' by the way?'

'Multiverse theory, don't worry your pretty head about it yet,' Harry dismissed, 'and those types are Gods are unfortunately quite common. We created them in a fit of our own apathetic wishes, some of it must've rubbed off when we weren't looking.'

'Sometimes I don't know if listening to you ruin all my preconceived notions is worth whatever this is.'

Harry laughed, 'You make it sound like you have a choice. How cute.'

Mr. Riddle sulked for the whole day after that as he had nothing to retort with.

The thing was, despite what Ron would say, Harry, does not go out looking to shag every creature he crosses. For fucks sake, it was one centaur, one time. That Ron was aware of. Would Harry say yes to a vampire or a werewolf or a veela if they offered? Yes- well unless Severus finally accepts that Harry is serious about trying out the whole dating thing again with him but that doesn't seem like it's happening anytime soon so, yeah, Harry would accept.

But that still doesn't mean Harry goes actively searching for some sexy strange in his life. No. It's not like the moment he steps out of the castle unsupervised he goes out of his way to fuck a unicorn or to blow a dragon or something. Harry is thirteen going on fourteen. He knows his body's limitations... sort of... more like vaguely aware of them until he finds himself in the hospital wing again.

The point is- getting humped by a grim was not his intention when he wanted to take a nap by the Black Lake okay? It wasn't.

And yet here we are.

"Fucking intelligent horny bugger aren't you? Heavy too, shit." Harry grunts, still groggy from his rudely, so incredibly rudely, awakened slumber underneath the shade of a tree. The large shaggy beast of a dog lay on Harry's back, his erection hot against the curve of Harry's ass. The only thing between the two was a thin strip of cotton that was his underwear.
The dog growled, half-feral Harry assumes, but it sounded rather proud of itself for managing to pull down the wizard's pants. It began rutting down against Harry frantic and erratically like this was its first heat in years. Now fully awake, and rather alarmed at this situation he has managed to unwittingly fall into, Harry begins to try twisting out of the dog's hold. The beast licks Harry's neck and then nips at his ear and fuck okay, that was a little hot but there was no way he was going to shag a dog.

Call him old fashioned but Harry would rather he have a fellow being of the same species take his human virginity ta very much. Preferably a sour faced professor with hands that make Harry feel things.. many… things… But at this point, he would settle for 'human'.

"Get off me!" He yells demandingly, his upper body twisting to try to shove the huge dog with his thin arms. The grim whines piteously but since Harry was the one getting humped at, Harry wasn't exactly in the mood to feel sympathetic. It's odd that the animal wasn't listening to his demands, yet still felt the sway of attraction and power, either the dog had been recently living in some extenuating horrible circumstances or he was a- "Do not even THINK ABOU- off! Off you brute!" He screams as the thin fabric of his underwear shifts lower on his arse. "Off!"

Harry was wary about doing too much magic lest his frail mortal flesh does something but it wasn't like his physical attributes could overcome the creature alone. So he thinks maybe just a small nudge wouldn't be too much of a problem. Just a small- and the grim goes flying. Fuck.

Well, it's not like Harry feels particularly regretful because that was a bad, bad dog, but still. He needs to learn to fine tune his control again. That's going to suck.

"This is what happens when you skimp out on the dinner date mutt." The young wizard spits as he pulls his pants up properly. Then, feeling immediately a little guilty because now that he's less groggy from sleep and more focused, he can see how thin the beast actually was. Matted dirty fur and bones he was.

Muttering annoyedly at how strange this world was, he summons Dobby and tells him to give the grim a nice hot rare steak when he wakes. He tacks on the dinner jibe as a message to pass on as well because mean or not, the dog did jump him when he was asleep and that was so not cool.

"Tell him Harry Potter isn't pleased." He says to a nodding Dobby, looking at Harry like he was speaking words of prophecy, "But if he barks twice and does the begging position you, Dobby, will come to him and provide him food. Understood Dobby?"

"Dobby understands." Dobby salutes with a smile, eager to please. "Dobby will do exactly as Lord Death says."

"Yeah, right," He sighs, it's been a long week. "Well, at least you're not doing it in front of other people like I told you."

"Should Dobby also kick the doggy in his special place?"

"…Go with your heart."

As Harry makes his way back to the castle, he curses to himself as he realises something. Hopefully, not all Trelawney's predictions won't be so literal the next time.

Chapter End Notes
SHOUT OUT TO THE TWO PEOPLE WHO GAVE ME A KO-FI.

YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE. AND WHAT YOU ARE, ARE STARS. CHEERS MATES!

Also, others, please buy me a ko-fi. You can even request stuff- I mean, no guarantee or anything but lets be honest, money can be a nice motivator lol. I'm under the name Hweianime as usual :D

https://ko-fi.com/hweianime/
The one where Death meets some hippogriffs, volunteers Malfoy as tribute and starts dating a Slytherin.

Alternatively, the one where Snape does not date Harry Potter because the author loves him to suffer

After divination class, Harry had wisely chosen to spend his lunchtime with the Slytherins.

"Harry!" Draco grins enthusiastically, "I see you've finally decided to sit with people of some class this time around."

"Oh shut it," Harry responds fondly, "I only joined you losers because I felt sorry for you Draco." The Malfoy heir scoffed.

"What's with your two Gryffindorks by the way?" Everyone looked at the Gryffindor table and sure enough, Ron and Hermione were pointedly sitting apart and only looking at one another in order to glare. In between them was a very awkwardly uncomfortable Neville, Seamus, and Dean.

"They're fighting." Harry sighs, it's honestly a good thing he's not in Gryffindor this year considering. Ron and Hermione were already still arguing about the whole Crookshanks thing and now Divination class.

Professor McGonagall had admonished them all for being distracted in her class, telling them how unreliable divination was- something which made Hermione sit up straight and smug. Unfortunately, she was one of the few that sought assurance in the professor's words, Ron eventually got fed up with her dismissing Harry's omen and divination as a whole, and may have strongly implied that the bushy-haired girl had only adopted such an attitude because she just being bad at something for a change.

Obviously, she did not take that well.

"Ooh, is this about you dying Potter?" Pansy asks, eyes gleaming like a magpie in the face of some very shiny new gossip. "Have you seen a grim recently?"

The Boy Who Lived shrugs and catches the eyes of the half Veela auror lingering nearby with a cheese plate in his hands. Gesturing him to come over, Harry smiled sweetly at the man who instantly dropped to his knees and shyly offered the younger wizard a small cracker with some expensive looking shimmering cheese on top. "I have actually," He tells them before leaning down to take in the offered food into his mouth. "Mmmn."

Auror Ruble actually whimpered a little as his fingers brushed the wizard savior's soft mouth.

"You are the actual worst." Nott deadpans as he is forced to shuffle over to make room for the auror. "Please tell me he's not following us back to the dorms."
Blaise snorts, "They can try but Professor Snape would probably throw them out. Besides, isn't Harry staying in Professor Snape's personal rooms anyway?"

"I am," Harry confirms, "But Se-nape said I could join you guys once or twice a week if I'm feeling up for it. Think of it as a slumber party. But in a dungeon."

"Sounds like my favourite type of slumber party." Blaise leers.

Harry raises an eyebrow and smirks, "You saying you've got your own Chamber of Secrets somewhere?"

"I wouldn't call it a chamber but I could introduce you to my basilisk if you know what I mean."

"Oh, I know what yo-" "I take it back." Nott bemoans as Draco makes gagging noises. "Both of you are the actual worst."

Blaise and Harry just grinned unrepentantly at their friends' dismay. The green-eyed wizard glances at the tanned teen, "Out of curiosity, do you really have some sort of sex dungeon?"

Blaise grimaces a little, "No but my mother does. I'm fairly sure that's how Father number five died."

"…I don't think I want to check out your Chamber of Secrets anymore." Because those secrets were murder secrets. And while that wasn't a complete turn off, Harry would rather just not have that sort of complication in his already quite complicated life.

"No one does." The other says sadly.

"THE GRIM DAMN YOU!" Pansy Parkinson shouts, causing everyone within earshot to jump. Auror Ruble was so startled he dropped the cheese plate. Severus was right, maybe the aurors were a little bit on the incompetent side. It's okay, they had his dementors looking out for everyone, even if they did get tempted by the students' souls occasionally. "YOU SAW IT?! TELL ME, TELL ME, TELL ME!"

They all stare at her.

"Um. I took a quick nap after Divination class? Like, outside the castle?" Harry tentatively answers because woah, that girl could give Hermione and Ron a run for their money in terms of volume, "I woke up and it was just there."

Everyone gasped and looked immediately far more concerned. Pansy was practically crawling out of her seat in her interest. "And, and? Did the grim do anything?"

"Uhhhhhhhhhh…." The wizard savior looked at all of them with wide eyes. Yeah, he was not going to tell them what actually happened, "Well, not really? I got freaked out and pushed it away with magic before leaving."

Pansy sighed a little in disappointment at the lack of scandal but seemed satisfied. The Malfoy heir patted his back, "Good job Potter, we would probably have all done the same thing."

"Hah, yeah…" Harry carefully doesn't look at Draco, because right now he has the best image of Draco screeching bloody murder whilst the horny grim was on top of him- and now Mr Riddle was laughing outright at his mental fantasy. Harry could keep a straight face if it was just him inwardly chortling but he was fairly sure that he didn't have the strength to keep at it with two gigglers inside his head. But it will all be fine as long as he doesn't look at-
"Harry?"

"Pft-" Harry bursts into uncontrollable laughter. Everyone on the table stares at him, since, with no context, it totally looks like the young wizard had keeled over in laughter for no discernible reason. There were actual tears in his eyes and his stomach aches a little.

"Um, Harry we have to go to cl-"

"Don't," Harry gasps between hysterics, his small hand feebly trying to block Draco's confused face from his view, "Just, ah, go first." Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, and Nott looked doubtful but decided it for the best to comply.

Blaise, because he wasn't doing Care of Magical Creatures and therefore had a free period at the time just sat there, watching the other teen cry from his own amusement. "You done yet Potter?"

"Al- pft- most." Harry hisses out before Riddle, the shit, pulls back out the mental picture with a talent only the most skilled legilmens could do. Needless to say, the young wizards bursts into new peals of laughter, his hands gripping the edge of the table like a lifeline.

The Italian Slytherin sighed wistfully at the sight before calling over Harry's resident stalker, "Oi Creevely you weirdo, might as well get a proper shot of this." Colin Creevely popped out from wherever he had been before, camera in hand.

"Cheers gov!" Blaise saluted the young Gryffindor lazily.

"Put my copies in the usual spot okay?" He pauses and eyes Harry's giggling form shrewdly, too busy trying to breathe to pay attention to the flashing of a camera, "Print less than usual, I think we can sell these ones off at a higher price since we haven't gotten any of him laughing like this yet."

After lunch was Care of Magical Creatures. And it was a wonderful day for it too. It had just finished raining so the sky was cool and grey, the grass was wet and ticklish and the dementors were all playing outside gleefully. Harry grinned and waved at the frolicking swirl of nightmare darkness, they all mimicked the action, how sweet.

As expected, Harry was one of the few latecomers to Care of Magical Creatures class. Luckily, Hagrid was half-giant and had cheerfully listened to his instincts and waited till the Chosen one slash secret entity of death was there before he started the class. He stood in that ratty moleskin overcoat of his in front of his hut. Fang, a canine who has a history with Harry's leg- and really what is up with the dogs here, you don't see this behavior in cats... usually- barked excitedly when he had caught Harry's scent.

"Oi Harry!" Hagrid yelled cheerfully, waving him over and drawing everyone's attention to him, much to his embarrassment. "C'mon, now, get a move on!"

Quickly, he skipped over to the group of classmates, settling himself nicely between his Gryffindor friends and his Slytherin ones. It's funny how they claim to hate each other so, but they always insist on being nearby each other, not close enough for touching obviously, but close enough to insult each other without raising their voices too much. It's a mutually exclusive abusive balance they share.

"You finally got over yourself, Potter?" Draco smirks.

"Oi, toss off Malfoy." Ron defended, almost instinctively. Draco, just as intuitively, curled up his lip into a sneer. Man, they really didn't take this blood feud thing they had going on lightly, did they?
"Ron, it was an inside joke, Draco, please try not to start a fight in Hagrid's first class."

"Sooo… what I'm hearing is the second class is a free for all?"

Harry closes his eyes and sighs as Ron starts to bluster angrily at the blonde Slytherin, "Let's just as all get through the first one first okay?"

"Come on guys," Hermione hisses to them, and it's only then did they realize everyone was shuffling along somewhere. Harry and Ron exchange looks and for one awful moment they feared another adventure into the Forbidden Forest.

"Got a real treat for yeh today!" Hagrid cheers happily, "Great lesson comin' up! Follow me, follow me!" Luckily, the half-giant had strolled off around the edge of the trees, and five minutes later, they all had found themselves outside some sort of paddock meadow place. Some sort of empty paddock meadow place.

"Um." The wizard savior bites his lip as his eyes flicker around the area. There didn't seem to be any creatures there to his knowledge, well, unless you count some insects in the muck. "I… don't see anything?"

He turns to Draco, but he's too busy snarking to Crabbe and Goyle to really pay attention right now. He turns to Ron then, but the redhead was immersed in looking to the sky and muttering a very obsessive mantra about 'no spiders, please Merlin, no spiders'. So, no help there then.

Hagrid huffs, amused at the children's confusion. "Patience, patience." He rumbled with a wide grin, "Now everyone gather 'round the fence here! Yeh'll want ter do is open yer books an-"

"How?" The Malfoy scion drawled, apparently despite his ever so slight but visible personal growth with Ron and Hermione, his fondness for the half-giant has not improved one modicum. He looks smug at the baffled look on Hagrid's face. Not that Harry could blame the large man, he was feeling a little baffled himself.

"What are you talking about Draco?" Harry asks in a loud not-whisper. Draco looks at him confused.

"Our textbook you idiot." He pulls out his copy of *The Monster Book of Monsters*, which he had bound shut with a length of rope.

Harry stares at it. Then he looks at Draco.

"Why the fuck have you put rope on it?" It seemed a little overkill for a textbook. He didn't like Lockhart's stupid books but that didn't mean he went around binding them with chains. "What the fuck Draco."

"Um. Harry?" He turned to see Ron taking out his own textbook. It was belted shut. "I'm kind of with Malfoy on this one." Others too began taking out their books, each bound in various creative ways. Someone had even gone as far as to use duck tape, the industrial kind, never mind how much that would be a bitch and a half to remove.

"Hasn'- hasn' anyone bin able ter open their books?" said Hagrid, looking crestfallen. The class all shook their heads. "Arry?" He asks the green-eyed teen hopefully.

Harry opens his satchel and makes kissy noises at it, "Here book, time for class." His own copy of *The Monster Book of Monsters* jumps out timidly, making snuffling noises much to the astonishment of the rest of the class. With a smirk, Harry picked up his textbook, ignoring the way it shuddered a
little bit at his touch and began stroking its spine, just the way it liked it. The book immediately opened.

"Wonderful!" Hagrid exclaimed, brightened by at least one person getting it. "Twenty points to Gryf- Slytherin!"

"It was nothing." The Boy Who Lived demurred.

Truth be told, the first time Harry got the thing, it had screamed bloody murder in his face- being a magical sentient object and all- and tried to hide from him. Took Harry two days shouting curses and death threats, which, in retrospect, was quite counterproductive, before Severus had stopped finding it amusing enough to help out and accio-ed the blasted thing for him. The git. Then it was just an easy matter of convincing the book Harry needed it 'alive' as long as it served its purpose in following his whims.

Of course, Harry certainly wasn't going to admit that out loud.

"Look, see. All yeh've got ter do is stroke 'em, like 'ow 'Arry's doing," said Hagrid informs everyone with a wide smile. "C'mon I'll show yer-" Taking Hermione's copy, his large hands rip off the Spellotape binding it like it was tissues. Holy shit. The book tried to bite, something Harry had never seen his own do and wow he was glad it didn't because the whole thing looked quite unnerving.

Hagrid then proceeded to run a giant forefinger down its spine, to which the book responded with a shiver before quietly opening itself in his hands.

"Oh, how silly we've all been!" Malfoy sneered because complaining was as instinctual as taunting Weasleys it seemed. Harry adores Draco but honestly, it's kind of a wonder how the Malfoys managed to survive for so long being such sarcastic little shits. It must be the hair. "We should have stroked them! Oh, why, oh why didn't we guess!"

"I- I thought they were funny," Hagrid uncertainly tells Hermione, looking lost and anxious.

"Oh, tremendously funny!" Malfoy exclaims, clapping his hands and just being a dick. Harry fights the urge to facepalm. "Really witty, giving us books that try and rip our hands off!"

"Shut up, Malfoy," Ron sneers before whispering real quietly to Harry, "Arsehole has a point though. Nearly lost my nose to that thing."

"You just gotta show it who's boss," Harry tells him. The freckled wizard looks at his aggressive textbook twitching violently in his hands doubtfully.

"Hey mate, do you think you could do mine?" The redheaded teen asks him hopefully. "I mean, you managed to tell your book what to do even without stroking it."

"You are such a lazy wanker."

"That I am," Ron says with no shame. "Come on, I'll, I'll-"

"Stop bringing up the centaur thing?"

"Aw, you know I can't do that." Harry sighs. Doesn't he know it.

"Fine. Then I want… you to go up to Professor Snape sometime this week and say something nice about him."

Ron pales, "Wha- you can't be serious."
Harry shrugs, uncaringly, "Well, I'm going to miss that nose on your face. It's really not going to be the same without it."

"Fine! Fine! Merlin, you're an even bigger prick than Malfoy sometimes." Ron passes Harry his text, which begins to spasm uncontrollably in the wizard savior's direct presence.

Harry leans down so his lips barely brush against the trembling cover and whispers softly, like the rustling of paper, "Obey Ron and no one gets obliterated yes?" He pulls back and tells his friend to unbelt the book.

Tentatively, Ron does so, and when his copy lays still and meek the redhead has to grin wildly. "This is great!" Ron gushes, stroking the spine and opening it up. "Hey, it's kinda cute when it ain't trying to kill me."

"Most things usually are." Harry drawls.

"Harry, if you do Weasley's you have to do mine as well!" Draco shouts, no, whines, suddenly taking notice that his best friend's attentions were elsewhere.

"What's the magic word Draco?" Harry sing-songs.

Draco pauses, looking deep in thought, "Um. Imperio?"

His friends. All. Suck.

In the end, Harry helps out the majority of the class with their textbooks, with the promise that sometime this week they had to go up to Professor Snape and say something nice to him. And yes, it had to be something nice about him specifically. No, you cannot piggyback on someone else's compliment. Yes, something actually about Professor Snape, isn't that what he just said? No, backhanded compliments will not count.

God, it's like none of these people can think of nice things to say about Snape.

Harry let Neville have a pass because, well, that seems a little too mean. Still, it was going to be quite an interesting week. For Severus.

"Righ' then," said Hagrid, who seemed to have lost his thread what with half the students trying to calm their raging paper-fuelled monster pets and the other half lining up in front of Harry, "so- so yeh've got yer books an'... an'... now yeh need the Magical Creatures. Yeah. So I'll go an' get 'em. Hang on..."

He strode away from them into the forest and out of sight. Once Harry was sure the man was gone, he leans on Draco's shoulder. He gets an irritated grunt in return but since that was the only resistance the Malfoy heir had given, he ignored it.

"Hey, Draco?" Harry says lightly, "Let's not hurt the half-giant's feelings on the first lesson yeah?"

"But-

"I can always postpone our little slumber party."

"You wouldn't." Draco hissed, horrified as Harry knew he would be. The blonde pureblood had been desperately looking forward to it, he was planning the whole thing and everything. It was adorable. And an obvious weakness to take advantage of.
"I would." Green eyes glittered with undisguised mirth, betraying his serious tone of voice. "Snape isn't exactly happy I'm insisting to do this so soon, not even been a proper week yet, even if it will be on Friday. If I so much as sneeze too loud-"

"Fine!" Draco grouches, crossing his arms in a poor form of defeat. "I am not going to let all my hard earned planning go to waste just for a few dumb jokes about some halfbreed oaf."

Well. At least Draco's going to be on good behavior now. Harry's not exactly sure how to minimize the deeply ingrained bigotry there though but the teen's been doing better treating Hermione and the less pure of blood like decent beings of society so that means something at least. Plus, no offense to Hagrid, but he does not inspire competence on behalf of all half-creatures what with, well, the whole putting everyone in dangerous situations thing he has going on.

"Hey, by the way, you guys want to play with Davian and the others after class?" Harry asks his friends while they waited for Hagrid, who immediately balk at the idea.

"You mean the Dementors?!" Ron says horrified, clearing remembering his last encounter with them. In Harry's defense, the Weasley never asked him who Davian was.

Harry nods happily, "Yeah, you know Custard really misses you know?" Custard was the joker of the flock. She earned her name because she swooped into the Great Hall, scaring everyone save for Harry of course, and stealing a large bowl of custard. Harry still isn't very sure what the dementors have done with it, because they certainly did not eat the squishy sweet concoction.

Ron shuddered so hard he looked like a flopping fish out of water, huh, maybe Harry has a vague idea where that custard bowl went then.

Quirking a brow Harry can't help but grin toothily, "Are you serious?"

"Don't know what you're talking bout." Ron muttered, carefully not looking at his best friend.

"Oh my god." Because Harry totally knew. Now he knows why Ron hangs the centaur thing over his head like a guillotine blade, this was the best thing ever. "Custard the dementor likes you!"

"Wha- no- fuck off Harry!" Harry cackled evilly. Draco, because even on his best behavior cannot help but be a prick, had been eavesdropping and slung an arm over Harry's shoulder with his own shit-eating smirk.

"Does my ears deceive me, Harry? Weasley's face is so frightening only a dementor could fancy it?" He questions eager and mean-heartedly.

Ron's face goes red, but then it's his turn to smirk, "Harry, you haven't introduced your slimy snake friends to your happiness-sucking friends yet have you?" Harry hums thoughtfully while Draco's face turns paler than untouched snow. The Weasley looks downright devious at this point, remembering clearly Draco's less than dignified response to the dark creatures on the Hogwarts Express not that long ago. "Because I think they'll get along rather splendid don't you think mate? They both like being all dark and shadowy and mysterious..."

"That is true.." Harry nods seriously like those traits were prime friendship material. "Draco, we can go meet up with them after class then. Get acquainted and all- oh shit, sorry Ron." The shorter Wizard looks at his redhead friend, a little guilty at managing to invite and then dismiss the other in less time it takes to cook an egg.

Ron shakes his head, trying hard to stifle his laughter, "No, no, please. You're always telling me to get on better with Malfoy, well, this is my trying."
Draco mutters something under his breath but Harry ignores it in favor of beaming and clapping a hand on the Weasley's shoulder. "Good man Ron!" Ron beamed back, enjoying both his friend's praise and his enemy's blusters. He isn't a Slytherin by any means, but that doesn't mean he can't pick up a few sly tricks.

His best mate is a quarter Slytherin after all.

Before Draco could protest his new after class plans, Hagrid came into view with-

"Ooooooooooh!" squealed Lavender Brown as trotting toward them were about a dozen beautiful specimens of hippogriffs. Damn. Forget any doubts he had for this class. This was going to be awesome.

They all had on a thick leather collar around their necks that was attached to a long chain held tightly by Hagrid, who came jogging behind. It wasn't the best safety precaution one could come up with but Harry was honestly just proud of the man that he had thought up any at all. Who says old dogs couldn't learn new tricks.

It doesn't take long for one of the creatures to notice Harry. Hippogriffs were very well attuned to their surroundings. It was one with gleaming chestnut feathers and fur, who caught Harry's eyes and immediately perked up. With a loud caw-ing noise all the others of its flock turned their attention to the entity mixed in between the students were more than avid interest.

"Come on! Get o'er there!" Hagrid roared with a few shakes of the chains. He hardly needed to though, the hippogriffs practically flew to the fence in their excitement, chests puffed up and trying to look their best in front of the powerful being watching them. Oblivious to the creatures' preening and flaunting, Hagrid began tethering their chains to the fence.

"Hey, Harry?" Ron whispers to him, "Um, it may be just my imagination but are they uh, kind of looking in our direction?" It was true, as prideful as the half-horse, half-bird creatures were, they could not help but keep shooting glances at Harry as they attempted to pretend to be nonchalant. Like aristocrats in the face of the high empress of the universe.

Harry shrugged like it was just so common for a whole flock-herd?- of hippogriffs to immediately start vying for his attention, "What can I say, I'm just that attractive."

"Yeah… to half-horses."

"Oi, I dated Percy!"

"Yeah, and? Have you seen his face?" Draco snorted at that.

"Good one Weasley."

Ron grinned, "I do try my best."

Harry narrowed his eyes and shot both of them evil looks, "I hate how the only time you two get along is to make fun of me."

Draco flutters his eyelashes innocently, "But, Harry, you asked us to find things in common. This is what we came up with."

"So!" said Hagrid, rubbing his hands together and beaming around, "Who of yeh wan' ter come a bit nearer to these beauts…"
No one moved. In fact, quite a few took a few steps back. Which, fair, hippogriffs were pretty damn bid. Still, there's Gryffindors here. What happened to bravery and courage and all that rot?

Rolling his eyes a little, he grabs Draco and Ron- who also grabs Hermione- and approached the fence, much to both the half-giant and hippogriff's pleasure. "Oi, Potter, Harry, no wait," the blonde pureblood protests a little shrilly, eying the magical beasts warily as they moved closer.

"It'll be fine, you arses," Harry reassures, before adding a little vindictively, "I'm good with half-horses apparently."

"Now, firs' thing yeh gotta know abou' Hippogriffs is, they're proud," Hagrid tells them with a large smile. "Easily offended, Hippogriffs are. Don't never insult one,' cause it might be the last thing yeh do. Always wait fer the Hippogriff ter make the firs' move, walk toward him, and bow. If he bows back, yeh're allowed ter touch him. If he doesn' bow, then get away from him sharpish, 'cause those talons hurt."

Harry nodded approvingly, that all sounds pretty sound. "You got all of that Draco? Ron?"

"Um," Ron says.

Draco scoffs, "Of course I did, but wh-"

"Now who wants ter go first?"

Harry shoves Draco forward and yells out, "I volunteer Draco Lucius Malfoy!"

"Son oF A-" Whatever the Slytherin was going to say died down in his throat as he came uncomfortably face to beak-faced with a hippogriff. "-err."

"Keep eye contact, try not ter blink, easy now." Hagrid reminds him quietly. Draco, wisely did as he was told, he was so still a petrified basilisk victim problem looked like it would move more than the pureblood right now. The hippogriff, a regal and large one with stunning dark grey coloring that shone to the point it could easily be mistaken for melted silver, was staring fiercely at Draco as if he was the one to blame for it not being Harry in his place.

Harry raised his own head sternly, knowing he's caught the creature's attention and looked at Draco pointedly, "Draco, bow now." He murmurs to the pureblood heir, with Hagrid whispering his agreement.

Shaking a little, the blonde gave a very elegant low bow. There's a moment of tense silence where the hippogriff stared haughtily down at the teen before the creature suddenly bent its front knees and sank into what was an unmistakable bow. Draco looked up at the creature, clearly, he had not been expecting that.

Hagrid clapped his hands, ecstatic, "Well done, Malfoy!" The half-giant looks like he could do a dance right here and now, "Right, right, yeh can go touch him now! 'is name's Silvdancer, go on! Pat 'is beak!"

The Malfoy heir looked like he would rather eat glass and wash it down with a melted cockroach cluster but he reluctantly, and hesitantly reached out to pet the beak a few times, getting more confident the longer he wasn't being violently attacked. The hippogriff closed its eyes lazily, making a low rumbling sound of contentment. Draco looked awed.

Everybody applauded the Slytherin, which made both Draco and the creature he was still petting, preen under the attention. When the blonde caught Harry's bright-eyed graze, the wizard savior
merely grinned wider and gave him a double thumbs up.

Draco silently mouthed 'I'll kill you,' but he seemed pretty happy despite the death threat so Harry wasn't going to be that concerned.

"Righ' then," Hagrid muses loudly, "I reckon he migh' let yeh ride him!"

"...I'm sorry what." Draco says. But it was too late, the half-giant was already pushing the Malfoy heir around the fence and toward Silvdancer.

"Yeh climb up there, jus' behind the wing joint," said Hagrid, "an' mind yeh don' pull any of his feathers out, he won' like that..."

"Look, so maybe hippogriffs aren't as horrid as I had expected but I really don't- oi!" Hagrid hoisted the young wizard onto the large creature's back, ignoring the other's protests of how his father would hear of this. "Up yer go!" He guffawed before unlocking the collar from its chain and slapping the hippogriff's hindquarters.

And okay, now we're getting into unsafe teaching method territory.

Thirteen-foot wings unfurled on either side of Draco, who immediately hugged the hippogriff's neck as without warning he began to soar upward. It was quite the sight, like a young prince on his silver flying steed. Silvdancer flew him around the paddock twice and by the time they both landed back on solid ground, Draco was grinning wildly, ear to ear, noble mannerisms be damned.

"Merlin that was wicked!" He exclaimed and everyone cheered.

"Can't believe erm sayin this- but great work Malfoy!" Hagrid roared, "Anyone else wants ta go?"

With Malfoy's success so recently burned into their mind, everyone wanted to have a shot. Malfoy, preening and loudly bragging, trotted over to introduce Crabbe and Goyle to his fine creature friend. "Silvdancer isn't a dangerous beastly brute," He tells them proudly, "Probably more noble than some of the Greengrass' steeds- definitely more intelligent, isn't that right Silvdancer?"

Silvdancer snorts in the affirmative.

Harry, of course, had no trouble with the hippogriffs. He didn't even need to bow, as long as he was close enough to them, they ended up bowing to him as respectful as they could be. Hagrid nodded eagerly every time he saw this, clearly on some level he had expected this to happen. "Yer really have a way with the creatures eh 'Arry?"

Harry snorted before deciding to settle on interacting with a hippogriff by the name of Buckbeak. The creature had probably never looked this smug as Harry began petting his beak. "You could say that sir."

"-and then I swooped down, Silvdancer gracefully landed and everyone applauded!"

"I see you've forgiven me for shoving you in front of the 'great hulking beasts'." Harry says dryly as they walked to dinner while Draco regaled his fellow Slytherins with the tale of how he tamed the regal Silvdancer for the sixth time. The class had such a blast with the hippogriffs that they ended up staying there for an extra hour, and by then Harry had missed out the opportunity to meet with his dementors again.

If only Snape would let them come into his room, then there would be no need for all this
rendezvous bullshit. Honestly, Harry may find the man's quirks and caustic personality more than a little endearing- but not letting his soul-sucking friends that exude misery and fear into his home? Well that was just plain selfish.

Suddenly the Slytherin group was accosted by a bunch of Gryffindors, Hermione and Ron being the ones leading them of course. "Oi! Mate!" Ron shouted, "Did ya hear the news?!"

Harry shook his head, even as Malfoy sneered at his redheaded friend. "What is it, Ron?"

"'pparently Smith is insisting Hagrid needs to be kicked out and that he's been all horribly injured and whatnot." Dean Thomas scowls.

Goyle blinks, as those the other snakes that had been in that class, "For what?" The heavyset wizard asks slowly like he was tasting the words to see if they sound correct.

"You don't mean for that scratch he got by his hippogriff?" Draco asked making a sour face at the memory, "That prat was insulting them and refusing to bow, he was practically begging for the creature to attack him." Zacharias Smith had ended up clutching his arm and howling bloody murder as his fellow cronies dragged him off. Hagrid had looked worried for a moment but since no one else seemed to be too overly worried there he too had seemed to ease the moment off.

Unfortunately, everyone, Harry included, had forgotten that, if there's one thing Smith hates more than not being the best, is not getting the attention he thinks he deserves.

"Does he even have that sort of power?" Harry questions doubtfully, "He's pureblood yeah, but he's not exactly from the most influential family is he?"

Nott nodded in agreement, "True, the Smith family isn't high in terms of riches or influence, but they're claims of being direct descendent to Hufflepuff are considered more or less valid claims."

"Ugh, unfortunately," Blaise mutters, "Mother had briefly married one of their cousins for a bit, I had to spend Christmas and Easter with that prat. It was horrible, their house is badger-themed."

"Listen," Draco butted in, his face haughty even in its elegance, "I'll let my father hear about this, he's head of the board of education so he'll do something about this."

"Wha- really?" Hermione gasps. Ron, however, squints his eyes at his rival, "That's.. awfully nice of you isn't it?" He asks not a little accusatorially.

Draco rolled his eyes, "Calm down weasel, I can assure you this is all selfishness on my part- today's class was... fun. And if Smith complains about it we would probably be stuck sitting in the much finding magical beetles or some rot which is both incredibly dull and bad for my robes."

"Oh." Ron says, deflating a bit as even he can see through the Malfoy's bluster this time, "Well we uh, wouldn't want that."

"Certainly not." Draco sniffed, "Come on guys, let's make a quick detour to the owlery. Can't get a Hufflepuff besting us, direct descendent or not."

"Of course Draco." Harry smiled.

"Harry, why did Ronald Weasley come up to me after class and tell me that, and I quote, 'was very generous in the way I didn't take off so many points today,'?"
Harry failed to suppress a chuckle as he ate his chicken, "Well he wasn't completely wrong right? You barely took any points off Gryffindor today."

"And what about the Patil girl complimenting my body structure the day before that? Or Theodore Nott and Hermione Granger praising my teaching skills the day before that?" The teen bit his lip.

"Well, you do have a very nice body structure," Harry says, eying the older wizard's shoulders appreciatively. He definitely wasn't forgetting the man's surprisingly muscular assets under those long sleeves anytime soon.

Severus flushed a little. "Don't be ridiculous," He mutters, abashed. It was awkwardly charming, the way the potions master had shuffled away from the compliments if a little sad. Harry's going to have to make people give him more compliments.

"You have your toothbrush?"

Harry rolled his eyes for the nth time. The embarrassment he had churning in him was slowly being exhausted into something more akin to annoyed affection as Snape mothered over him like a very disapproving hen. "Yes, Severus." He intoned blandly.

"And your medicinal potions?"

"Honestly Sev, you are literally forty seconds away, I think I will be fine with one night not under your paranoid Gringotts level wards." He teased. Snape just stared down at him blankly. Okay so maybe no joking about the man's worrying.

"I looked away for a second last year and you got stabbed by a basilisk fang by a diary who you were infatuated with."

Harry winces. Okay, fair. "I'm never going to live that down am I?"

"You killed a man in your first year."

"Hey!" He protests, "The only one who was harmed in that exchange was Quirrel! And possibly Voldemort." Snape shuddered at the name.

Honestly, that was so annoying. Grindelwald was considered one of the darkest wizards of all time—which was already pretty shit all by itself but to be fair, he did align himself with Nazis so whatever—and no one ever refused to say his name. Or Mordred's. Seriously, what made Voldemort so damn special?

'I..' Mr. Riddle faltered in his indignation as he realized Harry was right. His reign of terror hadn't even gone on for that long and from what he could vaguely recall, he, as the reigning Dark Lord never did get a chance to pull any really terrifying power moves like burning down the Ministry or anything. '.. Fuck you.' He mutters petulantly.

"Yes, well, be that as it may, I would rather not let such events become a recurring theme in your life." Snape murmured reaching out to stroke the younger wizard's hair gently. Harry flushed a little at both the affectionate action and words. He wants so badly to push this further but its far too soon.

But fuck. Does he want to push.

"It's one night," Harry assures the potions master softly, carefully he reaches up to Snape's hand still threaded into his hair and pulls it down so he can press the older wizard's hand against his cheek
Harry blushed as Blaise finishes unbuttoning the teen's shirt, leaving his pale chest exposed to the cool air and the other boy's hungry eyes. "Come on Zabini, stop that," Harry grumbles, self-consciously covering his slim figure futilely. Blaise tutts and easily pulls the offending limbs away from marring the pretty, pretty view.

"None of that Potter, I want to see everything." He drags the shirt down from the smaller teen's shoulders with one hand while the other is flat on Harry's chest, slowly mapping each curve and pausing only to give a curious pull to each hardened nipple. Harry shuddered at the sudden pain and pleasure of it, looking like the simple act of standing may prove to be too hard for him if this continues any further.

The Italian Slytherin hummed satisfactorily at the responsiveness of the other, tugging again just to incur another jolted roll of the other's body. "I bet that Weasley you dated never even played with you here has he? Yes, I wouldn't be surprised if he's as boring in the bedroom as he is outside it really." He says casually while alternating between flicking and lightly brushing against the sensitive dusky peaks. Harry doesn't answer, too busy panting and squirming under the darker skinned teen's touch. "Just a few tugs at your tits and you're already acting like a cat in heat. You're just like a girl huh Harry?"

Harry whines in response, a high needy sound that seems to escape almost involuntarily, "Don't, ah, say such, uhn, things you prick."

Blaise grins, "Don't say what Potter? That you're like a girl? The pride of the British Wizarding community, its savior, panting like some horny animal for a Slytherin? Or maybe that you're already sopping wet just from having your nipples teased? Because," His hand moves down to slip underneath Harry's underwear to grab the other's straining erection, slick with pre-come. "You certainly look like you don't want me to stop."

The Slytherin tightened his grip, making Harry buck against the tight friction instinctively. "Do you want me to stop?" Blaise asks, tweaking Harry's nipple idly as he begins to move his other hand on Harry's length at a torturously slow pace.

The Boy-Who-Lived sobbed in arousal and embarrassment but shook his head.

"-and that's the gist of it." Blaise finishes.

Harry and the other third year Slytherins stare at him.

"What," Draco says, breaking the stunned silence, "The fuck."

"You guys asked me to say one secret I've been keeping from someone in this room." Blaise defended, he gestures noncommittally at everyone, "And I have."

"A secret like, how you accidentally used Draco's conditioner without his permission, not, not, not your wet dream with Potter!" Nott shouts disgustedly. "Merlin Blaise, I was eating a hot dog- I don't need your weird homoerotic fantasies ruining it!"

"Wait. Did you use my conditioner?!

The Slytherin boys gave Blaise various looks of disapproval. Even Crabbe and Goyle were side-eying the dark-skinned teen judgmentally. The girls, however, had very different reactions.
Pansy's eyes were wide and cheeks flushed. She fanned herself dramatically as she murmurs, "Emphasis on erotic Blaise, damn." Millicent nodded furiously in agreement, red-faced.

Daphne was looking at Blaise with a delicately raised brow, "I always did peg you a bit of a sadist under all that ice cold posh you're shoving into our faces. Surprised your into blokes though, no matter how pretty Potter is."

Blaise smiles at her blandly, he does not seem to be so happy at her comment, "I'm fairly sure I get that from my mother, though that's an image I rather not imagine thank you. And for your information, I think girls are very attractive too." He leered pointedly at Daphne who just raised her other eyebrow and smirked back.

"Does this count as defiling a symbol of Britain? Because I feel like it does."

"Oh thank Merlin, I thought I was the only one feeling weirdly unpatriotic for some reason."

Blaise rolls his eyes, looking completely unashamed and unrepentant at his confession. "Do be serious, it's a passing fantasy at best. Like Harry would actually do those sort of things with me."

Everyone turns to Harry who had been suspiciously quiet this whole time. Harry who was staring at Blaise with pink cheeks and dark eyes.

"...Harry? Earth to Harry?"

Green eyes blink and suddenly the teen is snapped back to the present, his face goes from a light pink flush to an embarrassed tomato red as he realizes how he had zoned out from the conversation. "I," Harry coughs, carefully not looking at anyone, "um, wow, that was, I really wasn't ready for that." He fans his face, "Is it, is it getting hot in here?" He squeaks.

"Potter..." Draco says in the sort of horrified tone one would use if they saw someone gouge out someone else's eyeballs and swallow them whole right in front of you, "You aren't.. are you, are you possibly turned on?"

Harry coughs again and casually shifts his position so the pillow he had been hugging is placed over his pelvic area. "I mean, a little?" There is a round of disgusted noises from the majority of the male Slytherins, "Oh fuck you guys! That was hot and Blaise is pretty cute as well."

"Ugh," Nott says, scowling down forlornly at his half-eaten sausage. It's one of those awful muggle commercial cheap shit which is considered 'trendy' in wizard circles to eat. Worse still, it has that fake crap they call cheese oozing inside it, so the homosexual connotations there were pretty blatant once you get your mind thinking that way. Draco was looking at Nott's sausage with a similar mindset if the wrinkled nose of half disgust half amusement was anything to go by. Crabbe and Goyle just looked hungry.

"Really?!!" Pansy squeals while Daphne just regally nods her head like she fucking knew all along. The bitch.

"Well, I think Truth or Hex is effectively over now," Blaise says dryly but firmly. There are a few grumbles but everyone agrees that they've taken a turn for the weird here and that it was getting pretty late anyway so they began to leave, readying themselves for bed.

"Wait, Potter, Harry." Blaise calls out quietly, right before Harry turns to leave as well, "Maybe we should talk."

Daphne, because she was the last one lingering in the dorm room, gave Harry an elegant thumbs up.
Harry wasn't even aware you could make such a simple gesture elegant but somehow the young heiress of the noble house of Greengrass managed.

Harry turns to Blaise, unsure exactly how this is all going to go down. His face is still hot from his embarrassment and low-key arousal, because fuck if the Italian teen didn't paint a very explicit picture. It assured him greatly seeing the usually aloof Slytherin look just as nervous and unsure as he was.

"Potter.. was that true? What you said?" He asked, tentative and hopeful.

Harry half-shrugged and played with his hair self-consciously, "I mean, yeah. You're very good looking Blaise. And I guess you could say I've thought of similar stuff like that a few times-" Try half his own fantasies, damn Blaise, ",-but I'm not going to lie here, after Percy I don't think I could do the whole dating lovey-dovey thing again. It's not, it's not you, not really, it's just,"

"It's just not really you, hey I get it," Blaise shrugged, but he's smiling with relief and a predatory anticipation that makes Harry's blood pump a little faster. "I'm not interested in that sort of.. connection anyway. Just some experimental fun, no strings attached."

Harry stared, "You're like, fourteen."

"So are you." Blaise shoots back with his normal cool arrogance. And like, fair enough, but Blaise isn't secretly an infinite age-old primordial force of destruction so what the fuck.

"I was raised in an abusive environment which has made me cynical and uncomfortable regarding concepts such as pure love and sappy romantic themes- I'm also currently trying to convince Professor Snape to go out with me, what's your excuse?"

"My mother has gone through eight husbands since me, they've all died under mysterious circumstances, love is a lie at best and deadly at worst. You tell me."

They both stared at each other intensely, daring the other to say something against their declaration. Finally, Harry breaks the silence.

"So... just to be clear, this is, like, a friends with benefits scenario?"

"My mother always called it 'compatibility testing', but essentially yes."

"Christ, I kind of want to meet this mother of yours but I'm also rather afraid she'll swallow me whole." God, the women in this universe.

Blaise scoffs, "Please, you aren't her type."

"I'm the Boy Who Bloody Lived. I'm fairly sure I'm everyone's type." Harry scoffed back arrogantly. The dark-skinned teen just eyed him critically.

"She's more into... men with some form of muscle on their bodies."

"Ouch." Harry deadpanned, "How shall I ever get over such a damning rejection."

The Italian Slytherin laughed, it's a quiet low sound, and he leans close to the green-eyed teen to press a shy peck to his lips. "Don't worry, you're definitely one of mine though."

Harry laughed as well, "One of yours huh? I see you're all refined and noble-like but you're going to be quite the player when you grow up hm?"
Blaise hummed noncommittally, "We'll have to wait and see then. Now come on then, we should get ready for bed."

"Zabini, I didn't think you would be this forward." Harry gasps, fake scandalized.

The Slytherin rolled his eyes good-naturedly and gave his friend a little smack upside the head, "Don't be obtuse Potter, you know what I mean."

"Yeah, yeah."

They gather up their toothbrushes and such in comfortable silence, but as they made their way to the bathroom Blaise gently nudges Harry. "Hey, Harry?"

"Yeah?"

"Thanks for saying yes." Blaise was looking at his toothbrush like it was the most interesting thing he's ever seen in his life.

Harry smiles at the unexpectedly cute side of the stoic teen and nudges him back, "No problem. Thanks for telling everyone your wet dream, I guess."

"Draco is right, you are insufferable."

The Boy Who Lived kissed him quick on the corner of his mouth, "Well, maybe you should make me suffer a little bit later huh?"

The news that Harry Potter and Blaise Zabini were dating spread faster than dragon pox. Mainly because in the middle of breakfast, Draco, dramatic drama queen Draco, had to go choke loudly on his toast, spat it out and then proceeded to scream a very shrill, "YOU'RE DATING?!!"

"…Yes." Harry says, eye twitching, "And I was going to ask you to keep that quiet for a bit since we aren't doing anything serious but I see now that clearly, I didn't need to."

"I hardly care." Blaise shrugged, wrapping an arm around Harry now that he could whilst looking like he couldn't care less save for the smirk that gave away how highly entertained he was. "Now we can cuddle anytime we want now babe." He says softly and kisses Harry's forehead gently.

"Aw." Nott coos fakely, "And if I wasn't there last night when you said those very unromantic things, I would have actually believed you there."

"But you would have believed it otherwise?" Zabini nods to himself, "Good."

Harry rolled his eyes but leaned into the Slytherin's chest. "You have such a weird boner for trickery, I don't even understand why we're pretending to be so cute about this when you clearly said you weren't interested."

"Au contraire my pretty little darling dear," Harry and everyone else on the table gives him a look, "too much? Noted. Anyway, I hardly need all the drama of being an evil Slytherin fucking the Boy Who Lived. If I act all cutesy and disgustingly domestic then I will take much less heat from the others."

The wizard savior laughs, "How very Slytherin my darling." He praises mock sweetly, "Shall I also tell everyone how you wooed me through your poetic way with words?"

"Poetic is not the word I would have described Zabini's words from last night," Malfoy muttered.
"More like perverted."

"Depraved."

"Sadistic."

"Dirty."

"Lewd."

"Kinky."

"Shameless."

Blaise smirked, "I can't tell if we're still talking about last night or just listing my best features anymore."

"It's clearly both."

"Now kiss me you depraved, dirty, shameless man."

"Oh, I do love how you sweet talk me, dear," the tanned teen chuckles before obliging in Harry's wishes, peppering the smaller wizard's face with kisses whilst groping his ass underneath the table in a far less chaste manner. There was a mix of disgusted noises and cheering happening in the hall, along with a very familiar bellow over at the Gryffindor table of, "MERLIN HARRY, A SLYTHERIN?! I JUST GOT OVER PERCY!"

"Well, the goldfish just got scooped." Madam Pomphrey says breezily as the hall of students descended into cheers, boos and the exchanging of galleons as Blaise Zabini, an above average Slytherin student both in academics and looks, begins peppering Harry Potter with kisses.

Snape growls into his goblet.

McGonagall, who was sitting next to the potions master scoffed as she ate her lunch, "Please, Mr. Zabini is a rebound at best. Mr. Potter hasn't gotten 'scooped', more like, 'temporarily displaced'."

"I don't know," Pomona Sprout interjects shrewdly as she watches the newly formed couple, "They do look quite compatible together don't they?"

"They would share similar personality traits," Flitwick observes thoughtfully, "Mr. Zabini has quite a sarcastic devil may care attitude and high intelligence that would fit quite well with Mr. Potter's own blasé sarcasm and natural skills. It'll definitely be different to the Weasley-Potter relationship last year at the very least."

"Mr. Zabini is… neutral politically and generally… not hated among his peers," Snape slowly grits out like the admission was slowly killing him inside.

"It's not like we can object either way," Professor Dumbledore comments with an amused smile, "They're both the same age, and Mr. Potter hardly participates in the inter-house rivalry in the school. If anything it's only the fact that Mr. Zabini is a Slytherin and the son of someone known as the Black Widow that would be considered a cause for concern among the students."

All the professors nodded thoughtfully, except for Snape who just scowled, and McGonagall who was too busy trying not to smile. Unable to help herself though, the Transfiguration professor tacked on a cheeky, "They are quite a stunning couple though, don't you agree Severus?"

"That's a bit of an exaggeration isn't it Minerva?" Snape sneered hatefully.
"No, they are quite aesthetically pleasing by themselves but together their contrasting features really do highlight their looks in a very flattering manner," Flitwick comments with a soft sigh. Everyone makes similar observations of high praise, causing the potions master to resort to silent, furious glowering.

"The balance between their auras complements well," Trewalney says mistily, "Though their flame will not last long for the snake has no desire to be burned by the fire."

"What does that even mean?" McGonagall hissed irritatedly under her breath. It was no secret that she loathed the woman. However anyone with half a brain could decipher the obvious meaning of the divination professor's words, so McGonagall was more likely than not just antagonizing for the sake of it.

Snape just scowled, furious that he couldn't even insult the Zabini boy because he was one of his own. But the jealousy inside him didn't care, it was acidic, burning through him and slowly eating him from the inside out. It's almost laughable how easy the Italian teen had snagged Harry, how easy Harry had let himself be snagged.

Well, it would have been laughable if it wasn't so numbingly infuriating.

"Oh fuck, Blaise." Harry groaned as the tanned wizard pulls him into an abandoned classroom and pushes him against the door roughly as he peppers his neck with bites and kisses. "Seriously? Here? Now?"

"Not my fault you looked so pretty playing with my wood." Blaise Zabini chuckles lowly.

"It was herbology you twat! I was being, ah, helpful!"

"Oh believe me," the other sinks down to his knees, his expression wolffish and charming, "you were more than helpful."

"God you suck," Harry complains breathlessly amused. Zabini waggled his eyebrows lecherously. It's funny how apparently the Italian could go from cool as a cucumber to horny hot-blooded casanova in the time it takes to slam a door shut.

"That's the plan, honey." He purred before lifting up Harry's robe and unbuttoning his pants. Harry groaned as Blaise pulled down his underwear and wasted no time in tasting another wizard's dick for the first time. Fucking damn boy. "Shit, Blaise, ah, those pet names, oh yes, gots to sto-oh!"

"You were saying something cupcake?" The Slytherin gets a half-hearted kick in the thigh for that.

"Just keep doing what you're doing and maybe I'll show you how it's really done… babe."

"Challenge accepted, sweetie pie."

It takes Zabini about eleven minutes to get Harry off, it takes less than two for Harry to do the same. Blaise was mortified.

"We're doing this again." He tells Harry firmly once he regained his sense of vision and had sufficient air back into his lungs. The Boy Who Lived sat between his legs and laughed, wiping away some of the remnants of the other's cum from his chin as he did so. "Don't laugh! We're doing this again until I bloody well win, or at least not lose so horribly. What the fuck is with that tongue of
Harry laughed, "I'll teach you later," he promises, "but I really need to go back to my and Snape's quarters before he notices I'm just cutting curfew."

... 

"So. Zabini." Was the first thing Harry heard when he stepped into Snape's quarters. Harry, justifiably, felt himself break out into a cold sweat. He hopes he had cleaned himself up properly from his tryst in the empty classroom. Explaining why he had come late was not very high up on his to-do list right now, or, ever.

He looked up to see the older man sitting on the couch in the living area, staring intensely at him like he had been sitting there glaring at the door all this time until Harry finally came back.

"Zabini," Harry confirmed with a nod before slowly moving to sit by his favorite but currently incensed professor. "Is.. there a problem professor?"

"No." Snape denies immediately, vehemently, in a way that obviously means he does, before he hesitates and backtracks a bit. "I just … do not understand Potter. Enlighten me."

The teen frowns a little, not fully understanding where Snape wants him to start. He can tell that the man is upset. But he's not completely positive he knows why. "About what exactly do you wish for me to enlighten you on?" He asks.

Snape bangs a fist onto the coffee table. Harry jumps at the sudden harsh sound. "Don't play dumb with me!" The Slytherin nearly shouts. His face is blotchy and angry, "Zabini! Th-the scene at breakfast! Potter, I leave you alone for one night and you come out with the Widow's only son as you're paramour!" Snape sucks in a deep breath and somehow shoves back his rage, it's still there though, simmering and burning and pained. Harry can hear it in his next words, "What were you thinking Harry?"

"I-I don't..." Harry looks up at the professor confused and more than a little anxious at how serious this whole conversation has taken. He doesn't understand. Snape hadn't accepted his advances and while Harry was interested in pursuing him nonetheless, that and what is going on with Blaise were two different things, weren't they? "He offered and I said yes?"

There's a silence there. And from the blank expression on Severus' face, Harry can tell it's definitely not the good sort.

Did he say it wrong? Maybe he oversimplified it? But then again if he answered with detail it would've been construed as too crude. Harry feels worry gnaw at the back of his mind because he can't read Severus, like, at all this time. He can't even use past experiences and interactions as a reference because he's never wanted to pursue someone in such a romantic manner.

"That's it?" Disconcertion, judgment, disapproval, and pity. He can taste it in just those two words and it tastes bitter and bewildering. "That's all?"

It's like when he got rejected, but not really, because rejection was pain, pain, pain but this was hesitation and uncertainty and perplexing. Harry shrugs and kicks the couch with the back of his heel, he can't look up into those beetle black eyes right now. Not when they're looking at him like they want to rip his mind open and peruse his memories like an ancient tome.

"Harry… is what you said to me a lie?"
The teen snapped his head up and immediately turned to the potions master. "NO!" He instantly denies, horrified. Was that it? Did Snape feel that Harry was leading him on with half-baked feelings? "I meant what I said Severus, I did. You're, I've never, it's different." He insists.

"Then why are you... affiliating yourself with Zabini?" Snape spat.

"I don't, it's not the same thing! I just said it's different- I-" He's confused and questioning everything he's previously conceived about relationships because of a few pointed accusations and he hates how easy it was to topple him like this. Green eyes flare up at the older man, angry and accusing for his pain. He is not in the wrong here, no matter what Severus feels. No matter how twisted and conflicted he, himself feels.

"Why are you so upset with who I affiliate with anyway!?" Harry shoots back, getting more than a bit upset himself. "It's hardly like we're doing anything together- you've made that very clear to me."

"I'm upset because clearly, you don't know the meaning of restraint!" The professor near yells. "I'm upset that you fail to understand the concept of devotion, of, of, of faithfulness!"

"Fuck you!" Harry shouts, feeling oddly guilty and hurt by the words. "I know what they mean!"

"Do you?" Snape sneers, "Because someone with faith, with devotion, with restraint, does not jump on the next offer of a cock right after confessing romantic intentions to another."

"I... but..." Harry faltered, uncertain and uneasy. "You didn't, and Blaise did, and.. I.."

It sounded horrible put that way. Maybe it was. Harry knows that monogamy is a thing, he isn't completely daft. When he was with the werewolf in that beautifully bloody massacre of a relationship, the other was adamant about maintaining it, literally tearing anyone to shreds if they dared try court Death. But it wasn't much of a problem, all in all, it would've been rude to nurture interests in other suitors when you have already claimed one. Unless of course, you count the occasional minor harem, but those were consensual and relatively short-lived in his experience.

Yet this was different wasn't it? He's not claimed or been claimed by Severus, there was no right to accuse him of this infidelity.

"Harry," Snape says, quiet but firm, "That's not how this works."

"If you want I can call it off with him," Harry offers softly, it's not an option he particularly is fond of but a disappointed Blaise wouldn't ruin their friendship as much as whatever this was would potentially ruin whatever he had with the professor.

Snape looks even more frustrated and god, is there no pleasing this man?

"You can't," The older wizard makes a growling noise and pushes his hair away from his face aggressively, " Harry, Merlin, do you even like the boy?"

"Of course I do. He's my friend." He says truthfully.

The professor sighed, looking weary and exhausted at the answer, "That's not what I meant." He sighs again, and turns away, after a short pause he continues, "Look, Harry, I'm not exactly exuberant at the way your mind apparently works but I have a better understanding of it at least."

He looks back at Harry and grabs the younger's hand with his own, "Harry, I... my concern for you is genuine but I shouldn't have expressed it in the way I did." His grip tightens and the younger wizard has to wince a little at the pressure, Snape doesn't notice as he furrows his brow and tries to
speak. Nothing comes out at first, but slowly, he begins to speak. It was like his thoughts were in conflict, fighting to be the ones to be voiced as he haltingly whispers, "I... think you should... keep... associating with... Blaise Zabini."

"But... Really?" Snape nodded jerkily but didn't seem that happy about it, what with the way his jaw was clenched and his posture so stiff it must be painful.

"I wanted you to grow up." He tells Harry, "And I refuse to hinder that process because of a momentary lapse of selfish jealousy on my part."

"J-jealousy?" Harry says disbelievingly, hope unfurling in his chest like a giant flower, with its soft petals tickling lightly at his rib cage. "So does that mean-ah!"

Like a lion pouncing, Severus pushed himself off the couch and cradled Harry's head before pulling him into a harsh, biting seething kiss. Harry wasted no time kissing back, aware of how temperamental his professor's feelings were on this subject. It was far too soon when the older wizard decided to move back, and Harry groaned disappointedly at the loss of contact. "You're a very confusing man, even in wizard standards." He tells the man sternly.

Severus quirked his lips in a small smile, "Pot, kettle Harry."

"Touche." Harry smiles crookedly back. The potions master reaches out to stroke the wizard savior's unruly dark hair, letting it tangle loosely in his fingers.

"Now I think this is a good time to go to sleep." He murmurs, though his hand makes no move away from carding through the other's hair. "You have double potions in the morning and I want you to pair up with Longbottom, despite whatever Draco insists."

Harry sighs exasperatedly, but leans into the other man's touch anyway, "You are a cruel man Severus. You know I'm fairly sure if you lay off him just a bit he'll probably not blow up another cauldron or three."

Snape snorted, "Only Longbottom could brew something that produces an exploding domino effect so potent it only needs a single drop to react."

"His brews could be weaponized," Harry muses jokingly, "We could make a fortune on the black market- do wizards have a black market?"

"Potter, we're humans that just so happen to use magic, not saints- of course, we have illegal black markets."

"I would love to see one." Harry murmurs.

"Of course you would," Snape mutters though there's a quirk to his lips. The man stands up, letting his hand linger for a little bit on the nape of Harry's neck before making his way toward his personal bedroom. "Goodnight Harry."

"Night." Harry waves off. "And Severus?"

The potions professor pauses, standing at the boundary between his bedroom and the living room, he doesn't turn around. "Yes, Harry?"

"Whenever you ready, I'll be waiting for you."

Severus glances back, his hand clutching the edge of his door and one foot already inside his
bedroom and yet he still could not prevent himself from looking back. There, sitting on the couch, leaning toward him with earnest eyes, beautiful bright green eyes, was Harry with a soft patient smile. Odd broken Harry who didn't understand anything about love. Who deserved to figure it out properly. Without him getting in the way.

"…Go to sleep, Harry."

He shuts the door.

Chapter End Notes

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Death's boggart

Chapter Summary

The one where Death has his hands tied, faces his greatest fear and gets over it by sleeping with a professor (the identity of whom may surprise you)

Spoiler alert: It really, really won't.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The one where Death has his hands tied, faces his greatest fear and gets over it by sleeping with a professor (the identity of whom may surprise you)

Spoiler alert: It really, really won't.

Harry moans softly, quietly as Blaise runs his hands down his chest, his nails lightly pressing down and scraping his soft skin. The Slytherin was quiet, entranced by the pale pink lines temporarily marked onto the other's pale flesh. They've done a few things now, Harry had agreed to help Blaise explore his interests and Blaise had accepted that Harry didn't feel comfortable losing his anal virginity to him. Despite that small limitation, the Slytherin has taken to his sexuality like an alcoholic to a wine bar. It had not taken Blaise long to want to try something a little less basic despite it only being a few weeks since they had started their little trysts.

Not that the Boy Who Lived was complaining.

"You know, if I rip your tie, that's all you're fault right?" He tells Blaise, shifting his bound arms pointedly at the piece of fabric tying his wrists together and sticking them firmly on the wall. "Actually, if I break the wall that will be your fault too."

"Well that's hardly fair," Blaise huffed, "as if it's my fault that you have stupid strong magic- I had to research sixth year charms just to get it to hold right without it immediately loosening every time you wanted to scratch your nose."

Harry laughed, remembering the expression of the Slytherin's face when that first happened. It didn't bother Harry too much but apparently Blaise had found out he was something akin to a perfectionist in this context. "I don't think I've ever seen you work that hard before, I must say."

"I was this close to forgoing the whole tie thing entirely and just getting some iron chains instead." He grumbled as he petulantly tugged down Harry's pants. Though when he glanced up to see the green eyed wizard's reddening flush, biting his lower lip in pretty arousal, Blaise smirked and stroked the back of Harry's thighs seductively. "Harry Potter, you pervert." He accused delightedly.

The wizard savior hmph-ed, embarrassed at being called out on it, "At least it would be less mortifying for you Zabini, you know, no loose ends and all."

Blaise scowls as he realizes his tie was once again loosened around his boyfriend's wrists again and mutters the charm for the third time this evening. "This is ridiculous. I can't believe I thought this was
"I mean, it's not the most appropriate fabric to use in this situation no." Harry says apologetically, because the idea was a perfectly valid one and Zabini should not feel too bad for it, "But it's very comfortable, the silk feels good- maybe try going a tad tighter?"

Blaise looks doubtful, "Are you sure? It looks pretty tight to me."

"That's the problem, the tie is made of thick and smooth cloth Blaise. Looking pretty tight isn't the standard one wants when one is trying to tie a person up with it."

"Merlin, I can't believe I'm getting a lecture about this." Blaise mutters as he waves his wand and tightens the bindings further but there is laughter in his voice.

"Come on, you have to admit that if I started up a class you would be the most diligent student there."

The taller teen smiles and rises up to kiss the other wizard. "Mm.. Professor Potter, I must confess the idea has some credit."

"Mr Zabini, if I didn't know better I would call you a B-class deviant." Harry says in a stern voice, though it's ruined by the waver in his voice as he tries to suppress his giggles at the ridiculous of it all.

"B-class?" The Slytherin asks curiously.

"In muggle rankings, top marks is given an A and then it just goes down the alphabet." He explains patiently. Blaise makes a faint 'ah' noise.

"Well that makes far more sense than our way I am forced to admit."

"Isn't it?"

Blaise raises an eyebrow, "But B-class? Oh professor, is there any way you could bump up my grade- I'll do absolutely anything." He kisses Harry again, sliding a hand down his chest until it rests on the curve of his hipbone as he pointedly murmurs, "Anything."

"Fuck Zabini, seriously, is there some sort of wizard pornography you hide? There is, ah, no way you could keep coming up with this." Harry let's his head hit the wall he's stuck on, letting the other continue mouthing at his neck. Blaise hums and Harry groans at the way it vibrates against his skin.

"I read a few erotic novellas from the family library as a child. Nothing too racy, that's somewhere else, but for the longest time I had grown up thinking the Big Bad Wolf was a completely different beast altogether. He lets his teeth graze against the nape of Harry's neck pointedly, Harry leans into it welcomingly. "Though I'm more curious about your knowledge. I'm sure you could give some of my mother's suitors a run for their money."

"Muggle pornography is far more creative than your... written erotica." Harry sighed, "Really, no magazines or anything? For people with magic, you sure don't have much imagination to pair with it."

The Slytherin wasn't sure to sneer at the implication muggles had out-bested wizards in one area or intrigued at what depraved things they had cooked up. He settles on his usual aloof haughty expression. "Do not blame wizardry, I think the true problem lies with the uptight British stoicism around here." He sniffs, "I'm sure the Italians and the French magical community are much more..."
passionate in their magical designs."

"Mmnn... say passionate again." Harry groans, lifting up one of his legs to snake up around Zabini's thigh, dragging his body flush around his own. "Fucking love that accent you have there."

Blaise laughed, low and rough, "Passionate." He murmured before kissing Harry slowly, letting his hands wander from raised arms, down to the curve of his spine until he cupped the swell of Harry's ass and squeezed.

The Boy Who Lived groaned in arousal, "Zabini, if you do not do something about this I swear to god-!"

"Yes, yes." Blaise murmured amusedly at the other's impatience. His hands now moving to the front of Harry's pants and sliding into them. Wicked fingers began running lightly over the tied up wizard's hard shaft. Too lightly if Harry had any say in it.

Harry hisses his displeasure at being teased like this, but he can tell it only serves to heighten the other's amusement. "I will kick you and finish myself off while you writhe in pain."

"Merlin you're cute." Blaise murmurs affectionately, before fishing out Harry's erection and gingerly licking a long stripe from the base up to the tip.

"Shit." Harry gasps at the unexpected warm wet tongue, now moving playfully up and down his hard length. The gasp soon turns into soft moans quickly enough, especially when the Slytherin begins to tire of the action and moved onto trying to fill his mouth with cock instead. "Ah, uhn, yesss."

Harry groaned as he felt Blaise's tongue wiggle underneath the shaft of his dick, the feel of lips tight around his sensitive skin, moving back and forth along his hard length was amazing. A hand snaked up his leg, to his balls, lightly brushing against them like some tease. Harry's arms strain at its bondage, the urge to reach down and grab his boyfriend's face and fuck him was maddening. He can't even shallowly thrust into the other's mouth because Blaise, the cunning fucker, was pinning his hips to the wall.

Whether by magic or maybe the teen had actually been working out, Harry doesn't really care. He whines as Blaise pulls back a bit, taking his sweet time sucking the sensitive head of his erection like a straw.

"Ah, mhn, Blaise," Harry gasps, throwing his head back as the Slytherin squeezes his balls while his mouth swallows down Harry's cock again. "Shit."

Blaise looks up with hooded eyes, taking out Harry's penis away from his lips much to the green eyed boy's frustration. "You're crying again." He pointed out, sounding both charmed and deeply aroused. "Fuck Potter I love it when you cry and get all flustered like this."

Harry, immediately, got flustered. "Shut- shut the fuck up!" He denies in his embarrassment, his head twisted to his raised arms in an attempt to wipe the wet tears from his eyes. Harry's not fond of how his mortal body insists on creating salt water from his eyes when his mind fails to cope with all the stimulus his human nerves send to his brain. Blaise, and even to some extent Percy, had told him that they quite liked it, though the first time he cried they had fretted the fuck out. Which is nice and all but it doesn't make it less mortifying.

"Merlin you're just so pretty it's unreal." Blaise muttered, eyes hungrily taking in the sight of the usually so composed, if a little awkward, teen looking so abashed with his pinking skin and watery
eyes and the faint shine of tear tracks running down the soft curve of his cheeks. "Let's see if I can get you to scream darling." He adds in a low husky voice that causes Harry to look down at him in surprise.

"Wait, what did you just- oh shit! Blaise you uh, ah, fucking prick!" The wizard savior shouts as without warning the tanned teen swallows him whole again, his hands, unlike Harry's bound ones, were all over the place- skimming the inside of his thigh, fondling his balls, groping at his arse. Harry had been close before but now it felt like he was being shoved to the brink and shaken wildly as he teetered at the edge.

"No, ah, ahh, ah, not like, fuck, I'm, I'm going to," Harry tries to warn but Blaise takes it as encouragement more than anything, bobbing his head faster, the act becoming more sloppy with fervor and a hint of teeth that makes it so, so good. With enthusiasm like that, the fight to prolong the inevitable becomes incredibly short-lived and soon Harry is crying out loudly through his orgasm.

Blaise splutters a little, despite Harry's continued attempts to try warn him, but he takes the hot splatters of salty-bitter cum on his lips and face like a champ. He does however, make a rather disgusted face when he tries to lick some of it up. Harry cannot help but laugh breathily at his expression, the high of his orgasm still tingling under his skin.

"Blaise no matter how many times you taste it, it doesn't change flavor." He teases.

"I just don't understand how you can just swallow it all down like it's pumpkin juice." Blaise complains because he's secretly more competitive than Draco and Ron combined. "And it's so hot when you do that. Licking up my cum like it's the tastiest thing in the world."

"You're still hot." Harry consoles because he can't exactly say he's done it so many times he'd gotten used to ignoring the taste already. Or that the shit he got at the Dursley's was sometimes far worse. "I'm sure you'll get used to it eventually if you really want to, I mean, you do realize that it's not imperative to enjoy the taste of cum right?"

"Still." Blaise replies sulkily as he stood up to untie Harry's bindings. The wizard savior leers down at Blaise's obvious erection in his pants.

"Maybe I should give you a little demonstration to... aid you in your plight."

The Slytherin looks puzzled for a moment before the implications catch up to him and he leered back, "Please do... Professor," he says lowly, unsticking the tie from the wall and slowly pushing Harry down till the smaller wizard was comfortably on his knees before re-sticking his arms back to the wall.

Blaise unbuttons his pants, and pulls out his cock, hard and leaking. With a moan, he presses the head of his cock against Harry's soft lips, purposely smearing pre-cum around the other teen's mouth, entranced at how it looks. Harry let's him, his own penis stiffening a little in response. With a quick lick of his wetted lips, Harry opens his mouth in invitation, to which Blaise eagerly accepts.

It's quick work of course since Blaise had been hard since the moment he got Harry strung up by the wrists but the dark skinned wizard still manages to last longer than his first time at least. Something he had gotten so tremendously smug about, Harry shoved him hard against the wall afterwards and kissed it away until it melted into dazed arousal.

"Telling everyone my wet dream was the best fucking decision of my life." Blaise decides loudly once the high of a snog well done fades away enough for coherence.
Harry snorts, "I'm going to tell people you said that on your wedding day I hope you know."

"I'm counting on it dearest darling d-ow!"

"You know, there's something really off about Hermione?"

Harry looks at Ron curiously. "Is this about her cat again? Because once you get used to her unfortunate.. physical appearance, Crookshanks isn't that bad."

"No, no, I mean yeah that thing is a beast but-" He hesitates, "Have you noticed that she sometimes disappears and appears randomly in the day. Her bag is always filled with textbooks- even for stuff we don't even have on for the day, and sometime's she's out of breath for like, no reason!"

The Boy Who Lived hummed thoughtfully, "Well, me and Hermione aren't exactly close Ron, we're friends but she's like, sixth in line for best friend. Maybe even seventh. So no I haven't really noticed anything particularly strange, maybe she's just really excited to work on all her subjects and she gets tired from lugging around all those books of hers?"

"I mean, I guess." Ron says reluctantly. Harry pats him on the back.

"Look, I'm not saying you're imagining things or anything. You're a pretty observant guy Ron, it's just I haven't personally seen anything particularly odd, what with me hanging out with the snakes more often this year, I'll try to keep a better look out though."

"It's all I ask, cheers mate."

When they arrived to their first Defense Against the Dark Arts class, Professor Lupin wasn't there, so everyone began to fuss over their new seating. Harry, much to Ron's obvious pleasure, insisted on sitting by the redheaded Gryffindor because fuck if he didn't feel a little bad about spending less time with him. Then Blaise and Draco got into a bickering match about who should sit by Harry which may or may not have involved the phrase 'hoes before bros, bitch' and four rounds of stone, parchment, claw.

In the end Crabbe snuck in between the second and third round of stone, parchment, claw and could not be budged from his spot beside Harry. Ron was a little uncomfortable, what with the fact that he barely knows Crabbe and Crabbe kind of looks like a granite statue of the offspring of a professional wrestler and a goblin, but seemed to get over his initial wariness once he saw the twin offended expressions of the two snootiest Slytherins in their year when they realised what happened.

Professor Lupin finally arrived once everyone had comfortably, if irritably, settled into their seats. The older man smiles at them vaguely, ratty tatty briefcase in hand, but then pauses and gapes the moment he lays his eyes on Harry.

It was then, that Harry finally realises, that maybe Lupin is not exactly human. Because Harry is kind of an idiot that way.

Though he wasn't that much of an idiot to not know what type of creature. Seriously, Fate was many things, subtle never was really one of them. Remus Lupin. For fuck's sake.

You know what would be amazing? If Lupin actually turned out to be a vampire, that would be a goddamn plot twist.

Unfortunately, he's not. Harry would've sensed a vampire or any other undead type creature by sight alone. He can tell there's a magic creature, but that's mainly because they sense him first or it's like,
super obvious they're a creature.

Raising a brow at the new professor, who looks torn between an expression of awe and confusion, effectively snaps the older man from his stunned trance. Shaking his head a little, Professor Lupin addresses the class while trying not to look directly at Harry, which was a rather odd reaction. Could the man, was he fighting the natural impulsion to defer to Harry's true identity? It couldn't be.

"Good- good afternoon," the professor greeted, though his voice was hoarse and shook a little. "Please put all your books back in your bags as today will be a practical lesson. You need only your wands."

There were a few curious looks exchanged and more than a few whispers of doubt between friends as they did as the professor said.

"Five sickles says this one is somehow deeply related to Sirius Black."

Harry shakes his head, "I ain't taking a suckers bet, obviously he's going to be somehow related to the one guy who plans to skin me alive this year."

"All Defense Professors suck."

"Okay, how bout this," Ron says, glint in his eye, "I bet six sickles that Lupin being here is related to Black breaking out of Azkaban."

"You think this guy broke Black out of Azkaban?" Crabbe questioned doubtfully, looking pointedly at the shaggy, rather malnourished looking man.

"I'm saying he might've helped, maybe be keeping the guy hidden or something."

"I'll take you up on that bet." Harry says with a smirk, "Because I'm like almost ninety percent sure the guy was homeless."

Crabbe snickered, Draco- who sat beside Crabbe after much heavy debate- also laughed, even Ron had to try not to grin at the insult.

"Five sickles says he's Black."

Ron raises his eyebrows at the large boy, "Wha- like Lupin is actually secretly Black?"

"It is possible," Hermione interjected next to Ron, "I mean, in first year we- uhh, never mind."

"What Hermione was meant to say," Harry butts in smoothly, "Is that it's not that hard to pretend to be someone else, polyjuice potions, charms, even some very nifty human transfiguration- all highly illegal of course but I hardly think an Azkaban escapee would be particularly finicky about the finer rules of the law."

"What Harry said." Crabbe says, looking extremely chuffed that it seemed his suggestion was being seriously considered.

Hermione hummed, "Still, I wouldn't put my money on that, some polyjuice ingredients are hard to get, not to mention expensive. Black wouldn't be able to procure enough for one dose much less
enough to last for a whole year. No, I bet… nine sickles that Professor Lupin has nothing to do with Black but has a completely unrelated secret that will definitely hinder Harry in some way in the future."

"Oooh," Draco says, leaning out of his seat, "I say he's got both a Sirius Black and completely unrelated secret that will hinder Harry for three galleons."

"Wait, let me write this down." Harry muttered as he ferociously began penning the bets. "We are totally going to spread this around right?"

"Oh yeah totally." Draco says, even Hermione was nodding.

"I'm saving up for this tome I saw in Flourish and Botts." She confessed. "Also, can I be in charge of the accounting? I like math."

Crabbe and Ron wrinkled up their nose in distaste because, well, math. Harry shrugged and passed the parchment to her. She recoils as she saw his handwriting, "Oh Harry your penmanship is appalling!" She gasped.

"Only if I'm rushing." He protested.

"Never mind, I'll redo them later." She assures, spelling it dry before shoving it into her already overfilled book bag. "Now let's see what's happening today then."

Once everyone was ready, Professor Lupin nodded genially, "Right, if you'd follow me."

The older man led everyone out of the classroom, much to their confusion and curiosity. Along the way to wherever they were going, they passed by Peeves who had been floating upside down in midair.

"Peeves!" Harry shouted, earning the poltergeist's attention and causing all his friends to instinctively take one large step away from him.

"Princess Potter!" Peeves cackled joyously. Apparently if a delusional painting was allowed to call the Death Lord a 'fair maiden' Peeves had decided he was allowed to make fun of Harry's rather feminine appearance as well- provided he still used some form of respect or mention of nobility. "Hart dare thee on a summer's day!" The ghost exclaims with faux poshness as he encircles the green eyed wizard, tipping an invisible hat as he does so.

Harry grins, "No idea what you are on about you silly thing." He says fondly, Peeves just smiled like a mischievous little boy, definitely one born with Chaos' blessing indeed.

With a pointed cough, interrupting whatever the poltergeist was going to say next, Professor Lupin smiled at them a little puzzled and agitated. "Ah, I'm sorry to cut this short but-"

Peeves looked briefly irritated but pushed it aside in favour of grinning madly at the professor, a spark of recognition in his eyes. "I remember you!" He crows, before breaking into a taunting song, "Loony, loopy Lupin, loony, loopy Lupin-"

Everyone quickly turned to see how the Professor would take such blatant disrespect from the poltergeist. Peeves doesn't usually target the professors unless he was really bored or feeling very daring. To do so immediately to a new teacher was interesting to say the least. Surprisingly though,
the man was still smiling. Harry, who had been close enough and aware enough to see the signs, however witnessed a brief flash of bright yellow in those eyes.

Not exactly the mild mannered human the professor liked to pretend to be was he?

"You know, I'd take out the gum you had been stuffing from that keyhole, Peeves," Professor Lupin suggests in a kindly tone, loving a few of the more keen eared students questioning how on earth the older wizard had noticed that, "Mr Filch would hardly be pleased."

Peeves, with all the maturity of a five year old, blows a raspberry. Definitely one of Chaos' people.

Harry probably should have stopped it, told Peeves to play nice with the new kid in school and go away. But a petty part of him kind of wanted the older wizard to come out of this conversation shame-faced. He remembered Snape, proud, bitter Snape, telling him in not so many words how his father and his Marauders had bullied him in their youth and so Harry felt little sympathy to help the bloke.

The professor gave a rather put-upon sign before taking out his wand, "Class, pay attention, this is a rather useful little spell," Raising his wand up toward Peeves he shouted, "Waddiwasi!" which caused a wad of chewing gum to shoot right up the poltergeist's nose with such force the ghost whirled around in the air like he had slipped on ice.

"Woah, I didn't know you could hex a ghost." Sean Finnegan said amazedly.

"Poltergeists are different to normal ghosts." Hermione informs him knowledgeably.

Harry huffs and glares at the older wizard, much to the man's visible surprise, "Well I think that was really uncalled for professor." He says irritably as Peeves whimpers behind him, clutching his nose. "Peeves may have been unaccountably rude but I didn't see him physically attacking you."

Lupin flushed and looked rather chastised while some of the students began to murmur their agreements at Harry's statement. Ron and the other Gryffindors seemed to still be on the side that thought Lupin's actions were pretty neat but even they seemed to accept that it was a rather over the top response to just some baseless taunting. Hermione was looking shrewdly at the professor, apparently getting fooled twice by a Defence teacher's personality had caused her to look upon the man with some modicum of suspicion.

"Also," Harry continued huffily, because the idea of such a spell being used on an actual person seemed horrible and should be voiced as such before some of the more trigger happy students here got too many ideas, "why on earth would you make such a mean-hearted spell sound like something we should learn? A ‘useful’ spell? Are you bloody serious sir? Gum would block someone's nose and it would be amazingly difficult to pull it out- someone could legitimately die because they couldn't breath anymore!"

"That's right." Hermione agrees because she knows firsthand how horrible bullying can be, "I cried when someone put gum in my hair and that was just my hair. Encouraging students to such awful malicious pranks like that is hardly decent professor."

"Not to mention disgusting." Draco mutters, which earns the approval of his fellow Slytherins.

"Now Ha- Mr Potter," Professor Lupin says weakly, "I, I didn't mean it like that." The man takes a deep breath, clearly his first Gryffindor-Slytherin third year class was not going as well as he had imagined, and they hadn't even started it yet. "Look, I'm sorry for such a display, I am."

"Don't apologise to me sir," Harry sniffs before stepping to the side to reveal a very pitiful looking
poltergeist, "Apologise to Peeves."

Peeves who was playing the injured card a little too heavily to be proper believable but the point still stood nonetheless. Professor Lupin to his credit didn't hesitate, just nodded and moved closer to face the translucent trickster, "I apologise Peeves. I should not have acted the way I did, it was not befitting of me as a teacher."

Peeves for a moment looked like he was going to tell the wizard where exactly he could shove his sorry up to, but one pointed look at Harry made the poltergeist reluctantly nod and accept. Lupin smiled a little relieved and undid the hex, letting the gum fall out and Peeves freedom to skitter away with a dark look in his eyes that promised bad things to the professor lest they met again.

Awkwardly, Professor Lupin turns to the class and gestures everyone to starting moving along again, "Well, shall we proceed?"

As they begin to walk along the corridor, Lupin touches Harry's shoulder getting his attention when the blonde asks him casually, "If you have some free time after class why don't we have a nice chat Mr Potter?"

"Of course professor." The Boy Who Lived answers demurely though it seemed that the older wizard didn't exactly buy what he was selling. Annoyingly enough, Lupin didn't even seem to be that upset at his overly faked innocence, just exasperated and fond.

Harry narrows his eyes as the man passes him by to lead the class to their destination. Personal bias against the man for apparently bullying Severus in the past aside, Harry just doesn't trust the older wizard. If Lupin couldn't even accept the creature he harboured inside himself enough to sense an entity like Death, it said a lot of things about the man already. None of them particularly kind.

He hangs back with Neville in the crowd of students, which of course means that Draco, Blaise and Ron joins him there, which in turn means Hermione, Nott, Crabbe and Goyle followed suit.

"Hey, so I see you've established you're opinions of Lupin." Blaise drawls before kissing Harry on the temple quickly. "S'not very smart though, doing it so quick. Your word has a lot of weight in the school after all."

"Well I think it's great how Harry stood up to Professor Lupin," Hermione says, "I mean, normally I don't condone it but given our record with Defence professors, I think it's rather prudent to establish the boundaries with them before they do something like try and murder a student."

"Yeah, what 'Mione said." Ron agrees heartily. "I mean, I know they usually fixate on Harry but I ain't risking the off chance I, as Harry's best mate, will be caught in the crossfire."

"Weasley has a point," Draco agreed, "except for being Harry's best mate, that's absolute bollocks because clearly I'm his best mate but other than that he has a point."

"Woah, woah wOAH." Ron says before suddenly switching gears as he noticed that they were all walking slower now, "-hey, isn't this the staffroom?"

And indeed it was. Piling inside, Harry and the other Gryffindor-Slytherin third years could see a rather large cosy room filled with empty mismatched chairs save for one which was currently occupied. Professor Snape was sitting in a comfortable looking armchair with a cup of tea in hand as everyone filtered in, looking severely disgruntled at having his solitude so blatantly encroached upon. As Lupin began closing the door behind him, Snape sneered and stood up, "Keep it open Lupin, I believe I was just leaving."
Striding past the students, black robes billowing dramatically behind him, he turns heel last minute by the door to smirk nastily at them, "I should you warn you Lupin, this class contains the inept Neville Longbottom. I advise you not to entrust him with anything too above his… level without Miss Granger's help lest he strain something."

Neville went scarlet and looked down, Harry glared at Snape who was pointedly not looking at the wizard saviour. Honestly, there had been absolutely no need to say that. Especially in a subject he, for all intents and purposes, would know nothing about Neville's aptitude in.

"Actually, I was hoping that Neville here would assist me with the first stage of the operation," Professor Lupin replied easily though there was a touch of a challenge in his mild voice, "and I am sure he will perform it admirably."

The potions master narrowed his eyes and curled his lips into a rather cruel smile. "This, I simply must see then." He drawls, his voice low and mocking, moving away from the door to sit in one of the chairs furthest from the class.

"Hey, Nev, um," Harry pats the pale-faced Gryffindor who had the unfortunate luck to be pulled into two professors' fight, "You know, you can back out of this if you really don't think you can do this. I'll back up your decision either way this comes out and you know Snape likes me so he won't be too, uhh-"

"Incredibly harsh and make me feel like I would rather dance with a dementor?" Neville finishes shakily, Harry grinned at the spark of spirit in the boy.

"Yeah. That."

Neville smiles wobbly back before he takes some deep, loud breaths and shakes his head, "No, I-I want to prove S-Snape wrong." He says, "No offence."

"Why should I be offended?" Harry asked, "Frankly, I feel nothing but pride for you."

"Well… you know, you have that-" Neville makes an unintelligible sound paired with a random hand gesture in Harry's direction. "-with Professor Snape."

"Oh come on, you too?!"

"It's kind of super weird." Neville confessed. Harry stuck his tongue out, successfully getting the boy to calm down enough to chuckle a little.

"Now, then," Professor Lupin declared at the end of the room where an old wardrobe stood, presumably it was used for the teachers' spare robes. Apparently not though, as the wardrobe gave a sudden violent jerk practically banging off the wall. "Nothing to worry about," Lupin reassured when everyone had jumped backward in alarm. "It's just a Boggart."

Professor Snape in the far corner of the large room snorted loudly as many students stare with disbelief at their newest Defence professor while the rest, muggle raised, just looked confused and wary. Neville had lost all of what confidence he had been able to scrap together and stared at Professor Lupin with pure horror while the wardrobe doorknob began rattling furiously.

Harry too found himself eyeing the wardrobe apprehensively. Boggarts were, they were technically in his jurisdiction but also, they weren't either. Boggarts were not creatures of death but of fear, and that makes a big difference usually in terms of attitude discerning entities. However fear does not exactly fit into any other jurisdiction of another entity other than Chaos, even then, the species' limitation of only being able to scare one person at a time wasn't exactly very chaotic was it?
These are creatures that embody fear itself, even Death himself cannot deny fear, for fear can sometimes reach further than even the repercussions of death is capable of.

So Boggarts were essentially the adopted child to Death's very odd family, or at the very least, very distant but still well-tolerated relatives. Honestly the whole complicated mess doesn't mean much other than the natural affinity and immunity Death might have to say, a dementor, would not be there. Death would not be affected by a dementor's aura or soul sucking kiss in the same way he is affected by phoenixes. They will still recognise Death, worship him even, but that will not stop their instinctual ability to take on a person's fear when they step in front of them.

In summary, he's going to be faced with his worst fear just as much as the next mortal. And while he's not exactly sure what that's going to look like, he's fairly sure that no simple Riddikulus charm is going to cut it for him.

Seemingly unaware of his students' discomfort and fear, the professor continued on with an explanation of the species, "Boggarts like dark, enclosed spaces such as wardrobes, gaps beneath beds, cupboards under sinks- I've even met one that had lodged itself in a grandfather clock. This one," he tapped at the wardrobe, making it vibrate ominously, "moved in here yesterday afternoon, and I asked the headmaster if the staff would leave it to give my third years some practice."

How dubiously dangerous. No bloody wonder Dumbledore said yes.

"So, the first question we must ask ourselves is, what is a Boggart?"

Predictably, Hermione's hand was the first one up.

"Yes Miss...?"

"Granger sir. A Boggart is a shape-shifter," she replies promptly. "It takes the shape of whatever it will scare us the most."

"Couldn't have said even better myself Miss Granger," Hermione beamed under the praise. She's probably still suspicious of the man because Hermione's a smart girl like that, but Lupin complimenting her for her knowledge would definitely put him up a notch in her mind. "Five points to Gryffindor."

Lupin continues to talk about the boggart, and Harry only listens with half an ear as he wonders what his fear is. He has a good idea actually, you don't exist as long as he does without coming to terms with yourself and going through some serious journeys of self-reflection. The problem is, his fears are more conceptual than anything- an inability to control his powers is the major one- not exactly something a Boggart could convey unless it resorted to interpretive dance or something. Maybe it's Life trying to kill him, he remembers that period of time with little to no fondness, that had been pretty frightening age after all.

"-huge advantage over the Boggart before we begin. Have you spotted it, my Lor-Harry?"

Harry glanced up at the sudden use of his name to see Professor Lupin looking expectantly up at him, though there was a look of consternation on his face and the man was completely avoiding Harry's eyes, fidgeting a little under the wizard savior's attentions. He's fighting the compulsion to scent the air or preen and bask under Harry's gaze, it's a little insulting if not worrying. A werewolf denying his inner beast was not a healthy werewolf.

"There's too many of us right now, it'll get confused on what form to take." He answers easily
enough, nearby Hermione, who had been frantically waving her arm on the off chance Harry failed to answer, slumped disappointedly. That girl has some serious issues.

"Exactly," said the professor, looking pleased, "Five points to Gryffindor, you see-"

"Uh professor?" Blaise interrupts, "Harry's a Slytherin right now."

"Wha-" Lupin's face coloured as he realised his mistake, causing a few students to titter as he wasn't the only professor who had made such an error concerning the young wizard's confusing sorting. "I'm so sorry, I just assumed-" He coughs, "Anyway, ten points to Slytherin to make up for my error, now, as I was saying.."

The professor begins explaining the Riddikulus charm, making the class repeat it back to him to his satisfaction and Harry has to grudgingly agree that this man, while untrustworthy in his eyes, was certainly one of the best defence teachers they had encountered so far. He wouldn't go so far as to say it was a testament to Lupin's skill as a teacher, more like it was a testament to the incompetence of his previous professors really.

"Now this is where you come in, Neville."

Neville was this close to hyperventilating.

"Would not like to be him right now." Draco muttered, "Then again, when have I ever?"

"Don't be a prat Draco." Harry murmured as he jabbed him in the ribs with his elbow.

"Yeah Draco, don't be a prat." Blaise agrees, partly because he's still enjoys playing up the fake boyfriend thing and partly because he wants to take the opportunity to jab Malfoy in the ribs when he gets them. Blaise is also kind of, definitely, a prat. A fucking cute one though.

Neville was shuffling slowly to the front of the group like a prisoner off to his hanging, it didn't help everyone was as silent as the grave as he passed by. A few like Harry had given him a comforting pat on the back but it wasn't like there was much they could say now unless Neville spoke up first.

"Right, Neville," said Professor Lupin with a rather assuring smile. "First things first, what would you say is the thing that frightens you most in the world?"

Neville's eyes widened in fear before he whispered the word. Well, Harry assumes he said something, it was more a puff of air than anything that came out of the teen's mouth.

"Sorry, I didn't catch that Neville, can you repeat that?" Lupin asked.

The Gryffindor bit his lip before replying in a slight louder whisper, "P-Professor Snape."

Almost everyone laughed.

"Hoo boy." Harry murmurs, his eyes glancing to said professor sitting behind them, his expression hard to read at the distance. The potions master would have undoubtedly used a hearing charm and heard Neville's choice of fear, and even Harry isn't sure how the older wizard would be reacting to such a proclamation. It's one thing to be hated, but to know that you are someone's greatest fear is... it doesn't feel great.

Harry should know.

The presence of Tom in the front of his head recedes a bit.
"Professor Snape hm?" Professor Lupin hums thoughtfully, "Interesting choice. And you live with your grandmother correct?"

"Ehm, yeah but I uh, wouldn't want to see her either."

More laughter, Neville actually grinned a little at the sound, for once the laughter wasn't on him after all but with him. Even Draco and the other Slytherins was chuckling in amusement.

"All the purebloods have met his grandmother at least once." Blaise explains under his breath, "none of us think she's anything less than frighteningly."

"Though you would think Longbottom would've gotten used to Snape if he had lived with the crone for so long." Draco murmured, "Then again, some people burn in fire and some come out golden."

"..What?"

"It was something I heard from my father." Draco shrugged.

"No, no, you misunderstand me," The defence professor shook his head, smiling. "I wonder, could you tell us what sort of clothes your grandmother usually wears?"

Neville, justifiably, looks at the new professor weirdly, but complies, describing his grandma's clothing with a few prompts from the older man. Lupin soothingly tells the boy to visualise her, visualise Severus and when Neville tells him he is, the man then says, "Very good. Now imagine Professor Snape in your grandmother's clothes. Can you do that Neville?"

Harry narrows his eyes at the scruffy wizard. Great, a werewolf he could handle, a pervert he could handle, but a perverted werewolf interested in either humiliating or weirdly sexualising Severus was definitely a no-no. Harry wouldn't say anything though, because as bad as he feels for Severus, he knows that Neville, of all people, needs the win a little bit more. However Lupin certainly does not.

"I mean, I guess.." Neville says, with a look that strongly implies 'You fucking weirdo'.

"Good, now when I let the Boggart out and it catches sight of you Neville I want you to take that image, raise your wand and say Riddikulus. Remember to concentrate and focus on that image okay?" Professor Lupin turned to the class, "We're going to repeat this with all of you, so I would like if you take a moment now to imagine what scares you the most and how you could force it to look comical."

The room went quiet, thoughtful in self-reflection. Harry tries to imagine a furious homicidal Life dressed in fuck ugly clothes. It doesn't work. That woman was soft and beautiful in every single way, the same way Death was strikingly attractive and angular, only fitting well with morbid shades and monochrome colours.

"Everyone ready?" Professor Lupin calls out, getting a few murmurs of agreement and looks of panic. Harry frantically imagines Life tripping over her own feet, and hopes it's enough to work. "Okay, Neville, stand over there, yes, good, everyone else please back away- great. Now on the count of three I'm going to open the door,"

"Go Neville!" Harry called out, followed by a few other Gryffindors and some sympathetic Slytherins, causing the poor boy in front of the wardrobe to smile unsteadily at the cheers. Neville looked pale and even at the distance everyone else stood away from him, they could easily see the way the wand in his hand trembled.

"One, two, three-" Lupin's wand emitted some sparks at the wardrobe, unlocking whatever spell was
previous on the door. At first there was nothing, then, slowly a hand opened the wardrobe and out stepped the looming, intimidating image of Professor Snape. "Now!"

Neville froze, his wand was pulled out and his mouth was certainly moving but sound was not coming out of him. Boggart Snape sneered as he strode purposely toward the young trembling wizard, his less pleasant features of his face more pronounced making the man's face look far more unforgivingly ugly than in reality.

"R-r-r-r" Wide-eyed, Neville glances to his classmates searchingly before finally resting on Harry. Harry gives him a thumbs up and a wink, it's not really much in the way of moral support but it's enough to distract the Gryffindor from his nerves enough to yell out the spell, "Riddikulus!"

Suddenly the Boggart Snape seemed to stumble at the whip-crack like noise that was produced by the spell, his clothes shifting until he was wearing a long fur coat, a gigantic hat with what looked like a half rotted vulture on it and an almost equally large crimson handbag that didn't match his long patterned dress at all. Boggart Snape looked comically shocked as he took in his own appearance.

The whole class descended into a roar of applause and laughter, Neville ducked his head hiding his embarrassed flush of pride at a spell well done. Harry clapped of course, but it was quiet compared to the boisterous chortles of Ron and the other Gryffindors. The Slytherins applauded politely enough, but refrained from looking too impressed, after all this was their head of house they were making fun of.

Speaking of their head of house… Harry looked behind to the opposite side of the room to see a furious red-faced potions master glaring at the scene. He looks back to see Lupin calling out Parvati to come forward and for everyone else to form a line behind her, "Hey, one of you save me a spot okay? Okay." He quickly tells his friends before slipping between his excited classmates to sneak unnoticed toward Severus.

Silently he casts a very weak muffling spell around Snape and himself before slinking over to the glowering wizard who was still too busy murdering Professor Lupin with his eyes to pay attention. For all the older wizard likes to play aloof and stoic, and above petty feelings, Severus was surprisingly a very emotionally driven man. "You know," Harry sighs, "I'm not going to lie and say you didn't deserve this considering how mean you were to Neville, Severus."

"Shouldn't you be waiting in line with the other school children Potter?" Snape hissed, his face is twisted and blotchy from humiliation and anger.

"Draco and Ron are saving me a spot." Harry shrugged and lightly brushes the professor's shoulder with his hip. "I figured you, well," he bit his lip and in a softer voice he confessed, "I wanted to see if you're okay."

Snape blinked, momentarily shaken from his anger. Then the man narrows his eyes, "I don't need your pity Potter."

"It's not pity." Harry sighs patiently, he fiddles with the hem of his sleeve for lack of anything else to do, "Severus, I like you. You're gorgeous," Snape snorts disbelievingly, "intelligent and kind- even if you rather swallow one of Peeves' dung bombs than admit it- and yeah, maybe you're also horribly petty and prideful and downright mean but I like you nonetheless. And it doesn't feel good being made fun of, it never does, so I know you aren't feeling good right now and I wanted to try make you feel less not good, damn, did that make sense? I'm rambling aren't I?"

"Just a little." Snape agreed but he looks calmer now, more put together than the near feral expression he had before. He's even smiling a bit, it's faint, but the upward tilt of his lips is present
and Harry counts this as a major win.

Harry just smiles and brushes his hand against his arm a little more purposely, "Lupin is a dick." He tells Snape factually, causing him to shout a bark of sudden laughter at the unexpected insult that had seem to come from nowhere.

"Language Harry." The older wizard chides but there's only mirth in his voice. There were noticeably no house points being taken away either.

"It's true though," Harry says loftily, and Snape's smile widens into something vindictive and twistedly delighted as he leans in like he's about to hear the funniest thing he's heard this year, "Sure you shouldn't have insulted Neville in front of everyone- something I'm still unimpressed with by the way, don't get me wrong- but Lupin undermining a fellow professor? A Head of House even, in such a publicly humiliating way?" Harry snorted, "No, the mature thing to do upon hearing Neville's fear would be to get someone else to play first batter so the heat on you is less intense, much less add fuel to the fire by making a bet- and don't even get me started on how he just volunteered Neville on his own without even asking him first!"

"It was very wrong." Snape nodded sternly but with a little too much glee in his eyes to really pull it off.

"Oh come off it." Harry snaps, but he's smiling too, "We both know that this all started because you had to be spiteful. Though it doesn't exactly say good things about our new Defense professor if he doesn't even hesitate to respond back like some, some-"

"Man child?"

Harry makes a 'meh' gesture with his hands, "The point is, I don't like how he treated Neville, I don't like how he treats you, I don't like how he treats himself and I don't like how he treats you."

"You said the last one twice."

Harry grins, leans down, and pecks the sallow faced man's cheek with a quick kiss, "Because it's twice as important sir." He murmurs demurely before skipping off back to his class where Padma Parvati was facing a bloodstained mummy.

"Riddikulus!" cried Parvati and the mummy tripped on its own bandages. Everyone cheered, Harry did too- mainly because his whole body felt like it was brimming with tiny electric fireworks and he needed an outlet. God, even flirting feels stupidly amazing, Harry now feels a little bad about giving teenagers so much shit about their annoyingly petty love lives… Okay so maybe he doesn't feel that bad. Seriously, most of them have cell phones, how do they still keep getting into such blatant miscommunication-based problems?!

"Weasley, next!" Lupin shouted, Ron grinned and Harry clapped him on the back.

"Go get 'em Ron." Harry tells him before leaning back and whispering loudly, "Eight sickles says its a big ass spider."

"Wha-" Draco looked like Christmas had come early, "You're afraid of spiders Weasley?!"

"You're the worst." Ron deadpanned. "I hope my spider tries to have sex with you."

"Um. I am going to need some context for that one." Blaise says with wide-eyes, "Because that was really out of the blue. Like. What."
"Last year we followed some spiders." Harry explains as Ron steps out to face the boggart. As expected, it took the form of a frankly massive spider. A very anatomically incorrect spider because Harry's fairly sure they don't have human tongues the size of medium-sized snakes lolling out of their mouth. It was a rather disturbing sight as the pink appendages licked its mouth parts and all eight of its eyes leered at the redhead. Boggarts don't usually speak, thank the lord, because Harry was not that curious. "It... snowballed from there."

Draco and Blaise were too busy gagging at the boggart-spider to listen.

Ron had paled but had raised his wand rather steadily, already fairing far better than some of the other students, and shouted out the spell, causing the giant arachnid to fall tongue first on the ground as it suddenly found itself the owner of eight new rollerskates.

It's amazing how Ron doesn't know what a telephone is but muggle roller skates were something he knew well enough to visualise clearly in the face of his greatest fear. Honestly, Harry thinks Arthur Weasley is a nice bloke but the inside of that man's head would probably make psychologists weep.

Everyone laughed and cheered and clapped, and a triumphant Ron whooped and left the line to join the other students at the sidelines.

Hermione is next, she takes a step forward, head held up high and points her wand at the boggart. Immediately it shifted into-

"Huh." Harry says to himself, "I want to say I'm surprised but, uh, wow."

Professor McGonagall was looking down at the girl, disapproval and disappointment could not be anymore obviously etched into the professor's features. Hermione made a whimpering sound. Harry could not really blame her. He would sacrifice his left testicle not to be the sole recipient of that look.

"Riddikulus!" The young witch screamed, smart move, Harry's fairly sure most people would have lost their will to live if they were forced to endure that face for too long. And when he says too long he means three more seconds. Seriously, the dementors should take lessons.

'As a current dark lord, I concur,' Tom Riddle echoed in his head. Harry internally scoffs.

'Please, you can barely call yourself 'current' much less a dark lord.'

'Rude.'

Boggart-McGonagall did a boggart-Snape and stumbled as her clothes transformed into a candy-caned themed male swimsuit, fit with a comedically large sunhat and one of those large inflatable duck ring things Harry's seen people use at pools. Everybody laughs though Lupin looks distinctly more uncomfortable at having a doppelgänger of the Head of Gryffindor being jeered at than he did when it was Snape's image on the line.

"Ha- Potter!" Lupin shouts out hastily, "Your turn!"

"Go get 'em babe." Blaise teases and kisses his hair before ruffling it. Draco just makes more gagging noises because he is the height of maturity.

Harry grins but his stomach rolls nervously as he steps in front of the creature. He lifts his chin defiantly and stares it down.

The boggart looks back, the face of Professor Mcgonagall is one of distraught fear as it lays sight on Harry, on Death, and then almost reluctantly it begins to transform. The transition is slow, like the
boggart was trying to go against its inherent nature but that only served to make the change more horrifying as his own features, Death's features, began to reveal itself. The boggart of him is tall, hunched over despite the high ceiling and making him look even more looming.

Someone is screaming but no one can move, paralysed by fear as bone white claws that looked like giant swords twitched and inky black tears fell from the holes where eyes should be. The boggart's face was angular and sharp, his teeth even more so, hundreds of sharp jagged things bared in an expression of anguish and rage. He doesn't have his usual cool, calm and collected demeanour that Death upholds in public, nor the languid regality he naturally wears even relaxed. This was raw and feral and grieving.

Harry felt sick and cold as the boggart version of himself was turning his head slowly, almost unseeing of the wizards and witches below him, lost and searching.

For something that will never be there.

_Death is not the means to the end, but is the end itself. They very last step of the process. Whether it be a person's life. A species'. A world. A galaxy. A god. An entity. Death will be there until there's no more reason for him to be._

Harry moans softly, pained and nauseated while the boggart also moaned, loud and echoing and rasping. Harry feels dizzy and he can feel his own tears, human tears, wet his cheeks as he tries to breath, tries to ignore the inevitable fate of what will come to pass one day in the future. When every single thing eventually dies out, all the worlds and individuals in there. The gods and the mortals and all those in between. The true end of of everything.

Fuck, never let it be said that Death has petty concerns.

"LUPIN!" Snape suddenly roared, and as if startled back to reality, the blonde professor quickly jumped in between Harry and the boggart. Almost immediately, as if the creature had been relieved to rid itself of it's current form, it shifts into a silvery-white orb hanging in the air in front of Lupin, "Riddikulus." Professor Lupin chants, and the boggart turned into a white balloon that popped.

Harry felt a large hand cover his shoulder, it's only when the steady presence made itself known did the green-eyed wizard realises he was shaking. "I'm going to take Mr Potter to Madam Pomphrey." The deep tenor of Professor Snape announces, gently steering Harry away from curious. frightened eyes.

Professor Lupin nodded, "Please, please do." He says quietly, looking very concerned. As they left Harry could hear the defence professor trying be upbeat and giving out house points left and right to whoever participated. Severus tightened his hold on his shivering form the moment they closed the door behind them, pulling Harry in closer to his body as they walked. The warmth was comforting and grounding and Harry soon found himself leaning into it hungrily, clutching desperately at the man's robes as the fear of what he could be, what he will be wells up within him.

Because everything dies. Nothing lives forever. Because when all life ends, there is no chaos or order, no fates to be played with or magic to find wonder in. Knowledge would waste away, unused, and love would wear thin under all the grief until there was nothing but heartbreak shattered around. Then eventually, one day, time will end and space will crumble and death will be the last one standing, if only for a moment.

And oh, there will be no words to describe how horrible that one moment of complete and utter isolation will be.
"Sshh.. Harry," Snape's voice soothes in a rumbling gentle voice. He's stroking Harry's back in a slow constant manner, making it easier for Harry to try focus his ragged breathes in time with the action. "Harry, can you, can you walk for me? The infirmary isn't too far. Can you do this for me?"

The younger wizard tries to say yes but all he ends up with is a choked off sob, it seems this has affected him even more than he thought. Still he manages to nod and begins pushing away from the potions master. Snape tuts, and pulls him back closer to his side, an arm slung around him, curling at his shoulder protectively. "I asked you if you could walk Harry, I never said by yourself."

"Oh." Harry says a little dumbly. His voice wobbly and cracked. He sounds so small. He feels even smaller. "Kay."

They walk to the medical wing quietly. They ignore Harry's attempts to calm his breathing into something that doesn't resemble a panic attack and the way he clings to Snape like a lifeline. Just like how they ignored that Snape was rubbing his thumb into the crook of Harry's neck and that the younger wizard by now was perfectly capable of walking without a crutch.

When they arrived, the potions master wasted no time summoning a calming draught to shove into Harry's hands before herding him onto the nearest bed. Harry is embarrassed to say the whole thing feels depressingly familiar considering how many times he's been injured. Not that he's been injured a lot. It just happens the few times he is hurt, it's always something that could be arguably life-threatening slash crippling.

He wonders if it's because he's Harry Potter or if it's just him.

Severus then startled talking in low hushed voices with Madam Pomphrey so Harry sipped his potion obediently, it's disgusting but he's used to worse and it was helping. The shaking in his hands had stopped at least. Closing his eyes, Harry tilted his head and forced himself to swallow every last drop. "Bleh." He mutters.

"Harry?" Harry looked up to see Severus hovering in front of him, looking distinctly uncomfortable as he usually did when face to face with a Harry that was currently or had recently been crying. It's charmingly odd, the older wizard was great when Harry starts crying, while Harry was crying, but the moment he stops, suddenly it was like the man had taken a house elf to the face or something equally as baffling. "Do you want to... talk about what happened Harry?"

"No." He replies almost immediately.

Snape looked at Harry, assessing, but seemed to decide the topic was best left alone.. for now. "I see."

The younger wizard bites his lip, worrying it between his teeth as he thinks. Severus was a man who was aware of boundaries. Unfortunately he was also a man who enjoyed pushing them and sometimes even trying to slip through them to snatch up whatever information that caught his interest. It would be too much effort trying to fend Severus off such an intriguing little secret with blatant denials, he would need to play it Slytherin and downplay it.

"It's... a nightmare from my childhood." He finally confesses. It's hardly a lie. Ages upon ages upon ages ago Death had the epiphany that if, by some chance, every single thing perished, he would be the last entity left. It had haunted him to the point he had tried to kill himself by refusing to let anyone die. Life of all people had to slap him back to his senses as by the time he realised what his fear had done, the mortals had all been begging, crying out for death as overpopulation overwhelmed them to impossible degrees. "I forgot about it until now."
Severus narrows his eyes, which, super unfair Harry was not lying. He had gotten Knowledge and Space to block that particular era from his mind. Speaking of which, Harry has severely underestimated the telepathic abilities of Boggarts. Like, slow clap for those motherfucking bastards.

He wonders if he could pawn them off to Chaos. They were meant to be his responsibility after all.

"Your worst fear stems from a simple childhood nightmare." Severus summarises, looking deeply unconvinced.

Harry shrugged, "You saw it yourself." He says mildly, "Do you really think that was something made from this reality?"

The potions master grimaces, "…No." He says grudgingly. "But still-

"Would you be willing to explain your boggart professor?" Harry asks, effectively shutting the older man up. "I thought not." He sniffled.

"I see your point Mr Potter." Severus says tightly, "But be that as you may, your peers have already seen your worst fear, and I worry what they will say to it."

"Your worries are unfounded sir," Harry waves off dismissively, "If it was something trivial and vague like Professor Lupin's there would be far more gossip and speculation."

"But since your fears produced a monster, the fear would be more or less considered understandable among the student body." Snape concludes correctly, though he still didn't look happy. "However-"

"Oh do stop fussing Severus," Madam Pomphrey tutted, passing Harry a mug of steaming hot chocolate to which Harry accepted eagerly, "Here dear, there's nothing like chocolate to help stray whatever is left of your frayed nerves."

"I wish I knew that before taking the calming draught." Harry says glibly as he blows on the steaming mug. God, it smells so god. He damns himself for his oversensitive body that must force him to endure and wait until the sweet liquid has cooled to more tolerable degrees.

"Well you certainly must be feeling better if you can complain again," Pomphrey smiled while Snape gnashed his teeth, either from being scolded in front of a student or being insulted on behalf of his calming draughts or a combination of the two, Harry does not know. "I suggest a good night's sleep and if you have any nightmares I'm sure Professor Snape here can supply you with some Dreamless Sleep."

"Thank you Madam Pomfrey." Harry thanks dutifully, relieved he's not going to spend the night in the infirmary. Again.

The older witch smiled before moving her attentions to another patient a few beds away. Harry isn't sure what happened to the unfortunate witch there but he had swore he saw a fish tail when the mediwitch opened the separating curtain to enter, and he wasn't that curious to stick his nose into that. Not when he has his own issues to deal with anyway.

"I think you can drink that cocoa now without burning that kitten tongue of yours Harry." Snape says, dry and amused. Harry blinks up at him and sips the drink cautiously. He grins as it turns out to be the perfect temperature. Hot and sweet enough to echo that warmth in his stomach and chest.

"It's amazing how you always seem to know." Harry tells him with no small amount of wonder in his voice. He wishes he could do that. There's something oddly terrifying taking the first sip of something steaming hot.
"Yes, it is both a gift and a burden that I must bear." The potions master replies completely deadpan and Harry laughs, much to Severus' visible pleasure. "Now finish your drink Harry so we can leave before you start growing roots here."

"I don't come here that often." Harry complained but began drinking down his cocoa anyway.

"I'm going to be naming that bed after you Mr Potter if you come in again." Madam Pomphrey sniffed as she came back to them before turning to the potions master. "Severus do you mind putting Potter's mug in the sink once he's finished? Melson's rather 'fishy' problem is a little..."

"Of course Poppy," Snape nods. The medwitch mirrors the action and goes back to fret over her more concerning patient, leaving the pair alone.

"Um." Harry fidgets and holds up his cup to the professor, "I'm done sir?"

Snape wordlessly plucks the cup from Harry's hand with a wry smile. While he goes to put the cup into the sink which is on the other side of the room, Harry pulls himself out of the bed and thinks about sleeping tonight, alone, with the sort of resigned despair prisoners on death row had the night before their execution. He feels vulnerable and weak and the urge to recreate the recent memory of the potions master's warm presence is almost crippling.

The walk back is quiet but tense on Harry's end. He had been well enough not to need a human crutch, occasionally Harry stumbled a little or had to lean on Severus for a bit but other than that he had been walking more or less fine. Instead he takes most of the time just trying to build the confidence and courage just to voice what he wants to Severus. A hard endeavour since he's hardly sure what exactly he wants much less voice it.

All he knows is, the idea of being alone right now, is terrifying.

They reach Severus' private quarters and Harry realises, whatever he is going to say, he is going to say it now. Once the potions master closes the door behind him, he makes his move.

"It's getting late an- Harry?" The older wizard looks down to see that Harry had reached out to pinch a bit of the fabric of his robe.

"Um," Harry blushes furiously at what he's about to do. He needs to pull himself together, god, he's asked, no, demanded, for threesomes and had an easier time for it than this. "Will you, can I, can I sleep with you tonight?"

Snape stares down at him, his previous tired features from a long day drawn into something disbelieving. "Excuse me?"

Anxiety and mortification was crawling up his cheeks in an icy pink heat but Harry pushes on, it would only be more awkward if he backed up now after all. "Just for tonight." He adds hastily, "You know, just in case I get nightmares and all, what with facing my biggest fear today."

The potions master looked concerned for a moment before the emotion slid off his face like oil and was replaced by wry amusement, "You're not taking advantage of your trauma in order to sleep with a professor are you, Mr Potter?"

Harry bats his eyelashes playfully, flirty, he can be flirty, "Well Professor Snape, I think it's more of a question of whether you should risk your beloved young student's mental well being on the off chance I'm lying sir."

"Well," Snape hesitates but was still resolved enough to say, "We could not have that could we?"
a very low, sultry tenor. It made Harry shiver a little, like his body was trying to bask in the vibrations of the man's voice.

"No sir." Harry replies a little breathily. "No we could not."

Harry's heart is beating and the tips of his fingers feel numb and static. This was ridiculous. He was ridiculous. They weren't even going to fuck. There was absolutely no reason to feel so goddamn giddy and yet here he fucking is, feeling like a billion bubbles are inside him.

It's almost stupid how excited he was for this. Harry had dithered over what pajamas to wear for twenty minutes. He only had two sets of night clothes. Well, four if he mixed and matched. Technically six if he forwent the shirt altogether. Eight if he wore only the shirt and some briefs. Fuck. Harry was doing it again.

He ends up wearing one of Dudley's old shirts, worn and oversized and soft. It's a nice faded blue that goes well with the dark blue shorts he has on. Harry looks up and down at himself in the mirror. "You look adorable milord." Harry's mirror simpered. Seriously, does everything have to be sentient in this castle?! Fucking wizards.

"Thanks," he replies politely enough because that thing watches him as he changes clothes which was already creepy enough without the running commentary and wistful sighs. A sulking passive aggressive mirror that's seen him naked is the last thing he needs right now.

"If I had arms I would be honored to rip those clothes off your body and ravish you."

"We're getting back to creepy again Mirror." Harry sighs.

"Apologies milord." The mirror replies, distinctly unapologetically. Fucking wizards.

"Yeah yeah," Harry mutters, waving off the half-assed apology, he had better things to do then give a mirror a sexual harassment seminar. Again.

This is what happens when you give an object, who has the sole purpose of letting you see yourself, sentience. This or they become like, super shallow and bitchy.

Taking a pillow- and ignoring the wolf whistle when he leaned over his bed to snatch one up- Harry walks out of his bedroom with a nervous spring in his step. He's never, well, it's new- this platonic sleeping thing. When Death invites his partners to his bed they aren't exactly there to be cuddle buddies with after all.

(Sometimes, when he feels particularly lonely, he takes out a worn plushie made out of the fur of a rare breed of baby five-eyed Xs*lies that Chaos had given him. It's soft and warm and sometimes Death can pretend there's someone there beside him while he closes his eyes and pretends to sleep.)

It's exciting to the point of terrifying to be honest, there's just something about the situation that makes Harry want to scream out the jittery feeling in his stomach and jump up and down repeatedly just to shake out the nerves. He has to pinch his arm to distract him from the urge to do just that before he knocks on Severus' bedroom door.

"Come in!" The man shouts, probably still in the bathroom, and isn't that an enticing thought.

Harry looks down at his body with a frown. "No, bad meat suit." He hisses scoldingly as the overeager youth of his body coupled with the creative knowledge of experience proceeds to do what they will with the idea of their favourite professor in the shower. Or the bath. Fuck, bath sex.
Closing his eyes and taking a few deep breaths, he tries to think about anything else. Flowers. Zombie babies. Mushrooms. Mushrooms are so fucking gross Harry just cannot even. They're just, so... ugh. Unfortunately the tenacity of the human body once again shines through in the most embarrassing of ways because his half-hard cock was not flagging at all.

"Um, okay, this is kind of ridiculous," Harry mutters before taking a deep breath. He could just ignore it, it'll go away eventually and, irritatingly enough, he's not exactly 'big' enough for it to be that visible underneath his baggy shirt anyway.

Now more anxious than ever, Harry enters Severus' bedroom and closes the door behind him quietly. His assumption about the potions master still in the bathroom was a correct one as Harry could hear running water in the adjoining room. Which is just great. Because waiting is always fun.

With a lack of anything to do, Harry sat down awkwardly on the side of the older man's bed, closest to the bathroom door. He fiddles with the corner of his pillow while he waits and wonders if maybe this wasn't the best idea in the world.

He can't think of anything better right this instant but then again, he couldn't think of anything better than writing back to a hocrux diary and look where that had lead him.

'I have no idea what you are talking about.' Mr Riddle says faux innocently, 'I only remember wonderful memories of your charismatic company.'

"You used compulsions and stabbed me in the back and in return I killed your basilisk and swallowed your soul piece, trapping you in my mind possibly for all of eternity." Harry pointed out blandly.

'Wonderful memories.' Then, after a beat of silence, 'Wait. Did you just say eternity?'

"Possibly eternity." Harry stressed blithely, "There's always the chance I could get bored after all."

"Bored with what?" A deep voice that was definitely not inside Harry's head asked curiously.

The Boy Who Lived snapped his head up to see Severus stepping out of the bathroom in a simple but long, black night robe with damp hair. Fucking damn. "N-nothing." Harry stutters before flushing as he realises that not only is he openly ogling the man, but the man he is openly ogling is looking back at him in a smug amused way that says he knows that Harry has been openly ogling him.

In all fairness though, Severus looks damn fine in that night robe.

'Are you kiddi- what the fuck is wrong with you? He looks exactly the same as usual.' Mr Riddle asked with incredulous irritation.

"Shut up." Harry hisses because Mr Riddle has chosen a very bad time to be in a chatty mood.

"What was that?"

"Um, just something I was thinking a bit too loud in my head." Harry smiled uncomfortably as he mentally shoved the grumbling half-soul to the back of his mind again.

Snape snorted but mercifully let it go in favour of sliding under the bedcovers with Harry quickly following his lead. It's nice. For about fifteen seconds. And then suddenly Harry has no idea what he was supposed to with himself. Is he supposed to go to sleep now? Chat? Oh god, what does his hands even do in this situation?
He glances at the professor, hoping maybe he could give a hint on what to expect now. Unfortunately the cowardly snake was laying on his side, back facing Harry, so clearly he didn't know either and has chosen the non-responsive response. Fuck.

"Severus?" He whispers, wondering if the man had somehow managed to go to sleep in the last forty-five seconds because if he has, then, wow.

The older wizard hums, so, awake then.

Harry turns to face him, a little grateful that Severus isn't looking at him as he quietly murmurs a demure, "Thank you Severus. For letting me stay the night here. I know you might not be.. comfortable with me here-

"Harry," Severus sighs, "If I really didn't want your presence in my bed I would have no problem voicing it."

The younger wizard chuckled, "That is true, I can't imagine you saying yes to Ron or Blaise."

Severus made a snifing noise and Harry can practically see the sneer on his face. "I would hope not, the day I invite a Weasley into my bed is the day I crack and have chosen to murder them in the privacy of my own room."

"And what about the day you invite a Zabini?" Harry asks amused. The potions master huffed. "That's the day I get a death wish, Harry. Something you apparently have- really, you are aware of Madam Zabini's reputation?"

"Eh," Harry shrugged, "Blaise speaks of her highly enough but yes, I am fully aware that, that woman is absolutely terrifying and someone I would not want to cross."

"And, your relationship with the younger Zabini..." Severus hesitated and Harry quietly shuffled closer to his favourite professor, curious and wary at where this conversation is suddenly heading. His relationship with the handsome dark-skinned Slytherin was a sensitive subject for the pair, a sensitive and very confusing subject, one they usually avoid. "How is it faring? Any.. complications?"

"Um." Harry mumbled, "No?"

"...I see." He did not sound that pleased. Harry sighed.

"Severus, please, we've been through this. Besides, you really think the son of the infamous Widow would be the sort of person to stumble in the art of romance?" Well, Blaise had some very worrying ideas of what constitutes as a gift ("Lube? Are you seriously giving me lubricant?") but other than that he had been navigating the whole thing rather admirably. It helped a lot that neither Harry nor Blaise were very invested in the actual romantic aspect other than to keep up appearances and to piss the other person off.

"I suppose not," Severus grudgingly admits and it's a good thing the man wasn't looking at him because Harry can feel himself grinning widely at the other's obvious jealousy. He can't help it. It's fucking adorable and Harry adores the way the man tries to hide the fact he's sulking like the petty envious wizard he is.

Unable to help himself, he wriggles closer to Snape, slipping his arm over the figure and squeezing him in a one armed hug, "You are so cute." Harry murmurs fiercely, he's tempted to mimic a boa constrictor and wrap his leg over the man so he can do a full body squeeze for an embrace that better
satisfies his heart but he figures it's better not to push it right now.

"You're ridiculous." Severus huffs but there's warmth in his voice and more damningly, he doesn't shake Harry's arm off.

"You love it," Harry jokes.

He expects something snide and snarky in response. What Harry doesn't expect is a quiet, painfully honest, "I do, I really do."

There's not much he can say to that. Instead the wizard savior just squeezed the man a little harder.

After a minute or so of rather comfortable silence Harry's idle feet accidentally brushed against the back of the older wizard's knees causing Severus to jerk and hiss in surprise, "Merlin! What are your toes made of Harry? Because it's certainly not human flesh capable of heat regulation."

Cheekily, Harry just pushed his feet against the man's bare legs again, apparently his robe has hitched up a little, leaving the professor vulnerable to the younger wizard's cold toes. Severus jolts and turns around to face Harry with an incredibly unamused expression. "You're very warm." Harry explains with a sweet smile.

"You're exasperating," Snape sighs with a roll of his eyes but he doesn't move away and there's the faintest shadow of a smile on his face. Objectively, the semi darkness of the room lit by one candle does not play well for Severus' looks, the shadows on his face highlight his large nose, his sallow cheeks and his crows feet, but Harry thinks he looks softer, safe and- he shuffles even closer to the potions master, enough to let his legs comfortably entwine with much longer ones. This time Severus is the one that brings his arm to cover Harry's body in a loose limbed embrace.

"You're warm." Harry repeats quietly, and he doesn't just mean body heat anymore.

Severus seems to have sensed the difference, maybe it was in the change of lilt in his voice or maybe it was the way Harry knew his face flushed earnestly when he said it, either way Harry was treated with a rather dark blush on the older man's features. "You should sleep." He mutters but the warm weight of his arm drapes over Harry's body, pulling him close.

"Night Severus."

"Goodnight Harry."

Chapter End Notes

If you liked this chapter or just have some spare change to spare, send me a ko-fi at https://ko-fi.com/hweianime/

(please?)
Chapter Notes

Sorry, had a rushed editing. Also, oh my god, I make Harry cry, like, a lot. Why is this a thing? (It's totally going to be a thing)

Enjoy~~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The one where Death dabbles in exhibitionism, sucks a thumb and has a chat with a werewolf

The thing is, Harry doesn't dream. Not really. Just vague colors and feelings. It's never been a bad thing per say, awfully boring at times, but he's learnt to get over that and just relax into the feeling of floating in warm darkness. It's nice. Relaxing.

So why is it so unnerving now?

The constant blackness was suffocating, heavy with anxiety and oily with fear. It's cold. So cold. Stifling and icy and god, where is everybody? Anybody?

'Mr Riddle?' He calls out, because he should be here, he has to be here, 'Mr Riddle?!

Panic is digging into him with rust and dust-covered daggers that make his insides itch in a way that can't be alleviated, he wants to claw himself open to free himself from the growing terror inside of him, let it loose before he bursts. 'Mr Riddle?!!' He screams, he screams and he screams me he screams, 'Are you there?! Chaos?! Life?! Space?! Anyone?!'

Why is nobody answering? Why is nobody here?

His voice can't grow hoarse, but it feels like it was going to collapse, like it was going to crumple and leave him too. He can't bear the thought. The silence would be deafening. It's too dark. It's too fucking dark.

He can't do this. He can't, he can't, it hurts, the fear, the emptiness, why, why, why.

He wants to die.

But who would take his life?

"Harry," Severus shakes the younger wizard, gently at first but with increasing intensity as it becomes clear that whatever Harry was dreaming it was not at all nice. "Harry, wake up," Harry whimpers quietly, tears running down his cheeks but unnervingly the wizard saviour was making very little sound, maybe a product of his upbringing, something Severus would rather not dwell on right now, "Harry!"

"-uh, wha, S-Sever's?" Harry groaned just as the man was strongly contemplating on slapping him awake. Merlin the boy did love his sleep, even in the throws of a nightmare. "W's, t'was a dream?"
Severus nodded, wiping the shining tracks of tears down Harry's cheeks, "Yes Harry, it was a dream, just a dream."

The boy's lower lip wobbled and Harry pushed up to wrap his arms around Severus' broad shoulders into a tight embrace. "Thank god." He breathed out shakily, "Oh thank god."

And then Harry tilts his chin up and begins kissing Severus.

It doesn't register at first. It's some god awful time that's not night but definitely not morning and the professor has to admit that his awareness was not at his best at that moment so his own arms were wrapping around that slim back and his body was leaning into the kiss almost instinctively.

They kiss slow and lazy, Harry kneeling up between the potions master's legs and fervently running his hands against Severus' body almost desperately, like he needed to be sure of his existence. It's extremely flattering. No one has ever touched him like they needed him there before. It's only when the low thrum of arousal begins to spark into something aching that Severus finally snaps back to the reality at hand.

Literally. His left hand was resting at the curve of one very underaged wizard saviour Harry Potter's arse.

He pulls it away as if burned, though not without one last feel- it was a very nice arse, soft and pert-because at heart he's a horrible, horrible pervert trying his best not to be. Harry slowly separates his lips from Severus' when the older man had done so, probably sensing the change in mood. Severus is both pathetically grateful and mourning the loss.

Harry tastes like tears and Severus hates how arousing that was. He should not be attracted to Harry's tears. Even if Harry did look unfairly pretty when he tries and fails not to cry. Fuck. He is the absolute worst.

"I-I'm sorry." Harry quietly apologizes, looking down at his hands now in his lap and away from the professor. "I just," he bites his lip, looking lost and fragile, "I'm sorry."

Now Severus was the worst.

"Merlin Harry, I'm the one who should be apologising." He groans, "You clearly weren't in a good headspace and I, well, I knew that."

"You aren't exactly in the best mind either." Harry murmurs, the tears have stopped now and his mouth was curling into a wane smile, a little amused despite of whatever dream that had plagued him so recently.

"It is very late." Severus agrees. "Or incredibly early, I cannot exactly tell."

Harry huffed, a small breath of raspy laughter but it made him look so goddamn beautiful, Severus couldn't breath. He wants to lean back down and kiss the boy senseless again, gently push him till he lays onto the bed, his bed, and just-

Merlin. It's like he can't stop making new moral lows to stoop to.

"Yes, well," Harry huffed, wiping his eyes, "I'm fairly sure I would have gone to pieces if you shoved me away, so, yeah." Harry gives him a shy wobbly smile which tugs painfully at Severus' heartstrings. It's not fair. It is legitimately not fair that the potions master has to thank James fucking Potter for producing a being such as Harry into existence.
Of course Harry is absolutely wasted mooning over him of all people so maybe there is a twisted equilibrium of fairness in the universe.

"Do you.." The professor hesitates, he wants to ask about the contents of Harry's nightmare. Even when drugged to the gills it had seemed that the boy was incapable of having a bad dream. Sure sometimes he had trouble getting to sleep in the first place but once Harry finally sinks into the realm of unconsciousness he stays there. Snape knows. He's spent an embarrassingly long time watching him sleep. Like a creep. "Want to go back to bed?" He finally finishes. Severus knows when to press on and when to hold back despite how much his curiosity complains, his time as a spy had to be worth something after all.

Harry stiffened, just a slight tensing in his shoulders and a wary flicker of fear in his bright green eyes, barely noticeable but visible enough for someone as observant as Severus. "I." Harry fidgets.

Severus touches the young wizard's cheek gently, "Or," He says quietly, his voice still gravelly from sleep, "Alternatively, I have, on good authority, heard that chocolate solves a lot of problems. And I think we have the sufficient ingredients to concoct some biscuits if you are amiable to it."

The boy blinks before grinning outright, Severus can't help but feel like there were a dozen tiny bats flapping about inside him. He was well over thirty, he shouldn't being feeling so besottedly fluttery over every single thing Potter does for fucks sake.

"Are you proposing we bake cookies?" Harry asked, incredulous but looking like he was quickly warming up to the idea. "That, that sounds really," The younger wizard giggled, "I'm sorry, it's just the idea of you baking cookies of all thing is a little hard to imagine."

"It's cookies Potter, I'm not a monster." Severus sniffed earning another laugh from Harry, tears now dried and forgotten.

"Well then, now that you say it like that, yeah, I could go for some chocolate chip cookies." Harry says.

It takes them about an hour to produce a rather pathetic amount of biscuits. It's mostly because Harry insists on the age old tradition of sneaking as much cookie dough in his mouth as possible and trying to pretend he was doing no such thing every time Severus so much as raised an eyebrow at his antics. But also, admittedly, because Severus may have taken a fair bit longer than usual stirring up the dough because he had been enjoying the way Harry had been staring very appreciatively at how he had looked with his sleeves pulled up to expose his tensing forearm muscles in motion. While they had waited for the goods to be baked they had jibed playfully on the hygiene problems that come with eating raw cookie dough, something that Harry vehemently believes is 'worth every possible negative outcome, trust me on this Severus."

Severus did. He got mild food poisoning a day and a half later but admittedly it was worth the delighted look of glee on Harry's face.

It was worth everything.

Despite Harry's more or less public stance on what he thinks about Professor Lupin, Defense Against the Dark Arts still became almost everyone's favorite class. Even Harry has to begrudgingly admit Defense was in his top three most enjoyable classes. Just because he thinks Lupin fucking sucks as a human and a creature, it doesn't mean he was a bad teacher after all, and the wolf-man was a very, very good teacher.
No one cares about the horrid state of his clothes or the fact he undermined a fellow professor or that Neville was strong armed into facing a boggart without even asking him permission first—well that’s not exactly true. Occasionally whispers of discontent about the subject would rise up now and again but those topics would quickly be swallowed up by the waves of positive comments that came from the next few lessons.

Defence against the Dark Arts seemed to focus on studying a number of creatures, usually with live demonstrations accompanying these lessons. General information is provided on the species, alongside personality, habitat, diet and how to handle them if ever faced with one— it's a solid lesson plan overall that is further bettered simply by the fact that Lupin wasn’t a complete and utter nincompoop.

Still, Harry kept to himself in those classes. Mainly because he knows what sort of message he sends out by doing only the bare minimum of the werewolf's classes, but also because he genuinely doesn't want to distract the class with his own presence. You can't show people how dangerous and bad tempered a runespore can be if said serpent was literally belly up with all three heads begging to be stroked and lavished with attention by Death.

Potions was so-so in comparison. Severus was a great potioneer but hardly a top-notch professor. If Harry was going to perfectly candid, he was surprised the man decided to get into teaching at all. The job suits him as well as a duck to lava.

It also hasn't helped that the story about Boggart Snape had traveled throughout the school like a flash flood and the damage on his reputation had yet to dry up. The man hasn't actually been as horrid as he could've been since he's stopped calling Neville out outside the classroom like Harry insisted he not do, but inside the classroom? Well, it's not so bad that Neville cries at the end of the hour, but sometimes it's close.

Harry likes to stick with Neville as his potion partner since Severus tends to be relatively kinder to the poor boy when he's around but apparently that just freaks Neville out even more.

"Are- are you serious?" Harry asks dubiously. "You rather Se-Snape calls you a blithering baby troll than sit with me?"

"I mean," Neville says awkwardly, "that's sounds incredibly bad now that you worded it like that but uh, yes?"

"Why?"

"Look Harry," Neville sighs tiredly, "Am I grateful that you have helped curb Professor Snape's need to murder me? Yeah, sure, I'm, I'm not a complete idiot, but,"

Harry waited patiently as Neville fidgeted more and more as the silence reigned on. "Neville are you going to tell me what's wrong or ar-"

"Your weird Snape thing is super weirding me out!" Neville burst out, red-faced.

Harry blinked.

"Like, I knew about it, most people do by now but, like, like, now that we're potions partners I never really knew you know?" The Gryffindor rushed out, looking rather shamed and desperate to not offend one of the few people that doesn't laugh at him all the time. "But then you started hanging out with me for potions and, well, well, I was really happy but, ehm…”

Ron suddenly appears as if summoned and claps his hand on Harry's shoulder, "Harry, you say very
bad things under your breath."

"Excuse me?!

Neville heaved a sigh of absolute relief, "Merlin, thank you."

"Wha- I do not!" Harry protests, offended and confused.

"Harry, mate, remember that time Professor Snape blasted on someone for not getting a larger stick of wormwood to stir their potion with and you said, and I quote, 'I wouldn't mind getting stirred up by his large stick of wormwood'?"

"Um." He does vaguely remember saying something along those lines. But the comment was right there! How could he not?

"When Snape told Finnegan that his cooling potion would scrape off the skin of his throat if he ever had the misfortune to swallow it, you responded by whispering to me, 'Not the only thing that could scrape my throat if I swallowed it.'" Neville added in, quietly but no less accusingly. The shy Gryffindor looked more confident in his complaints now that he has someone to back him up on them.

And, okay Harry does recalls that one. Not his finest moment. But still. "I don't do it that often." Harry weakly defends.

Ron, to Harry's surprise, actually nods thoughtfully, "That's true actually, Harry's weird gross Snape fetish thing aside-"

"One, that is RUDE AS FU-"

"he's actually a legit crazy good potions partner which kind of makes dealing with all," Ron waves a hand in Harry's general direction, "that worth it."

"It's not just Harry," Neville explains, "It's Professor Snape too."

Harry and Ron stared at him uncomprehendingly. "Um. What." The redhead says.

"Wait so this is about you wanting to get yelled at by Snape?" Harry asks bewildered, "Because, Neville, I know I have a weird Snape thing or whatever but just because I like hands, that don't mean I like being choked." Harry paused as he reconsidered his last statement. "Well., I mean…"

His freckled friend closed his eyes and sighed long-sufferingly, "Well, as much as I want to go into that can of flobberworms, I think we should let Nev explain his uh, opinion."


"Professor Snape... he... he...

"Professor Snape... he... he...

"Professor Snape... he... he...

"healwaysskeptlookingatHarryanditsjustsuperuncomfortableallround."

"Merlin's balls." Ron breathed, his eyes dawning in realization, "I totally know what you're talking about! I just assumed he was just always staring at me." Ron shuddered.

Neville narrowed his eyes at his fellow Gryffindor. "You thought.. Professor Snape.. was looking… at.. you."

"Hey, it could happen." Ron argues, "Also I meant like, angry looking, like a 'Ohh what's that idiot Weasley boy going to do next?' kind of thing. I mean, I wouldn't know. I'm not dumb enough to
"Yeah well, I have!" Neville huffed, "And he's only staring at Harry with this, this- I don't know! It's not angry or sour but it ain't soppy or smiling neither, just, staring."

"Nev, if he ain't scowling or glaring it totally counts as Snape being soppy and smiling." Ron shivered, "I can't even imagine it, Snape smiling."

"Professor Snape has a lovely smile." Harry protests, "Also what the fuck Neville, a few inappropriate comments and stares and suddenly you don't want to pass Potions class with me?"

Neville shrugged, "Pretty much, yeah."

Ouch.

Green eyes glared, "I missed the old days when you used to try not to hurt other people's feelings."

Harry sniffed, Ron laughed and gave his fellow Gryffindor a one-armed hug.

"Nah, Nev's just growing into his own." Ron cheered, causing Neville to grin in response, "Don't worry mate, you can buddy with me in potions."

"Um, about that…"

If Defence was okay and potions were so-so then Professor Trelawney's class was possibly the most annoying. Partly because said professor keeps insisting he's going to die- which admittedly could suggest she isn't isn't a complete hack but just grossly misread the signs or, as Hermione insists, is totally doing it for the attention- and also because Harry's fairly sure Fate has been sending him troll messages in his fucking tea leaves. Seriously. There is no way he keeps getting penis shaped fortunes every. single. time. Goddammit Fate. Harry's just glad they haven't gone into crystal balls yet.

Care of Magical Creatures, while not as bad, was rather dull after the first lesson. Harry made it loudly known that it was all fucking Zacharias 'Oooh I got a scratch' Smith fault and was responsible for everyone having to look after flobberworms for the past few weeks worth of lessons. Flobberworms. What do they do? Flobber. That's it.

Fucking Smith.

Ironically Defence class is probably a better Care of Magical Creatures class than anything actually. Like, what the fuck, does no one plan their curriculums with the other professors. Seriously. This school.

"Darling, you've been doing nothing but complain about Hogwarts for the past forty minutes." Blaise rolls his eyes as he leans back on a fence. Harry rests his head on the darker skinned wizard's shoulder and sighs.

"I just don't understand why there's only one magic school in England."

"Lack of students?" Draco suggests, also listening in.

"I'm fairly sure more wizards and witches would get together more often if they weren't already sick of everyone being people they knew and grew up with for eight years." Harry replies dryly, "Also, think about it- another nearby school would mean Hogwarts wouldn't be satisfied stagnating in it's piss poor quality. If there was two schools there would be rivalry and competition much like our House situation, only instead of house points it's quality of education and equipment."
"That does sound pretty good." Blaise admits, "We could always do with some better things."

"I've heard from my father that Beaubauxton and Durmstrang has professors that oversee subjects of certain years so they aren't as overworked." Draco brings up. "It makes sense, they can focus on those years better and we'll probably be provided with a better education."

"That's all well and good but we hardly can afford new brooms, much less new professors." Blaise points out. "Though I have no bloody idea why, we certainly give enough tuition money to pay the average minister worker six times over its ridiculous."

"Not to mention the amount of galleons my father donates!" Draco gasps, "Where In Merlin's name is all that money going?!"

Harry silently recalls first year with the giant chessboard, the underground chamber filled with deadly plants, a super rare magical artifact mirror thing, and a troll that's hardly native to Britain. He wisely decides not to tell Draco where he suspects all his daddy's money has gone to. "I mean, I think they've separated some of the money for muggleborns who can't afford the tuition right?"

Draco and Blaise both made a disgusted noise, "Are you serious?" Draco scoffed, "Yeah, it's a legitimate problem for like orphans without a vault or whatever but tell me, how many people in this school do you really think cannot afford the schooling? And bear in mind, the Weasleys have managed to afford all their spawns a good education despite their... incredibly meagre lifestyle."

That. That's rather true.

Huh.

"Hey, Hermione," Harry called out, "What is your opinion about the muggleborn funding- still essential or rather redundant given everyone's general economic stability?"

Hermione and Ron, bent down with their hands filled with old lettuce, turned around to glare at the group of Slytherins. "As fascinating as your conversation sounds," The bushy haired witch hisses, "I believe my opinion is firmly on the 'get your arses over here and help us feed the flobberworms or so help me god I will personally chop you all up and feed you to Sirius Black'."

"Here here." Ron muttered darkly.

"Yeah," Harry drawled with a smirk, "Nah, I'm gonna have to hard pass on that ta. Delicate immune system and all from all the injuries I sustained last year remember?"

"Wha- then what about Malfoy? Zabini?" Ron splutters.

"Moral support." They reply in unison.

Ron groaned despairingly, "Slytherins."

"House has nothing to do with this Ron." Hermione mutters as she shoves her leaf of lettuce in front of a particularly large gross looking worm. The flobberworm slobered over it enthusiastically. "I'm pretty sure they're just arseholes."

"Ugh, I cant believe I'm missing my first Hogsmeade weekend." Harry groused into his pumpkin soup. "On Halloween too, what the fuck. Just kill Sirius Black, it cannot be this hard."

Blaise kisses his neck playfully, "Oh baby, don't worry, I'll buy something pretty for you instead."
"Gag." Nott coughs.

Harry smirks before turning around to embrace his boyfriend with wide eyes, "Blaise, you needn't!" He gasps, as if genuinely surprised.

"Anything for my pretty boy." Blaise crooned, pressing a chaste kiss onto Harry's lips which Harry eagerly deepened.

"Double gag." Draco groaned. "You guys absolutely disgusting."

"Maybe I'll buy you something pretty to wear for me." Blaise mused, hands trailing purposely down Harry's lithe back, resting just above the swell of his cheeks. "What do you think Harry? Silk or lace?"

"Surprise me." Harry purred.

"I am quite interested to know what you would look like covered in gold and jewels," The tanned Slytherin confesses, dark eyes hooded and not even trying to hide his desire at the idea, "Maybe I should go to Esme's Enchanting Enchantments, I've heard they've got a few... interesting items." His hands finally reach further down to cup Harry's arse cheeks firmly, an obvious insinuation to exactly what sort of interests those objects lay in.

"Oh darling, you do care!" Harry squealed like the sugar baby he secretly is, and tried to kiss the laughter away from his guffawing boyfriend while his friends of green and silver boo and make gagging noises in the background. The couple just laughed and kissed and flipped everyone the bird before Blaise loudly declared that it was time for the pair to go head off to class, despite the fact it was a Friday night with no curriculum happening in the foreseeable future.

Nott throws a large tome at them that he had been reading but Harry easily dismisses it with a wave of a single hand, his other hand busy holding Blaise's as they saunter out of the busy Great Hall with twin smirks on their faces.

The moment they step out of the hall, walking away from prying eyes and into an empty corridor on the dungeon floors, Blaise ducks down to capture Harry's lips with his own in a kiss far less chaste than before. "Merlin, you're so perfect." Blaise moans.

Harry laughs breathlessly, breaking the kiss in favor of rumbling the front of the Slytherin's shirt with his wandering fingers, "I know." He replies smugly.

"So modest too." Blaise murmurs as he mirrors Harry's movements, soaking in the warmth through the fabric.

The Boy Who Lived hisses loudly as Blaise found his way to his nipples, rubbing teasingly at them before pinching and twirling them gently between his forefinger and thumb. "It, ah, uhn, comes with, oh y-yeah, perfection mmm.."

Blaise hummed and began to unbutton Harry's shirt, eyes eagerly drinking each bit of skin revealing itself to him. Harry shivered as the cold air of the dungeon directly hits his chest before realization of where exactly they are also hits him.

"W-wai-ah-t, wait." Harry moans, gently but insistently hitting the back of his boyfriend's shoulder while said boyfriend latched his warm lips around his nipple. "Fuck Blaise, we'll, uhn, get cau-oh-caught!"

"But you like that don't you?" Blaise says throatily as he licks and plays with Harry's sensitive,
exposed chest. Harry keens, as Blaise continues, "You're getting off a little at the idea of me stripping you in a place where anyone could walk in, could see you getting thoroughly toyed with and enjoying it like the pretty little slut you are."

Dear god.

The words smash into his libido like an extremely sexy pile of bricks and Harry moans, inadvertently thrusting his hips upward against his boyfriend's own at the images it conjures up. It's cold in the dungeons but right now it feels like Harry wouldn't be able to tell if he was in bloody Egypt he felt so heated. Encouraged by the reaction, Blaise begins palming the bulge between Harry's legs and playing with the hem of the wizard savior's pants, teasing him with the possibility of wearing nothing but his shoes and socks in the middle of an empty school hallway.

"Would you like that Potter?" Blaise drawled but there's a waver of uncertainty in his voice and hesitance in his eyes, not that Harry could fault the young wizard. They've done things. From kissing to blowjobs to some mild bondage, and yeah, they've seen each other completely naked but that's all behind locked doors and underneath sound muffling blankets. Exhibitionism was new, and admittedly a little scary with its consequences if they actually get caught pants down. Literally in Harry's case.

Harry bites his lip, he's so fucking aroused already, but he knows both of them shouldn't do it despite how much he wants. "Maybe..." he tentatively begins, "There's a room in the dungeons, Argus told me it's spelled to always be slightly open for Mrs Norris to come and go in there as she pleases. She likes going there to nap and watch the fish through the window."

"I cannot believe I'm feeling this grateful for Mrs Norris and Filch right now." Blaise groans like he's being personally offended that he is now forced to feel positive emotions for the grumpy caretaker of Hogwarts and his even grumpier cat.

Harry grinned at the obvious note of dismay in his boyfriend's voice, "Well, I guess we don't have to use it if you don't want us to continue..."

Blaise groaned defeatedly.

"Darling, McGonagall could pass by in that swimsuit attire we saw in Defense class and wish me luck right now and I'd still want to continue."

Harry gave him a vaguely disturbed look, "You would be continuing alone if that really happened Blaise, because ugh."

"Oh, I believe I can convince you to get back into the mood." The Slytherin purred, sticking out his leg between Harry's in a manner that could hardly be interpreted as anything but sexual, "I am very persuasive."

"Well then," Harry says, his voice gone a little higher and breathy as his simmering arousal reignites once more, "Let me lead the way than."

It's a rush, giggling quietly as they dash through the near empty school and dodging every possible shadow they see just in case it's a professor or a prefect or a fellow student sneaking around, testing the limits of curfew. Arousal and adrenaline alight the fire in their veins like gasoline and petrol, and Harry feels like he's truly a child, a particularly naughty one with very little regrets at that very moment.

They reach the room, it's open just as Harry had said and seems to always be slightly ajar no matter
how hard you try to close it. In other words, perfect for trying out some vanilla exhibitionism. Even just knowing there could be a chance of being visible to any prying eyes was enough to send a jolt of lust into Harry, into Blaise too from the way he immediately crowds against the shorter wizard and twists him so Harry's facing said opened door.

"Why don't you pull down your pants Harry?" Blaise questions slyly, his hands sliding up Harry's pale stomach, feeling the way Harry practically quivers with lust as he obeys, snapping his fingers and magically loosening his pants and underwear just enough to slowly fall onto the ground with a near silent thump. "...I was sort of hoping you would've done it by hand darling but I guess that'll do just as well."

"God Blaise, you are so picky." Harry shakes his head with a bemused smile before letting out a low groan as Blaise tweaked his sensitive nipple in retaliation.

"I rather call it..." Blaise hummed against the nape of his very naked wizard savior boyfriend's neck, "...refusing to let my expectations down."

"Mmmnn- so what are you expecting now then?" Harry drawls as he reaches down to grip his dick, hard and begging for something other than the cold night air. The heat and pressure of his own fingers wrapping around it after so long of being ignored is absolutely fantastic, and Harry cannot help but hiss loudly in pleasure, "Shit, that's good." Harry moans, throwing his head back and allowing his dark-skinned boyfriend even more access to his neck for kissing.

"Well," Blaise murmurs, his voice dripping with his own greedy lust as one of his hands snake around Harry and lightly smack Harry's hand away from his hard cock in favor of replacing it with his own. "I was thinking," he continues whilst he begins stroking Harry's dick in an agonizingly slow fashion, taking his time to circle the tip of it's sensitive head with his thumb, wet with precum and encouraging even more to slick his hand completely with. "We could, mmn, do that thing I really liked.

"Mmm... you, ah, want me to get on my, fuck, knees right here and blow you?"

"Fuck Zabini, yess," He begs, his body aching for release, legs already shifting in anticipation, "Please."

Blaise groans, "Merlin, you're perfect."

"Already knew that." Harry giggled, stepping out of his pile of clothes and craning his neck to look behind him where Blaise stood. Underneath his lashes he could see how dilated the taller teen's eyes were. Blaise wouldn't let his gaze leave Harry's slim, compact body, pulling out his cock from his pants and stroking it absentmindedly as his eyes roamed over the curve of his spine and ass.

Harry, enjoying the way Blaise was enjoying himself, fluttered his eyes and in his sultriest tone asked him seductively, "How do you want me Zabini?"
Blaise moans at the vision Harry presents, so gorgeous and submissive the way his green eyes seem to look coyly back at him like Blaise was the most attractive and powerful thing there. "Always." He groans out, gripping his erection tightly to keep from coming there and then.

Harry frowned, confused at the odd use of phrasing, he turns his head to find Blaise frozen in the closest Harry had ever seen him to be panicked. "Blaise, wha-?"

The Slytherin waves his hand dismissively, albeit a little stiffly, before putting back on his lustful demeanor, "Turn back around darling," he orders lowly, in a commanding voice which held a slight rasp of arousal that makes Harry immediately obey with a shiver, "I want you to spread your legs and bend over, hands to your knees."

"Yessss," Harry hisses agreeably, odd stumble in the scene already forgotten from his mind as he scrambles into position, body alight with electrifying desire now. He feels vulnerable and embarrassed in the best way as Blaise circles around him, observing and lightly touching his body as he pleases.

With the way he's positioned, the only thing Harry can see was Blaise's clothed legs, hardly much of a hint to what his tanned skinned boyfriend is thinking. Any attempt to try look up earns him a light warning strike to his buttocks, which really, sort of made Harry want to try sneak a peek all the more.

"Ah!" Harry gasped in pleasure after Blaise spanked him a little harder after more than a few acts of disobedience. It's amazing. He was sensitive before but now it felt like he was made up of one single nerve, wired to crave any touch, itching for it. Blaise tutted.

"Harry, Harry, Harry." He murmured while a finger dragged up the naked wizard's spine, causing Harry to shudder and curl his back up against the touch like a cat, "Merlin, for such a pretty doll like you, you're just gagging for it huh?"

"Ye-ahn-yesss," Harry hisses out like the words were being dragged through his teeth, "More nghn, p-please."

"I love it when your so honest." Blaise groaned, "Fuck, Harry."

Harry felt Blaise part his cheeks, the cold air tingling against his hole now on display to hungry eyes. He moans shakily from shame and desire, which only gets louder as the hot, slicked up length of Blaise's erection pushes up to rub against it. It's a horrible tease for a line they won't cross and they both know it, but that still doesn't stop the slide of hard flesh sliding between his arsecheeks from making Harry's toes curl up in intense anticipation nor from Blaise making a noise of pure lust. Occasionally Blaise would adjust himself so he would be fucking the tight space between Harry's thighs, letting his cock drag against the underside of Harry's own dick and balls in the process.

It doesn't take long for them to cum, their voices covered by their own hands as they try to stifle their sounds as best as possible. It's exciting and arousing and with the hormones running rampant through their veins like their being chased by all the bulls in Spain, it doesn't take very long for them to want to go another round.

"We're going to miss curfew Blaise," Harry hums halfheartedly between the kisses he's peppering onto dark skin as he sits against Blaise's chest on the carpeted floor of the room.

Blaise chuckles lowly, "The others will back us up," he says with a smug confidence that clearly implies either a lot of trust in his fellow Slytherins or a lot of blackmail material. Harry grins at the latter thought.
"If Draco's the prince of Slytherin, you're clearly the assassin." Harry laughed softly. Blaise smirks, apparently rather taken with the idea.

"And what are you then, in this metaphor?" He asks, amused.

"That's easy," Harry replies mischievously, licking a long stripe up his boyfriend's neck from collar bone to the underside of his chin, making Blaise shake and groan. "I'm the usurper, seducing you away from the throne and into my camp of blood and sin."

"Ugh," Blaise groaned, "Not gonna lie darling but I hardly need to be seduced to jump into that camp."

"I know," Green eyes were half-lidded in desire, "but it would hardly be a trial."

Blaise smiles slyly, "Mmm... well why don't we make it a trial?" He asks, a challenge underlying in his voice that Harry felt compelled to accept.

"Oh?" Harry finds himself interested, extremely interested. Blaise is fun, probably the most lighthearted relationship he's had and that could be partly attributed to the usually quite laidback Slytherin's proactiveness in anything remotely sexual.

Blaise smile reverts back into a smirk as he adjusts his sitting position to a kneeling one and gestures for him to sit there.

Harry looks doubtfully at Blaise's lap. It's a nice lap for laying your head on for a patting but not exactly built for being sat on, even for someone as scrawny and delicate as Harry. Blaise, sensing his doubt, rolls his eyes and gestures harder, "Come on darling, it'll be fun." He wheedles.

"Fine," Harry huffed, secretly entertained beyond belief, "I'm already out of curfew, in a classroom, naked, what more could I lose?"

"That's the spirit babe." The Slytherin says cheerfully, he pats his lap invitingly, "Now come on, hop on to my lap."

Harry smiled and shook his head but complied anyway, crawling to his boyfriend and straddling his lap. "I have legitimately never seen you so enthusiastically peppy about anything else in the three years I've known you."

"Well, in the three years I've known you, you've never been out of curfew, in a classroom, naked." Blaise answers glibly, "Turn around please, I want you to face the door."

"Pervert."

"Takes one to know one."

"You know that saying doesn't even make sense, I mean, a detective isn't necessarily a psychopath when he identifies one, like, what th-shit, Blaise what are you--"

Harry threw his head back and yelled out in shock as something began probing the inner walls of his ass. He has no idea what it was except sort of twitchy and slippery without the feeling of wetness. It was also very, very eager. "Bl-ah, haahah, fuck, uhn, please, wha-Blaise!" Harry panted out near incoherently as Blaise idly rubs his finger against his now twitching hole.

"Do you like it darling?" He asks while Harry trembles and squirms on his lap, legs spread obscenely wide and his dick, hard and dripping onto his own quivering stomach. "When my mother heard I
gained myself a companion, she sent me this spell. It's something I rather not look too deeply into but I tried the spell at a weaker level on myself and I can attest to its, ah, benefits."

The image of Blaise victimizing himself to this spell would have been amazing had Harry had the mental capacity to conjure it. Right now he was just trying to remember how to breathe. It gets worse and so, so much better when Blaise shuffles him closer till his back is pressed tightly to Blaise's front, allowing Blaise's erection to now snugly jut right below Harry's own smaller one.

When Blaise began to thrust up against Harry's cock, rubbing against his balls and soft, sweaty skin, they both groan feverishly, though Harry's was more of a constant babble of blubbering gibberish as his brain begins to slowly melt from over sensitization. Pale legs are spread wide despite himself, and Harry could feel his body mimicking Blaise's motions, trying to get as much friction as possible to tip from the precipice he's been stuck on since the moment the spell took place.

"Merlin, nugh, you're stunning." Blaise hisses, his hands against Harry's hips, pushing Harry's pliant body to grind harder into his. Harry gasps he knows this is it. He can barely take anymore.

"Blai-Blaise," Harry chokes out, his legs are trembling and honestly, Harry's vaguely shocked he's managed to stay upright like this for so long what with the childhood malnutrition and the coma and the whole shit health thing he has going on, "I'm, I uhnm, cum'n-"

The sound of the door creaking in front of them, makes Harry snap his head up in a jolt of instinctive fear and, not going to lie, arousal. His vision was blurred from the tears but there was the unmistakable silhouette of a person there. Best case, it's a wandering student, worst case, a patrolling professor.

Either way, as hot as this all was, he knew he had to put a stop to it before it went too far. As Death, he could indulge in all sort of sordid things because consequences were rather trifling concepts in general, but unfortunately, Harry Potter has no such privilege. Trembling, he begins to straighten his back, his voice was absolutely wrecked and he needed to make sure Blaise could hear him even at the risk of exposing himself further to the stranger. "A-ah-ah, Blai, Blaise!" He stutters out while the taller teen's hot shaft rubbed crudely against his own, Blaise's grip tightening and creating even more heated friction between them. "Plea- mfnn- se, w-wait ah,"

"Don't worry darling," Blaise purrs, far too immersed in the way Harry's thighs feel against his dick, his arse pressed against his stomach, to notice the newcomer, "you can cum first, I want to watch."

"No w-wait, ah, I- fuck- I," Gods it's so tempting, too tempting, his body is screaming for it but what little left of his mind is shouting out to stop, to try and preserve that last shreds of dignity he had. He tries to reach behind him, twisting to face Blaise but he's immediately distracted as Blaise, the fucking bastard, decides it to be the perfect time to dig into Harry's pale shoulder with his teeth and tug his nipples. Harry cries out incoherently and thrashes as the sensations, pleasurable as it is painful, pushes him to an orgasm that completely overloads his mortal brain.

Vaguely, through the buzzing fog in his ears, Harry hears Blaise swear as he ruts harder up into Harry's limp, quivering body before the Slytherin slumps and Harry can feel the hot splatter of his cum on his thighs. He almost completely forgets about there being a person watching behind the door until said there begins to creak open, and even then Harry didn't have much strength to look up at that particular moment, still boneless in the afterglow.

It's only when Blaise chokes out a fearful, "P-Professor Snape!" does it finally dawn on Harry who exactly was watching him get his thighs get fucked, near fully naked and then cumming nearly immediately when he realised someone else saw him.
Jesus Christ. Fucking why.

Harry moans, though this time it was more of mortified despair than any actual arousal. Though, to be completely fair, Harry's fairly sure that he's going to have a very long term fantasy based on this in the near future once he's recovered from the trauma. Because he's warped that way. Still. *Fuck.* Why couldn't it have been Argus? Or McGonagall? Actually, no, Harry's pretty sure his body would literally keel over and go back into that coma if it was McGonagall.

"Zabini... Potter." Oh god, oh gods, oh to all the gods, Severus didn't sound angry, he sounded downright glacial. The potions master stepped out from behind the door he had been hiding behind to reveal himself in all his furious glory. His posture was as tense and straight as a ruler being stretched, his gaze hard and painful to be a victim to and his cheeks were red, almost like he was swallowing down his own flames of rage churning inside his body. "One hundred, no, two hundred points from Slytherin for leaving the common room after hours and participating in such... unsavoury, depraved deviancy in a classroom."

"Potter." Professor Snape managed to not look directly at his nude, sweat soaked form and yet somehow still accomplished making Harry feel like he was being scrutinised and deeply judged on every inch of his body. Though that could be most likely due to his guilt talking at this point. Guilt or something akin to a sub-drop. He heard humans got those sometimes after particularly intense sessions. "Detention, every day, for three weeks." Then, almost as an afterthought Snape added, "And you are no longer allowed to leave our quarters without my permission after your afternoon classes are finished."

"Yes... sir." Harry whispered, subdued. His voice was still raspy and wobbly from crying, a reminder of what he had done not a few minutes ago. The last part of the punishment seemed a little unfair in his opinion but Harry hardly was going to argue back against it when he was literally caught pants down.

The professor nods at Harry's acknowledgment, then sneers poisonously at Blaise, "Zabini," he near snarls, causing the Slytherin to flinch at the sheer animosity from his usual aloof Head of House, "you'll get detention everyday, for five whole weeks. Weekends included."

Blaise gulped audibly, "Y-yes sir."

Severus Snape stares them down, nostrils flaring and hands shaking, its a tense few seconds of deafening silence where nothing but the weight of the situation sinks down on all of them. Finally, mercifully, the potions master turns around, "Come along H-Potter." He orders harshly.

"Sh-should I- my clothes..." Harry stuttered out, his voice still a little slurred at the edges but anxiety really helps pump a little bit of adrenaline back into his veins.

Severus' jaw clenched and his teeth made a horrible grinding sound as his eyes flickered once again to Harry's unclothed state. At the very least his hands managed to effectively cover his manhood but it hardly mattered in the face of, well, everything. "Obviously," The potions master snapped, "Hurry up and get dressed, unlike your... Zabini over there, I rather not display your assets to the entirety of Hogwarts thank you."

Harry hastily complied, eager to slip back under some clothing while Blaise meekly, and kind of uselessly, tried to help, which seemed to only make the aura of disapproval around the professor radiate even harder. "Zabini." He snapped, "Potter is perfectly able to dress himself so I do suggest you run along now lest Slytherin loses another thirty points."

"O-of course sir." Blaise stuttered, then with an apologetic look at Harry he quickly wasted no time
in scampering off, away from his professor's ire. Harry wished he could only be so lucky.

With his pants on and his shirt barely buttoned, Severus took this moment to tsk and turn to leave the room, causing Harry to hurry after him whilst fumbling blindly at his shirt. Harry figured this would probably be like all those other times they argued, Snape would say some things, Harry would also say some things and then Snape would leave the room and refuse to talk to him for like a week or three, depending on what level of injuries Harry will sustain at that time.

It's probably a good sign in a relationship to be comfortable enough with the other to be able to fall into a nice familiar pattern right?

"What were you thinking?" Snape hisses furiously as he slammed the door to his quarters behind them, stalking up to Harry like a furious panther. Harry begins to open his mouth to apologise, profusely, because he was totally in the wrong here, but the words immediately flee back down his throat as the older wizard's lips surge against his in a searing, near painful kiss. Severus wastes no opportunity and slips his tongue into parted lips and the kiss immediately goes to whoa to whoa.

Harry whimpers and instinctively reaches up and grabs onto his professor's shoulders, sinking his fingers into his robes and clinging on to the ride for dear life as the man practically attacks his mouth with his own. And it hardly stops there, large hands with long tapered fingers were firmly running up his torso, only pausing when Severus touches something unmistakably wet.

It's then that worry begins to make itself known in the pit of his stomach, and Harry begins to draw away from the older wizard's embrace, a little wary and a little dazed at the unexpected outburst but it seemed he was going to keep being blindsided as Severus rubbed the streak of cum striped messily on his stomach with his thumb before pressing said thumb lightly against Harry's lips.

"Suck it." Severus demands, his deep timbre so deliciously gravelly with desire Harry has to shift his legs uncomfortably as his tired cock valiantly tries to rise to the occasion once again.

Timidly, half expecting for the wizard to pull his hand away and slap him or something equally mean-hearted, Harry licked his lips and suckled the offered thumb. The taste is bitter, salty and has not improved now that it has cooled over time but Harry is too busy drinking in the absolutely wrecked expression on his professor's face. He can only imagine what those dark eyes are seeing, Harry staring back at him with wide green eyes, lapping his own semen from Severus' thumb like an infant, cheeks flushed, already sweaty and rumpled from before. Just imagining it makes him whine softly as he embarrassment and arousal flushed through him.

"Merlin." Severus groaned, and it's only then those Harry's gaze flicker down and realise that the wizard's other hand was grinding down on his groin.

Severus was getting off on this.

Fucking fuck.

He's tempted to push, maybe bite the flesh of the finger a little and smile seductively but Harry knows how annoyingly tempestuous Severus can be in these sort of matters. Then again, Harry also knows what a twisted little promiscuous shit he is, so he scrapes his teeth lightly against the pad of his professor's thumb anyway but at least had the decency to pretend he didn't do it on purpose. Severus has some sort of issue with control as far as Harry can tell, if the older man knows he has control over the situation, he's less prone to freak outs.

One day Harry is going to push that man down and fucking ride him till he cries the wizarding equivalent of uncle.
Severus gasps in response, his sallow cheeks red and eyes burning deeply into Harry's own, almost like he was actually peering into his mind and what he saw, he really, really liked. Before Harry even knew it, the man moaned, loud and low as he shuddered through his orgasm, thumb still in Harry's mouth, practically massaging his tongue.

They're panting harshly by the end of it, breathing like all the oxygen in the world has leaked away as they never break away from each other's gaze.

Finally, somewhere between the blink of an eye and eternity, Snape pulls away. His thumb comes out with a soft 'pop,' reddened and spit-covered, and then, with an emotionless face, the potions master fucking licks his thumb like it wasn't the sexiest thing Harry has ever goddamn seen. A longing whimper crawls brokenly out of Harry's mouth as Severus wets his lips with his own tongue.

Severus, hearing this, smirks, and yeah, Harry's totally hard now. A little late but when has his body been anything but inconvenient to him at this point?

"Don't assume," Severus begins, voice like the darkest velvet, "even for a moment, that this doesn't mean I'm not absolutely furious at you." He licks his lips again and Harry can't help but follow the motion with glazed eyes, "Luckily for you, I just lost my high horse to ride on with this... indulgence, so I shall let this go for now. Do you understand?"

Harry nodded his head rather dumbly. He could hardly trust his voice to do more than make that wishful whining noise again.

"Good." The Head of Slytherin raised his hand above Harry's head, a familiar action shared between them- then visibly hesitating. It's almost funny, how easily Severus succumbed to his desire to press his thumb into Harry's mouth but suddenly he was too shy to ruffle Harry's hair in a gesture of sweet affection. It was just another line of similarity that connected them, their insecurity in the realms of romance.

He leaves without petting his head and Harry feels oddly bereft without it.

So after what shall be called 'The Most Horribly Embarrassing And Yet Rather Hot Thing to Ever Happen To Harry Potter's Life So Far,' things surprisingly, did not change that much. Seriously. Harry didn't expect it either.

Severus, after the initial few days of going between complete frigid silence and snide, snippy commentary, had gone back to his (relatively) normal self. Which still involves complete frigid silence and snide, snippy commentary but... to a lesser degree anyway, whatever. The point is, Harry desperately needs everyone involved to forget and move on from 'The Most Horribly Embarrassing And Yet Rather Hot Thing to Ever Happen To Harry Potter's Life So Far.'

Blaise agrees. Agrees vehemently. Apparently Blaise wasn't feeling too chuffed about the memory either. And Severus was hardly as kind to Blaise as he was to Harry.

"It could've been worse." Blaise shrugs the first time the Slytherin had detention without Harry having one as well, "A boring waste of time but could've been worse. I mean, it could've been worse, I'm pretty sure if I was a Gryffindor Professor Snape would have poisoned me in my sleep or something."

"You've said 'it could've been worse' three times Blaise." Harry pointed out with narrowed eyes. "Blaise, if Se- Profes-"

Blaise sighs and rather tenderly brushes back Harry's consistently ruffled hair, his eyes exasperated
but fond, "Hey, look, it's only for two more weeks and I still get to go to Hogsmeade so-
"
Harry rolls his eyes, "Yeah, yeah, could've been worse."
"Could've been worse." Blaise agrees easily.

"Mate seriously? Your boyfriend still gets to go to Hogsmeade?" Ron asks with a mouth filled with pork and potato. "That is so unfair, if a Gryffindor did naked stuff with you in a classroom after curfew while Snape watched- so gross by the way, just, ugh, thank you for not going into specifics when I asked you for the third time by the way- that Gryffindor would have been straight up Avada Kedead. And all he got was five weeks of detention?"

"Harry only got three weeks." Hermione piped up unhelpfully as she flipped a page of her textbook while carefully trying to drink soup at the same time. Ballsy choice of food really, considering Harry was pretty sure that was a library textbook. Ms Pince is pretty batshit with those books, Harry once saw her scream at a first year for dog-earring a page of what looked like an incredibly trashy cheap magazine.

"Yeah but now I'm pretty sure Snape has a weird Harry thing." Ron points out with a chicken wing. "I mean, think bout it, I bet the only reason Snape didn't ban Zabini's Hogsmeade privileges was because Harry doesn't have them."

Hermione gasped in understanding, "Are you saying." She begins, voice all hush hush, clearly enjoying being part of the gossip, another sad reminder how little interaction with girls she has experienced- the Ravenclaw girls are miffed she tries to answer all the questions and the Gryffindor girls just don't connect to her in a way she probably could've have found in a Ravenclaw, not to mention her only really close friend Ron is probably the straightest bloke's bloke in the whole year. Not that it's much of a competition to be perfectly candid. Jesus, Harry may be the closest thing she has to a female friend thinking about it, and isn't that just sad?, "The Professor didn't revoke Hogsmeade to avoid letting Zabini spend more time with Harry?"

Harry scoffed, "Please, Professor Snape isn't.. um… well…" No, wait, actually Severus kind of, totally was petty enough to do that. It was kind of attractive. There was something fundamentally wrong with him. Then again, that's not news. "Go on?"

"Wait, doesn't that mean that no one's really sure when they're going to catch Black?" Hermione asked curious and worried, "What are the aurors even doing?"

"You mean apart from flirting with Harry?" Ron says with a smirk. "Generally flirting with each other."

"Oh dear god I'm never going to get out of this castle am I?" Harry groaned as he looked sadly at his egg sandwich. Damn himself for being so beautiful. Damn it to hell.

Hermione opened her mouth to say something sympathetic but then Crookshanks leapt onto her lap, a large spider hanging from his jaws causing Ron to jerk away like he was being shocked with lightning. "Aw, look how clever Crookshanks is," she immediately croons, "did you catch that all by yourself?"

"It's certainly a very… big spider." Harry awkwardly compliments, causing the cat to puff out with pride. Crookshanks then began chewing up the spider smugly. Ron made a disgusted noise.

"Does he have to eat… that in front of us?"
Hermione sniffed, "I don't know Ron, it can't be as bad as watching you eat."

"Oh shit, burn." Harry whispered while his two closest Gryffindor friends began glaring daggers at each other. Crookshanks just kept eating in the background, and occasionally meow-ing.

"Just keep him over there, that's all," Ron finally says irritably, "I've got Scabbers asleep in my bag."

Which is of course the moment when Crookshanks attacked his bag.

"MERLIN'S FLabby B- GET OFF, OFF YOU STUPID BEAST!" Ron roared, leaping into action and tried to pull the hissing, slashing feline off his bag.

"RON NO, DON'T HURT HIM!" Hermione screeched, and yeah, obviously the whole dining hall was watching now. Harry couldn't blame them. Crookshanks had some serious determination there, claws still imbedded on the Weasley's worn satchel even as Ron began whirling it around like some third rate carnival ride. Like, there's some serious inner core strength or something there. Good on him. "RON!"

Scabbers apparently had no such core strength and flew out of the bag like, well, something that flies out of bags. Anyway, Crookshanks began untangling his claws from the fabric before chasing a, justifiably, terrified Scabbers who had caught onto the situation quick. "CATCH THAT CAT!" Ron yelled.

George Weasley made a lunge for it just as Harry tried to reach out to coax Crookshanks into his arms resulting in them both falling onto each other in a messy heap. "So," George asks once the surprise of the fall wore off, looking up a little dazedly at Harry who lay tangled on top of him, "Did you just fall from heaven? Because you look like an ange-"

"FOR FUCK'S SAKEs GEORGE!" Ron snarled, "NOW IS NOT THE TIME, SCABBERS IS IN DANGER!"

Scabbers was also running underneath the tables, skirting beneath startled legs and ducking underneath lifted feet. Finally, someone in this school under the name of Cedric Diggory realized they were all wizards and accio-ed Scabbers into his grip. "I've got him!" He shouts before promptly screaming as Crookshanks practically spins around to his direction and dashing full pelt at the Hufflepuff like a small, furry missile.

"Blaise!" Harry shouts. From across the room the tanned Slytherin sighs as he draws out his wand.

"The things I do for love- ACCIO, uh, SCABBERS THE RAT!" A terrified looking Scabbers shot out of Cedric's grasp and into Blaise's, once again attracting the rather vicious attention of Crookshanks who had begun hissing much like a very aggravated snake. But with way more fangs and claws. "Um. Harry? Darling!?" He asks a little frantically.

"Accio Scabbers!" Harry calls out, summoning Scabbers for a third time, this time from across the Great Hall, the poor fat thing was shaking from all the manhandling he had gone through. "Here Ron, I bought you some time, suggest you take that time and run."

"Thanks Harry, I swear that cat is fucking bonkers." Ron says, the last bit shot pointedly at Hermione. "It's got it in for Scabbers, I can tell."

"That's not true!" Hermione burst out shakily, "All cats chase rats!"

"And yet I hear Parvati's rat is still fine and not-attacked." Ron replied snidely, in the distance a student yelped fearfully, clearly Crookshanks was advancing closer. "I should go, you know, before
that mangy thing tries to scratch my eyes out or eat me and Scabs in our sleep something."

Harry sighs because children were ridiculous sometimes. "Look Ron, let me ask Sev- Snape if I can
go to your dorm for a bit and I'll cast some protections on your bed to ward off anyone from... eating
your face or whatever. Your friend should be safe provided he stays in that room- I'm not equipped
to put any advanced spells onto Scabbers himself after all." He's healthier now sure, but not healthy
enough to be sure his innate powers won't leak into his magic.

"Cheers mate." Ron thanked gratefully. He shot one last glare at Hermione before stomping off out
of the Great Hall.

The moment the large doors slammed shut, Crookshanks came bolting out from under the tables in
front of Harry and Hermione snarling and spitting. Hermione just picked the ugly feline up and made
little shushing noises.

"Oh Crookshanks, why?" She asks softly.

"Ron's not wrong Hermione." Harry shrugged as he tentatively patted the now calmed cat while the
rest of the student body resumed their activities, "Crookshanks genuinely doesn't like Scabbers from
what I gather. I mean, I'm not huge on Scabbers either but I like Ron enough not to... eradicate the
vermin."

Hermione stared at him. "You're... you do know that occasionally you sound like a super villain right
Harry?" She frowns slightly, "Also, wait, I care about Ron too!"

Harry shrugged again, completely ignoring the super villain comment. It's not like she was wrong.
And who hasn't had a super villain phase in their lives? Please. "Yeah but Crookshanks clearly
doesn't."

The bushy haired Gryffindor slumped over at that, stroking said cat in an attempt to calm herself,
"That's true." She muttered dejectedly.

Harry sighed again. Blaise may keep him young with his very mature outlook on life but the
Gryffindors with their childish behavior, befitting their age to be fair, remind him how very, very old
he was. "Hey, I think what's really bugging Ron isn't that Crookshanks is attacking his rat- well, it's
definitely something- but also, it's the fact you're not taking his side or even acknowledging his
arguments."

"W-what do you mean?" She asks, her need to patch her friendship with Ron overtaking her usual
unwillingness to take Harry's help in something. Then again, usually Harry's advice only extends
academically, it's rare that Harry is given the chance or the ability to give an social advice.

"Well, clearly Crookshanks is a very clever magic cat yeah?"

"Yes?" Hermione replies, unsure where this is going.

"And he obviously can see attacking rats and such sets a bad example, or at least understands it to a
point he doesn't attack any rats owned by other witches and wizards save for Ron's apparently." Harry
pointed out, "So, wouldn't it be fair for Ron to assume your cat is going out of his way to
 torment his rat?"

"That's- I-" She shut her mouth and grudgingly nodded, looking appropriately shamed, "You're
right, I guess Crookshanks really doesn't like Scabbers, though I have no idea why."

The savior of the wizarding world shrugged once again and snatched up a bunch of cookies that
have replaced the lunch on the table. "The why of it hardly matters." He tells her, "What does matter is that you tell Ron you're sorry, that you acknowledge Crookshanks does seem to be particularly aggressive at Scabbers and that you will try to make sure the two will not meet. Maybe tell him beforehand when you bring out Crookshanks, make him feel as safe as he can given the situation, not dismiss his fears."

Hermione listener intently and nodded, clearly taking the advice to heart. "That makes sense," she says before brightening, her eyes glinting in determination, "you're right Harry, I'm going to do that right now!"

Harry coughed and looked pointedly at the large furry feline grumbling in her arms.

"... And when I meant 'right now' I totally meant 'right after I put Crookshanks in my room'."

"Nice save Hermione."

The next day, Hermione and Ron were rather amicable during breakfast time from what Harry could see. Herbology they even partnered together and seemed to be chatting together nicely, if a little more restrained than usual. Still, it seemed like progress. Until Transfiguration time.

Apparently Lavender Brown's rabbit died or something which fit somehow with some prophecy Professor Trewalny said in the first lesson that for the life of Harry could not recall. Either way, Hermione's very vocal doubt on the subject caused the Gryffindor girls to dislike her even more and caused a larger rift with her friendship with Ron since she demonstrated a pretty dismissive attitude about the death of Brown's pet. That trip to Hogsmeade is probably not going to as fun as she had previously anticipated now.

He felt for her, honestly he did. They both share a social awkwardness that results in a lot of really bad decisions though Harry's usually end up more sexual in nature at the very least. Or actual murder. Po-tay-to, po-tah-to.

Speaking of bad decisions that either end up with sex or murder, Harry ended up bumping into the new defense professor once he had bid his friends goodbye on their trip to the wizarding village that he was banned to enter. Not that he's implying that he was going to murder or have sex with Professor Lupin. Just that it was a strong possibility, what with his record of Defense teachers and the fact that this was one was actually kind of cute. Plus, despite his dislike of Lupin for various reasons, hate sex is always a thrill and Death's always had a bit of a weakness for the demi-humans, especially the werewolves.

"Harry? What are you doing here alone?" Said werewolf questioned curiously, his head popping out of his office door where Harry must've passed whilst walking aimlessly around the castle. Even Severus wasn't angry enough to constrain him to his room for the whole weekend after all. The potions master had even promised to let Harry sleep in his bed with him once again, a promise which has recently been given more and more and Harry loves it. The warmth, the comfort, the proximity, he's never slept with another for the sake of sleeping before, not truly, and now he can't imagine how he could exist so long without it.

Harry shrugged lazily, "Everyone's off to Hogsmeade, Professor." Then he added with a exaggerated pout, "And Colin Creevely apparently is too behind on his essays to play with me."

Poor Colin. The poor child looked positively distraught turning down Harry's casual invitation to hang out. Then again, Harry's also sure the reason why the second year was behind on his essay
work was because he was leading an underground ring spreading and selling voyeuristic photographs of Harry, so, fuck Colin. Not that Harry's that offended but still. Fuck Colin. And Blaise too because he's fairly sure his boyfriend's in on it as well.

At least Blaise is probably using the money he earned from it to buy Harry gifts. He better fucking be anyway.

"Ah." Professor Lupin says, looking like he's considering something before asking, a touch too eagerly, "Why don't you come in? I... I've just taken delivery of a Grindylow for our next lesson."

Harry raised an eyebrow, interested despite himself, "Water demon huh?" Then another thought occurred to him, "Wait. Delivered? How does that work?" He asks curiously, "Like, is there a magical delivery service that works independently from the whole owl thing? And how expensive would it be to transport magical creatures? Actually, where do they even get those creatures? Is there like a sanctuary-farm thing for grindylows or do whatever service you use have to hunt for them? And w-"

"Maybe you should come take a seat first before you go through that list of questions." Lupin interrupts, looking amused and terribly fond. It wasn't like the usual gasping, rapturous feared awe he was used to from most werewolves but Harry decided that the time for such expectations of Lupin have been and gone. Sure the man has exhibited some possible signs that on some level he recognises Harry as who he truly is, then again, it could also just as well be that Lupin just recognising Harry is his old, dead friend's son and Lupin is just nostalgic- and the worst werewolf ever.

Whatever. The point was, he was over the whole hating Lupin for not believing in his inner wolf, he wasn't over hating Lupin for being one of Severus' childhood bullies, but he was over the werewolf thing. Sort of.

Harry smiled as he nodded and walked toward the professor. "Of course sir," He says serenely, swanning into the office like he owned it, "and can my first question be- why is your boggart a moon?" Harry steps into the office, eyes glowing inhumanely bright as he stares at the wolfman, "Pretty odd thing to fear, especially for a werewolf like yourself professor."

He shut the door.

Chapter End Notes

Remember, if you got any spare change, please check out https://ko-fi.com/hweianime/ for a donation! *rattles empty mug hopefully, well shakes empty mug to be technical*
Death's talk with Lupin

Chapter Notes

I didn't really do Lupin very well to be honest. Partly because it's been a while and mostly because Lupin was never a character I really cared about? That sounds really bad. Um. Hopefully you guys are cool with my Lupin?

Enjoy~~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The one where Death talks with a werewolf, gets kissed (not unusual) and some plot happens (very unusual)

Lupin's eyes were wider than the moon he was so afraid of and Harry was fairly sure the werewolf has stopped breathing altogether. It was only when Harry pulls out a seat for himself in front of Lupin's desk does he snap out of whatever imitation of still life he was doing.

"W-wha- what?" The professor wheezed out like he'd been punched. "I'm not, how could I be a- I'm, I-" Lupin begins to laugh, it's the sort of nervous, crazy, verging on hysterical laughter you get on the edge of a breakdown. Or a knife.

"Yeeah." Harry drawled, staring at him nonplussed, "You've totally convinced me, what with such quick wit and thinking. I apologise, truly you're not a werewolf, just a really brilliant actor." Harry then steepled his fingers together, letting his chin rest on top of it as he leaned on the office desk, "Now why don't you take a deep breath and sit down Professor?"

Lupin complied almost robotically, blinking in surprise once he seats himself back onto his chair as if he didn't even realize he was following the suggestion until he did so. He looked a touch fearful and Harry couldn't help but hide a smile behind his hands. It was like looking at a wide-eyed puppy, the scrappy type that lived off the streets.

Harry wants to groom him. He's always been a fan of the underdog stories after all, and what better underdog is there than a homeless werewolf with self-hating identity issues? Harry would watch the fuck out of that movie.

First step though, would be Lupin acknowledging his half-wolf status. "Professor. You're a werewolf." He says firmly, eyes flashing a brighter green as he stares into Lupin's own.

Lupin whimper, a noise so clearly canine that Harry can see the flattened dog ears on the older wizard's head. Lupin immediately slaps a hand to his mouth but the damage was already done. He slumps in his seat, defeated and silently nods. It's not the verbal confirmation Harry desires but he figures it would hardly be as interesting if Lupin wasn't going to be a bit stubborn on his end.

Harry sits back on his seat, smugly and waits.

"I-I-I," Professor Lupin stutters and Harry raises an eyebrow. Clearly his issues run deeper than he had first thought. It irks him a little bit Harry has to change his interrogation tactics.
With concerned eyes and a softer voice, Harry asks carefully, "Professor Lupin, when exactly did you get bitten?" There's no way the man was a born werewolf, sure a natural werewolf could suffer from self-hatred, but they would at least be more in tune with themselves despite that deep-seated loathing.

The older wizard hesitates again but this time he does answer with a proper answer. ".Four." He whispers hoarsely, eyes pained and a little glazed, "I was four."

Ah, shit. So there's some real trauma besides the whole prejudice thing, now Harry feels real shitty about briefly contemplating on being a dick to the man about it.

"Hey," Harry stood up and walked around to awkwardly hug the man's shoulders, "hey," he repeats, his voice still soft but far more genuine than before, "I'm sorry, I was being... forceful. Callous."

"N-no, it's completely fine." Lupin said weakly and quivering slightly in a way that clearly conveyed how not fine he was and oh god, were those tears? No, that is not okay, Harry is the crier in this story. "Oh Merlin," the wizard sobs, "th-this is so embarrassing."

"Noo," Harry says even though it kind of was. He wonders if Severus would forgive him if he made out with Lupin so the man would just... stop.

Somehow, he doesn't think the potions master would buy it.

Oblivious to Harry's inner conflict, Lupin sniffs and summons a napkin to blow his nose into it. Ugh. Okay, maybe shelve the making out idea.

Wiping away his tears hurriedly, the man turned to look up at Harry with a sad, grateful smile. "Thanks Harry, for comforting me."

"Yeah, well, ughn." Harry mumbles bashfully. "It would be depressing if one of the better defense professors here succumbed to depression because of me so, whatever."

At his words, Lupin visibly brightened like the rising sun. "You think I'm a good professor?"

Fock, he didn't mean to reveal that. Flustered, Harry looked away and crossed his arms defensively. "Don't get the wrong idea," he protests irritated that the man may confuse Harry's pity with familiarity, "It's, it's not like I like you or anything, just objectively out of all your predecessors you show some level of competence." He grouses.

Lupin chuckles, apparently he's the optimistic sort, odd considering his obvious issues surrounding his negativity of his own self, but complexity is the spice of life and all that bullshit. "Well, I'm happy to know that I'm at least competent in the eyes of my most belligerent student."

Harry smirked, proud of his belligerent status, "Don't get too big a head sir." He snarked before forcefully veering the conversation back on to the original topic at hand, "and don't distract me, I still want to talk about your furry little problem."

Lupin's expression shutters a little at that, "I don't think there's much to talk about." He says stiffly. Harry just sighed.

"Professor, I'm not going to fuck around here- you being all," he makes a loud frustrated noise as he gestures at everything about the older wizard, from the dark eye bags, the thin form that came from eating less than one should, the overall shaggy and unkempt appearance, there's was just nothing about the man that screamed 'healthy living'. "It's killing you. Seriously. I'm not joking sir. You need to accept there's another part of you, and that part of you has fur and fangs, and you need to accept it
Okay so maybe Harry's slightly exaggerating the urgency of it all, it's not like the man is going to keel over and die from not mastering his inner wolf, but it's certainly going to shorten his lifespan dramatically. Lupin's unwittingly hurling himself to death so fast Harry can practically taste it.

It's not a pleasant death either, if you fight the wolf, the transformation takes a far greater toll on your body. Short term, it's painful as fuck— not that Harry's personally experienced it but he presumes from the amount of screaming and weeping he usually witnesses for these things that it probably does anyway— the long term effects however are where it becomes truly appalling.

Bones would become more brittle from the constant healing, muscles could snap or loosen permanently from the constant strain, strained ligaments, joints will be disjointed, severe arthritis, migraines, weakened immune system. A wheelchair would be guaranteed by fifty. A closed coffin by sixty.

Best case scenario right now for Lupin is probably having a permanent limp in the future if he fixes up his problem right away. Then again, Harry's never been good at estimating healing.

Professor Lupin looked shocked. "K-killing me?" He stutters out, looking rather ashen. Which is sort of expected when someone tells you you're dying. Whatever, Harry's just pleased that the man was still creature enough to not question how exactly Harry knew this information and just subconsciously trusted him enough in the aspect of death to just go along with it. Because exposition fucking sucked.

Harry patted the werewolf's head, "It's not as bad as what you think, just some basic training to get your more acquainted with the beast inside and I think, maybe, you won't be crippled completely for life."

"Cr-crippled?!" Lupin gasped like the assurance was a physical assault to the more tender regions of his body. Like fuck, Harry just said he *maybe* won't be crippled for life. So much for the optimistic type. Ugh. This man had some serious and very conflicting personality issues. At least Severus had the decency to keep to a similar theme of problems with the occasional unexpected splash of 'to fuck or not to fuck Harry Potter?'

Which is really a question Harry would rather not focus on right now. One frustrating topic at a time.

"I'm thinking we get you more in tune with your senses first," he barrels on like he doesn't hear his professor hyperventilating beside him, "sense of smell and hearing is what we should focus on since those are key wolf traits-"

"Harry, what-"

"-general physical fitness and health is important so we'll try jogging through the forest in the evening or something," Harry continues thoughtfully, ignoring Lupin's growing protests, "oh, and I hear meditation is great for centering you as well."

That seemed to do it, Lupin jumped out of his chair to tower over Harry in a way that was probably meant to intimidate if Harry hadn't seen him crying not a few minutes earlier. Emotional degradation and mood swings, unsurprising but a tad concerning. "Harry, stop! I don't need training to be a-a-a-"

"You can't even say it can you?" Harry says pityingly. "Professor, you're going to die before you reach seventy and yet you're unwilling to even try prevent that?"

Lupin hesitates like this was a choice of apples and oranges instead of needless painful death apples
and the fucking opportunity to gain some goddamn control in his life oranges. Harry kind of wants to hit him. No, Harry definitely wants to hit him. And he definitely no longer wants to make out with him. In fact, he couldn't be more turned off right now unless Lupin was somehow secretly female.

Ugh. That wasn't the prettiest mental image.

"I... fine." The man says defeatedly, as if Harry was being the selfish arsehole here. What a bitch.

Harry narrows his eyes, displeased with the werewolf's attitude, "Fine, what Professor?" He challenges, crossing his arms irritatedly. "Fine, I'll gratefully accept your kind offer to help better myself,' or 'Fine, you caught me, I'm a suicidal ingrate who doesn't need your aid and would rather fuck myself over than even try attempt to help myself because all werewolves should die'?

"You're very different from your parents you know?" Lupin observes, apparently not that offended about Harry's rather snide remarks about his person. Harry briefly wonders if that's still optimism, a really low level of self-esteem or a incredibly odd combination of both.

"I wouldn't know." Harry responded haughtily, "they're dead."

The professor chuckled, even if it was a rather nervous, uncomfortable chuckle, "Touché." Lupin looked at him, his eyes still untrusting but they still glimmered with something akin to hope, "Harry, I will gratefully accept your ever so kind offer to help me through my little furry problem."

Harry smiled faux sweetly, "Thank you," he says to his professor and holds out a dainty hand to shake on it. Lupin barely even hesitated, practically pouncing on the offered hand, enclosing it with both of his larger, scarred hands, though he looked a little puzzled at his own reaction.

"So, how are we going to do this?" Lupin asks curiously, ignoring the way his body refuses to release his grip on the younger wizard's hand, resulting in an almost embarrassingly long handshake. "I'm usually free most evenings, Thursdays and weekends but I would like enough time to maintain my teaching schedule."

Harry stares at Lupin in something akin to dawning horror. It just occurred to Harry that he's going to have to either sneak out of Severus' highly warded rooms or ask Severus if he can break his curfew punishments in order to rendezvous with his former childhood bully turned fellow professor. Who's also a werewolf.

Fuck, Severus is really not going to be happy with this.

A knock on the door startled Harry from his slowly spiralling thoughts.

"Come in," Lupin calls out, and lo, and behold, like a demon summoned with the blood of a seven week old virgin lamb, Severus swooped into the office, robes billowing magnificently and carrying a goblet that seemed to be smoking rather ominously. The potions master stopped at the sight of Harry, eyes narrowing at how close the pair were to each other, not missing the way neither have broken out of their handshake and were now just standing near each other, holding hands.

"Ah, Severus," said Lupin, smiling like he couldn't feel his fellow professor's dissecting gaze on him in the way that only serial killers do when pondering about how to get away with their next kill. "Thanks very much. Could you leave it here on the desk for me?"

Professor Snape did not as much as leave smoking goblet on the desk as he did body slam the thing onto the desk with a very ungracious expression adorning his face. Harry's pretty sure if Severus snarled with that gorgeous low baritone of his, Harry would leap into his surprisingly muscular arms in a heartbeat.
Casually Harry pulled away from Lupin in favor of his attractively seething Professor, "Professor Lupin was just offering to show me his Grindylow sir." Harry informs him.

"Of course he did." Severus says in a way that heavily implied that he wouldn't be surprised if Grindylow was some sort of euphemism. Furious and a little disgusted, yes. Surprised, no.

Harry couldn't blame him, he's not exactly a paragon of chastity and has always liked teasing the academic types. He did date Percy Weasley after all.

"You should drink that directly, Lupin." Snape orders the other man, while beckoning for Harry to come to his side with a look that brook no protests, "Harry, come along, I have some ingredients to pick from the Forbidden forest and I know your centaur friends have been insisting on spending more time with you."

Harry looked at him in disbelief because, one, Severus had a timetable for when to stock up ingredients from the forest and Harry knew today was not one of them. And two, possibly more importantly, Severus loathed it when the centaurs came by. Bane especially gets on the potions master's nerves for some reason. Probably the unrepentant hatred for wizard kind Bane vocally shares. It could also possibly be because centaurs were apparently the only things with abs in Magical Britain.

Really, really good abs.

Like, choc-a-bloc type abs, the type of abs body shots are pretty much made for, the sort of abs that you just want to fucking- what were they talking about again?

The goblet on the desk made a gurgling fizzing sound that directed Harry's attention and curiosity toward it. With a wary eye, Harry gave a quick sniff at the fumes before visibly recoiling. Snape, who had also been distracted from glaring at Lupin by the goblet's interruption, let out a soft chuckle at Harry's offended expression. Professor Lupin watched it all unfold with a vaguely bewildered expression at Snape.

"What is this?" Harry demanded to the potions master, he could smell something vaguely familiar but he wasn't going to risk taking another sniff to figure it out.

Severus smirks rather unkindly and Harry just knows whatever it is that comes out of his mouth it's going to be some form of pettiness, maybe even an outright obvious mock at Lupin. "You could call it a... supplement. Professor Lupin adores the stuff, always eager to lap it up like a dog."

"Ah," Harry nods in sudden understanding, "You know Professor Lupin is a werewolf too then."

Severus blinks, his mouth parts a little, his only concessions to revealing his surprise before he smirks, smug and proud. "So you figured it out already Harry, only you."

"Like it's hard." Harry scoffs but he preens at the praise, "Honestly, his name is Remus Lupin. Like, I don't like advocating the whole 'blame the victim' thing but come on, you're kind of asking to be a werewolf with that sort of name."

Professor Lupin looks mildly offended at that. Professor Snape, meanwhile, looked like he wanted to throw Harry onto Lupin's desk and ravage him there and then.

Huh. It's nice to know Harry isn't going to be the only fucking weird one in their future relationship.

"Yes, well," Lupin coughed awkwardly, "Harry has-"
"Graciously." Harry coughed. The Defence professor glanced down at the boy with a smile twitching at the edge of his lips.

"-graciously, decided to help with my furry little problem." He finishes rather cheerfully for someone who had been so ashamed about admitting said problem in the first place. Harry personally thinks the man definitely has more than a few issues. Mentally.

He wonders if there are wizard psychologists out there.

It just make so, so much sense if there wasn't.

Like, so much sense.

"And how," Severus begins slowly, tentatively, like it all sounded too good to be true, "exactly do you hope to accomplish that Harry, I mean, Potter?"

Harry smiled and began counting with his fingers, "Meditation definitely is a must, a werewolf is just as affected spiritually as physically after all. Then exercises are also vital, Professor Lupin needs to build muscles for strength, stamina and, well, health in general, I mean, no offence professor."

"Oh, no offence nee-"

"Because, you kind of look like a hobo- that means a homeless person if you didn't know that."

"N-no, I uh, I knew th-"

"Well, more like the hobo that other hobo's eats." Harry muses, and there's the sound of Severus trying to choke back a laugh, "Anyway, you'll need to consume more meat, I'd assume you've eaten more since you became a professor but seriously, hobo food, not even normal hobo food but like, last resort hobo food, like, a hobo wouldn't even consider eating you until they've eaten all the better hobos because you're just that-"

"Okay, yes, I get it." Lupin interrupted a little more offended than before.

"As fun as insulting Professor Lupin is," Snape smoothly enters the conversation, "We really must leave, the Halloween feast is in an hours time and I distinctly remember Lupin volunteering his time to decorating."

"Ah, is it already so late?" Lupin murmurs, looking at the clock hanging in his office. He looks torn between relief and reluctance and puzzled at his own mixed reactions. "Well, I guess I shall see you both off at the door then."

"No need," Snape sniffed curtly, there's an air of smug authority in his posture as he wraps an arm around Harry's shoulder possessively, "We'll see ourselves off, good day Lupin."

Harry waved with a cheeky smile on his own face, "Looking forward in seeing you later sir."

As the door to the office slammed shut, courtesy of Severus Snape, Lupin felt like a fog of... something, slide off him like water, leaving him clearheaded and muddled at the same time. He had, his greatest secret had been revealed, to Harry Potter of all people, but had it been revealed? The boy claimed to have known for a while. And not only had he not freaked out, not as bad as he should have anyway, he had even accepted a mere child's offer to help with something he had been struggling with for years. He had accepted it with the strangest insistence in his mind, in his heart, his soul, that Harry Potter knew what he was doing, that Harry Potter was powerful.
Also, was there something going on with Severus and Harry?

"What in Merlin's name just happened?" He asked to the empty air.

Lupin received no answer.

It turns out, Severus was surprisingly on board with the training Lupin thing. Really, really on board.

"Jesus, ah, Christ Severus," Harry gasped, breaking away from the potions master's sudden and literally breathtaking kiss that had been plundered from him the moment they stepped back into their private quarters with the suddenness and intensity of a coiled predator pouncing at unknowing prey.

"Merlin, Harry," Severus groaned back, "How are you even real?"

"I'm secretly a being that surpasses god." Harry confesses with a sly smile, making the Slytherin laugh breathily.

"I can believe that." Severus murmurs, leaning down to kiss Harry again, something which Harry happily reciprocates, leaning into his professor's body, trying to mold his own figure against him.

"Does that mean," Harry gasps between feverous kisses, "I can ignore the curfew you've set for, ah, me, sir?"

"Only in, mmhn, regards to training the mutt Harry." Severus responds as seriously as he could with his thigh wedged between Harry's legs, pushing up against Harry's crotch deliciously, "I shall of course be chaperoning."

"You just, nmhn, want to watch Professor Lupin pant as, ah, as he has to run through the Forbidden forest at night." Harry accused playfully before groaning as Severus' large hands skimmed the length of his body meticulously.

The potions master's eyes lit up with vindictively glee, "We're making Lupin run through the Forbidden forest?"

"Eventually." Harry amended, "We'll start with laps through the castle or something first, get him used to, well, running." Harry has a feeling running was a very foreign concept to most wizards, werewolf or not.

Severus looked a little disappointed about not throwing one of his former tormentors straight into the deep end but still seemed appeased at the fact he was going to watch the man suffer in some form at the very least. God, he was adorable. Harry stretched up to get him to kiss him again, to which Severus complied easily.

It's sweet and a little sloppy and Harry just wants more. Unfortunately, that last kiss seemed to be the end of what the professor was willing to give and Harry was embarrassed to admit he tried to chase Severus' retreating mouth with a wishful whine.

He feels heated and tingly and Harry sort of loathes Severus with his stupid wavering morals. Either you submit to your animalistic desires or you go ice a turkey until Harry becomes sixteen or whatever age is deemed appropriate in this backwards place. Don't fucking play with him like this.

(Or play with him more, god, play with him more.)

"I, hah, think we should take this time to... refresh ourselves before we go down to dinner." Snape
says, his breathing still heavy and face just as flushed as Harry's own. Despite his words, the potions master's dark eyes still lingered hungrily upon Harry's young form, long fingers twitching as they are refrained from moving back to their previous ministrations.

Honestly, the man's resolve was like a pendulum, for fucks sakes was there no one here that wasn't some flavor of insane?

Professor McGonagall doesn't count because she's kind of scary. Also, Harry sort of feels like she's secretly insane anyway. Like, she was the one who devised a giant chessboard where you actually had to play chess to protect the goddamn Philosopher's stone, how is that not the actions of a certifiably insane person?

"Fine," Harry muttered petulantly, he can feel his expression sour at irritation as his body realized that he's got to resort back to self pleasure to take the tension off now. He's used to masturbation now, one would have to be when you're a sort of healthy young teenager with the sex drive of a god, but it's still irks and humiliates him in a way that he just can't shake. "Whatever, sure."

"Harry..." Severus starts, but Harry refuses to look up at the man and steps away.

"I do get it, sort of, I'm not a complete child," Harry spat out the last word angrily, "that doesn't negate the fact that this, all this, is so fucking frustrating and needlessly complicated." Blaise has been distancing himself since the incident as well, justifiably wary at being caught by Severus and their quick trysts were getting worryingly romantic despite Harry's wishes. It's agonizing, how he's somehow twisted up in this dramatic bullshit. As Death, there were no trivial mortal moralities to bind him or, to a lesser extent, his partners into. It was all fairly straightforward with everyone generally knowing what they were in for, whether it be a fling, a very open relationship or a very, very closed relationship.

What could he say? He does love the possessive ones.

Drama was interesting, it was fun to watch occasionally, even more fun to be apart of, but Death isn't made for drama the way Chaos or Magic or Fate thrive off it. Death is a relatively simple entity who enjoys the occasional misunderstanding and conflict as long as it's generally and immediately followed by some very rough make up sex.

And right now his life has been nothing but conflicts and misunderstandings and very little sex.

If Harry's going to be honest, the lack of sex was bothering him a lot these days. He's young and gorgeous and powerful and yet the one man who he craves for is just being a fucking cocktease at this point. The always getting painfully injured thing was also kind of a problem too but hey, he's... thirteen, fourteen? Sex is clearly the priority number uno here.

Harry seethes as he closed the door to his bedroom behind him, he won't even give Severus the satisfaction of seeing him slam the door and confirming that Harry is indeed a child. He hates this whole 'age morality' thing the professor has been all wrapped up in, like yeah, he gets that it's completely valid and if this was an actual kid like Neville or something Harry knows he wouldn't be exactly enthusiastic about that sort of relationship. But. On the other hand... nope he's just a gigantic hypocrite but goddamnit it's his vacation. Give him a break.

Briefly Harry contemplates the pros and cons of forcing himself out of his mortal body temporarily to go seek out Thanos. There's a Marvel universe close by that is making waves, and it's driving Harry up the wall with low simmering lust. Someone clearly managed to scoop up the infinity stones with the intention of death in their minds. That's so hot. He's heard there's a Hydra Captain America lurking around that particular multiverse so fingers crossed it's him.
Then again, going a step back in physical recovery as Harry Potter wouldn't be much fun either.

But what if Thanos got the gauntlet? Harry's practically obligated to go over there and... reward him for his efforts.

Unless it's the Thanos who isn't courting Death and doing that weird eco-kill-half-the-universe-bullshit Thanos. Because that Thanos can go fuck himself.

Seriously. Just. Double the resources you stupid fuckface. Or even better, speed up the time it takes for resources to grow. And if you're really dead set on the genocide, don't fucking pussy out with choosing who to kill- obviously you murder the elderly who've already lived a full life, the fatally ill, the comatose, the dictators, the abusers and those assholes who always cut in line for shit. Like, you spend years gathering up six magical reality-bending stones from across all corners of the galaxy and you could not have come up with a plan to how to strategically genocide to minimize the most psychological damage to a planet you're trying to 'save' in that timeframe? Even Hitler had a plan. A bigoted, horrible and nonsensical plan but it is arguably a better plan than having half the universe's population being chosen for slaughter via the same principles as flipping a coin-

Huh. Harry vaguely feels he'd forgotten something.

"Harry?" The deep voice of his professor called out behind his door, accompanied by a few short, sharp, knocks to the wood. "We must depart now if we want to be on time for the Halloween feast."

"Ah, yes, coming!" Harry calls out before silently cursing to himself as he rushes to tidy himself up and not look like he'd just wasted a good amount of time seething and lost in his thoughts.

Severus brushes some nonexistent lint off his robes and tries not smile like the lovelorn idiot he is as he hears Harry frantically getting ready for dinner. He fails. It's not like anyone is watching him anyway. Not like when-

Merlin, he wants to die. For so many reasons.

The potions master hates how complicated this has all become. He used to be able to withhold himself from indulging in depravities with his student, well, further depravities. A few moments of weakness in the form of kisses but nothing too sordid. Yet, ever since the... incident, Severus can practically feel the absence of his self control in regards to Harry.

Just remembering it is enough to send a heated flush to his face and to regions much lower south. It was like being fourteen and finding his first scandalous magazine all over again. Except, instead of a busty blonde in a skimpy polka-dotted swimsuit, it's a thirteen year old wizard savior, completely nude, aroused and splayed out wantonly to anyone's passing gaze as his classmate thrusts his dick between his thighs and against his erection.

Vividly Severus recalls how at the time being overcome with jealousy and lust. His eyes had been drawn to the way Harry's body moved, how the pink blush on the usually pale skin traveled down his chest, the sounds, oh the sounds that escaped brokenly through soft lips. Breathy moans, uncontrolled gasps, those slutty, desperate little whines. He'd never seen Harry like this, so exposed and desperate, never seen the gorgeous being climax, and Severus absolutely loathes the fact he had to see it by some other Slytherin's hand. And he despises how he now craves for it to have been him even more desperately than before.

Love was truly cruel to him.

It's gotten worse, he's gotten worse. He can feel it. Every excuse to touch Harry has been found and
when there wasn't anymore excuses Severus would find new ones, make new ones. And Harry is so responsive to all of them, so eager and needy that it's near impossible to curb his impulses when they were being encouraged so.

Honestly, at this point, he doesn't even understand what he is even fighting this for. Harry, for some unfathomable reason, desires him, and that desire is certainly reciprocated by Severus, it's not as if they could become pregnant and Severus has enough pride as a professor to never abuse his position to garner sex. It'll all be mutually consensual and perfect and Severus would never have to watch another Weasley or Zabini suck face with Harry ever again.

Well if only he could completely ignore the fact Harry was about twenty years younger than him. And Potter's son. And Lily's son. And a third year student. Who's also defeated the most recent dark lord. Who Severus had served under and, consequently, is one of the main driving forces that caused Harry to have become orphaned and sent to an abusive household. Harry, who also isn't aware Severus was one of the main driving forces that caused Harry to have become orphaned and sent to an abusive household, on top of everything else. Harry, who is so young, so broken, and who can't possibly feel the same obsessive pull Severus does, who-

"I'm ready, I'm ready," The door swung open to reveal a slightly out of breath Harry Potter looking back up at him, shaking Severus out of his down spiraling thoughts. "How do I look?"

"I didn't know you had orange robes." Severus says.

Harry shrugs, "I spelled some of my robes orange, honestly, it's not that hard."

"It.. it looks surprisingly good on you." He replies truthfully, not that he was surprised, Harry hasn't exactly kept his vanity a secret from Severus. It's one of the few traits that the professor can see in Harry that must've clearly come from his Potter heritage. Unfortunately, Severus finds it endearing on Harry, because Severus is not just a pervert but a romantic pervert. And a hopeless one at that.

Harry preens with a demure crooked smile and a pleased glow in his relentlessly green eyes. He's sweet and beautiful and just so darling like this, looking up at Severus, happy under his praise, like a kitten. A beautiful kitten Severus wants to ravish.

Merlin how he longs for death.

"So," Harry says as he begins to dig into his meal, "How's Hogsmeade?"

"Absolutely amazing." Draco brags, eager to have a willing audience listen to his apparent adventures in Hogsmeade since all the people he usually brags to were there with him, "I mean, it's not as great as some other wizarding towns I've been to but the hot butterbeer at the Three Broomsticks was absolutely delicious. Wish we could have brought you some but they wouldn't allow take away orders."

The last bit caused Draco to scowl darkly, clearly his usual 'My father will hear about this' schtick didn't work on the bartenders.

"I think I still have some Butterbeer on my lips." Blaise hummed faux casually. Harry turned his way.


"Maybe you should help me clean up."
Harry made a thoughtful noise but he was already leaning in for a kiss, "Well I heard the butterbeer was absolutely delicious."

"You two are utter rotters." Theodore Nott groused across the table while Harry and Blaise began making out passionately. Draco, who was sitting right next to Harry shot Theodore a commiserating look. "Disgusting teenage garbage is what you both are."

"You're just jealous." Blaise smirked cockily, "Harry dearest over here is such a fantastic kisser, far superior to everyone else I've made out with."

Draco immediately whips around to face the entangled couple so fast his usually perfectly quaffed hair had to take a moment to settle back in place, "Wait. What?"

Even Theodore was frowning in confusion, "I thought Harry was your first boyfriend." He states a little uncertainly, "I mean, I know you've charmed that Ravenclaw fourth year last year into a quick snog behind the quidditch pitch but-" Theodore narrowed his eyes, "No."

"What?" Draco repeats.

Harry kisses the cheek of the grinning Zabini heir, "We have an agreement." Is all Blaise says and Nott chokes.

"What?" Draco repeats again, far more irritated at how out of the loop he was in this conversation, "Nott, what do they mean arrangement?" He demands.

"Blaise is allowed to... let's say, ink his quill wherever he wants as long as he tells me beforehand." Harry purrs and watching the look of realization dawning slowly on Draco Malfoy's face is far better than looking at any sunrise.

"If it helps, I've only... inked with two other Ravenclaw girls and snogged a Hufflepuff." Blaise shrugged. "Though compared to my dearest, they weren't exactly skilled calligraphers if you know what I mean."

"Oh, oh Merlin," Draco brought his face into his hands, horrified, "Oh dear sweet Merlin why?"

"Well Draco," Harry says brightly, "I am so glad you asked."

"No, wait-"

"Please don't-"

"It all started because I didn't want to have sex." Harry begins like he was dramatically reading the beginnings of a fairy tale, he looks at his paling friends' faces as he cruelly adds, "Penetrative anal sex."

Draco groans, his head back in his hands, "Nooooo."

"Don't get Harry wrong, he was perfectly happy do all sorts of other things with me when I asked," Blaise happily tacks on, "there's this thing he does with his feet that was particularly enlightening-"

"Lalalala I'm not listening, lalala," Theodore sings half-hysterically.

Harry and Blaise laughed, taking pity on the pair Harry quickly finished off the explanation, "Anyway, I figured it wasn't fair for Blaise considering my other... pursuits. So I told Blaise he could try out a fling or two provided they were of the opposite sex, willing, and that he would tell me
beforehand or as soon as possible afterwards."

"They were so shallow too," Blaise scoffed, "just wanted the prestige of 'stealing away' the Chosen One's boyfriend for a moment."

"Ah, the Hufflepuff girl really pissed you off huh Blaise?" Harry mused.

"Hopkins was pretty but she was a right prissy bitch," Blaise complains non too quietly, "the nerve of half the things she said about you while pawing at me, under some grand delusion that she would be the fairest of them all after this or something she was."

"Are you talking about that fifth year Marisa Hopkins?" Draco asks, finally lifting his head out of his hands, "That does explain why she keeps staring at you with hexes in her eyes."

"Isn't she dating Smith now?" Theodore questions sounding positively gleeful, unable to help himself from being sucked in to the drama. It also helps that he has his own personal bone to pick with the Draco Malfoy of Hufflepuff. Zacharias Smith apparently jinxed Theodore or something and embarrassed him horribly in front of his crush a month back. He's never talked about the specifics of it but it's clear that ever since then, Theodore has been right by Harry's side as an adamant 'Fuck Zacharias Smith to Hell' supporter. "Oh Merlin does he know? Can I tell him?"

"Ugh they're dating?" Harry sneers, "They suit each other at least."

"From what I've heard from Pansy, Smith is far more into Hopkins than Hopkins is to Smith- I mean," Draco gestures to a smirking Blaise, "clearly."

"Hey, no objections here," Blaise shrugs, "after she sported out some stuff about de-throning my darling over here, I pushed her away and she, well, she was very insistent. Not good with rejection. After some more aggressive, shall we say, advances, that were promptly denied, she turned my tie into a cluster of cockroaches!"

The boys all shuddered sympathetically. That's not a jinx you want to be on the other side of the wand for.

"Merlin, sometimes it feels like I'm friends with characters from mother's newest novella." Draco sighs.

"Except gayer." Theodore mutters.

"Way gayer." Draco agrees.

"Harry should come with his own warning label." Blaise also agrees earning a smack upside the head from Harry.

"They mean you too dearest," Harry hisses.

"Oi, I'm into girls too!" He protests while Draco and Theo shakes their heads.

"Nah mate, that still makes you half gay doesn't it?" Theo argues with a smirk.

"That reminds me," Blaise turns to give Draco a leering once over, "you want to see how gay you are Malfoy?"

Draco flushes, his pale skin practically aflame as he splutters, "Wha- how-why- I'm not gay!"

All three boys sitting by the Malfoy heir squint their eyes, assessing, "You must be a little gay."
Theodore finally decides. "Not even a little curious?"

"No!" Draco denied furiously, "I don't even find Harry attractive other than in a very, very objective way!"

"Huh." Blaise furrows his brow, like the idea of Harry not being sexually attractive to someone was mind blowing. "What about older men? Muscular? Have you ever thought about Hagrid in any particular way?"

"NO." Draco snarled, "Also, what the fuck Blaise, that's, just, ugh." He shuddered.

Blaise shrugged, "I hear some wizards like that type."

"I'm not gay!" Draco stands up and shouts and blushes even redder as everyone in the Great Hall stares at him with wide eyes. Slinking back down on to his seat as whispers reignite in the hall Draco glares at the trio. "I loathe you."

"Aw, I love you too Draco but I have Blaise here," Harry chirped, pecking his now rather flustered but pleased looking boyfriend on the cheek.

"No, that's, I didn't say love, Merlin, I'm not gay! Why would you even think that?"

"It's the hair." Harry immediately says.

"The thirteen beauty potions you keep." Theodore adds, "And those are for your skin alone."

"The poster of your favorite quidditch player shirtless that's hidden in the back of your History of Troll Wars textbook." Blaise grins as Draco sucks in an outraged breath.

"Alain Lecroix is a great quidditch player! And don't go snooping through my stuff! And he's not shirtless!"

"Draco, he's practically shirtless. It's a photo of him sweaty and lifting up his shirt to wipe the sweat from his face." Blaise gives him a condescending look. "Also you leant me that textbook, it's hardly my fault you forgot it was there."

"Oooh is it the hot French one from the, uh, the Queerberry Quafflepunchers?" Harry asked, visibly interested. If he can't have Severus any time soon he would like to try ride the broomstick of a quidditch star, you know, immerse himself in some wizarding culture. The French players are definitely cute, but the Bulgarian team, the Vratsa Vultures looked like they could fight off a pack of lions barehanded. And Harry finds that insanely attractive.

"It's the Quiberon Quafflepunchers you ponce." Draco mutters darkly before shoving, rather unbefittingly of his noble bloodline, a slice of pumpkin pie into his mouth.

"Meh," Harry shrugs, unconcerned, "Sergey von Lazerav is better anyway, apparently he's a one eighth vampire with a tan, like, damn."

"How dare-"

Suddenly the school ghosts popped out of the walls, effectively distracting them all with their synchronized flying and dancing. It was quite a lovely end to a nice meal. Harry wished his dementors could see it instead of wandering around the cold night for Black again. Not that the dementors mind the cold, they were built for worst things after all, but even they got bored. Then again, ghosts, literal souls with no physical meat shield whatsoever, tend to get a bit jumpy when the
dementors come by.

However, as most things in Harry Potter's life goes, things went south suddenly and quickly. It was after a feast well done, everyone was sated and satisfied and this close to passing out into a food coma- especially Crabbe and Goyle, who had not stopped for air whilst stuffing their faces with food during dinner- before the Bloody Baron whooshed down from the dungeon ceiling in a panic.

"Milor- Harry Potter!" He calls out, flying quick and purposeful toward the wizard savior, his expression pinched with worry.

"What ails you Baron?" Harry asked while the Slytherins stood back, but hardly far enough to prevent themselves from watching. Nosy snakes.

The Bloody Baron, not one for flowery prose and apparently little patience to use his silvery tongue, hovered uncertainly for a moment before finally informing Harry, "It's Sirius Black, he's-"

"This blows." Ron sighs as he sits on top of Harry's sleeping bag. "This was meant to be a fun day and now not even Peeves is smiling."

Peeves did seem uncharacteristically serious at the breach. Harry briefly wonders if he hadn't been Death, would Peeves be making a joke out of it all? Probably. He sort of wishes Peeves was finding this funny, the atmosphere was already tense enough, and having the resident paranormal prankster looking like a soldier off to war was only making it worse.

"So it's true then? Sirius Black broke into Hogwarts?" Harry asked for confirmation. The ghosts were good gossips but they tend to jump the gun on things like this. Then again, the whole school wouldn't be having a slumber party in the Great Hall if it was false.

"Yeah, made it all the way to the Fat Lady's portrait." Ron answers glumly.

Harry felt a deep, prickling raw emotion build up to his throat from the pits of his stomach. "That's, that's,"

Ron nodded understandingly, sympathetically at his friend. But Ron doesn't know. Ron doesn't understand the depths of what he is feeling right now. "Horrible I know."

"Ridiculous!" Harry screamed maybe a little more high-pitched than he liked. But he was enraged beyond normal volume words. "That's bloody fucking goddamn ridiculous!" Draco sitting to the left of him was staring. Blaise sitting right of him stared. Hermione and Neville who had just sat down with them was staring. Cedric Diggory who was at the other side of the hall was staring. Dumbledore was staring. Harry didn't bloody care.

"Hogwarts lets in a mass murdering psycho without even a 'How do you do?' and I'm here having to run up three flights of stairs to get to the dungeons!?!" He screams to anyone listening. Which was everyone. The Great Hall has gone completely silent so his words are practically ringing through the room. "SERIOUSLY?!!"

Actually Hogwarts let the dark lord in her housing twice now too. Honestly, this castle needs to get her fucking shit together.

"But Harry the dungeons are on the lowest-" Harry glared at Ron who stopped mid sentence under the pure venom in his friends eyes.

"I. Am. Aware." Then in a softer, snide voice Harry mutters, "Safest place in Britain my arse."
This is so unfair.

"So..." Draco coughed while Harry fumed darkly, "Weasley, do you think Black's still skulking around the castle? Honestly Harry's not wrong about the security in this place, when my father hears about this-

"He'll torch this place to the ground. Rape the castle by fire. Let the stones crumble into ash, brick by ugly brick." Harry hisses.

Draco looks perturbed at his furious friend, "... Well I've got absolutely bullocks to say to that, so I'm going to turn this conversation over to the Gryffindors."

Neither Gryffindor looked pleased at that.

"Percy and the other prefects are meant to be patrolling with the professors around the castle so I would assume at the very least Dumbledore suspects him to be still here." Hermione finally says.

"Wonder why B-Black even showed up at the tower," Neville helpfully continued, even if he stumbled a little at saying the murderer's name, "Harry's not even in Gryffindor after all."

"Must've not read the news," Blaise sniffed, "Probably assumed since his parents were in Gryffindor, Harry would've been too."

"So Hogwarts not only let in a serial killer but a stupid and uninformed one at that." Harry grumbled, "Joy."

"But then, you have to wonder exactly how he could've gotten in to the castle." Ron mused.

"Other than that Hogwarts is a bitch?" Harry replies dryly but then he cocks his head thoughtfully, "Though you're not wrong, the Ministry's aurors aside, the Dementors shouldn't have let someone like Black slip through like this." He would have to ask them how that managed to happen tomorrow, Harry's not exactly happy that no one got the chance to brush their teeth before this impromptu slumber party and if it turned out it was because the dementors had been slacking off there would be some serious talking to happening.

"You're right," Hermione agreed, her face making a little frown as she tried to figure out this newfound puzzle, "A disguise wouldn't work since the dementors would attack anything human that crosses into Hogwarts grounds, and there are special enchantments on the castle, to stop people entering by stealth."

Harry nods smugly, "See, Hogwarts is a bitch. A bitch that wants me dead."

"Or," Hermione says, "It's an inside job."

"You think it's Lupin?" Blaise asks curiously while Ron and Neville moan.

"Nooo, he's like, the best professor we've ever had." Ron complains.

"Weasley is, unfortunately, not wrong," Draco sighs, "Lupin's classes are actually rather interesting, still, it is suspicious."

There's a tense silence that settles on the group as they contemplate whether, once again, they've gotten another dud of a defence professor. Harry's more vaguely irritated than anything. Lupin better not as fuck be smuggling Black into the castle, not after Harry just offered to help him so nicely like he did. But Harry can also sense how the trust and respect these children harbour for the professors
in this school were once again taking another critical hit so he decides to lighten the mood.

"You know, we should just erect a barrier that stops dark wizards with bad intentions getting into Hogwarts, like the Dark Lord or Sirius Black." Harry suggests idly, then almost casually he adds, "We can call it the fence against the dark arts."

Then he bursted into uncontrollable laughter.

"I hate you so much right now Harry." Ron groaned.

"Admittedly very clever, but terrible nonetheless." Hermione criticised.

"I didn't realise you were so.." Neville didn't finish but the intent was clear.

"Lame?" Draco finished with a smirk.

Harry didn't care. He was fucking hilarious. He was comedy gold.

(In the end, the only one who appreciated his amazing wit was Blaise, who broke into a grin and offered a high five in a show of their silent camaraderie. Harry always knew the boy was full of refined and incredible taste. He will be rewarded greatly in the afterlife. And after class. Wink wink, nudge nudge.)

Chapter End Notes

Support me on ko-fi please (Hweianime)
Death's werewolf training

Chapter Notes

OKAY. OKAY. This is VERY IMPORTANT.

There is a SORTA VERY SEXUAL SCENE- you can tell I'm slowly cracking under the lack of porn tbh- that sort of involves a humiliation kink and dom/sub undertones because I am a perv and those are some of my kink of choice and IF YOU'RE NOT OK WITH IT JUST SKIP IT. I marked it with an *** as a warning.

If you are okay with it- tell me what you think.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The one where Death trains a werewolf, the Dementors fuck up a Quidditch match and a Potions Master has a bloody good time all round.

Sirius Black is there too I guess.

The students talked of nothing but Sirius Black for the next few days. It reminded Severus far too much of his own school days but instead of how cool Sirius Black was for snogging another pretty seventh-year girl, it was all about how much of a lunatic Sirius Black is. And that, that was the sort of gossip Severus finds he quite enjoys. Even if some of the theories on how the criminal entered the castle made him sigh at the sheer lack of sense and intelligence that these students must hold.

There's a particularly popular one about how Black transfigured himself into a shrub or some nonsense. It's ridiculous. Severus secretly loved it.

Despite the fact Black had even managed to enter the premises- something of which ate inside Severus with anxiety and old hatred extensively- it had been a, dare he say it, good week. The Gryffindors had to suffer from their new portrait replacement, Sir Cadogan and his obese little pony, people have been talking horribly about his former tormentor, and best of all, Harry Potter was to be closely monitored at all times meaning Severus can walk alongside him all over the castle without looking too strange or out of place.

Of course, he could do without the Weasley prefect tailing Harry as well, or the fact Zabini was sticking by the boy like he had a permanent sticking charm on him. But then again, when has Severus' life ever been perfect?

Though, watching Lupin, red-faced, sweaty, out of breath and near tears as he runs his second lap through Hogwarts at night is probably as close as Severus is going to get out of perfection.

"H-Hah-Harry," Lupin gasped, he looked like a man dying in the desert, sweat-soaked and practically dragging his body toward Harry and a very, very happy potions master, "Mercy, puh-fuck-leasse."

"Language," Snape admonished gleefully while Harry crossed his arms and frowned. The werewolf was really struggling just to complete the second run through the course Harry had created for him. It
wasn't even a particularly large amount of distance, just two staircases up, then a circle around the area and then back down again. It's a bit strenuous for a human but this was a werewolf for fuck's sake.

"Ten push ups and then we're good for the night." Harry decides.

Lupin moans like he's been hit in the gut with pure wolfsbane.

"Merlin, you're pathetic," Severus says with a sneer though it's ruined by the almost manic grin he's trying to suppress on his face. It's almost disturbing. Harry wants to lick him.

"Well, why don't you try it then?" Lupin snapped annoyed while Harry passed him a cup of water that the professor guzzled greedily.

"Gladly," Severus smirked, pulling off his dark outer robes, rolling up his white shirt sleeves and exposing some very noticeable muscles in his forearms. Harry immediately felt his mouth go dry. Has the man even done a push up before or is he doing this to mess with Lupin and Harry (for very different reasons of course)? From the smug, near cocky expression, Harry's definitely sure it's definitely the latter. He never knew the professor could be such a tease. "How many again Harry?"

"Uh, um," Harry faltered, eyes having trouble moving from those arms, "fifteen?" He says faintly.

"Fifteen it is." Severus agreed serenely while Lupin made a weak noise of protest on the floor.

The potions master joined his fellow professor on the ground, legs straight and arms supporting him upright and eyes still gazing up at Harry, drinking up the pink blush creeping up the youngest wizard's face smugly. What happens after was like live porn in Harry's opinion. He barely even noticed Lupin struggling through his push ups, not when Severus seemed to be breezing through it. Well, maybe 'breezing' was too strong a phase. More like, nicely plodding through. Better than Harry expected at least.

Also the way the older man grunts out the number of push ups he's done so far each time was insanely sexy.

Severus finished a lot faster than Lupin, admittedly Lupin was already tired from his run but Harry has seen werewolves twice the professor's age benchpress small horses, so there was little sympathy there. Severus, however, was very impressive in comparison.

Harry is fully aware he's putting his two teachers against very different standards of physical fitness but come on. Wizards and werewolves aren't exactly the sort of species you can fairly place in the same weight class. Though Lupin was doing a really good job arguing otherwise.

Once finished, Harry threw a banana at Lupin who unpeeled and devoured hungrily, still lying half dead on the ground. Severus was also panting and sweating a bit from the exercise but seemed excessively proud of himself as he stood back up and summoned one of the spare water bottles they had packed for Lupin.

"Okay, so, no offense Professor Lupin But this was a lot worse than I originally expected." Harry observes critically, "We'll do something similar to this every second night and Saturdays. Any other day will be dedicated to either meditation or sensory testing."

"Sensory testing?" Severus questions.

Harry nods and smiles, "Werewolves have heightened senses. Hearing and smell are the main ones
but taste and vision are also enhanced to some extent. Lupin has been... suppressing a lot of his abilities in an attempt to be 'normal' so we need to confirm if he's really lost his enhancements or there's still hope.

"And, what would this entail exactly?" Lupin asked warily, fully aware that Harry intended to go all out for his 'recuperation' and that Severus was certainly not going to help ease his pain even a little bit.

Harry hummed which made the defense professor all the warier toward the child, "I'm not sure but I think leaving you in a pitch black room with a few lightly scented mousetraps would be a good start."

"He could participate in a game of some.. poison roulette." Severus suggests smoothly, looking completely serious as Lupin and Harry stared dubiously at him, "Oh do not gape like an imbecile Lupin, it's just a few snacks where all you have to do is to pick out the ones that aren't mildly poisonous." The man smirked, he couldn't help it, "It's all for your benefit after all."

Lupin narrowed his eyes. "You're having the time of your life right now aren't you?" He accused, but it only made Snape smirk even harder.

"I have no idea what you're talking about Lupin."

---

**Dear brother,**

It's been a while since we've written. Mostly because Chaos, the bastard, went off and did a genocide run with nothing but a yellow flower as his choice of mischief. It's a whole thing. Don't ask.

I see you've recovered nicely from your coma, truly I don't think any of us has managed to get into so much trouble when we assumed our mortal bodies. Well, I wouldn't say trouble per say. More like we don't get fatally injured or anything from said trouble.

It's rather fascinating how our individual traits as entities reflect even the type of mortal lives we lead. Though to be perfectly candid, I sort of assumed more dead people in your life than more near-death experiences haha. Then again I doubt even Fate could predict something like this.

God, I sound like Knowledge don't I?

Anyway, you seem relatively fine, we all miss you fiercely, arguable some more than others.

(Please save me, everyone here is insane)

Sincerely,

**Time**

"Merlin Severus, you are such a bastard." Harry giggled.

"I'm purely invested in Lupin's wellbeing, nothing more," The potions master drawled as they both squatted over a pair of Lupin's shoes that Harry had asked an overeager house elf to steal so Severus could pour a small vial of glowing orange liquid into it. The inside of the shoes began to steam lightly as the worn fabric began to absorb the liquid and began to smell oddly of a beach in summer.

"Liar," Harry accuses, but the fondness was leaking out of his voice like a badly bandaged bullet
wound. Severus gave him an equally affectionate look that Harry could not help but want to kiss.

So he does.

Sitting up on his knees he leans forward, pulling the man's face up to close the distance between their lips. Harry kisses the older man, soft and slow, cherishing the way Severus makes a small breathy sound of surprise before melting into it, letting Harry take the lead in the kiss.

It's nice, nothing too heated, though Harry feels his young body getting aroused quickly enough. Damn his sensitive body. He would purposely deaden his nerves ages ago if the way the near constant arousal didn't feel so addictively good. He sighs a soft moan as he shifts his legs, one hand moving back to grind against his erection in his pants, the pressure helping him focus back on leading the kiss, keeping it slow, sweet, lazy.

He can feel Severus start to skim the curve of Harry's cheeks lightly with one hand, brushing through his hair, letting Harry groan in anticipation as they both know by now how sensitive he is when it's pulled but suddenly the man hisses sharply and moves jerkily away.

"Shit!" Severus swears.

Harry blinks, lust-fogged daze dissipating quickly, "Severus? What's- oh shit," It seems the vial wasn't as empty as Harry had assumed and a few drops had fallen on Severus' pants, steaming lightly where they've been soaked. "Are you, um," His mouth suddenly went dry and numb as the professor began to unbutton his pants hastily.

"The potion was meant to be used on thicker materials like the soles of shoes or leather," Severus explains, his face red, more than a little chagrined as he's forced to disrobe his lower half in less than pleasant conditions. "If I don't take this off it'll burn me, rather painfully at that."

"That, uh, yeah, sense, made.. yes." Is all Harry says. Vaguely he understands, the potion was made to just warm and prickle Lupin's feet uncomfortably while he wears it, an effect that they've already considered would be slightly muted since the werewolf would be wearing socks. It would be practically weaponized if it's put onto bare skin or thin fabric. He totally understands. But. Severus was taking off his pants and somehow it was like half of Harry's brain has shut down.

Unfortunately, the part of Harry's brain still active involved Tom freaking Riddle bemoaning all the life choices that somehow lead up to him trapped in the head of a god with little morals who was trapped in a body of a horny preteen, with the only thing to watch being his dour-faced double agent stripping.

'Shut the fuck up Riddle, you're ruining the view.' Harry thinks furiously.

'How can you even consider this a view? Are you serious, did you not see me as a diary or-" Harry didn't hear the rest of it, already shoving the dark lord out of his head and locking the half-soul up in the back of his mindscape.

Harry bit his lip as he watched the man's pants fall, a very, very distant bit of his brain, the moralistic part, was saying that maybe Harry should look away. Give the man some privacy. Some respect.

But then Harry's eyes moved back up and saw the man's, ahem, magic wand and all ethical thoughts flew out of his mind like a dementor fleeing from a patronus.

That was, it is, wow.

Harry is both simultaneously incredibly turned on and very afraid.
Very, very afraid.

He is not going to lie, he's a little glad Severus insisted on waiting now. Not that he would ever admit it. Vaguely Harry always knew the man would be large considering his stature but Jesus Christ, Severus just had to be above average for everything doesn't he? Even behind the dark cloth of his underwear, it was fairly obvious how well endowed the professor was.

Like, just two of his fingers is sort of pushing it for him width wise, but from the looks of it, Harry's going to try to have to work up housing his whole fist inside him at this rate.

Huh. Turns out his fuck or flight reflex is more messed up than he thought.

Harry doesn't know if he should blame mortal hormones or the memories of his immortal body fully capable of getting fucked by giants, insisting it can be done. He's inclined to be fair and despair at both.

Almost as if his body was controlled by some outside force, Harry found himself pushing aside Lupin's shoes in favor of shuffling closer between Severus' almost bare legs.

"Maybe, I could-" Harry's words lead off suggestively, his blush coloring his cheeks bashfully as he feels embarrassment wash over him. He can't believe he'd just offered like he was so desperate as to…

"Sure." Came the rather strangled reply. Harry snapped his eyes up to see Severus' own flushed face, surprised at the consent. The man looked a little surprised himself like he hadn't actually expected to say yes, but Harry certainly wasn't going to give the man any time to take it back.

The Boy Who Lived knelt in front of his professor, his hands tracing up the man's inner thighs, carefully avoiding the groin region through an unspoken agreement. It wasn't their time. Not yet. But oh how he wishes it was.

Instead, his touch lingers on the red spots on Severus' thighs, making the man groan a little in pain. Harry licks his lips before licking a long, wet stripe on his skin, the saliva cooling the burning effects of the potion.

The potions master moans, a mix of relief and desire as he watches Harry's pink tongue flatten against the skin of his leg, warm and erotically wet before it flicks upwards in an almost kittenish manner.

"Harry..." he reaches out to curl around Harry's untamed hair, clenching a little to give it the pressure Harry loves. Spurred on, Harry starts licking in earnest while his hands move up and down, feeling the curves of Severus' legs.

The older wizard's dark eyes were glued onto Harry's form as he began sucking a rather red-looking patch of skin, Severus' breathing going audibly rougher and heavier as he did so. "H-Harry, I, ah, I have to," his voice, usually a dark, smooth velvety sound is rough and cracked with desire. Harry finds he enjoys the way the professor's gorgeous voice begins to fray under the pleasure, so he lets his teeth scrape lightly under the now sensitive flesh before pulling away with a soft, wet 'popping' sound to smile slyly up at the man. Tomorrow Severus is probably going to have some hickeys adorning his legs and Harry knows the idea of it is turning the potions master on just as much as it does Harry.

Taking it a step further, Harry nuzzles into the man's crotch, his cheek rubbing purposely against Severus' thick, hard erection. Fuck, his mouth is actually salivating
"Harry," Severus breathes out, deep shaky breaths as his fingers entangled in Harry's hair tighten in warning. There's a wet spot on his underwear, where the tip of his cock is positioned, and Harry can't help but lick his lips a little. "Harry, stop."

"Severus," Harry murmurs pleadingly, his voice feeling weaker than it sounds, god he just wants this so bad. He lets his fingers lightly skim over the length of his professor's shaft seductively, enjoying the closest thing he has to touching Severus like this before he must inevitably pull away.

"No," The older wizard grunts, "Harry. No."

The savior sighs, disappointed but far too used to the rejection to really feel the sting anymore. "Kiss?" He asks hopefully.

Severus seems to relax at the question, happy that this wasn't going to end in another fight, something Harry does feel rather guilty for. He's an eternity older than this man and he really should act like it. Especially since it seems to stress Severus out as much as it does.

"How could I deny such a request?" The potions master murmurs, kneeling down to share a simple, soft but heated kiss with him. Lazy and sweet, just like they had started out with.

"Look, I'm just saying, I like kissing far too much to switch out the halves." Harry says, remembering all too fondly of the Lupin Shoe incident last week.

"Are you serious." Ron looks deeply perturbed, "You would rather have sex with someone with the body of a dolphin then someone with the face of one."

"Wait," Blaise speaks up, his arm is draped over Harry's shoulder as the group all walk to the Herbology greenhouses. "Can the dolphin head person speak human or do they have dolphin vocal chords because I may have to change my answer."

"Oh bugger that's true," Draco murmurs thoughtfully But then shakes his head. "But no, I'm sticking with my answer."

"I mean, I'm hardly an expert but I feel like the female anatomy of most mammals would feel... similar, right? And dolphins have sharp teeth and fish breath." Nott shrugs, "I'm with Harry on this one, I think human head, dolphin body is definitely better."

"Thank you."

Cedric Diggory, their current official escort and unofficial close acquaintance to Harry Potter, narrows his eyes at the odd group of Slytherins and Gryffindors. "There is something deeply and fundamentally wrong with you kids," He says, not unkindly, "I fear Harry has ruined you all."

"I fear that as well." Nott replies solemnly as Harry at the same time indignantly says, "Hey! You're supposed to be from the nice house!"

Diggory smirked and ruffled Harry's already messy hair like the handsome dick he secretly is, "Hufflepuff's are the house of the loyal and hardworking Potter, we aren't necessarily the house of the nice."

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"Wow, Blaise, you weren't kidding when you said you snagged quite the catch." Harry says as he...
watches one of the Gryffindor prefects, something Perkins he recalls, on his knees servicing Blaise in an empty classroom.

Blaise has been very proud a few weeks before about seducing a Gryffindor, a prefect no less, and had told Harry yesterday where and when to come to make an appearance. Apparently, the prefect was quite a fan of the famous Harry Potter. "Also, you really need to work on your silencing charms, anyone nearby could hear you." He lied.

The Gryffindor made a startled muffled moaning sound when he heard the new voice, pushing his legs together from where they had been previously splayed out and still. Perkins looked a little frightened, though, from the way his legs were shifting together, he was still more than a little aroused.

"Jonathan," Blaise drawled, "aren't you going to greet my boyfriend? You were so excited to meet him before," the young Slytherin looked down at Jonathan, and while Harry couldn't see his face at that angle it was obvious whatever expression Perkins was wearing both amused and aroused Blaise. God what a sadist. Blaise raised an eyebrow and smirked knowingly, "though, from the looks of it, you still look pretty excited now."

"B-uh-laise, no," Jonathan panted, sounding raw and desperate. Harry wonders if the Slytherin may have pushed things too far. After all, Harry isn't exactly sure if all the repression and posh in a British boarding school always immediately translates into being a completely kinky motherfucker. He's pretty sure that's just a lazy stereotyped myth to make fun of British boarding schools.

Blaise leaned back on his seat, eyes still lingering on the kneeling form of his newest conquest, "Safeword?"

And huh, Harry isn't sure how he feels knowing he taught the boy the concept of safe words now that he's watching it be put in action with someone else. Christ Blaise. You sure don't do things in halves.

Jonathan hesitated, turning his head to look back at Harry, biting his lips and looking flushed an embarrassed, before shaking his head. Jonathan Perkins, now that Harry can see his face, was a very handsome bloke, stocky, tall, athletic, with faintly tanned skin and short brown hair. From what he vaguely recalls, Perkins is muggle-raised, which explains why he actually looks like he has some muscle definition on his body. Not exactly, someone, he would've picked to be part of Blaise's type considering his previous playmates were slim pureblood females with decent sized breasts, and Harry himself who wasn't exactly the paragon of masculinity.

Then again, if he's as submissive as Blaise says he is, Harry could certainly see the appeal. There's nothing quite like watching a conquering warrior type begging on their knees for your praise after all.

Blaise makes a pleased humming sound, letting his hand stroke the older Gryffindor's hair like he was a king petting his favorite beast. Jonathan seemed to practically melt into it, shuffling forward and resting his head on Blaise's knee in an easy motion that reveals how well practiced it was. The Slytherin's legs were still casually spread, erection unabashedly sticking out from his pants, cocky bastard.

"Good pet." Blaise croons, "Now do you want to say hello?" He gestures Harry to come forward and with a roll of his eyes, and an exasperated smile, Harry complies, sauntering until he's only a few steps between the pair and himself.

Jonathan looked up at Blaise, pleadingly, and taking pity on him, Blaise sighed, "Or, I could make the introductions for you."
"Please," The prefect whispered and Harry, cocked his head.

"Not much for Gryffindor courage huh?" He asks, causing said Gryffindor to bury his face further into Blaise's legs, his blush was rosy and reaching all the way down his neck.

"Don't be mean Harry," Blaise chides, "He's just a little shy."

Harry chuckles, "He's very cute, you never told me about how exactly you two got together, I mean, he's not exactly..

Blaise smiles a little awkwardly, and shakes his head, ah, Jonathan clearly has some issues with the topic. Well, they can discuss this another time then.

"Anyway," Harry says, "do you mind if I-?"

His Slytherin boyfriend grins and gestures toward the prefect, "Be my guest babe."

Harry scrunched up his nose at the pet name, making Blaise's grin only wider, before walking around until he's beside where Blaise was sitting and squats down so he could be face to face with the teenager who was…

"Huh, you really are getting off on this," Harry muses as he watches the Gryffindor rub his wet cock with only the palm of his hands. It's clumsy, forcing his erection to occasionally bounce lightly between the cold floor and his clothed stomach, leaving a sticky trial of pre-cum almost connecting the two. He looks desperate and incompetent, panting and pawing against his hard cock. It's a pleasure to watch, to say the least. "Why are you, um jerking off this way may I ask?" Harry questions as casually as one would ask about Quidditch scores. It seems to make Jonathan even more embarrassed, his heavy breathing and stifled moans getting only louder in response.

Blaise tuts, his grin now more of a sly smile. He's enjoying this immensely. Harry hasn't seen him this taken with someone since himself, though Blaise probably doesn't realize it yet. "Come on pet, Harry asked you a question."

"I, mnf, ca-ah-n't touch myself, umn, with-"

"Head up Jonathan, I want eye contact," Blaise snaps, firm and sharp, "don't be rude."

Shakily the prefect obliges, flushed and almost glassy-eyed in humiliated arousal. Blaise even shifts the leg between Harry and Jonathan, just so he wasn't blocking the full view of the Gryffindor debasing himself for their pleasure.

"I-I canno, uh, cannot, use my, ah, fingers be-ah-cause master, nnhn, forbids it," Jonathan says breathily, just saying it out loud was making his hips thrust forward, his dick making embarrassingly sloppy sounds each time, dirtying his pants and shirt as well as the floor. Harry has to bite down on his finger just to hide his own smile, he already knows his own cheeks are quite red as dark lust tingles through his body at the sight. Fuck. Blaise sure knows how to pick 'em. Harry would've wanted Jonathan for himself if he wasn't already head over heels for Snape.

"Shit, you're such a loyal, pretty, little-" Harry glanced in Blaise in askance. Harry personally doesn't like to be called a 'whore' or anything too drastically degrading but he can't exactly assume the same for Jonathan. Blaise mouths a word and Harry lifts his eyebrows a little, he smoothly continues his sentence, "Bitch, aren't you?" He begins to stroke Jonathan's hair the way he saw his boyfriend do before, the act steadying the other a little bit. It's a little prickly but surprisingly softer than it looks.

The prefect groaned. "Ye- ah, yes, uhn,"
Harry sort of wishes Blaise and he had discussed this first. Like, this was a really nice surprise and all, but Harry isn’t sure how far he can go. It’s one thing to get Blaise into this, Harry is fairly familiar with his tastes by now, it’s Jonathan that’s the problem here. After this, he’s going to have a long talk with Blaise on how to properly set a fucking scene.

For now though, "Do you want to cum Jonathan?" Harry murmurs, moving to stand up, to assert a sense of dominance in their positions, "Does the prefect want to cum?"

Jonathan nodded furiously, he’s shivering with need and Harry vaguely wonders how long the pair had been at it before Harry had walked in. "Yess, sir," He slurs.

Blaise chuckles darkly, "Do you enjoy that pet? Having boys three years your junior order you around? Controlling even your most base desires?" He’s stroking himself slowly, watching the scene between Jonathan and Harry.

Harry smirks as the prefect arches his back, shuddering at his master's words. As he does so, Harry sticks out his foot, teasingly brushing against the older teenager's dripping erection with his shoe much to both Blaise and Jonathan's obvious pleasures. "How about this Jonathan?" He repeats the motion, nudging his shoe against the hard length a little more insistently, giving Jonathan a bit of friction to uselessly try and hump against before he pulls away again, "Having fun soiling my shoe?"

"Ah, ahh, uhn," Jonathan gasps, his fingers scrabbling against the floor as his hips jerk in rapid, sharp thrusts into the air in an attempt to find some release. Occasionally he would look up at Harry's face, his apparent 'hero', then back down to see his own body so exposed despite his clothing, his lewd dick almost dancing with each desperate movement, leaving a wet trail behind. The Gryffindor seemed dazed like he couldn't actually believe this was happening to him. It was delicious.

Harry had to pull out his own cock, fucking into his hand eagerly as he watches.

"You should enjoy it while it lasts pet," Blaise drawled, though his voice is getting heavy and rough, and Harry knew he was close, so was he for that matter, "It'll probably the closest thing you'll, uhn, ever get to Harry either way."

"Oh, I don't know," Harry groaned, eyeing the way the prefect was disgracing himself hungrily, "Maybe if he's a good boy, he can, mmhmn, play with my bare feet next time." He says, and then he, very gently, pushes Jonathan's dick downwards, lightly stepping on it.

Jonathan practically yells in surprise as Harry grinds his cock just a little harder into the ground and cum loudly, his whole body practically spasming as he releases upon the floor- and to a relatively smaller extent, on Harry's shoes- again and again, splattering all over. Both Blaise and Harry find themselves cumming at the sight, moaning softly as they did. Harry managed to get a few drops on the exhausted looking prefect, and for a second he regrets not aiming directly at the wizard.

That would have been quite a sight.

All three were panting harshly, Jonathan a bit more loudly than them. He's probably never had cum so hard before. Of course Harry, being the least active participant of the three, was the first to get his breath back and decided to place himself on clean-up duty. He cleans himself up first, then Blaise before a quiet, ashamed voice speaks up below him.

"Um," Jonathan Perkins flushes again, looking humiliated without the high of arousal buffering it, "You're.. foot."

Harry laughed softly, "Ah, yes, my bad." He takes a step away from Jonathan and exposes the teen's
now flaccid dick, practically soaked in its own juices. The Gryffindor looks absolutely disgraced, especially when Jonathan moans in mortified despair as he realizes exactly how he looks and how his tired dick twitches at the exposure, one final mortifying betrayal from his body. The sadist in Harry wants to take a photo. Instead he flicks his hand, cleaning up the remains of their mess, even going so far as to straighten up Jonathan's clothes.

"Th-thanks." The prefect murmurs, though it seems Jonathan could hardly bring himself to meet Harry's eyes, which, fair. Blaise finally gets his haughty ass off his seat to help Jonathan up instead.

"You alright pet?" He asks a little concerned.

Jonathan, and wow Harry did not realize how tall he was, seriously, this guy clearly did sport during the holidays, like the real physical kind with tackling and throwing weights and bats and okay, so Harry doesn't actually know that much about the intricacies of sports unless you count blood sport but doesn't really count. Anyway, Jonathan smiled a little weakly at Blaise. "Bit shaky, really embarrassed, but fine." He mutters coyly.

"Shall I," Blaise hesitated, "accompany you back to your dorms?"

The older wizard bit his lip, looking torn for a moment before he shook his head, grinning a little too wide to be real, "Nah, I'm, I'm good, you-" He flickers his eyes to Harry, "you can just, uhh, I'll just... go...

And awkwardly, he went.

Harry stared at Blaise, Blaise who was watching Jonathan leave and looking very much like he wanted to follow. Huh. Now there's an interesting thought. "I think," Harry says slowly, "you should go after him."

The Slytherin blinked, his attention leaving the classroom door and back to Harry, frowning confusedly as he did so, "Why? He said he was good?" Blaise yawned before grinning, "Anyway, we should definitely head back before people start missing us for dinner dearest."

Harry shook his head but smiled fondly anyway. Blaise might get it eventually. Right now though, Harry was definitely feeling up for some food.

"Kuh, k-kill me," Lupin groaned as he doubles over, panting and looking like he had been put through the metaphorical and very literal ringer.

"Hey, you should be proud of yourself professor," Harry reassures kindly as he hands over a cup of water.

Lupin takes it gratefully before he scrunches his nose up and immediately throws it over his shoulder with an expression of tired irritation, "The water was laced with wolfsbane huh?"

Severus raised his eyebrows and clapped slowly, "I have to admit Lupin, I'm rather impressed, there were only two drops but it would've been enough to give you crippling food poisoning for a month." He passed his fellow professor another cup of water, "This one isn't compromised, don't worry."

Lupin smiles, nods, takes the cup and immediately throws it over his shoulder. Harry whistles, impressed.
"You didn't even scent it."

"Didn't have to, I heard the lie." The werewolf says smugly, "Probably laced it with a swelling solution or something."

"Or something." Severus murmured, but both wizards could tell that he was being playful, or as playful as he liked to reveal in front of Lupin. Apparently given the opportunity to poison the werewolf and watch him suffer through an obstacle course of his own design did wonders patching up Severus and Lupin's tremulous relationship. On Severus' part at least. Harry's fairly sure the defense professor hasn't fully forgiven the man for spiking a third of his chocolate stash with various edible prank potions confiscated from the Weasley twins.

The Gryffindor twins were absolutely baffled into a whole potions class worth of silence when Severus casually gave them five points each to Gryffindor the moment they crossed the threshold into his classroom the day after Lupin succumbed to his vices and then screeched bloody murder as he grew feathers and a ghastly orange beard. Actually, all the Gryffindors in that year were baffled into silence and competency. It was a very satisfying day all round indeed.

"Honestly, you're adapting much faster than I had anticipated," Harry confessed as he hands Lupin a jar of water. Lupin sniffs it warily before taking a tentative sip, finding it to his satisfaction he guzzles it down eagerly. "I had you pegged for another fortnight till you showed consistent results."

"I had you down for eight more days." Severus murmured, "Though I hoped you would betray my expectations and we could've pulled this out for as long as a month. Maybe two." He said in a louder voice, though it was a rather fruitless endeavor given that Lupin's hearing has improved exponentially since the training began.

"Aw Severus," Harry cooed, "You do care about Lupin."

"I do not care about Lupin." He sneered, "I just have an objective view on Lupin's capabilities coupled with previous information gathered from his past few weeks of recovery."

"He cares," Harry whispers loudly to a bemused, if bedraggled, Defense Professor.

"I think I'm starting to get that." Lupin whisper-confesses with equal volume, making Severus glower and growl irritably.

"Don't you have a morning class you have to teach Lupin?" Severus sneers.

The werewolf groans, "Merlin, the fifth year Gryffindor-Slytherin class yes, I'd almost forgotten we have to get up early for hippogriff classes."

"I can't believe you're doing hippogriff classes upon teaching us all about imps and kappas and shit," Harry groans, "I mean, you might as well tell Hagrid to fuck off and call yourself the new Care of Magical Creatures Professor at this point."

"Language." Severus comments instinctively but he looks at Lupin with faint curiosity, like he's never thought about what Harry had said before but wasn't that particularly invested in finding the answer. "Harry has a point though. You really should be teaching the students more defensive spells," he sneers, "then again, you're quite used to stealing the jobs other people want."

"S'not my fault I'm such a good teacher," Lupin smirks, but the slight slurring in his voice revealed his exhaustion. "Now, s'excuse me, I need to, ugh, die."

"Have fun sir!" Harry called out with a faked bright enthusiasm as the tired werewolf retreated.
Snape chuckled as he began to lightly guide Harry toward the dungeons, his hand warm and tingling against Harry's small back.

"It's time for us to turn in as well Harry."

"Fine, fine," Harry sighs, "Admittedly I'm quite tired as well."

Severus hummed as they kept walking, his hand notably still lingering between Harry's shoulder blades, and Harry notably stepping a little closer in response. "How has rehabilitation been treating you then?"

Harry shrugged, "It's slow but I'm walking aren't I? Madam Pomphrey is pretty adamant about those stretching exercises but I don't think she fully grasps the concept of empathy."

The potions master felt his cheeks warm slightly as he recalled the first and not last time he had accidentally walked in on Harry practicing those exercises. As crude as it sounded, he's been forced to adopt a small workout of his own every time after he had to watch Harry stretch his pale limbs in his ragged old clothing. Usually seeing the hand-me-downs filled Severus with self-righteous rage but those types of clothes had a tendency to… slip and suddenly Severus finds himself filled with something very different. Which is really just all types of wrong.

"Ahem. Yes, well, if Madam Pomphrey insists, then far be it for myself to go against such a formidable women." Severus says easily but Harry sees the way the older wizard's skin flushes ever so.

With a sly smile, he presses himself up against the taller man's side, letting his hand run seductively across the broad torso of his professor. "Why Severus," Harry purred, "Is it possible that your fear of our resident mediwitch isn't the only thing that would prevent you from aiding me in my quest to end the reign of rehabilitation?"

"Yes." The potions master replies readily, looking down at the young wizard with a smirk, arm curling around slender shoulders, "I value your health greatly of course."

Harry laughs, snuggling deeper into the crook of Severus' arm as they walked slowly back. It was late enough all the paintings were asleep so the pair could indulge themselves more than they usually could in public. It was nice, well, sharing comfort almost platonically wasn't really Harry's thing- or so he'd thought but this, this was nice. Really, really nice. And from the way Severus was looking at him, unguardedly fond, he must have the same opinion too.

"So you're taking Lupin's class today? That seems fun." Harry says as he walks alongside Severus.

"Indeed." The potions professor drawled.

"What are you going to teach? We just finished Kappas and Grindylows so please tell me it's not another water-based creature, the classroom practically reeks of fish now. I don't know how Lupin stands it."

Severus chuckled, remembering fondly how just a month ago, a blindfolded Lupin ended up eating raw fish because he couldn't discern the smell from a cooked one. "No, not another water creature, though the species I'm thinking of smells rather like wet dog when drenched."

Harry side eyed him suspiciously, "You didn't." He says, a mixture of humorously impressed at the gall of this man and irritatedly exasperated for exactly the same thing.
"I have no fathomable idea what you're talking about." The professor teases, his voice low and rumbling with his restrained amusement.

"Severus," Harry huffed, "'Tis a little cruel isn't it?"

"Tis would be crueler to make the man talk about the topic himself would it not?" Snape shoots back, which, surprisingly fair, Harry didn't think about it like that. He certainly wouldn't want to teach a class about how death sucks and how we should all learn different ways to avoid death.

Then again, Harry also knew Severus had a petty streak a mile and a half wide, and he certainly wouldn't have wanted the man to teach this class if he was Lupin.

"Just, don't be completely horrid and make the poor man mark papers on how to kill a werewolf or something," Harry sighs, knowing an unstoppable force when he sees one, "Or at least make them write creative ways to kill a werewolf, like three possible options not in the textbook."

"Granger would have an aneurysm." Severus drawled. Harry laughed and lightly smacked the man's arm playfully.

"Severus, what happened to having some 'pride as a professor'?"

"That was some bullocks I made up to make Lupin feel bad about skiving off work." The older wizard snorted, "Also, should you really be encouraging my morality as an upstanding professor, all things considered, Mr. Potter?"

Harry groaned, "You're right, throw that academic pride away sir and just ravish me right here in the halls."

Severus choked and a pair of Ravenclaws who ended up overhearing Harry's very bold statement ended up tripping and falling all over each other.

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It's the Gryffindor-Hufflepuff game. And it's fucking terrible. Draco was right to fake an injury and get the Slytherins to skip out. Screw what Ron says. He's pretty sure if someone cut him open right now, he'll be filled with more rainwater than actual human blood.

"I hate that you convinced me to do this." Harry hissed to Ron who's equally as drenched from the absolute torrent of rain hitting them, "I would appoint Draco as my new best friend except I know that he's off in the castle drinking tea and failed to invite me so I hate him a little bit more than you right now."

"C'mon mate," Ron wheedled, but it was hard to sound convincing when your teeth sounded like tiny chittering mice, "This is an important game for Gryffindor if we don't win we might as well have to kiss that cup goodbye."

"I'm going to have to kiss my toes goodbye." Harry moaned before spluttering as the horrid wind changed its course again, and the harsh downpour began directly aiming toward the direction of their faces, much to Harry's dismay. "Fuck, I should have just sucked it up and gone to Pompfrey for my shitty rehabilitation exercises instead of ditching like that. Now I'm gonna get dreadful ill, and a scolding from her."

"You are such a whiner. Hermione is even here and you don't hear her complaining bout it."

"THAT'S BECAUSE YOU CAN'T HEAR ME OVER THE RAIN RONALD!" Hermione screamed against the howling storm around them.
The only good thing about the quidditch game was that every single player actively involved in the quidditch game looked equally as miserable, even more so really since they had to actually do shit in this awful weather while all Harry had to do was sit and drown. Cedric particularly looked desperate to find the snitch and end the game, points be damned. Only Oliver Wood didn't seem deterred.

Then again, Oliver Wood was a fucking inhuman freak. And that was coming from Harry. That boy would make hell his quidditch pitch bitch if he ever stepped foot into it.

And okay, watching the quidditch players was sort of fun—though admittedly not for the same reasons Ron thought so. There was something almost enrapturing about trying to see which one would be the next from almost slipping off their brooms completely, like, they're flying with polished sticks of wood, obviously, these poor wizards and witches were slipping and sliding around like they were on a greased up see-saw.

Oh my god. There should be an Extreme Quidditch sport. Where all the broom handles are oiled up and there's like, fake snitches and random itching hexes thrown around and all the goal hoops are set on fire. Harry could totally get into that shit. Why were wizards so fucking boring?

It takes a surprisingly long while to realize that something strange had been beginning to envelop the area. Silence had settled over the field like an invisible cage, the wind while harsh didn't roar, and the rain which fell down almost painfully hard no longer sounded like gunshots in a battlefield. The air grew colder, cold enough Harry could see his breath, and it felt as if the misery of the wizards and witches had become almost tangible, suffocating them all with foggy fear.

'It couldn't be,' Harry thought, horrified. He recognized this, recognized the way Mr. Riddle would slink into himself every time this happened, but no, it can't be true, there were so many children here, it's not...

But it was.

Dementors, not just a couple, but all the dementors, were down on the field below, congregating like church-goers on a Sunday morning. Or maybe hobos heading toward one of those soup kitchens. Because they looked positively ravenous.

"Dear Merlin," Ron gasped, he too managing to drag his eyes from the game once he began to feel the effects of a hundred dementors nearby, "What, why?!"

"Black must be here," Hermione said, terrified. "Oh, god, Sirius Black is here now?!!"

"Why aren't they doing anything? Must be the weather, confusing them, can't exactly blame them but still..."

"They're..." Harry faltered, "distracted." He finally settled on.

The two Gryffindors looked at him. "Distracted?" Hermione asks but it looks like she too has pieced things together as well.

"The food." Harry gestured to all of them, "They're starving." They're always starving.

And of course, that's when people began to scream and panic as they almost collectively saw the horde.

"Harry," Ron hissed, shivering furiously, "Do something."

Harry nodded and stood up, casting some magic to amplify his voice, "DEMENTORS." He yells
out demandingly, "FALL BACK."

To his annoyance, he can see his creatures hesitate but still slowly push onwards to gather around the quidditch field. Clenching his jaw Harry stalks out from where he was sitting to move quickly toward the dementors' direction. All of the dementors were here, does that mean Black really came here? What is Black even fucking doing?!

Worse, more than a few have gotten distracted from their assigned goal and have begun drifting upwards, curious and hungry, toward the quidditch players who were slowly becoming aware of the danger happening below them. Quidditch players. Fucking morons literally don't notice a hungry dementor unless it literally grabs them by the ankle.

Even Lockhart with a mirror would've noticed sooner. With a mirror.

"DEMENTORS!" He booms, Harry can feel his patience straining and it's showing in his voice. It still sounds like Harry but there's a low underlying something that really freezes the creatures as if they can sense the rolling dark fog coming from the horizon with the speed of a rampaging bull. Luckily the mortals were too busy screaming to really notice, dismissing the renewed shiver of fear down their spine as them suffering from both the dementors and the cold, icy rain. "COME DOWN OR FACE WRATH!"

The dementors made creaking sounds, like the jagged ends of broken bones being purposely scrapped against one another, before they conceded to Harry’s demands, hovering back down to the ground, surrounding Harry with the sulky reluctance of children who know they done fucked up.

Harry stared at the group of wraiths, green eyes glowing luminously, grey storming weather doing nothing to diminish it, and the whites of his eyes greying into pitch black dangerously. He likes to think he's a rather benevolent entity, but disrespecting such a direct order in public? One of his creatures?

Blasphemy.

He doesn't care that they haven't basked in his presence for so long, that they've gotten used to a more independent lifestyle, that these past few months he's acted more as a friend, a father, than a lord. They should know, at the very core of their souls, he is their creator, their destroyer, their god.

And you do not fucking ignore your god.

"You all..." Harry hisses, "better have an explanation for your actions."

The tallest dementor, the leader of the group that Harry had so affectionately named Davian, floated forward uncertainly. It fidgeted until another fellow dementors pushed at it, irritated and nervous at the wait. Davian made a few slow gestures which were interspersed with occasional noises that sounds more at home in the background of a horror movie.

Harry raised an unimpressed eyebrow once Davian finished, hanging his mutilated head low in chastised forgiveness. The rest of the horde followed suit. "I thought as much," Harry muttered. "Is Black even here then? Or were you using it as an excuse to sneak a snack?"

Another dementor at the back, Harry thinks it's Rxyês but it's probably Custard considering Custard usually has the undertone of scraping nails against an ice block mixed into her usual voice. She makes a bone chilling warble of distressed protesting that's intermixed with the sound of cracking glass and roaring wind.

Harry sighed, "Well how am I meant to believe you? I don't see Black. Either you all are as
incompetent as the aurors you work with or you have just lied to my face."

Now every dementor was making the distressed warbling sound. The cacophony of sounds made Harry nearly waver in his resolve while it made every retreating wizard and witch flinch, however, he stood strong. There's a time and place to be a pushover but it's neither here nor now. He prides himself on the skill of his dementors if nothing else about them, almost as much as he favors their loyalty, to find himself questioning both from this stray batch of his creatures… it's not something he enjoys.

"Oh?" His face scrunches up, furious and dark, "THEN WHERE THE FUCK IS SIRIUS BLACK?" He screams at them, forcing the most feared creatures in the wizarding world to fall silent and cower. "You say you're not incompetent, you say you're not liars, but there's hardly much evidence, on the contrary, is there hm?" Harry steps toward the dementors, face enraged and green pupils glowing toxically against the blacks of his eyes, "You all have not only dishonored yourselves, but you have dishonored me with your actions today," he hisses, his true voice leaking through giving his voice an edge that sounds like the crack of thunder, the harsh rasp of a last man's dying breath, dried bones of a sickly bird snapping against unforgiving cement.

The dementors hang their heads. Silent.

Harry feels a pang of sympathy for them but pushes it away for now. "Well?" He snaps, "What are you waiting for, leave and resume your patrolling- properly this time."

Contritely the dementors all nodded and slowly began floating away, causing a collective sigh of relief among the wizards and witches. They may not have heard Harry through the rain, but they knew the wizard savior was infamous on having sway over the dementors. Davian was the last one, lingering behind. Harry sighed.

"I'm not, I'm not too horribly mad." He tells the Dementor, "Just.. a little... disappointed is all." At that Davian seemed to slump down, looking like its soul was the one being sucked out and reliving the worst moments in its undead life. "We'll talk further in the morning."

Davian, poor thing, nodded sadly before floating away to join his other dejected horde-mates. Harry really does feel bad for them, that wizard prison place was probably the closest thing to an all you can eat buffet for them though actually, thinking about it, it would probably be more like getting free samples with the occasional proper meal to live off of there. And from what Harry's heard, the current government doesn't seem to have the stomach nor the criminals to really keep up and maintain a proper death row system. Jesus those poor things had been probably starving. Harry simply must confront Fudge on this matter as soon as possible.

Still, you can't just attack children because you're hungry. They're children! They wouldn't even be that filling what with their lack of life experience and all, like eating ravioli without the filling.

Then again... damaged children sort of tasted like slightly burnt profiteroles...

'What the fuck.' Tom says from nowhere, reading the last thought in Harry's mind. 'What- profiteroles?'

'It's a hollow pastry filled with light cream and covered in dark chocolate. I shouldn't even need to explain the symbolism there.' Harry mentally sighed as he began leaving the quidditch pitch to head into the castle. Most of the students that haven't run off already were gawking at him in a highly uncomfortable manner so Harry rather ignores them in favor of Tom. Tom who lately hasn't been hanging around much, preferring to read in the mindscape and only coming out to ask questions or sulk or be all scandalized like he hadn't been a Dark Lord who advocated to brutally slaughter all
magic-less people and therefore has very little high horses to stand on here, 'Or is it the children eating thing? Because let's be honest, most kids in bad environments usually die more often than the kids who are living quite nicely.'

'It's a mix of both,' Tom admits though he sounds irritated, after months, arguably years inside Harry's head, he's learned to even pick up the subtlest changes to Harry's emotional state, and he can clearly feel the tired condescension in Harry's answer. 'Besides, you can't exactly protest to Fudge about Dementor rights, he'll lock you up in St Mungo's favorite golden boy or not.'

'True,' Harry also admits with a fair amount of irritation, 'Though it seems awfully narrow-minded of you wizards, you fear the hungry dementor yet you refuse to feed them.'

'The so-called purebloods are generally a narrow-minded group,' Harry could feel the ex-current-Dark lord shrug, 'It's really what made gaining so much power at only twenty so bloody easy.'

'Fucking wizards.' Harry bemoaned in his head. Tom just shrugged again. The splintered soul of the man was really getting better at handling his anger issues, now he only gets the occasional spike of rage when he was being personally insulted, or when the entity shows any interest in anybody but himself. Okay. So maybe he's still pretty constantly angry. But he's getting better. Just as he's getting better at understanding the enigma he currently lives inside.

And Tom knows that Harry's doing his best to hide his turmoil, a hard thing to accomplish considering where Tom spends his free time. Which is all the time. He hates when Harry is unhappy. And not just because the mindscape is a stormy hell when it happens.

It's because he can't do anything to help.

"Harry, a moment please."

Harry turned around in surprise, "Sure Professor," He agrees amiably, then to his friends he says a quick, "catch you all later." To which, they all replied similarly.

As the last of the students trailed off, out of the classroom, Harry shut the door wordlessly and locked it with magic before walking and sitting against one of the nearby desks, "Is something the matter Lupin?"

Lupin stared at Harry, his face completely blank, "You're not human."

"I'm not," Harry supports easily, a lazy smile on his face as he flashes his eyes a bright green, letting the darkness erode the whites of his eyes once again. "It is about time you noticed, you have been improving remarkably at accepting your inner wolf."

"I, I thought it was because of all that," Lupin waved his hands vaguely, "stuff about the killing curse, I asked Severus about it a while back, it explained a little but…” The man bit his bottom lip, worrying it nervously, "it didn't explain enough."

The Boy Who Never Lived tilts his head up, defiant and challenging. With his eyes glowing eerily, he looks like what Lupin would imagine a demon would look like, something inhuman and dark, yet temptingly beautiful. Lupin wanted to kneel and worship him, to bite him, to be bitten, and he felt horrified at how vivid these desires have become recently.
"What are you?" Lupin breathed.

"Maybe one day I'll tell you wolfman. All you need to know is," Harry murmured, he pushes himself off the desk he had been leaning on to step in front of the professor. "don't get in my way," On his tip toes, he reaches up to wrap his hands lightly around Lupin's neck, pulling him down so Harry's breath could ghost lightly against his ear, "okay?"

Lupin whimpered. It feels like if he defies the child now he could very well die. He doesn't like how his neck prickles in a way that doesn't exactly mean fear either.

"Okay," He whispered back. "Okay, I, I won't interfere," Lupin steps away a little, so he can see the bland smile on the creature in front of him. It feels almost disturbing, how if he had never honed onto his instincts like he had been doing for months, he would probably have never thought twice about doubting Harry Potter's identity. A thought then strikes him like a cruel stab in the back, "Can you, just, at least tell me what really happened to Harry. Please."

The stabbing sensation turned into a ripping one as Harry, no, whatever this being was, looked at him pityingly. "Lupin, you know no one can survive the Killing Curse."

He knew. He knew but, oh Merlin, it hurts.

"Oh shit, are you going to cry?" The being asks looking concerned and a little fearful at the idea that the grown werewolf was going to burst into tears again. "Lupin, this body is the product of James and Lily Potter, I am still Harry Potter until the day I shed off this mortality."

"It's just... Harry deserved so much more." Lupin sniffled, his eyes glassy and throat raspy from trying to hold back his tears. Harry moved closer to awkwardly stroke the man's back.

"He does," He agrees softly, "but the sad fact is, if he had somehow miraculously lived through the killing curse, there would've been no way the original Harry Potter would've survived the childhood I went through."

Now Lupin really began to sob, which, like, what the fuck, this wasn't news, he should be stronger than this, "Lily always did tell us that her sister was awful, I just, ugh, never really, shit," the professor began making awful wet blubbering sounds, like think of the sound someone makes when they drown- and imagine the exact opposite of that. "Merlin, I'm such a coward."

"Well I hardly see why that relates to my brutally horrid childhood." Harry huffed, "If anything it's your lack of individual thought that was the problem. Then again, you would require some sort of courage to speak up against your headmaster, mind you I still don't fully understand why he of all adults gets to choose where I had to live."

"Well, that's obviously because," Lupin blinks, and blinks again, he wipes away his tears to frown, "because.. I don't know."

It turns out he never knew a lot either.

"Face it Lupin, the fates haven't exactly been kind to him, me, shit this is hard. The point is, this body is Harry Potter. At the very least, never doubt that."

The werewolf hesitated before he nodded, chuckling bitterly, "It's hardly like I have much else to live for anyway."

Harry slapped him.
Lupin hisses, clutching his cheek he looks back to stare, wide-eyed. It stings, but what's worse is the way it feels like the inside of himself is shivering as if physically shook by the slap.

"You're a self-pitying fool Lupin," Harry sneers, "You know what your problem is? It's that you never want to try, you're bogged down with self-doubts and anxiety and sure, the world is scary and anxiety is truly a demon hard to fight but you don't even try. You would rather lie belly up and bemoan how unfair life is for you because you're a werewolf. Before me, you would rather fight your wolf, yourself, then fight for others." Lupin whimpers a little. Because it's true, it's true but it hurts and why.

"You didn't fight for Severus despite knowing full well what it was like to be bullied and discriminated for being different, because you thought yourself more of an outcast than Severus and therefore you deserved to keep your friends. You didn't fight for employment after you lost your first job, choosing to bitch about the unfairness while being financially supported by James Potter- and I know you could've because overseas employment is far more creature-friendly than here. And you certainly didn't fight for custody of me when my parents perished."

"I'm sorry, I'm so, ugh, sorry," Lupin rasped, crying all over again. He feels small and broken, shattered by the greater being's words.

Harry's eyes flared, green and black, and he roughly grabbed the older man's chin and lifted it so all the werewolf could see was the hypnotic power in those furious eyes, bright and burning, "Don't. Apologize." Harry hissed, "Fight. I know you can do it, in less than a year you've made more progress in taking control of your life than you had in decades. If you truly think you have nothing to live for, live for me, if I'm not enough, then live for yourself. I will be your godchild, we will find Black and punish him for what he has done, to my parents and to your trust, and then you will live or die fucking trying."

Lupin's eyes flashed, gold, fierce, alive. He breathed like he was taking his first real breath in years. And then he smiled.

"Yes... Milord."

Chapter End Notes

If you like my shit and have some spare change to spare please check out my ko-fi account and give a little donation. Because nothing says I love you like 3 dollars lol. I mean, don't feel obligated. Damn I feel bad now. Just, if you want.

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Death's chats with the Minister

Chapter Summary

The one where Death chats with the Minister of Magic, learns some shit about Black and gets adopted

Or, the one where there's finally some actual plot happening, like oh my god finally amiright?

Chapter Notes

SORRY FOR SUCH A LONG WAIT. There was uni exams and um, other shit, but mostly my laziness tbh.

Also I'm overseas right now- so like, sorry for bad editing :(  
Anyway, enjoy~~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The one where Death chats with the Minister of Magic, learns some shit about Black and gets adopted

Or, the one where there's finally some actual plot happening, like oh my god finally amiright?

After that, Lupin changed.

It wasn't obvious. But it was noticeable enough.

"Hey," Pansy whispered to Harry, "h ave you noticed that Lupin's gotten sort of… attractive lately?"

"I don't understand why you've designated me as the 'gossip about boys girlfriend'. Like, I know I'm gay but we're honestly not that close and I know you have other female friends." Harry sighs. It's already tough talking with girls like Hermione, who really mainly just talks about book-related things, talking with someone as girly as Pansy was can be extremely... tiring.

"Because you're also the biggest slut I know , Potter . " Pansy hissed, which, so fucking rude . " Now come on, I cannot be the only one looking at that man with new eyes."

"He is more confident than before," Harry agrees, though not without a little exasperation seeping into his tone. Where the hell were his other friends and why were they all so late to Defense class?

Possibly still trying to squeeze between the crowds of female (and the occasional male) students trying to sneak a peek into the classroom as Lupin prepares for class actually.
"It is definitely that, but it's also like," Pansy makes a soft, vaguely irritated but still affectionate noise as she tries to explain her weird teenage girl thoughts to Harry. Seriously. Harry is just so not in the mood right now. It's been a week since Lupin's finally gotten over himself and become far more cooperative and independent but it's also been a week since Severus has left to go to some stupid potions conference and won't be coming back for another week still. "He was always sort of okay-looking but now that he's ditched the whole hobo thing he looks healthier and just, downright edible. Merlin, I think he's been working out too, it's starting to really show."

Harry glanced at Lupin who, sensing the gaze, turned his head to face Harry and smiled before turning back to writing about nifflers on the board. The Boy Who Lived had to concede that Pansy was right; at the very least, Lupin had practically flourished now that he's found meaning to his life. Gone was the ragged, patched up clothes, the dark bags under his eyes and unkempt haircuts. Lupin looked like he had been attacked by a stylist, not necessarily a high class one because he wasn't exactly rolling in cash, but the werewolf did look infinitely better than before. Younger even, now that the mustache he had been shaved off, and showing off his scars with such unabashed confidence that the wounds looked sexy instead of painful.

Yeah, okay, maybe Harry would totally hit that if he wasn't currently moping over a certain sour faced professor's absence.

"Well?" Pansy demanded.

Harry sighed again, "Yes, Lupin's hot, is that what you want?"

"No." Pansy sniffed, "What I want is to sit on Professor Lupin's-"

"Ron, Hermione!" Harry cried out in relief as they appeared just in the nick of time. "Come! Sit here! Spare me from this hell wrought upon me!"

The pair of Gryffindors looked at him funny but did so anyway. Pansy made an indignant sound but then leaned forward to catch Hermione's eyes, "Hey, frizzles, don't you think Lupin looks hot?"

Harry groaned.

When Harry owls Minister Fudge he's vaguely surprised how quickly he gets a response back. Then again, he is an important figure in the world, one who is currently in possible danger of getting whacked by an infamous murderer to boot. Also, it certainly helps that Fudge likes Harry as a person as well, the willingness to listen to his advice in the form of extra security was proof of that.

It also helps that Harry likes Fudge as well. Fudge, in Harry's opinion, is very malleable with the right words.

"Minister!" Harry greets, enthused. They're in Severus' living room for privacy, with both Fudge's and Harry's auror guards standing outside in the dungeon hallway. "Thanks for responding so quickly sir, I know how busy someone like you can be and all."

Fudge chuckles, sitting on the couch as gestured by Harry. "Well, when you said you wanted to tell me something important how could I ignore it?"
"You are too kind sir," Harry flatters as he summons the teapot and cups to the table, "Though I do feel bad, I mean, it might not be that important in retrospect..."

Fudge takes the offered tea cup and pours himself a drink, "Nonsense Harry!" The man smiles, "To be honest this is certainly a nice change in scenery from the constant meetings and paperwork in my office."

Harry nodded, genuinely sympathetic to the man's plight. "Then I'm glad I asked you over," he says decisively. "You deserve to have a break considering all you've been doing."

Fudge looks momentarily surprised and touched by the consideration, and his face turns a little pink at the words, "W-well, I mean, it has been a little stressful lately," he confides, "and the fact that Sirius Black is still around certainly hasn't helped."

"Not to mention what happened at the Quidditch pitch last week." Harry nodded and summoned some sugar biscuits to pass to the rotund wizard. He took them gratefully.

Fudge groaned, "Yes, that was a nightmare to deal with. A lot of people are demanding answers to why I let something as dangerous as dementors roam the school."

"It is a valid concern," Harry says mildly, "The problem is that without a supply of humans to prey on they're going mad with hunger. I mean, even you have to admit sir, it's unfair to expect a starving man to watch a bakery. Eventually, a pear danish is going to get attacked."

Fudge blinked, "I," he says slowly as if tasting his words, "hadn't thought of it like that."

"You mean you've never thought of dementors like that," Harry replies, not unkindly. Wizards were very selfish creatures, they have trouble empathizing with others outside their species. "I do understand, it is hard to treat them fairly when they look like.. well... that."

"Monstrous." Fudge shudders and Harry clamps down the surge of protectiveness that demands he defend his dementors.

"Yes," he agrees through gritted teeth. "They were born with some unfortunate aesthetic issues I agree, but that doesn't change the fact that they have been loyal to your ministry. They are not pets your predecessors have tamed Minister, they are intelligent and old and have the capacity to revolt."

The Minister looks unsure, torn between scoffing at the idea of intelligent dementors and seriously considering Harry's words. But Fudge isn't an idiot, he has managed to become the minister or Britain for a reason and not all of it can be attributed to Lucius. "They've never gone against the ministry before," he tries to argue.

"That's because they've never had the reason to- Azkaban is enough to satisfy them, to keep them happy where they are- no one has moved them before." Harry argues back, "I've managed to keep them in line thanks to my... affinity." Severus has explained everyone's theories about how Harry's soul was possibly in a symbiotic relationship with the Avada kedevra curse which was honestly sort of hilarious as well as a terribly convenient excuse.

Mostly the hilarious part.

"But they're really starving sir, I mean, they're surrounded by children and teenagers learning magic,
all those emotions, excitement, fear, anxiety, seriously, it's literally candy from babies."

Fudge looked scared, but fear drives understanding when given in small doses. The man has met a dementor, so he understands their danger more than the average witch or wizard to be perfectly honest. And he can't exactly scoff at such simple logic that Harry has handed him, not when it makes so much sense. It's not the same, not really, but Fudge can understand temptation, he's dieted before, and while he has trouble connecting that sort of empathy toward such nightmarish creatures as dementors, it's also not a particularly complex task to do.

"I- I don't like them roaming around either Harry, especially now that you've brought their… needs to my attention,” he admits, "but they're our best bet at catching Black."

"They're also going to be your best bet to throw you out of your Minister’s seat if they succumb to their hunger," Harry points out, though not unkindly, "Minister, please, you've been such a great Minister and I understand your desire to find Black, but Black for some reason is fixated on me and the dementors are liable to attack anyone but me. If we have to boil down to it, you need to treat this as a numbers game and, let's face it, I'm just one kid."

"Shit, Harry how could you even-" Fudge has a hand on his face covering his eyes, which slowly moves like it's trying to pull the aghast and frustrated expression off his face. "Merlin, it's unreal to think of you as just a kid."

"Look, just," Harry bites his lower lip. There's not much he can do for the dementors in this world, which, unfortunately, does not look nicely upon suggestions of human sacrifice. God, everyone became such prudes after their world's respective dark ages. Not that it wasn't too bad, concepts on hygiene improved dramatically and all but still, in this case total bummer, "Maybe have half of them stationed here and half back in Azkaban and switch a quarter of them over every fortnight or something. I mean, we have over a hundred dementors in the school to catch one man, it seems a little overkill."

"But Black-"

"Black has already entered the castle once, despite the danger," Harry has to give it to the man, he has balls at the very fucking least, "and Dumbledore, justifiably, won't let the dementors onto school grounds. I mean, who's to say Black isn't just hiding in the castle?"

Under his breath Fudge made a very unsavoury comment on where exactly Black deserves to hide but nodded reluctantly, "An unnerving thought indeed."

"Black's patient." Harry agrees. "He waited what, nearly thirteen years to figure out how to break out of prison? I don't like him but whatever trump card that has let him keep hiding for as long as he has he isn't going to just throw it away for no good reason."

"Maybe we should favour the presence of aurors to the presence of dementors in this matter. After all, if they hadn't found Black yet, I doubt that will change in the next few weeks."

Harry grins. "That's brilliant sir!" He praises him like he hadn't thought of that idea himself ages ago. But it's still rather brilliant, after all, it wasn't like any other wizards have figured out that little tidbit of logic by themselves. Fudge is actually quite a logical man, he just needs the appropriate nudges to get there that's all. Like a child actually. A child with a lot of power.

This will open a lot of doors if he plays this right.
Fudge beams at the praise, probably unused to it. You don't exactly get a lot of compliments in politics after all. Seriously, it doesn't matter if you're a literal saint or the devil himself, no one is happy with you once you become a politician. Harry knows this personally. He's had to console both Michael and Lucifer when they tried to descend down into humanity to fight each other in the political battlefield. Lucifer ended up dying from stress and drug overdose while Michael had a very public mental breakdown and completely lost faith in humanity for about three hundred years.

"Oh, wow, thank you Harry." The Minister of Magic looked at his watch, lips turning down regretfully, "Well, I should go, I've got to do some paperwork." He sighs.

Harry looks at the older wizard's weary face consideringly, taking in the obvious signs of stress and reluctance before smiling, "Oh hey, actually my friend Mr Filch, he's like the caretaker of Hogwarts, invited me over for tea- would you like to join? I mean, it's nothing fancy but he has much better tea and biscuits, and I'm sure both of us would enjoy your company."

Fudge hesitated, "I don't.." His eyes flickers to the hopeful smile on Harry's face and his weak resolve dies faster than a daisy in Harry's hands. "You know what?" Fudge grinned boyishly, "I have the time, and what's the point of being Minister if you can't skive off for a bit?"

Harry grinned back, "Exactly, now let's go raid Mr Filch's cookies. I hear he got a new supply."

"So, I hear Percy's dating Penelope Clearwater , " Draco says out of the blue.

"Yeah?" Harry says, interested. He vaguely recalls a Clearwater, she was one of the basilisk victims if he remembers well enough. Pretty girl. Nothing stands out about her too much. He vaguely recalls she has really nice hair. Not Lucius Malfoy standards of hair. But. Nice enough. "No shit."

"You're not… feeling a little left out or anything are you? I mean, I sort of assumed you knew so like," Draco made a face that was probably due to a complex array of emotions and thoughts but just sort of gave him a constipated look.

"Draco," Harry chuckled, "Blaise is my boyfriend but I've literally watched him have kinky as fuck sex with Jonathan Perkins thrice now. I think you can rightly assume that I would hardly feel envy over any exes I have. I'm happy for Percy, really, he deserves someone wonderful who appreciates who he is."

"You know, that would've been almost sweet if you had only completely omitted that thing about kinky sex and, wait, Jonathan Perkins- really?!" The only reason Perkins is noted by people outside his House is his out-of-place body type in a school filled with very similar molds. Gruffindor was the name many tend to refer him as behind his back. Which isn't too bad to be honest. Goyle and Crabbe have once been called small stone ogres so, yeah.

"I know right?" Harry says a little jealously, "Gruff and stacked and fucking tall to boot. Blaise promised to tell me how he managed to snag that kind of prime beef from the straight market of heterosexuality but he hasn't held up to that yet, unfortunately."

"Didn't peg him to be Blaise's type either," Draco mutters, "I mean, he likes them lean and soft,
"Muscled and well cut?" Okay the metaphor is slowly falling apart. Now Harry's vaguely horny and hungry. God he would murder for a bloody steak. "Yeah, totally, but hey, there's nothing wrong with broadening his tastes. Actually with the way he has barely looked at anyone else for a while, he may have just found his favourite flavour."

Draco raised a brow, "Aren't you afraid Blaise'll dump you for the Gruffindor?"

Harry shrugs, "We weren't exactly the most serious relationship ever Draco, I think we'll still be friends."

"Mother says you cannot break off a relationship with someone and still maintain the same level of friendship," Draco tells him seriously, it was adorable how worried he was about this.

Harry grinned. "Your mother is a smart lady, but she isn't me."

"Thank Merlin." Draco dramatically groans in relief, Harry pinches his arm in retaliation, "Well if anyone could be so casual with dating it would have to be Harry 'the Boy who cockteased' Potter and Blaise 'literal slut' Zabini."

The Boy Who Cockteased gave an offended gasp, "How come I'm the cocktease?"

"Because Blaise has actually had sex with people." Draco sighs like the explanation pains him, "From what I hear he's done it with that Ravenclaw fourth year and the Hufflepuff that likes to wear her robes unbuttoned."

"Okay, Blaise had sex with one person- the Ravenclaw. He didn't like the Hufflepuff girl, apparently being loyal doesn't stop you from being a bitch."

"What about the Gruffindor?" Draco asks curiously because apparently Harry is the Blaise Zabini sexpert. "If Blaise likes to slum it with Perkins so much, still super weird by the way, I would've figured they've done it by now."

Truth be told Blaise was making Perkins wait until the older boy snaps and practically begs for his cock. Harry came up with that idea and it still makes him feel a jolt of straight up arousal imagining the moment. It's a pity he won't be able to witness it but he's sure it would be an absolute pleasure to watch. Not that Harry would tell Draco nor betray his boyfriend's trust like that. Deftly he switches the subject.

"Done it? Draco, why can't you be an adult about all this and just ask if they've been fucking like bunny rabbits?"

"Because I have some class," he sniffed haughtily, "Even if it has lowered greatly since hanging out with your dubious presence."

"Your father likes me well enough." Harry points out smugly. Draco gives him a look of disgust.

"Trust me, that is a whole other set of issues we'll discuss one day. I'm just happy believing you do
not flirt with my father on the few occasions he comes to visit, and my father does certainly not allow
nor encourage such, such, such lust!"

"Aw w Draco, are you jealous of me and your dad's forbidden love blossoming?" Green eyes
brighten as his pale lips tilt upwards in a teasing lilt.

Draco looks like he was about to spit fire his pursed face was so red, but suddenly he seemed to
deflate and smile toothily. Harry was immediately on edge. "More like I wonder how Severus will
react when he hears of, what was that? Your blossoming forbidden love?"

Harry narrows his eyes, "You wouldn't."

"As his godson, it is my rightful duty to inform him about such matters," he replies smugly, like
he's already won. And Harry just cannot have that delusion running through the poor boy's head.

"As your father's forbidden lover, it is my rightful duty to tell him about how you smuggled bottom
shelf alcohol from Hogsmeade and got drunk for the first time." Harry smiles, teeth flashing,
"Bottom. Shelf." Because Mr Malfoy was the type to be more upset at knowing his darling son
willingly ingested low class consumables than the smuggling thing. Of course both Mr and Mrs
Malfoy would still be overall far more appalled at the underage drinking than the lack of a brand-
name on the bottle. Probably.

Draco paled.

"Touche Harry, touche."

"You know Lupin, you're a fairly lucky bastard all things considered." Harry hummed under his
breath as a near breathless Lupin plopped down beside him. The man had just finished his second lap
of the Forbidden forest in record time.

From the looks of it, the man hadn't tripped up more than once, though it seems he's had a few
unfortunate run ins with branches. Must've been too focused on the ground. Harry can't exactly help
with multitasking shit like that, and werewolves don't actually have in built sonars for trees. The best
he can do is tell the man to either keep practicing and hopefully his eyes will better accommodate his
increased speed or to move past that pain, a werewolf generally holds a higher threshold for that sort
of stuff anyway.

"What do you, uff, mean milord?" Lupin groans, stretching his back before reaching the picnic
basket in front of them and grabbing a sandwich. The nearby pixies and other such creatures of the
forest, which had previously scattered upon the werewolf's appearance, were slowly returning,
attracted by Harry's presence.

Harry rolled his eyes and summoned a sandwich from the picnic basket with a twitch of his finger,
"Milord? Really Lupin?"

"It just feels right when I say it, rolls off the tongue quite nicely," Lupin smiles sheepishly, then he
admits, "also, it would be even weirder to call you Death God or some other similar title."

"I'll give you that," Harry agrees with a laugh, "Death God sounds very tacky, though to be fair,
you're still a little off in guessing my true status."

"But I'm close." It's not a question. Lupin's gotten smarter. Or maybe he's always this smart but never had the bravery to speak it as well as he did now. Harry can imagine him easily as a general, a second in command somewhere. Not necessarily the boss, no, Lupin will probably never be the full on leader type, he relies too much on other people, too blindly loyal and still a touch too hesitant to speak up. Traits you can't exactly shake off after thirty odd years.

Sure he's more independent, more outspoken, but Harry knows, at his heart, the werewolf would always be a follower.

"Very close," Harry agrees. "As I was saying before, you're a very lucky individual Lupin. Not many werewolves, especially with mindsets such as yours previously, would have flourished without a pack. Pretty sure they die, suicide or someone shoots them down or just idiocy really, which I suppose can be a form of suicide as well."

"Oh," Lupin says, fidgeting and focusing his gaze to the grass that he begins to absentmindedly tug at, "That's... nice." It's clear he doesn't really mean it.

Harry ignores the discomfort, though he wishes Severus was here, he would probably want to discuss possible gruesome ways the life of a werewolf with Lupin's background could have gone horribly wrong. Then again, Severus also doesn't know his real identity and probably would believe Harry was being intelligent but completely hypothetical. Still, as much as he's beginning to enjoy Lupin's company, Severus' is bounds more satisfying.

"'Tis isn't it?" He smiles, "Have you gotten any further with uncovering the mystery of the disappearing Sirius Black?"

"Probably further than the dementors but no," Lupin admits. "Sometimes I catch a scent but he's clearly not stuck around for it to settle and really, it's been over a decade so even I'm not completely sure it's him and not some stray, uh," his eyes flicker to Harry, "student."

"The dementors are completely baffled as well," Harry also admits, his face wrinkling up in annoyed distaste. He had been very proud about their tracking abilities until now. "Whatever Black's done to cover his hide he's done it well." The utter asshole, he knows at least half of his dementor horde are going to come out of this whole mess with some serious insecurities in their abilities.

This man has single-handedly ruined some perfectly good dementors and given them anxiety issues. Honestly Harry was sort of impressed by him. He may actually hire the man in the afterlife as a consultant on escape-preventive measures. After all, there are a lot of people who aren't willing to stay their allocated time in hell.

"There must be some sort of trick to what he's doing, do you think Black has some sort of map?"

Lupin shook his head. "No, there's no other, I mean- even if he did, it won't exactly account for the dementors."

"Also it doesn't explain his break out in the first place, no, it's definitely something else."

Lupin was tugging at grass even harder, nervous perhaps on the topic. Understandable, betrayal from someone so close is hard. It must be even worse considering the werewolf's loyal nature.
Taking pity on Lupin, Harry rummaged through the frankly obscene amount of food the house elves packed for them and threw the man a warm meatball sandwich that smelt positively alluring. "Eat Lupin, no need to hold back to human limitations in front of me. You need it, and plus, I'm fairly sure the house elves would commit seppuku if they find leftovers."

"Seppuku?"

"A form of suicide, it's actually pretty interesting see, the dishonored warrior or, more accurately samurai, would pull out a dagger-type weapon, really it could work with anything sharp enough, and-"

"Actually, maybe I don't need to know."

Harry snorted. "Pansy."

' Hey, Harry ,'

Harry hums in acknowledgement as he writes down seventeen different potions alternatives to using a glamor and their pros and cons, knowing Mr Riddle could hear the noise in his head. The report is actually pretty interesting, who knew that you couldn't eat too much vinegar when using a beauty potion with crushed pearls? Harry sure hadn't.

' It's about Black. '

That gets his attention. "What?" He hisses, forgetting to use his inside voice and earning a few odd looks in the library. ' How- are you serious Tom it's been over half a year! You've been sitting on information for how long exactly?'

' It's not like I have a lot of memories! ' The horcrux protests indignantly. ' I'm mainly made up of my childhood before everything sort of fades out with the occasional blurry recollection. '

' You're right. ' Harry murmurs in his head apologetically. It slips his mind sometimes how confusing it must be to be Riddle right now, it must feel like his brain is stitched up with cotton, with just over half of the organ still present. The first shard was tiny despite being the oldest part of Tom's soul in his head, the information grasped from it would not be plentiful and what information could be found would most likely be filled with static. ' I do apologize Mr Riddle. 'Twas awfully insensitive of me to forget. '

' Yes, well. ' Riddle huffs but there's little heat to it. It's hard to get angry when you're literally surrounded by the person's guilt and contriteness. ' I'll just assume that it's because of my ability to appear relatively collected and sane, in contrast to you in your old age. '

Harry tries to muffle his chuckles, ' Of course Mr Riddle. Now what was that about Black? '

' Oh, right, Black's not a death eater. '

Harry blinked. Then he chuckled.
'That's very funny, Mr Riddle, I never knew you had such a terrible sense of humour.'

'I'm not joking Harry.'

Harry chuckled again, though this time it was noticeably more strained, as he walked quickly from Severus' dining table to his bedroom. After he shut the door behind him he immediately rushed to the mirror with a snarl on his usually serene face. His delicate features looked ready to shatter at the sheer ferocity in his expression and his eyes were swirling with a mix of pitch black and toxic green. "Are you fucking serious?" He hisses to his reflection, knowing Mr Riddle can see him through his own eyes.

Inside his head he could feel the half-soul shrink back but Harry mentally shoved Mr Riddle toward the forefront of his mind where emotions as hot as hellfire burned.

"How is this possible?" Harry demands, "If Black isn't a death eater why did he kill the Potters? Why is he coming after me?"

'I don't know!' Mr Riddle wailed, 'Please, stop, fuck, it hurts!'

Harry closes his eyes and takes some long, deep breaths, forcing his head to cool and calm much to his little hitchhiker's relief. "I'm sorry, we've just been over how you cannot recall all your memories," he apologises though his mind is still preoccupied by this new knowledge. Mr Riddle must be able to sense the lack of real sincerity behind it but didn't comment, far too busy trying to get a grip on himself.

It's a little hard. This is the sort of information that could have helped Harry so very very much in the past year and he knows it's not Mr Riddle's fault, it isn't, but it's just so frustrating to think about on almost every fucking level. Still, he manages to wrestle himself some control over his turbulent emotions, far wilder and less muted in his human body, settles himself on his bed and sighs.

"Again, apologies." Harry murmured.

'It's.. it's.. I shall get over it.' Mr Riddle whispers back. Harry feels monumentally guilty about it but at the very least the man would have a taste for what's to come further in the future. Surprisingly though this thought does not give the half-soul much comfort at all.

"Why don't you just tell me what you know right now?" Harry murmurs in his most soothing, gentle manner. Mr Riddle is still frazzled, but it's hard to maintain that sort of exhaustive emotion when surrounded by Harry's own forced serenity. Mr Riddle is less akin to a tiny boat on an ocean and more like a chip of ice. If the ocean heatedly rages, the ice will melt, if the ocean grows cold, the ice hardens. Harry would almost feel sorry for the mortal, in such an exposed, damaged state he is easily malleable, in the forefront of Harry's mind where his own emotions are projected. "After that you're free to… recuperate in the farthest recesses of my mindscape."

'I'm fairly sure it was a death eater who betrayed the Potters to me,' Mr Riddle murmurs, subdued. It had been a while since the soul had been confronted with the extent of Harry's, of Death's, presence and it always left him quiet as he tries to puzzle through the sensations, his reactions. 'Maybe more than one? But Black wasn't one of them. Which is odd because the Black family definitely served under me.'

"Maybe Black has siblings?" Maybe one of Black's siblings had gotten the information and framed him. That sounded legit. Harry wouldn't be so confident to blindly accept the theory, but it was
definitely the sort of bullshit plot twist that Fate loves.

'Most likely, I hardly believe a family as Dark as the Blacks wouldn't join my cause, they certainly were loyal to me during my Hogwarts days.'

"Huh."

Interesting.

"You know, Minister, ah, I mean Cornelius," Harry quickly amended at the stern expression on the other's face.

Filch, who was also sitting with them for tea, snorted. "Impressive, I couldn't get Harry to say my first name for ages," he says as he drinks his tea.

"A very stubborn child indeed," Fudge agrees. Apparently after the first arranged 'tea party' with the pair it was found, to Harry's amusement, that the minister and the squib actually had quite a lot to talk about, becoming rather fast friends all things considering. "This is very good tea by the way."

Harry was happy for them, Filch needed more friends and Fudge, well, he needed someone who wasn't too afraid to call him on his bullshit.

"Harry bought this batch for me last year, expensive stuff, told him he shouldn't have but, heh, that boy insisted."

Now if only they could stop talking about Harry.

"That boy is right here," Harry mutters, biting into his biscuit and trying not to make a face of distaste. He prefers the chewy cookie to the crunchy butter biscuits favored by the general British, even if they do pair better with a cup of tea. "Anyway, as I was saying before, Cornelius, I noticed you and your wife were one of the many requesting to adopt me."

The two older men blinked at him, a little blindsided by the unexpected topic. "Ehm. Yes. We ah, we did, why?" Cornelius coughed nervously, "I mean, I'm not blind, I've had to overlook the paperwork for all of this and my family name hardly holds the weight of the Malfoys so I understand if you find it quite presumptuous but to be fair-"

Harry laughed, soft and good humored as he shook his head with a smile. "No, no, no," he chuckles, "goodness Cornelius, I was actually talking about accepting your adoption request."

Filch spat his tea back into his cup. Fudge stared, his expression much like a startled squirrel. "I, uh, what?"

The Boy Who Lived leaned back on his chair; arms resting on the armrests and slim legs crossed, he looked like royalty sitting on the worn furniture. A beautiful prince, generously allowing his subjects to wallow in his presence.

"I believe you would make a great stepfather," Harry compliments airily. "You're already aware of
my history and my medical needs, you're used to responsibility what with your job and all, you're old
blood but still new enough to not be pressured in following tradition. "H is eyes soften a little and
his smile turns bashful, "and above all, you've been very kind to me Cornelius. I trust you. You're
willing to listen to my advice and, well, maybe I'm the presumptuous one here but, but , I would like
to think you enjoy my presence just as much as I enjoy yours."

"Oh Merlin I think I'm gonna cry I am, that was beautiful Harry," Filch sniffled.

Harry shot the man a bemused look, the craggy old squib was getting soft with age in his opinion.
"You thought me getting Mrs Norris new cat food was beautiful as well."

"You custom ordered it!" Filch protests, "Just let me have my moments, yer the closest thing I have
that I would consider a grandson after all." The craggy castle-keeper shoots a still rather shocked
looking Minister a stern glare and pokes an accusing finger at Fudge's chest, "You better do a fine
good job at parenthood Cornelius, friend or not I'll-"

"Argus, he still hasn't even accepted my offer," Harry tuts, which seems to stir Fudge back to
consciousness as he sputters.

"Hasn't eve- Harry I would be delighted, nay, honored, to let you into my family!" he announced, his
double chin practically quivering in his elated pride.

Harry bites his lip, a poor attempt to suppress a smile, Cornelius may just be his new favorite puppet.
The perfect mix of shallow arrogance, cowardly loneliness, and the driving force to please and be
pleased. All that plus a deceptively pleasing conversationalist and him being in such a position of
great power? Well it just brings out the manipulative sugar baby in Harry, it does.

Mistaking the suppressed smile for something else, Cornelius beams widely, his hands practically
shaking with excitement and glee. "Oh Harry, truly?! I honest to Merlin cannot believe it. My, I need
to inform the missus immediately!"

Harry leans forward toward the man, his soon to be stepfather, biting his lip softly and fidgeting with
the collar of his robe. "I only ask , Cornelius, to keep my original last name and to have a certain
amount of freedom in my life. I'm used to being independent considering, well. " His eyes snap
open, wide and imploring. "But I do want a family, I do! I just, I fear I would feel smothered if you
treat me like most children."

Fudge leaned back and nodded slowly, stroking his chin in thought. "' Course, of course, wouldn't
dream of it Harry. You're a good, mature kid, and at the age of independence soon anyway. It's
hardly like me and the missus have much to teach you beyond that," the Minister chuckled, "I may
just have been dealt the easiest hand at parenthood in Wizarding history."

"Harry is a very good boy," Filch agreed and the pair of older men clinked tea cups in agreement.

"And on the subject of your last name, I wouldn't even dream of making you alter it. The public
might revolt. Not to mention even I'm aware my last name doesn't exactly inspire heroism."

"Well," Harry says slyly, well aware at how strongly he was laying it on, "y ou're quite the hero to
me sir, after all, you're the man trying his hardest to keep me safe right now aren't you?"

"Huh. I guess I am," Fudge says, a little smug at the realisation. "I must say, when I woke up this
morning I hardly even imagined today turning out as it did, but I can't say I'm going to regret this ."
"Me too Cornelius," Harry grinned, "or should I say, father?"

Argus silently watches the exchange and wonders if he should tell the minister how very wrong he was about Harry going to be easy to handle.

There's a Hogsmeade trip on the last weekend of the school term. On that morning snow was falling softly, pure white and yet not overwhelmingly blinding due to the cloudy sky. It was a beautiful day, a perfect day to go out and have fun. Which is fantastic if you weren't currently being hunted down by a possible serial killer, but a definite madman and therefore was not allowed to go.

Seriously, fuck Black. Fuck him to hell.

Harry briefly wonders if he can just tag along provided he piggybacked on a dementor or something. Because while he's not unhappy staying behind in the castle, a change of view would certainly not hurt right now.

God, he doesn't even want to go to Hogsmeade, he just wants to go somewhere that can provide asian massages for his back. Fuck, he wants someone to properly hit his pressure points with a firm but knowledgable hand. And acupuncture. He's never been on the receiving end of acupuncture since it felt like a pretty useless endeavour to do so until he gained a human form, but now that his back aches and his neck and shoulders are painfully stiff he wants. So bad.

"Merlin Mr Potter," Madam Pomfrey grouses above him, her hands kneading the soft flesh of his back the best she can. It had been okay at first, when he had been so stiff and sore that any small amount of relief was a blessing but now her abysmal physical strength- again, damn all these lazy wizards to the gyms of hell- was barely enough to satisfy . "I'm doing the best I can you little ingrate, honestly, it's hardly a picnic for me either. What did you do, cast a petrification hex on yourself?"

"Maybe," Harry mutters, "you're just getting on in your yea-ow, ow, ow!"

"Are you going to apologise Mr Potter?" Madam Pomfrey murmurs silkily as she so very cruelly pinches him on the side of his upper arm. There are times like these where Harry brutally regrets all this time spent in the mediwitch's presence , and getting more and more familiar with her until they've reached a point in their friendship where she can not only threaten but now instigate bodily harm to him.

"Yessss," Harry hisses, "Mercy Madam, for the love of god mercy!"

Jesus Christ, only now does she have the strength to bruise. She loosens her viper-like pinch grip mercifully though the aftermath of the pain is throbbing and insistent. Harry pouts, eyes teary from the pain because his body is a sensitive wuss to just the highest degree.

To add insult to injury she slaps his back and tells him she's finished. "Maybe next time we'll get one of the older male students interested in medimagic to help with your body- and do not say anything crude Mr Potter, honestly, you're terrible."

"Hey, I haven't said anything yet!" Harry protests. "Honestly, you rate the hotness of every wizard
that comes through your sickbay for one day and suddenly you're labeled as a deviant."

"Mr Potter, I regret to inform you that, in my professional opinion as a mediwitch of over five decades, you are a deviant," s he replies solemnly, though the edges of her lips twitch upwards ever so slightly. "A deviant, I may add, with some very unorthodox opinions."

"You're just mad that I put Cedric Diggory as an overall seven point three."

"That is only because you rated Mr Flint above Mr Diggory, as an eight point one and therefore are clearly aesthetically blind." Madam Pomfrey sniffed. "Honestly, there is no universe where that ranking is even remotely acceptable."

"I don't like men with prettier skin than my own." Harry rolls his eyes. "I mean, I have great skin, one may even call it flawless but have you seen Cedric's skin, it's like it actually sparkles in the sunlight."

"Quite." Madam Pomfrey says in a manner that makes Harry suspect she has no idea what he's talking about and doesn't care. Which, she totally should. Because Harry's fairly sure Cedric has some family recipe skin cream and he is fairly willing to murder him for it.

Chaos would love to have a vial full of that stuff. For some reason the entity has been interested in the uses and abuses of skincare products. It would be the perfect souvenir.

"Well, once again, do your exercises and if you feel exhausted after magic or literally anything, for Merlin's sake, stop. I refuse to treat you again just because you overexerted yourself and fainted because you decided to try take up a bet with your boyfriend and race a dementor up a hill.

"I'll owl Severus to purchase interesting muscle relief balms if he sees any in that potions convention-" Harry pouts at the reminder. Severus and he had tried exchanging messages via owl but it was a been a poor comparison to their usual close companionship. Harry was the type of being who liked to converse face to face; writing was for paperwork, talking was far more personal and Severus seemed to share a similar sentiment.

God he misses Severus. At least the man shall be returning the day after tomorrow, the potions master was supposed to be back by the end of today's Hogsmeade trip but had been strong-armed by some of the more esteemed members of the international potions guild to stay longer. Apparently being one of the best potions masters in the United Kingdom made one very in-demand, it was a wonder Severus even chose to stay on as a professor here in the first place.

"- you got that? Mr Potter?"

Harry'll have to ask him that once he comes back.

"Mr Potter!"

"Wha, ah, um, what?"

Madam Pomfrey looked very unimpressed. "Get out."
Harry gave her a lazy salute and slid boneless leg off the bed, snatching up his shirt from where it had been flung carelessly on a nearby chair. The old mediwitch shook her head fondly at her favorite patient. She can see why Severus is so charmed by the boy. Even she has trouble remembering his young age at times.

"See you later Madam."

"Don't let the door hit you on the way out."

Harry chuckles and waves as he goes. The mediwitch shakes her head again, poor Severus has quite a handful on his plate doesn't he?

Walking down the empty halls, Harry shivered as he fumbled with his shirt buttons. Harry's not sure what to do now, it bums him out that he has nothing to even occupy himself with on the last weekend of term, other than wonder how his holidays will work once the adoption papers settle into place. He suspects there'll be quite a few parties Cornelius would throw in his honor, political reasons and all that, and the Fudges seem like the sort of parents that would enjoy spoiling any kids they would've had.

"Psst."

He wonders if he can convince them to try go to a muggle cinema. Harry's fairly sure 1994 was around the time movies like *The Lion King* and *Little Women* came out. Chaos insists on updating his references every decade or so from various universes and Harry in particular feels that wizards would do well learning a few messages behind many muggle films.

"Psssssst- Harry, oi, OI, Harry!"

Harry spun around, confused, and spotted none other than Fred and George peering out at him from behind a statue of some old crone that probably invented wizard cocaine or some vague bullshit. "Fred? George? Why aren't you at Hogsmeade?" he asks with no small amount of bitterness.

"Well you see-" George starts with a grin.

"-we were thinking-" Fred's smile was, if possible, even wider.

"-how cruel-"

"-unfair really-"

"-it was to not let you enter Hogsmeade just once-"

"-once."

"So," George winks while Fred gestures Harry to follow them, "we decided to give you a little bit of, ah-"

"-festive cheer." Fred teases, "'Tis the season and all that."

"Well colour me intrigued." Harry tilts his head, curious at this unexpected turn of events as he trots over to the classroom the twins were coaxing him into.
The pair of redheads beam once Harry shuts the door behind him and settles his gaze toward them expectedly. Fred fishes out something from his cloak with a flourish, laying it out on a nearby desk. "Early Christmas present for ya Harry."

It was a very worn looking, albeit rather large piece of parchment. A blank piece, actually.

Harry blinked dumbly at it. 'Mr Riddle?' He mentally prods.

'Seems deceiving,' Riddle observes, intrigued, 'not hiding-a-soul deceiving-thought I'm sure you know that already- but there's complex magic there. Not my work surprisingly.'

Harry mentally rolls his eyes at that. Surprisingly. Like the only talented wizard to come out of Hogwarts was Tom. It's nice to know even death does not despoil the ego.


Fred gasps and clutches his heart dramatically while his twin makes a disappointed tutting sound.

"Now, now Harry, that's not just some boring piece of parchment," George chides.

Harry raises his eyebrows inquisitively. "Well what is it then?"

"This, my dear," Fred gestures to the parchment proudly, "is the secret to our success."

George agrees by petting the item fondly. "Not that we really need it anymore, we know it by heart now." George shrugs easily. "And so we bequeath it to our resident imprisoned princess, knowing how much greater the need for this is for you than us."

"Oh my, as expected of my knights in shining armour," Harry fluttered his eyes flirtatiously, causing Fred to look a bit flustered.

George, with slightly pinker cheeks, cleared his throat. "Well, let us tell you an epic tale of how we first found this artefact of sheer greatness, it all started once upon a time, when we were young and innocent, well, more innocent than now at least-"

The story was quite an epic, if a little too over-exaggerated, tale which essentially just boiled down to the twins filching something from Filch in their first year. Still, very entertaining. Harry particularly enjoyed the bit with Mrs Norris turning into a mini dragon. He does feel a bit bad for Argus though, and it must have shown because the twins immediately leapt to soothe him.

"Of course it wasn't as bad as it sounds," George chuckles a little nervously. "We don't think Filch ever realised how the parchment works."

"Though he must've had an idea of what it was, or he wouldn't have confiscated it in the first place," Fred muses before smirking. "I mean, this little beauty here has taught us more than all the teachers in this school." Harry silently asks Mr Riddle to remind him to ask Filch about it. Maybe he might remember who were the original owners of… whatever this was, were.

Harry groans. "You guys are such cockteases, I will burn this thing if you don't hurry it up and tell me what it is, I swear to God."
The twins laughed and Fred took out his wand, touching the parchment lightly while incanting, "I solemnly swear that I am up to no good."

At once, thin lines of ink started to spread like they had been injected into veins from the point that George’s wand touched. It was a fantastic sight to watch as words and pictures seemed to blossom across the page until it revealed a map. Not just any map, but a map showing every detail of the Hogwarts castle and grounds. It was an impressive display of magic and ingenuity. Not to mention some seriously gorgeous art skills.

Like, someone actually had to hand draw that on parchment, with a quill, while magic was imbued in it. That's some serious effort.

On the top it was written:

*Messrs. Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot, and Prongs- Purveyors of Aids to Magical Mischief-Makers are proud to present: THE MARAUDER'S MAP*

Even more remarkable were the tiny ink dots, steps Harry realised, that represented people. There was Dumbledore in his study, and even creatures like Mrs Norris and Peeves were labeled and shown. It was outstanding. Who would have the intellect to make-

Wait a goddamn minute.

Harry's eyes flicked back up the top, *THE MARAUDER'S MAP* stood stark and proud on the parchment. The Marauders. As in. The people who bullied Severus. As in. His father. His current defence professor. His fucking psycho stalker.

Someone has some fucking explaining to do. And Harry knows exactly the werewolf to interrogate.

"See," Fred breathes, he and George had walked around to stand behind Harry while he had been contemplating strangling his own professor in a very unsexy way, to point out a set of passages Harry hadn't even realised were there. "If you look at these you'll see that many of these secret corridors actually lead to-"

"Hogsmeade," Harry finishes, surprised at the amount of getaway passages there were. Like, one or two he understands, but there were a bunch of them, like seven, seriously, how shitty a school was Hogwarts to have this many? Was there a war going on at the time or?

"Now Filch," George says, also tracing different passages with his finger, the warmth of his chest emanating as he moves closer to Harry, "Filch knows about these four, but we’re sure we’re the only ones who know about the rest of them. Don’t bother with this one, it's caved in, and this one has the Whomping Willow planted right over the entrance for some reason, so really there's only one passage left."

"Luckily," Harry shivered at how close Fred also was, to the point that he can feel the vibrations of his voice tickling the back of his ear in a manner that makes Harry want to arch up and shiver, "that last one eads right into the cellar of Honeydukes. We've used it loads of times. And as you might've noticed, the entrance is right outside this room, through that one-eyed old crone's hump."

The Boy Who Lived grinned up at the pair, who looked down and grinned back. Sly bastards. "Well then, what are we waiting for guys? Let's go!"
"Wait, so you guys actually knew Quirrell was hiding another human being on his person and didn't talk to anyone about it?" Harry asked incredulously as they trudged through the twisting turns of the passage, the previously pitch black tunnel brightened by Harry's powerful 'Lumos' spell, it was a simple enough spell to not be taxing to his body.

"Well, when you say it like that-"

"-it sounds really bad."

"To be fair we did assume Quirrell kept like, a pet rat or something named Tom in his turban. Not the strangest thing a defence professor has done. Trust us."

"And yet you still pelted the man's turban with snowballs with the assumption another living thing was inside there," he deadpanned, eyebrow raised.

"Ummmm..." they both fidgeted. These cute fucking psycho twins.

"That is so horrible!" Harry laughed, delighted.

'Don't laugh at them!' Mr Riddle snapped in his mind indignantly. 'That was me they were pelting snow at...technically. Scold them! For fuck's sake Harry!'

It only served to make Harry laugh harder, now imagining diary Tom getting pelted with snow as he is glued to the back of Quirrel.

'Harry!'

'What, it's funny! Besides, the current and still active part of you is still trying to Dark Lord the fuck out of Britain in a way that totally deserves solid ice to the face.'

'That is-'

'I would like to remind you of the compulsion charm, the attempted murder of me via basilisk, the actual murder of the Potters that led to a life of child abuse and your frankly appalling teaching habits as a professor.'

Mr Riddle fell into a very sulky silence, unable to protest.

'That's what I thought.'

The passage to Honeydukes was longer than expected, but thanks to the bright and lively company of the twins it felt like little time has passed. The only evidence of the length the journey took was the ache in Harry's muscles and the burn in his chest.

"Hey Harry, you alright?" Fred asks, looking concerned at the ragged way Harry was breathing. "Why don't we have a short break."

"Ah shit, thank Merlin we thought this through," George cursed, rifling through his robes and pulling out a familiar vial that Harry could now easily identify as one of his pain numbing medicinal potions, "Here, sit down first."
Fred sat down first, back against the wall and legs splayed out as he pats his thighs cheekily, "You can sit here fair maiden, don't want you to get too stiff from sitting on the cold floor."

Harry chuckles breathily. "You've been hanging out with Sir Cadogan far too much, Fred." But despite his jibe he obediently sat between the older Weasley's legs, Fred's arms immediately closing around his chest and bringing him flush against the teen's body.

The other twin shook his head with a cheeky grin. "Fred, you sly wanker," he says as he sits cross-legged in front of the pair. "Well if he gets to cuddle with you then I get to at least feed you Harry." George unstoppers the vial and shakes it suggestively. Harry licks his lips before opening them slightly, tilting his head up in response.

Both twins groan at the sight, and Fred has to subtly shift his position to not give the game away while George gently holds up Harry's chin with one hand and slowly tilts the potion into the younger wizard's mouth with the other. Both watch as Harry swallows down the potion trickling past his lips with wide eyes, their brains working furiously to try burn the image into their minds.

Fred, who probably has the bigger crush out of them both was making soft shushing noises and greedily hugging Harry tight.

Once finished though, it was George who couldn't help himself, pulling the rim of the vial away from Harry's lips and replacing it with his own in a sweet kiss. Harry responded easily after the initial jerk of surprise, pliant and soft. He began really writhing and moaning into George's mouth when Fred, behind him, started peppering the sensitive areas behind his ears with kisses while moving his hands up and down his torso, pointedly ignoring anywhere below the belt like a gentleman.

"Ah, this is, uhn, quite a, a, ah," Harry stutters out once things began to slow enough for him to let his brain form more coherent thoughts.

"Well," George brushes his lips against Harry's again, "we heard about your, nhm, shall we say, less… traditional relationship with Zabini-"

"-so we figured-" Fred nibbles the tip of his ear, delighting in the sharp gasp he earns from the action.

"-maaybe-" George's hand trails upwards suggestively.

"-if you were amenable we could-" Another nip.

"-have a little tryst of our own." Harry can't even tell who is touching where anymore, his body alight with where they've trailed their curious trickster hands.

"Think of this as our Christmas present, really." George murmurs.

Fred, a lot more hesitant, tacks on a much less sure, "You know, if you're okay with it?"

"We can't do anything serious, I'm ah, still dating Blaise," he warns the twins, who looked reluctant but agreed nonetheless. Harry smiled, now breathless for a whole other reason, "but other than that, how could I say no to my knights?"

Fred and George looked at each other in silent conversation before turning back to Harry, with twin grins and bright, mischievous glints in their eyes that foretell Harry was going to be in for quite a ride.
After that… delightful distraction, a more notably dishevelled and sore-jawed Harry and pair of incredibly smug Weasleys finally made it into Hogsmeade.

"Oh right," George says with a great smile, the Weasleys hadn't been able to stop smiling wildly since then, boneless and blissed out, "you need to remember to wipe the map afterwards."

"I didn't think we got it that dirty," Harry says, confused, causing Fred and George to blush and laugh respectively.

"No, ah, not from that," George reassured, still cackling.

"Like this, see, 'Mischief Managed'," Fred demonstrates, his wand tapping the parchment again and returning it back to its blank state.

"Oh," Harry mutters, embarrassed at his assumption, "that makes more sense."

Once they slipped out of the back room of Honeydukes, Harry kissed both twins on the cheeks and bid them goodbye before leaving to find some of his other friends. He doesn't have to look for long, thank God, this place was brimming with students. Not that Harry could fault them, the sweets and chocolates covering the shelves and displays looked absolutely mouthwatering. Harry snatches up a caramel cocoon on his way to where Hermione and Ron were standing. They were at the farthest corner of the shop labeled UNUSUAL TASTES and examining a stack of blood red lollipops.

"Ugh, no, Harry won't want one of those. They're for vampires, I expect," Hermione was saying.

"Yeah but c'mon, Harry could be a vampire," Ron cajoles. "At the very least he could use more blood in his system, I heard Madam Pomfrey say so, it must be true."

"Okay I'll give you that last point," Hermione concedes, "and as your friend I'll ignore the first part of what you just said because that was just stupid."

"It was not!" Ron protests.

"It kind of was," Harry interjects and Ron nearly breaks a jar of what looked like honey coated insects in his surprise.

"Holy fu-"

"Harry!?" Hermione squeaked. "What are you- how- what-"

"-cking heck mate! Did you learn how to apparate?! Did you-"

"-when did you- how did you- did someone- but how-"

"-get one of your centaur harem guys to hitch a ride here or maybe-"

"-seriously how-"
"-did you piggyback on a dementor? No I feel like we would've heard the screams then, did you piggyback on Snowflake? Because I thought I saw a white peacock hanging around the castle before we left for Hogsmeade and I-

"One," Harry interrupts, putting a finger on both of their mouths to shush them, "Ron what the fuck, how are you not over the centaur thing yet? And two- that Snowflake thing better be a fucking joke you bastard, because Draco told me his father wrote to him that Snowflake hasn't been seen for like a fortnight and I haven't been sleeping great since."

Ron snickered. Harry's going to have to ask Severus to make some peacock repellent when he comes back.

"Also to answer your many half questions Hermione, here's how it went down-" With a lowered voice Harry began telling the pair about the Marauder's map, careful to make sure no one overhears with a well placed silencing charm.

Ron was seething. "How come Fred and George never gave it to me!" he shouts indignantly. "I'm their brother!"

"Because I'm cute," Harry says simply, making Ron cross his arms and mutter crossly about his pervert brothers. "And a great kisser, though Fred certainly is good with his tongue-"

"Nope! Nu-uh! Don't wanna- nup." Ron shudders, he's still pissed about the whole thing but his revulsion at hearing about what happened in the secret passage really put a damper on his rage. Seriously. How far up the Weasley tree must his best friend climb before he is satisfied? Honestly Ron sometimes feels like Snape needs to just say yes al-bloody-ready to Harry's propositions before it's too late and the insatiable maneater tastes all the dishes at the Weasley buffet.

"Anyway Harry," Hermione says, saving Ron from what was definitely going to be a torturous conversation. "What are you going to do with the map? You certainly can't keep it!"

"Uh, I certainly can," Harry scoffed, "I cannot betray the twins' trust like that. Besides Fred and George had told me something interesting about the secret passages around Hogwarts which may help us narrow down how Black has been managing to break in so easily."

"You think he's been using a secret passage," Ron gasped. "That's brilliant!"

"Yeah but get this, apparently there are seven passages, Filch knows four of them, one is caved in, one is underneath the Whomping Willow and one is the one I just went through to get here."

"And you're going to tell the professors about the last passage right?" Hermione asks hopefully.

Harry sighs and nods, "Yeah, trust or not, if Black has been using it I must tell them. I won't reveal the map though, I'll be wandering about alone every Hogsmeade weekend, they won't question it if I say I just stumbled over the place given my penchant for finding myself in bullshit situations."

They all chuckled in agreement and Hermione had relaxed considerably. She was getting better at not twisting herself up in all sort of knots recently, or maybe she was just tired of the constant feud she and Ron keep having over their pets and was grateful for the occasional amiable moments she's been able to gather recently. The bushy haired Gryffindor had looked quite stressed for a while now actually, Harry should probably feel worse about not asking her but he's been busy himself. Also, she seems to be constantly disappearing.
"Well Black will have a hell of time trying to break into Honeydukes after sunsets what with the dementors swarming around now," Ron says thoughtfully. "There's signs from the Ministry talking about dementors patrolling the streets of Hogsmeade all over the place now."

"It's a good idea," Hermione nods. "It would be hard for someone like Black to constantly hide out around Hogwarts, full of dementors and aurors and sentient paintings and whatnot, he would've certainly been caught by now if that was the case. Spreading the search area wider makes sense, though I do wish they had done that earlier; Black's probably settled in to his hiding place by now."

"Fudge owled me saying he's bringing more aurors around as well," Harry adds, "he's taken my suggestion of moving some of the dementors back to Azkaban to minimize public outcry and incidents like the whole Quidditch pitch fiasco too. The reward to find Black is going to be significantly higher in the next few days as well considering the upcoming announcement of my new status."

"New status?" Hermione and Ron blinked.

Harry shrugged. "Didn't I tell you? I'm getting adopted."

"What?"

Ron and Hermione quickly pay for their sweets, rushing Harry out of the store and into a dark corner table in The Three Broomsticks. Only then did they stop cursing at him and start interrogating. Harry wishes he had found Draco and his friends instead. Then again, he's fairly sure they would've done the same thing as well, only with more vehement insults.

His friends are all nosy little shits.

"Spill, Harry," Hermione demanded.

"Yeah mate, when were you gonna tell us you were getting adopted?" Ron says, looking hurt.

"I mean, it's very recent, you two are probably the first ones in the school to know," Harry tries to soothe warily, before immediately regretting it. Oh God Draco is going to be livid when he finds out he wasn't first to know. At the very least, Ron looked appeased.

"So who is it? Can't be the Malfoys, Malfoy would have said something." Hermione signals for a very curvy lady and politely asks her for three butterbeers. Ron's face was quite red once she left and Harry had both his eyebrows raised, amused at the boy's embarrassment at his own admiration of the female form. Ah, to be young again.

He waits patiently for the tankards of butterbeer to arrive, and only when his friends take their first swig of the drink does he reply to Hermione's inquiry. "Cornelius Fudge is going to be my new father by the time the school year ends."

The response was amazing.
Ron sprayed butterbeer all over the table and Hermione half choked, half spat her own drink back into the cup. Harry laughed gleefully. He is very much going to enjoy the public response once Fudge makes it official. The wizarding world will lose their collective shit.

The satisfaction tastes as delicious as the fresh butterbeer he drinks.

But then it's sort of ruined when it goes up his nose as Ron and Hermione suddenly shove him off his chair and under the table.

"What the bloody-"

"Shhhhhhh!" Hermione hisses. "*Mobiliarius*!" A nearby Christmas tree rose a few inches off the ground, drifted sideways, and landed with a soft thump right in front of their table, hiding them from view.

"McGonagall, Flitwick, Hagrid and Minister Fudge just entered the building," Ron mutters, keeping his hand firmly on Harry's head in an attempt to keep him on his knees under the table. Harry wants to make a very, very sexual joke about this but was intrigued enough to remain silent and eavesdrop with his little Gryffindor detectives. Silently he casts a bit of magic to enhance their hearing, the spell buzzing a little in their ears but worth it as they could now hear the adults ordering their drinks loud and clear. Hermione nods gratefully to him while Ron gives him a thumbs up underneath the table.

"So, what brings you to this neck of the woods, Minister?" asked the curvy waitress. Madam Rosmerta, Hermione whispered helpfully to Harry.

"What else, m'dear, but Sirius Black? You must have heard what happened at that quidditch game?" Fudge sighed.

"Hard not to when you're serving the very students who had experienced it," she drawls, but then in a low whisper she murmurs a more worried, "do you really think Black's still in the area, Minister? I mean, the dementors have been searching the whole village from the moment the sun leaves for three days now, it's... not the best for my business."

"I can imagine," Fudge says sympathetically, "and I am very sorry for that, but it's a necessary precaution, you understand."

"I do," she sighs, "I just wish they weren't so... dementor-like."

"It's a wonder how Mr Potter could stand them," Professor McGonagall muses, "I can barely teach with those horrors floating around the grounds."

"I know righ'?" Hagrid says with no small amount of awe, "It's amazing, tha's what i’ is."

"It's unnerving, but in a strangely beautiful way," Flitwick agrees while Madam Rosmerta makes a noise of considerable interest. "Oh you should see him interact with them, it's *beauty and the beast* but far more gothic and chilling, I would pay good galleons to commission artwork comparable to the sight."

The table raises their cups in agreement, "hear, hear."

"So it's true then?" Madam Rosmerta's voice brimming with curiosity, "I've only heard talk about the boy's looks but-"
"M'dear, Mr Potter is a doll brought to life!" Fudge exclaims boastfully, already exuding fatherly pride. "If your beauty is an exotic flower, Harry Potter is, is-

"A moo’beam shinin’ through the forbidden forest," Hagrid says.

"A jewel that has captured the night sky," McGonagall suggests.

"Untouchable snow in a lifeless winter," Flitwick sighs.

There's silence and Harry can imagine them all staring at Flitwick.

"What?" Flitwick defensively asks and the subject, thankfully, moves on.

"You know, I still have trouble believing it," Madam Rosmerta says sadly, "I mean, Sirius Black, I remember him when he was just a boy at Hogwarts, rambunctious and naughty yes, but not a, not a, well."

"That's not the worst of it though," Fudge says darkly.

"Do you recall who Black's best friend was?" McGonagall sounds forlorn, pained.

"Of course, never saw one without the other, James Potter and he used to drop by all the time."

Hermione gasped and Ron had to slap a hand over her mouth, but he looked shocked too.

"Such troublemakers they were."

"As intelligent as they were mischievous."

"The Weasley twins could give 'em a run fer their money though."

"Oh don't make me imagine it, I may need something a little stronger for that awful image."

"You'd have thought Black and Potter were brothers!"

"More than a few students had a betting pool on if they went a little further than brothers if you know what I mean."

"Hogwarts never changes when it comes to that does it?"

"Still, those two, absolutely inseparable."

"Potter had trusted Black beyond all his other friends. Black was best man when James married Lily. Then they named him godfather to Harry. Harry has no idea, of course. You can imagine how the idea would torment him."

Harry is once again glad he wasn't actually Harry Potter. Jesus Christ if he had found out like this he's pretty sure traumatized wouldn't even cover a quarter of his issues. Still, he hadn't realised how highly regarded Black was, especially to James Potter. It makes the theory of him being framed more and more likely. But still, there're plot holes in the idea. Like why Black is hunting him down.
"Even worse, m'dear, see, not many people know this but-" Okay, Harry is going to have to insist Fudge curbs his gossiping habits once they become legally family, because what the fuck, don't tell the pretty barmaid government censored secrets, "the Potters knew You-Know-Who was after them. A spy of Dumbledore's tipped them off. They hid via the Fidelius Charm."

"The Fidelius Charm?"

"It's an incredibly high level and complicated spell," Professor Flitwick informs Madam Rosmerta, followed by a whole long explanation but it boils down to one dude being solely responsible with the secret and Black fucking it up.

Somewhere through the very classified information spilling out Hagrid starts loudly spitting curses against Sirius Black, which, from what Harry understands, is fair. Except the part where he confirms Dumbledore fucking insisted on him being sent to the Dursleys. That was not at all fair. Harry hopes he gets to slap the man someday.

They talk about Peter, the fourth Marauder apparently, but Harry only half listens, still wrapped up in the fantasy of slapping Dumbledore and reaming him out for literally everything he's done wrong. Tom helpfully shared a few memories with him about his own experiences with the man and, seriously, how was Dumbledore even surprised that Tom became such a successful Dark Lord? Harry fucking knew House bias would ruin this stupid wizarding society.

Also the first example of magic Dumbledore showed Mr Riddle was an example of destruction and violence, like, the kid is eleven year old orphan, its a dick move all round really.

"-blew Pettigrew to smithereens. Died a hero's death, he did."

"Stupid, foolish boy, always hopeless at dueling," McGonagall whispered sadly.

Silence.

"Well, there you have it, Rosmerta," Fudge finishes, voice thick with emotion. "Black was then caught and had been in Azkaban ever since."

There's some more conversation, a lot around Black's current sanity and Harry almost decides to just leave, get back to Hogwarts before he gets caught, but then Madam Rosmerta asks a very interesting question.

"But what do you think he's broken out to do?"

"He's clearly aiming for Mr Potter," McGonagall immediately answers. "Insane or not, he's clearly a little unhinged and there's little explanation to why he would target Hogwarts instead of reuniting the Death Eaters or something."

"Whatever it is," Fudge's voice has gone hard, Harry has never heard him this... driven. He mentally congratulates his choice of parent. "He isn't going to get to accomplish his goal. We hope, no, we will catch Black long before that."

There's a round of more serious 'Hear, hear's before the sound of glasses being set down on the table.

"Well, we should probably head back to the castle." Chairs were being pushed away, and from Harry's position he can see them all rise to stand. "Cornelius has dinner with he headmaster to attend,"
and we must start herding the students back."

"Yes, of course," Fudge agrees.

Once they all leave Ron's and Hermione's faces appeared under the table. They were both staring at him, lost for words.

"Well," Harry says finally, "isn't this just the biggest pile of shit?"

Harry already knew vaguely that Lupin, Black and Potter senior were friends known as the Marauders. Oh, and some bloke named Pettigrew too he guesses. He knew that something happened and Black turned to The Dark Side or whatever and that led to Harry Potter becoming an orphan. And most damning of all, he knew that Black possibly didn't turn to the dark side at all, and was probably framed- though, again, still doesn't explain the breaking out of prison and hunting him down thing.

He also knew that he hadn't told any of his friends this and now they were looking at him like he was going to burst into tears or something.

He just might. Because Harry's fairly sure he would be in the biggest shithole ever if they found out he had been aware of this plot twist for near the whole time now.

Then again, he still has the faint lingering scars on his neck as emotional blackmail. But then, there's a very good chance that would end with everyone involved near tears and honestly, Harry would just rather be the only one.

"O-oh, dear god, Black my godfather?" He began to blubber in a way that is most believing in his opinion, "I just can't believe he was actually, like, friends with my father and Lupin and-

"Harry we all know you're faking," Hermione deadpanned, and shit, he took too long deciding. Ron too was mirroring her expression and crossed arms.

"Mate you are in such shit right now."

Chapter End Notes

https://ko-fi.com/hweianime/
The one where Death is officially adopted, Severus realizes he has a kink he really doesn't need right now and the Christmas holidays are gonna totally be brushed over because this author sort of forgot about it and wanted to get this fucking year to the end okay?

The great thing about being the Minister's future son... well, there were a lot of great things actually. It's why he decided to become him in the first place. Anyway, all the adoption paperwork was passed with near impossible speeds and with as few people aware of it as possible. Neither Harry nor the Fudges had wanted trouble during the whole process, because apparently, despite how unpopular adoption is in wizard society, it was still common enough to have rules.

Really, really stupid rules.

Let's just say, Harry's real glad he doesn't have to ink runes all over his body and deep throat a live eel before flinging it out of his mouth to see which potential parents are the most suitable for him.

Not because of the eel bit, he has worryingly little compunctions about that except maybe the general size of the eel and his stupid heightened physical sensitivity for literally everything, but mainly because, knowing his luck, the fucking ink will probably not wash off and he'll be stuck with it for the rest of his mortal life. Also, Harry's vaguely afraid that Fudge would not win. Scratch that, he's certain Fudge wouldn't win.

Luckily that never came to pass, because of wondrously unjust things like nepotism, abuse of power and other such themes that probably should not be looked too closely into.

Of course, while the adoption has officially passed, there was still the matter of telling the public.

Which brings Harry here.

"Hello Mr. Potter," Rita Skeeter greets, her bright red lips forming a large, predatory grin. "I must say this is a surprise."

"You're telling me," Harry chuckles with semi-faked anxiety as he takes a seat across from the woman. He's not a fucking idiot, he knows in universes with stupid small societies like these there are three main forces that control everyone there; the government, the media, and the monarchy if present. And since he's already snagged the Ministry and there is no wizard king to seduce, that leaves the last powerhouse to the Daily fucking Prophet. Because apparently, these stupid wizards rely on one news-agency for their general information.

It's like they're asking to be enslaved really.

For the past week, Harry has been reading as many newspapers of the Prophet he could get his
hands on to prepare for this interview the moment Fudge told him about it. Skeeter was a good writer, compelling, dramatic and emotional. Whether any of her stuff is true is a whole other story of course but Harry can see why everyone eats her stories up, she's an even better writer than Lockhart to be perfectly frank. Harry had actually honestly enjoyed the piece on the Terrible Twin Twist scandal she had done a month back.

"So, Harry Potter, Boy Who Lived, and now the Minister's Golden Boy," Skeeter begins, tasting the new title on her tongue before letting her quill furiously begin writing by itself. "How does it feel to go from literal rags to riches in such a short time?"

Harry beamed, "It's all a little unbelievable to be honest," he tries very hard to sound like a naively hopeful orphan instead of the manipulative piece of shit he was. From the way Skeeter looks gooey eyed he thinks it's working, "I mean, I, uh, I didn't have the greatest home life, and when the Malfoys helped me escape from there last year it was already, like, a dream that I'm still scared will end. But to get, for Mister Fudge to actually want me, me to be his son, that's, it's just," Harry's voice wobbled, "I've always wanted parents."

The blonde journalist dabbed at the corners of her eye with her handkerchief and sniffled, "That's beautiful Harry, may I call you Harry?"

"Uh-"

"Anyway, Harry, can I ask how you and Minister Fudge have gotten so close?"

Harry shrugged, "Well in a weird way we can thank Sirius Black for it," He replies cheerfully, "The Minister and I only really gotten close because of his concern for my wellbeing, since, you know,"

"So the terrible Sirius Black is actually responsible for your current happiness," Skeeter muses, eyes alight with the story gift wrapped in her hands, "How… ironic."

Harry laughed, his own eyes equally bright with amusement, "Yes, dreadfully so isn't it, not that I find myself complaining. In fact, I find it quite humorous. When Black is finally captured I would very much like to ask him what he thinks of the subject."

The reporter tittered, a hint of genuine humor painted on her sly lips, "That's quite the opinion, Harry."

"I have quite the personality Ms. Skeeter," Harry smiled, making the woman in front of him smile wider, she looked less professional and far more dogged journalist. It was a look that fit her more than the clothes she wore. "Besides," he reminds her mildly, "he did kill my parents, godfather or not. I have no love for one of the people responsible for ruining my family."

"Quite right, quite right, a bold statement from someone so young," Rita Skeeter nodded, writing furiously, "then again, you had to be more than bold to endure the harsh childhood you had gone through," the woman gave a sympathetic smile like she somehow understood what it was like to sleep in a cupboard for eleven years.

Harry, in turn, gave his own look, one mustered up to say 'hey, it was hard but I was strong enough to get through it and look forward to every new day,' which Skeeter ate up hungrily.

"That's why I'm just so thankful to be adopted by Mr. Fudge. I know him quite well now you know, and I know he would never hurt me as the Dursley's had." He demurs, pulling the topic back on track. He has no interest in going over his horrid childhood again. Skeeter looked a little disappointed but nonetheless continued. After all, it was a little hard to be upset when you had the journalist
equivalent of being given free rein over a candy store.

"Well aren't you as sweet as pumpkin pie." She coos.

Harry flushes despite himself. Soft compliments always get him the most, embarrassingly enough. He lets his blush linger, doing little to contain it knowing full well how nicely it matches with the image he wants to convey. "Thank you Ms. Skeeter." He politely replies, looking a little flustered. Carefully he glances to the nearby wall clock, noting he has little time left before the short interview finishes, most of the information would've been provided by Fudge so he was really more of a fluff piece than anything. A very valuable fluff piece who was determined to win over Ms. Skeeter.

"You know," Harry fidgeted, looking abashed, "I know this isn't the right time to say, but I'm actually a fan of your stuff miss."

Skeeter blinked, taken aback by the unexpected comment before looking vaguely suspicious, "Really?"

Harry nodded enthusiastically, "Oh yes, I really liked how you did that story on the illegal potions bust last month! That had been absolutely riveting from start to finish, heck, even that one piece last week on that bill that may or may not pass in the Wizengamont was actually exciting to read!" Green eyes glowed as he leaned in toward her with exaggerated awe, "You know, people had said they had thought Lockhart was one of the best writers this decade but honestly, I think you're far more dedicated to the story than he ever was. Especially considering, well, last year."

All suspicion was cleared from the woman's features as Harry kept babbling on, replaced completely with pride and flattery. She straightens up her posture, her cheeks pinking through her makeup as she tries to hide a pleased smile from her face with the feather of her quill. "Oh, well," She coughs, attempting to maintain professional instead of absolutely delighted, "You, ah, really read my story on the Bill of Shark Product Limitations in Potions? That was one of my drier reads, bland really if I'm being completely honest."

"And yet I couldn't help but read it from start to finish, I mean," Harry makes an embarrassed face. Truth be told it was an interesting read on a very controversial topic that in reality, Harry would hardly be ashamed to say he read, but people tend to believe you're just kissing arse if you get a little too eager. "The way you took in the perspectives of the people affected, not just the ministry wizards but the potioneers and the wizards making a living on selling those products, well, you made what seemed to be a cut and dry case anything but. It was almost amazing how much information you'd gotten too, no other paper could brush further than the surface of the story but you managed to go above and beyond."

Rita Skeeter was practically beaming at the in-depth analysis in her favor. Not even her boss has praised her this much on her most popular piece, and here she was getting it all from the Boy Who Lived no less. Actually, she was outright beaming, it felt almost as good as the first time her mother hung up her first story on the Daily Prophet.

"Really, with the way you word things too- dramatic but still set in realism and a touch of humor, I mean, if you ever wrote your own book I would be the first one to pre-order it."

"You know," Skeeter fidgeted, coughed, "I actually am working on a story, not that I've got much done on it, work and all, but, uh, I do have one in the process."

Harry was intrigued, "Really?" He asks delighted.

Maybe he can get her into writing fiction on the side then. Good reading material has become
awfully scarce in the wizarding world since Harry realized Lockhart was a phony in more ways than one. The Daily Prophet was a good source of drama but nothing quite truly beats reading a proper adventure.

And he does not mean those horrid romantic novella bullshit that some of the pureblood girls just adore reading. Every single one of those things was made up of roughly twenty percent angst, thirty percent misunderstandings, fifty percent foreplay and literally no mention of sex at all. Like, if Harry is going to read about a cursed vampire prince and your average secretly fairy teenage girl falling in love, he better be getting some big payoff here okay?

The witch reporter waves him off, embarrassed to have even brought it up, "It's stupid, just something I have sort of tried to do on and off since I was in Hogwarts," She chuckled nervously, for some reason she suddenly felt like she was the one being interviewed instead as Harry's eyes- 'green eyes brighter than any burning stars,' her Quick Quote Quill wrote- stared into hers- 'with an intensity that made me feel like I was both a child and the most important human being in that moment.'

"Really? Why?" Harry blinked, "You have a knack for weaving tales Miss Skeeter, and no offense, but I think your talent is wasted just telling other people's stories, instead of your own."

"O-oh," Skeeter can feel her face burning so hard she can hear her ears fill with the rush of blood moving suddenly into her head. She thought she lost her sense of shame years ago but no, here it is, crawling out into the open as it swoons under the sweet smile of Harry goddamn Potter. "Well, I mean, wow, but my work keeps me busy and-"

Harry tilted his head, a dark flash of calculation and understanding flashed in his eyes before he grinned and leaned back on his seat, "Well, it's simple then, how about I hire you?"

Rita Skeeter stared, "I, uh, I, excuse me?" She squeaked.

"To write your story," Harry reiterated, like that was the problem, "As I said before, I think its a waste for you not to pursue it when you already have the talent and passion for writing. I mean, I'm not stopping you from working at the Daily Prophet, wouldn't dream of it, but now you can have the freedom to afford to turn down projects you think are beneath you to do this instead."

Skeeter's mind whirled at the opportunity presented to her. If the Harry Potter wants her to work on a long-term project which he would pay her for, her boss could hardly refuse. Not only that, her status as prime reporter wouldn't be so precariously unstable just because she's a female journalist so, as Harry said, she could afford to act a little more picky in what stories she can write instead of being forced to take in any and all unwanted fluff pieces.

It would be amazing.

"But, but why?" she found herself weakly replying, "You don't even know what my story is about, it could be absolute garbage."

'Well then it'll probably fit in well with most of the other modern wizarding literature in England then,' Harry silently thought. Mr. Riddle who was listening in chuckles in his head.

Of course, Harry didn't say that, because that was just a little too rude.

Instead, he says, "Well I may not know about your book Miss Skeeter," Harry once again catches Skeeter's gaze with his own, "but I do know you. And I know I can trust that what you write is hardly garbage."
It's all a blur for Rita Skeeter after that.

All she knows is that she walked out of Hogwarts with an interview that will help her piece one of the biggest celebrity stories of this year, a book deal from said celebrity and two hundred galleons richer.

And that, well, that was pretty darn swell.

Mrs. Fudge was an interesting woman. Not one Harry would've pegged to marry Fudge but then again, he had been imagining a grandmotherly type individual similar to Professor Sprout so what did he know.

Unlike her husband she was tall, a little plain but not unpleasant to look at, in fact, she had a timid charm to her appearance. She looked like a perfect little housewife really.

You know. If the perfect little housewife owned a knife the size of a pumpkin which was messily covered in some very suspicious looking substances.

Seriously what the fuck is with the women here.

"Oh darling you are even sweeter looking than my hubby had said!" She cooed, Harry laughed nervously as he tried and failed to not look at the frankly massive blade the woman had calmly pulled out of her handbag to place on the table between them. Again. The fuck. Where's Cornelius? Actually what the fuck Cornelius? "Oh my, you look like a doll! Malorie is going to be so jealous when she finds out! Not that she doesn't deserve it, always bragging about her son, always 'Chester managed to shred his stuff animals with his magic,' and 'Chester set fire to the Kneezle.'"

Chester sounds like a maniac. Jesus Christ Malorie get your kid under control.

"But now I can say, 'Well Harry defeated the Dark Lord when he was one,' and 'Harry singlehandedly saved Hogwarts, so screw you Mal.'" The woman giggled, "Oh, should I have not have said that? You're thirteen yes? I think you're okay with some swearing right?"

"Uh, yeah, I'm uh, yeah I'm good with swearing." Harry isn't quite sure how to place Mrs. Fudge. On one hand, she seems like the typical air-headed housewife stereotype. On the other hand, giant knife. "Um, if you don't mind me asking, about that um, knife-"

"Oh!" She gasps as if she had forgotten, "How silly of me, this is my gift for you! Boys like this sort of thing right?"

Harry thinks that Ron may find it cool but he doesn't think Draco and Blaise would admire it with the same enthusiasm. Nott and Neville probably wouldn't care for it at all and Crabbe and Goyle would ignore it. Huh. Wizards were sort of lame.

Personally, he didn't have a huge fascination with weaponry himself. He was practically a walking apocalypse, after all, anything else in comparison usually comes out lacking in his opinion. Harry does admit, he does enjoy the more ornate fantastical designs, Japan is very creative with their weapons especially. Cursed rare weapons are interesting too, or at least have a very bloody and tragic history behind them.

Still, he smiles politely and takes the offered gift with as much grace as he can muster, "It's wonderful," he praises, "where did you even acquire such a large... piece?"

At the very least the thought behind the gift was rather normal, how refreshing.
"Oh!" Mrs. Fudge chuckled, brushing her hair back from her shoulder, "Well you know how it is, see originally it was shattered into pieces when I took it out this man's stomach, but then I figured it was quite wasteful right? So I asked one of my acquaintances to reform it back to its original state, he had to do some improvisation but I'm sure it looks quite similar to the original you know?"

Ah. Never mind then.

"Uh huh, yeah, okay, so Mrs. Fudge,"

"Please call me mother," Mrs. Fudge beamed brightly, "Or mum, or Penny if you're feeling too shy."

"Penny," Harry amended, "what is it exactly that you... do?"

It turns out she's a mediwitch at St Mungo's. It doesn't explain the stomach knife thing because what the actual shit but Harry has decided to ignore it and just accept the obvious female superiority in this society.

Later on when an anxious Cornelius Fudge asks Harry how the meeting went Harry just gave the man a smile and told him he was looking forward to the holidays.

"Severus!"

Severus Snape chuckled fondly, the insides of his chest twisting and warm at the exuberant welcome as he opened his arms to allow Harry to run into them.

The potions conference was interesting, meeting with like-minded, intelligent potions masters and enthusiasts to trade ideas and recipes. The delightful conversation was also a refreshing change from the usual dull monotonous life of constantly talking down to children who were unsure of how the differences in a frog and a toad's eye could alter a potion dramatically. The respect he had been given was a nice change too. Though to be fair, since Harry came along Severus had found his need for his ego to be stroked far less pressing. Knowing a wizarding celebrity, a gorgeous young one at that, is actively trying to seduce you does admittedly some wonderful things for self-esteem.

Of course, caring about said wizarding celebrity when that wizarding celebrity is both underage and incredibly prone to danger does very little for his emotional state, his dignity and generally his health all around.

"I missed you dearly you know," Harry says confidingly, like it was some sort of scandalous piece of gossip, "I tried to convince one of the house elves to eat with me during the meal times I was too tired to go to the Great Hall but they had nervous breakdowns after, like, six minutes."

"I can imagine," Severus drawls, low and ridiculously fond at such a ridiculous image. "Forgive me if I'm wrong but I'd hardly presume house elves to be great conversationalists."

"Startlingly bad," Harry huffs amusedly while he nuzzles the side of his face into the potions master's chest, "Too worried about how I felt about the meal and the cleanliness and so on to really talk about anything else before they cried and apologized and popped away to possibly cry some more. I felt really shit by the fourth time it happened so I told them I didn't need a dinner companion anymore."

Severus frowns slightly, torn between the very petty, possessive emotion of feeling pleased Harry had been missing him so badly and the more decent feelings of guilt and empathy at Harry feeling so miserably lonely. "Well," his arms wrapped around Harry's body squeezed in reassurance, something he could feel the other take much pleasure in as Severus could feel the younger wizard nuzzle harder against his own body, "I'm here now."
"Mmmn, that you are," Harry groaned appreciatively. "I'm going to have to insist to Cornelius that you need to join us occasionally on outings, or maybe just insist on sleeping over more at the Malfoys, though I figure it's a bit mean to do that considering it'll be our first vacation together."

Severus blinked.

He tried to rewind Harry's words but they made just as much sense as the first time he had heard it.

"What?"

Harry blinked back up at him. "Oh, right, you don't know," he says like he was the one who should be surprised instead of Severus.

"Evidently not." He replies, a touch coldly. Inwardly he winces at the way it comes out. Lily had always said he was too defensive, too prickly, that he always came off a bit intense with everything. Fortunately, though, Harry looked barely affected by his tone.

"Oh," James Potter's son should not look so cute when he's befuddled, but against all genetic odds, he barely holds a candle to Potter save for the hair. And he does look cute, with his indescribably green eyes wide and his mouth slightly agape, highlighting the soft lining of his lips, and if Severus tilts his head down a little he can even see a hint of tongu- "Well, Minister Fudge, by tomorrow, will officially be my, well, step-father."

Severus stares at him.

"What."

"Actually," Harry casually muses, as if he hasn't both shocked and horrified Severus to levels comparable to his early death eater days, "I should also tell you that Black broke into Gryffindor again, Neville had written down the password list or something and then lost it so McGonagall was incredibly pissed. Oh, and I got this really cool map from the Marauders that I'm totally willing to show you as long as you promise not to confiscate it from me."

"Harry, while hearing Black has, once again broke in, is disturbing, I am a little more preoccupied with the news of your new... family." He mentally files away the Marauders Map information for a later date, there was, somehow, more pressing matters to attend to right now.

Harry grinned widely, "Oh yes, Cornelius has been quite lovely so far, and so is Mrs. Fudge who is awfully delighted to have me as a kid. Apparently, she had always wanted to adopt, but it's sort of looked down upon around here unless you're taking in a relative? Like, that's fucked up, right? What sort of society thinks badly of adoption? At least with me being so famous they'll be very little in the way of complaints," he babbled, Severus loves it when he babbles. Harry's beautiful silent and still but there's a different beauty when he moves like this, childish and bright-eyed and delightfully excited.

Harry in still silence makes Severus want to paint and worship him.

However, Harry like this, bubbling with enthusiasm, makes Severus want to kiss him, again and again, until all the breath leaves their bodies and their lungs shrivel into tiny raisins.

Of course, that urge was stifled ever so slightly because what. The. *Fuck."

"You're getting adopted. By the Minister of Magic. Cornelius. Fudge."

Harry gave him a look that reminded him far too much of his own expression when facing an
incompetent Gryffindor trying to finish a potion faster by increasing the heat of the fire. "Yes Severus," Harry says slowly and there's a part of Severus who sort of really wants to spank some of the sass and insolence out of the boy just as much as he reluctantly savors having a partner he can snipe at.

Then the boy chuckles, low and sweetly menacing, it's intoxicating, "Minister Fudge wasn't very hard to convince. He's not naive per se, just a little... lonely? No, that's not it, needy?"

"But why?" Severus questions, he can believe easily Harry could've essentially seduced Fudge into wanting to adopt him. Harry was very seductive, too much so in his opinion but that didn't explain exactly why Harry would choose Fudge of all foster parental options. Fudge was barely a competent minister without Lucius' aid in the shadows, it's hard imagining the man taking care of a mutt much less a precocious and physically delicate child like Harry. Fudge hasn't had to deal with Harry at his most ill, his less attractive habits like always leaving his damp towels and cups everywhere, never had to deal with the boy angry, his tendency to oversleep, the soft way he sighs in annoyance whenever they have a vegetarian meal before picking at it like a suspicious bird- it was hardly fair.

For Harry of course.

And maybe, possibly, an infinitesimally small part of Severus is seething on the inside that Harry hadn't chosen him as a viable adoption candidate. It's a greedy, selfish thought, but then again Severus has no delusions in being anything but a greedy selfish man.

Harry shrugged, like his decision was as callous as the gesture itself, "Why not Severus? Fudge is powerful and he will dote on me harder than perhaps even Lucius to Draco, and he'll be far more open about it too."

"I dote on you," Severus mutters petulantly until he realizes he had said that out loud, "I mean, I didn't,"

Harry blinked before chuckling softly, "Are you by chance, jealous... of Fudge?"

"Don't be ridiculous," he lied loftily, "As if I would be-" his bluster was sealed off by Harry's cool lips against his own mouth and soon any thoughts of talking melted away with slow languid open-mouthed kisses.

It's nice, wonderfully so, Severus wishes he could do this forever. Unfortunately, his back protests from bending down so long and from Harry's increasingly wanton moans the already unchaste kissing was moving on to far more dangerous territories for the young wizard. While he does enjoy Harry's high sensitivity to pleasure, obscenely and disgustingly so really, Severus sometimes can't help but wish it could be dialed back just a minute amount if only to prolong their kissing further before he is forced to draw the line again.

"I'm not jealous," the older wizard concludes lamely, his face heated from both the result of their previous activity and shame at the envy he denies. Harry, however, seems to delight in his immaturity, smiling and peppering him with affectionate ticklish kisses wherever he could reach-which, amusingly, wasn't very high.

"You are," Harry teases, eyes glowing in his own amusement, "don't lie, sir, it is unbecoming."

"Maybe I irrationally felt the slightest amount of distaste to the idea," Severus acquiesces generously, making the young wizard laugh. "Still, as shocking as it is, I am contented with the fact you will be happy with your new living situation."
"I did think of you first, you know," Harry confesses, unknowingly soothing the unease in Severus' heart, "but then I figured that would make our relationship even more complicated. I mean, wanting my daddy to fuck me is a lot worse than wanting my professor to after all." Harry laughs, unaware at the way Severus tenses his whole body as molten lust suddenly attacks him in response to the oblivious boy's words.

He smiles weakly, aware of it being a joke but inside Severus feels shamed beyond measure as his body, which had been previously low-key aroused ramp into an overload of desire. "How very true," Severus replies, proud at how dry and sarcastic he sounds, barely a trace of the complete and utter turmoil he's feeling.

He couldn't possibly be... aroused by the idea of Harry calling him daddy... could he?

Oh, dear Merlin no.

"Excuse me," Severus steps abruptly way, it's awkward and ill-timed and he curses himself for his lack of patience on the matter but now that he's done it he can't exactly backtrack, "it's been a long trip and I would like to recuperate in my sleeping quarters."

Harry looks pitifully rejected but there was no way Harry must learn of Severus' newfound fetish, which he most definitely would if they stayed together any longer he's sure of it, "Oh, well, I guess-"

Severus quickly presses a kiss to Harry's forehead, the action seeming to placate the boy slightly before apologizing, "I'm sorry, I truly am exhausted, goodnight."

Harry watches Severus hurriedly glide away, slamming the door to his bedchambers closed before slumping onto the nearby couch.

"Just like old times huh?" He sighs with exasperation and tired fondness. "Well, some things never change."

It's a Tuesday morning when the news hits. Harry's a little offended. Everyone knows you got to aim to be in the Monday news for best impact. Monday papers get the best stories, closely followed by the weekend papers then Friday papers. Tuesday papers were shit papers that mainly drone on about business and politic- oh okay that makes sense actually.

Of course, it didn't really matter if it was a Monday or a Tuesday because everyone went mental fifteen minutes into breakfast. There were gasps and screams and a lot of swearing that included various body parts of the great Merlin's. And of course, Harry could not forget to add the staring, and pointing. Like, for fucks sakes don't these people know pointing is rude?

Even the professors were shocked into school girl levels of reactions, with only a few looked unsurprised by the news story. Dumbledore and McGonagall were the two who knew beforehand out of necessity, being headmaster and deputy headmistress and all. Severus and Remus were spared from the surprise as well, though Severus was clearly unhappy that he realized Remus had known before him if the way his darkening expression during their conversation was any indication.

The pair left breakfast early, Harry was curious to what they were saying but he was far too busy fending off everyone else.

"Mate, I still cannot believe you convinced the Minister to be your new dad," Ron chuckled disbelievingly as he looked at the photo of Harry and Cornelius Fudge smiling and waving at the camera in the Daily Prophet. Mrs. Fudge didn't enjoy much publicity oddly enough, and with her quirks, Harry thinks the Ministry's PR group has done very little to encourage her participation save
for a few photos at vital events. "Like, don't get me wrong Harry, you're smart and prettier than any
girl in my family."

"Like that's very hard," Malfoy mutters under his breath. He had decided to break protocol and sit
with the Gryffindors with Harry because this conversation was important and an important
conversation was a conversation Draco simply must be part of apparently. Blaise, Nott, Crabbe, and
Goyle followed suit, though the latter two were fairly happy to sit anywhere there was food with
little complaints really.

"- but you're also a foul-mouthed pervert who has stupid bad luck and a body more breakable than
Malfoy's poncy-arse teacups."

"Wha- I am fucking not!" Harry protests.

"Uh, yeah baby," Blaise kisses his boyfriend's cheek, "You sort of, definitely are."

"You're just mad I didn't tell you."

"Well it would've been nice to know," Blaise says annoyed, "and that doesn't make it less true."

"Oh shit, trouble in paradise?" Nott murmurs, then in a louder voice adds, "Actually I'm sorta pissed
you didn't tell me either."

"Oh my god," Harry groaned, "Okay, hands up, whose pissed I didn't tell them about my adoption."

Everyone immediately raised their hands.

"Wha- Ron! Hermione! I told you guys first!"

Hermione sniffed, "Yeah, but only because you slipped it out in casual conversation. If it hadn't
come out by chance we wouldn't have known either would we?"

"Besides," Ron says, "we're still miffed you didn't tell us when you realized Black was your
goddamn godfather."

"Wait, are you serious Weasley, you didn't know Black was Harry's godfather?" Malfoy interrupted.
"You may come from blood traitor family but you're still a pureblood!" He didn't even sound
derisive, Draco seemed genuinely baffled, "Your mother was on the Light side, good friends with
Harry's parents, fellow Gryffindor etcetera- seriously?!"

They all turned to look at Ron who was wearing a sheepish expression. "O-oh, um," Ron looked
down at his breakfast, "I, uh, maybe I might've possibly, uh, wasn't listening? My bad."

Hermione shook her head disappointedly, "Ron…"

"I get bored!"

"Anyway, on a more important note," Nott coughed before grinning, "Does the Minister of Magic
know about your weird Snape thing yet?"

Harry shrugged, "I'm sure he'll figure it out, but I'm determined to play good son to him and his wife
as much as I can."

"That's smart," Hermione nodded, "it isn't good to scare the man too soon, he seems very, uh,
conservative." Harry scoffs. Rude.
"Yeah, you probably shouldn't tell him the details of you and Blaise's relationship either," Draco smirks.

Blaise smirks back and pointedly leans in to nibble Harry's ear, making the green-eyed wizard shiver out a soft breathy groan, causing everyone else to groan in a far less pleasurable manner. "Mmnn," Blaise murmurs, "probably for the best really."

"Aah, yeah, um, for the best," Harry huffs before turning to his boyfriend with a flirtatious look, "now, are you still eating breakfast or shall we sneak off before morning classes babe?"

Blaise's smirk widens, "Well, I do need to punish you for your secrecy, pass me an apple will you?"

"You know, you can finish your apple here," Harry says with a slight frown of concern as he summons a large shiny apple to pass to Blaise. Breakfast was important. He personally wasn't a big fan of breakfast food but still, you have to eat in the morning.

The tanned Slytherin snatched the apple from the air and stood up, looking at Harry with a hungry look that had very little to do with food, "Trust me pookums, this apple is not intended for breakfast."

"O-oh." Harry swallowed heavily, quickly standing up to follow Blaise.

Once they left, the rest of the group looked at each other with the shared wary fondness and mild disgust only people who are Harry Potter and Blaise Zabini's friends could understand.

"Poor Mr. Fudge," Hermione said.

"Poor Britain," Draco and Nott shuddered.

"Poor apple," Ron sighed.

"So let me get this straight Lupin," Severus loomed menacingly at the current defense professor when they were finally alone, "You were one of the few who knew beforehand that knew Harry was about to be adopted." The 'before me' was not said but heavily implied.

"I, had, uh, suspicions, yes." Which may or may not have formed in the exact moment Harry had told Lupin he was going to be adopted.

The potioneer scowled, "And you didn't think maybe to owl me such pertinent news?"

"I thought someone else told you! Dumbledore maybe!" Lupin said half hysterically, it's been a while since he's been on the receiving end of such a murderous look, and age has only served to make the expression more poisonous on Snape. Honestly, when he had casually mentioned that over breakfast while everyone else was gawking at the unexpected news he didn't realize he had hit such a sore spot with the man. Then again, Snape had always been quite a petty man. "Or more likely Lord- I mean Harry!"

"And that!" Severus jabs a finger at the man in the chest, it was as painful as it was accusatory, "What is with this Lord Harry business?! I'm not an imbecile, but you, Lupin apparently are because you keep slipping that term when you refer to Potter almost every time!"

Lupin cursed inwardly. Harry was going to be pissed.

"Is this a-" Severus looked disgusted and furious, "did you seduce Harry you wretched beast? Is that
what this is about?! One of your sick, perverted-

"No!" Remus cries, aghast and red-faced because okay, maybe he's had a few dreams now and then but Harry had told him they were perfectly natural and could be ignored fairly easily since he was still mainly human. And if some of those dreams trespassed into the literal hands of reality, well, that's his secret to keep to the grave. "He's my student for Merlin's sake!"

"Well, he's mine too!" Severus roars before rearing back, anger fleeing from his face as he realized what he had inadvertently implied in his jealous rage.

Lupin, because he wasn't, as Snape had implied, an imbecile, blinked. The pieces have fallen into disturbingly horrifying clarity now. "Did you, when you say 'he's mine too,' does that, did that mean 'he's mine too and that's just an obvious fact,' or did you, uh, mean, 'he's my student too and I'm attracted to him so why would that be stopping you?'"

The silence was all the answer Remus needed.

"Oh, my fUCKING MERLI:"

Severus threw his hands against the werewolf's mouth, something he wouldn't have dared done before so at the very least Lupin's glad to know the man's fear of him has lessened. Though at this moment, some fear would be very much appreciated because what the fuck. "Shut up Lupin," Severus hisses. "Or they'll never find your half breed body. Do you understand?"

Lupin glared but nodded. Warily and reluctantly the potions master removed his hands from Lupin's face and the werewolf took it as his opportunity to strike. With his now well-honed physical reflexes, his hand snaps up to grip Snape's neck and lifts him singlehandedly up, pushing him against a nearby wall for better support and maximum pressure.

"Harry Potter?!” Lupin spits furiously, he's aware the wolf part of him is more jealous than anything but it's the human aspect truly howling out in rage. "You- he's fourteen!" He's not, he's infinite, beyond comprehension, but Snape doesn't know that. Hell, not so long ago Lupin didn't know that either, so the idea burns against his brain like boiling oil.

Severus, to his credit, doesn't fight back, there are no excuses, as there shouldn't be, but there are no pleas for mercy or forgiveness or repentance either. Worst of all, there are no promises to stop. Lupin tightens his grip and growls.

Severus chokes but ultimately looks resigned to the punishment. Strangely enough, Lupin feels even more infuriated at the lack of response. "At least deny it you perverted freak!" He screamed.

"As," The potions master wheezed, "As if I, gh, I can."

Lupin snarls disgustedly and releases Severus from his grip, letting him fall ungainly onto the floor, gasping for breath. "Well, fucking say something then! Anything! How could you?!"

"I, I love him," Severus confesses, voice raspy from abuse.

Lupin slaps him. Hard.

"Merlin's fucking-" And there was Severus' signature death glare, it was almost a relief to see the hateful look, seeing a submissive Severus was unsettling, to say the least. Not to mention it really made Lupin feel guilty even though he knows he's in the goddamn right here. "I'm serious Lupin!"

The werewolf blinked, "Wha- really?" He says incredulously, though more from surprise than anger.
Lupin’s not sure what was worse, that he assumed Severus was incapable of proper love or that Severus just naturally came off as a person who could hardly bring himself to say love lest the word curdles his tongue to the point it falls off.

Okay so maybe his perceptions of Severus were fairly not great overall. Still.

"It's not," Severus looked like he was struggling with his words, Lupin hates to say he can relate. Though while Lupin finds talking about feelings mildly uncomfortable, he's fairly sure someone as isolated and prickly like Severus treats his emotions like how a pureblood wizard treats their squib relatives- in that he never talks about them unless it's negative and snide. "What I feel, it's, for Harry it's not, not... just sexual."

He can feel his facial muscles grimacing. Okay, maybe Lupin is less comfortable with feelings than he thought. Or maybe it's just listening to other people talking about sexual feelings. Especially Severus who Lupin has never once even considered remotely sexually in all his bisexual life. But he truly feels that it's a fair response. Because *gross*.

"Well... I would hope not." Lupin says for lack of much else. It wasn't like he could say 'Good job for not being a complete pervert."

Severus made an embarrassed noise of frustration. "I don't fantasize about little boys." He tries again but even Lupin can't help but despair and pity the way the other has dug an even deeper hole for himself.

"Well... I would hope not for that either." He repeats, far drier than before.

"Merlin's fucking- Look, Lupin," Severus snarls, defensive and all his pent up emotions from before being funneled into his irritation, "I'm not a delusional dimwitted cretin, I know what I feel for Harry is disgusting in every level imaginable, I'm a depraved pedophile in regards to Harry, it's wrong, and if there's a hell out there I'm sure I'll going there once I inevitably perish."

"As if Harry would throw you into hell," Lupin muttered under his breath, reminded once again about Harry's true identity.

"What was that?"

"I said," the werewolf says in a louder voice, "at least save some verbal abuse for me to throw and give you hell."

Lupin studied his fellow professor thoughtfully. If this was anyone else, any child else, he would not have stood for it. Severus would have been literally eviscerated alive. But this was Harry Potter, the Boy Who Was Technically Not a Boy, and perfectly capable of enforcing his rejections to any unwanted suitors.

Still, physically Harry was around thirteen, less really considering his stunted growth, and it doesn't matter if mentally he was more, or if his looks gave him an almost ageless elegant beauty, it was still wrong and sick.

"Does Harry know?" He asks, though Lupin vaguely knew already what the answer would be.

Severus slowly nodded his head with a raised eyebrow of disbelief, "I'm surprised you didn't know yourself Lupin." He says a little condescendingly despite the situation, "It's fairly obvious even to the less observant individuals in this castle."

Well then… Lupin suddenly felt very silly as a few things he had dismissed before suddenly fell into
place with this new information. Merlin, it seems he was very good at ignoring the obvious when it really didn't suit him sometimes.

But if Harry was okay with it, verily so really if his memory only now faithfully recalls - seriously he felt like a fool - then Lupin decides maybe he could make some peace with the idea of Severus' own mutual feelings. Hell, it's not like there's going to be anyone else who's going to be half as accepting as he will be if Harry's going to keep his true identity a secret.

Biting his lip, Lupin groaned internally but finally said, "Get up Snape, I'm fucking pissed, rightly so you piece of shit, but I'm not going to kill you."

Snape blinked, clearly surprised, "What changed your mind?" He half groans out, because apparently, the man is asking for a punch in the face. Fuck, if Lupin still didn't have a lot of lingering guilt for how he's treated Severus in their childhood, he would have totally relished in breaking the potions master's overly large nose.

Seriously, major issues aside, what does Harry see in this man?

"I know Harry," Lupin says shortly, "well enough at least to understand he is, and possibly always will be, the exception to almost every rule. Even ones concerning age. I don't like it, make no mistake, but after some time to process and my own talk with Harry I have decided I will eventually make peace with it."

"That's.." Severus struggled, which Lupin figured was fair, the dour-faced wizard looked torn between gratefulness and a whole cocktail of other less appreciative emotions, "Thank you." He finally settles on.

Lupin sniffs, "Trust me, Severus, I didn't do it for you."

He partly did it for him. But like hell, he would admit it.

"You better be serious about Harry though."

Severus flushed, an ugly embarrassed red and said nothing. Lupin rolled his eyes. Stubborn awkward arse.

Again, what does Harry even see in him?

"You know, when Cornelius insisted on going out alone for his afternoon tea I didn't think it would be with you, Potter."

Harry swiveled around sharply, catching sight of a blank-faced Lucius Malfoy leaning against the shadowy part of the wall. He was wearing inconspicuous robes, the same shade of grey of the castle walls, though upon closer inspection there were thin silvery designs sewed ornately into the fabric. In his hand was the Daily Prophet.

"Mr. Malfoy," Harry greeted smoothly, "I didn't know Cornelius didn't tell you about our... chats, I don't know what to say really."

"Neither do I," The older Malfoy admits, stepping out of the darkness. Harry looked upon him with both envy and awe with the way the light immediately lit his hair up like it had been spun from the golden spider webs, "you are far more cunning than I'd initially thought."

"I have many layers," Harry replies loftily, making Lucius crack a faint smile.
"Well then, congratulations Potter for your new... parents."

Both wizards exchanged sly smiles, knowing full well that when Malfoy said parents he didn't really mean parents.

"I guess we'll have to learn to share Cornelius, hm?" Harry says casually, like the Minister of Magic was some favored toy that could be played around with.

"More like I have to learn to take what I can Mr. 'Ministry's Golden Boy'," the other dryly shoots back before sighing, "I would have objected at Cornelius' decision if there had been a legitimate reason to," he admits in a surprising show of honesty, "but somehow I feel like this is karma wrought rightly upon me for what I did last year."

Lucius actually looked a little haggard when he mentioned it. Harry sympathizes, Lucius may be rather callous and self-absorbed but he wasn't a sociopath, the weight of knowing he could have killed children, his own child no less, by unleashing a basilisk onto the school was not an easy thing to ignore. Admittedly he has done a very good job trying to ignore it but guilt was a powerful thing.

"Well, I can't really speak for karma, but I am willing to discuss beforehand any changes you want to implement in the Ministry," Harry decided generously, "Despite last year's incident, you saved me from the Dursleys and for that any bad will I have toward you has been cleared." Shyly he also added with a smile, "Also, I am quite fond of you Malfoys."

The head of the Malfoy family blinked, "How very... magnanimous."

Harry airily waved the hesitant reply off, "Please, I'm hardly that interested in politics anyway. I'm invested in a more efficient system of course but really I won't be playing anything more than an advisory position to my new father." He then pinned the older man down with eyes that glowed eerily, "Then again Mr. Malfoy, it would hardly trouble me at all to play a more active role in the political game, you should do well to consider your allegiances from now on."

Almost instinctively Lucius found his hand squeezing the Dark Mark burned into his arm over his robes, a phantom throbbing that he could never shake off even with the Dark Lord's so-called untimely death.

"I," He says with a strained smile, "I think I shall do well to take your advice, Harry."

He had the Potter boy's favor, and will only keep it should he choose not to throw it away as he had almost done before. And now, more than ever, did Lucius realize the weight, the importance of the Golden Boy's favor, a child who could wield his reputation and looks like a knight and his sword.

Harry smiled, all sweet childish charm with only his bright eyes still glowing to give him away, "That's good sir, Draco's one of my best friends you know? And you and Narcissa are some of my favorite adults, it would be a pity if we ever meet across a battlefield, metaphorical or otherwise."

"Yes, I dare say so." Lucius agreed solemnly.

Maybe it was time to go home and discuss some things with Narcissa.

There was some weird tension between Lupin and Severus before Harry had left for his first Christmas at the Fudges. It might have been due to something related to Lupin asking him a lot of frankly uncomfortable questions about how he feels about Severus. Unfortunately, it seems the pair have to act as grown adult humans and sort it out themselves because Harry had sort of underestimated how big of a deal becoming the British Minister of Magic's adopted son would be.
Like, he knew it was big, but Christ wizards seem to literally have nothing better to do. Harry had sort of hoped Black would have done something to capture everyone's attention again, but then, when have any of Harry's would-be murderers done anything to make his life easier?

"I'll miss you," Harry murmured as he brushed his hands non too casually against Severus' own while he drags his trunk out through the dungeon halls.

"And I you," Severus murmurs back, "But you are aware that we'll be seeing each other at the Malfoys' Christmas Gala in just a week."

"Still," The Boy Who Lived pouted, "I only just got you back." Thoughtfully he added, "Do you think Cornelius would let me bring you over for dinner once or twice?"

Severus raised a vaguely bemused eyebrow, "Would that not be seen as a rather odd request?"

Harry shrugged, "I wouldn't know, but I hear teacher-parent meetings are common?"

"Unfortunately we don't practice those sort of customs here."

"Well," he huffed, "Y'all probably should. I mean, at the very least write end of year report cards or something, like my god, I understand all the professors are busy having to teach every single student regardless of year- which by the way has so many problems, I cannot even- but there are only two exams a student goes through in like, eight years, that the Ministry provides and marks!"

"We do have assignments and pop quizzes remember?" The potions professor says mildly though it was clear he harbored similar opinions from the way he hasn't really argued against any of the points given.

Harry scoffed, "And yet there are literally no long term consequences if we fail them all as long as you do well on the NEWTs and OWLs."

Severus tilted his head in acquiescence, "You know, your friend Granger would probably strangle you for your blasphemy."

"At least Ron would have my back,"

"The young Weasley may just let Granger have her way with you once he realizes that you've been sitting on that particular nugget of wisdom for near three years now."

"Fair point," Harry grins crookedly, "I guess I'll have to keep that revelation a secret, for the greater good of course."

"Still," Severus says, "Your points have a lot of merits, unfortunately, change is not a popular word here."

"Yes, unless we're talking about Defence professors, then change is all the rage there," They both chuckle, "I'll see what Cornelius may think of my ideas, he probably won't do much but I predict he'll at least increase budgeting for education at the very least."

"Maybe you getting adopted is not as an initially dismaying idea as I had once thought," the professor mutters causing Harry to bark out his laughter at how obviously eager the usually surly man was at the idea of a raise.

For the first time in a long time, Harry boards the train back from Hogwarts toward Kings Cross. Since he wasn't staying in Hogwarts for Christmas as usual, all of his friends had too opted to go
back home to their families so the train cart back was particularly cramped. It was surprisingly enjoyable if a little too noisy for Harry’s personal taste.

Mr. and Mrs. Fudge, alongside a pack of reporters headed by a grinning Rita Skeeter, greeted Harry very warmly. Mrs. Fudge had even gone so far as to squeal excitedly before wasting no time to envelop her new son in a hug. Mr. Fudge, the more reserved of the pair just patted Harry's back in an awkwardly affectionate gesture.

With barely time to say goodbye to his friends, Harry found himself mobbed by the press and their flashing cameras. Luckily the Fudges were rather irritated with all the fanfare and with the help of the aurors sent to guard them, they had managed to extract themselves away from the commotion and portkey away.

The Fudges lived in a very nice mansion. Not as lavishly large and ostentatious as the Malfoys but it seemed to show an obvious appreciation of comfort over grandeur, an appreciation Harry gleefully agrees with.

Overall in the next few days, Harry had decided he had made a fantastic choice with his adoption. The Fudges were busy people, what with Mrs. Fudge working in the emergency areas of St Mungo’s and Mr. Fudge running the Ministry, and were unused to taking care of children, which suited Harry just fine. He was given a large amount of freedom to go out- if you ignored the team of aurors sent to guard him discreetly- a larger amount of pampering and the occasional lunch and dinner date with his new family.

The only complaints he could muster about being adopted by the couple would be the constant stream of events he now had to attend and that they were disgustingly cheery morning people. Mrs. Fudge woke up at four. In the morning. It is obscene is what it is.

Of course, it's not like he disliked the events themselves, Harry had fun schmoozing up everybody he met, the Austrian diplomats had been particularly charmed at the Nott's Winter Well-wishing Waltz.

"Honestly Harry you are such a weird kid," Theodore Nott drawled as Harry made his way toward the group of pureblood children huddled in the corner in a way that somehow didn't look petulant. Harry flashed a smile at his diplomatic entourage and waved them goodbye before smirking at the others watching.

"Weird or gorgeously suave?" Harry drawled.

"Weird." Theodore, Draco, and Blaise chorused.

"But in a very hot way," Pansy amends with a wink.

"Speaking of attractive, have you seen von Berne's son?" Daphne drawled.

"Mnn, I have," Blaise groans like he had taken a bite of a particularly tasty dish, "exquisite."

"Ooooh," Harry glanced around interestingly, Daphne and Blaise always had very good tastes in everything, "where is he?"

"Must you three?" Nott sighed, "My family is hosting this event you know? Can you not make a scandal concerning one of our most notable guests' son?"

"The von Berne's are also quite militaristic in attitudes," Draco informed them, "As good looking as their son is, I hardly doubt he would do something so, well, frivolous as accept flirtations from anyone in such a public event."
Blaise, Harry, and Daphne glanced at each other before looking back at Draco. "Challenge accepted." They chorus.

"No, wait, that wasn't a-and they are gone."

"Draco you dumb bitch." Theodore moaned into his hands. "Mum's going to kill me."

Okay so maybe Mr. Fudge wasn't that impressed that someone caught Harry snogging Joseph von Berne, heir to the von Berne family, minor German royalty, major German pureblood nobility, and nineteen. Mrs. Fudge had been very impressed though and Joseph von Berne had insisted on a continued communication via owl which had resulted in stronger British and German relations so Cornelius couldn't be too fussied. Still, he had made Harry promise to at least be more discrete, and to try not to break too many hearts in the process.

"I'd almost forgotten all the rumors of Harry being a promiscuous flirter," Cornelius Fudge sighed as he poured a tumbler of blizzard brandy for himself, "I mean, I could hardly believe them considering how mature and insightful the boy was but I see there was some truth in them after all."

"Harry's a very pretty child," Penelope 'Penny' Fudge giggled, "besides, a mature child is really just a teenager if you think about it, and you know what teenagers love to think about Corny."

Cornelius laughed, "I suppose so dear. Still, I am worried about him."

Penny smiled and snatched the tumbler from her husbands grasp to taste, "Harry's a very good child, intelligent, independent- what's one or two faults really? I'm surprised he isn't more of a handful given his, well," she coughed, her demure features twisting into something more disgusted, "previous relatives."

"I'm the Minister of Magic and yet I couldn't even punish those awful muggles," Cornelius sighed wearily, "Sometimes politics is just the worst."

"Well," Penny huffed, passing the drink back, "We'll just have to be the best parents dear Harry is going to have. You can tell he's fitting himself right at home here."

Cornelius smiled fondly at his wife, "Really? How can you tell?"

Penny nodded, "He asked to borrow my favorite knife for cooking something for us tomorrow, you know the one, the cursed silver one with the blood rubies. I was so happy he felt comfortable asking me for something I had to say yes."

"Does, does Harry know it's cursed?" Cornelius says nervously.

"Psh," his wife waves away cheerily, "tis only a minor curse, as long as he isn't making something with chicken we're fine."

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**Extras**

**Flirting with Joseph von Berne**

"Hello, I'm Daphne Greengrass," a blonde pureblood brought her hand up to be kissed, "Charmed to meet you."

Joseph von Berne stared at her with piercingly cold blue eyes and barely a smile. He did reach out
for her hand but only for a very formal handshake much to her obvious ire. Not that he particularly cared. "Thank you for making your acquaintance known Ms Greengrass."

"Please," her voice drops low and eyes go lidded, Joseph tries not to show his grimace, another far too young pureblood looking to scope out their prospects, "Call me Daphne."

"I would rather not Ms. Greengrass." He replies stiffly.

She pouts and he resists the urge to roll his eyes. Pushy girl. What is she, fourteen? Ugh. It's already bad enough that he has to defend against the older pureblood singles' advances, but the younger ones were just as pushy and more willing to cry to their influential parents.

"Well, that is hardly-"

"Daphne, can't you see you're annoying him?" Greengrass tried not to show it but it was clear she was irritated at the newcomer, a dark-skinned young wizard, around the same age as her, grinning toothily as he swanned confidently into their failure of a conversation with two sparkling glasses in his hands.

The wizard nudges the Greengrass witch to the side, making her scowl and hiss something vaguely threatening before leaving with a little huff. With a smirk the dark-skinned teenager passed Joseph a glass, "So sorry about that gorgeous, Daphne can be a little too eager, you know how it is."

"I do," Joseph says simply because he's not stupid. He's top of his class in more than just Defense and Duelling, he can tell this one has the exact same intentions as Greengrass. He narrows his eyes, "Also, you shouldn't be drinking that."

The wizard ignored him, instead of giving him a charmingly cheeky smile and sipped the champagne, "What can I say? I'm a bit of a bad b-hey!" He spluttered as Joseph silently transfigured the alcohol into some very bland orange juice.

"Go find someone else that's interested," He tells the wizard coldly.

The young wizard glares, "Rude." He mutters.

"I'm uninterested and straight," Joseph shoots back, "there is a difference."

"Well, I tried," The wizard sighs and turns to leave.

"Wait," Joseph says, and the wizard turns around with a vaguely miffed air. He smiles and holds up his drink in a 'cheers' gesture, "thanks for the drink."

"Wanker." The other scowled.

"Could've let the poor boy down a bit gentler son," Arthur von Berne, his father, comments idly as he walks to stand by his son.

Joseph rolled his eyes.

"You know, despite what your grandfather insists, there's more to life than dueling and sword fighting."

"I know. There's horse riding too." Joseph huffed.

"And romance," his father chides mildly, "your mother and I are getting worried that you will never find anyone."
"I have Titiana."

"That's your sword."

"Amy."

His father sighed, "That's your horse. Just... at least try to mingle."

"I did. I conversed with a Greengrass girl and... that other one."

"Joseph..."

Joseph made an irritated sound, he was nearing twenty, hardly a child anymore. "I'm going to go now."

"Give love a chance Joseph," His father, so embarrassingly called out. In public no less! Joseph wished grandfather was here, he would set his childish father straight. The von Bernes are meant to be a serious family. Joseph is going to follow in his grandfather's footsteps, maybe not exactly, but more or less in terms of attitudes. No matter what father said.

He stands at the side, leaning against the walls to sip his champagne and try not to look like he's sulking.

"I see you're having fun sir," A soft voice says, barely hiding their mirth as they interrupt his silent seething. Joseph turned his head to catch sight of a young wizard of slight stature who had made his way to stand beside him against the wall. There's a part of Joseph that wants to scoff at such a feminine looking boy, another spoiled British brat then. Probably never had a hard days work in his life. Disgraceful really.

But there's another part of him that can't help but perk up at the admittedly very attractive sight. He cannot help but steal glances at the young wizard, with his pale skin and tousled wild black hair, his bright green eyes and, interestingly enough on closer inspection, a beautifully rough tangled web of pale scarring adorned his neck. The scars were not hidden by a collar or a choker, it is worn with pride and confidence.

Maybe his initial impression was wrong, Joseph decides reluctantly.

"I would hardly call standing around and smiling vapidly, 'fun,'" he retorts. The green eyed wizard laughs quietly, everything he seems to do is quiet it seems. Joseph couldn't imagine such a delicate teenager like this ever raising his voice unless he truly had to, and even then it was still difficult. He finds he likes it, everyone else was always so insistent on being loud, he likes quiet.

"Really? I find it very fun." He purred.

"Then why aren't you out there then?" Joseph asks a touch derisively, looking down at him. He knew exactly why the young wizard was here, how irritating.

The wizard gazes back up at him with a bemused expression before pointing at the plate of finger food in his hands. "I'm hungry and there isn't much space elsewhere to stand and eat comfortably."

"Oh," Now Joseph felt like an ass.

"Do you want a mini quiche?" The wizard offered with a smirk, he looked quite smug, but not in an annoying arrogant way, more like a kitten that had caught its first canary, Joseph couldn't help but note. His green eyes crinkled lightly when he looked smug. "The spinach one is very good."
"Well… if you are sure," he says hesitantly, not wanting to come off as ruder than he already was since the British wizard had been nothing but cordial back.

The younger nods, taking a small green quiche piece from his plate and holding it up for Joseph to take, which he did with a polite 'thank you'. The wizard's smirk had softened into a rosy-cheeked smile that made him look even sweeter than he already was, Joseph could feel his own cheeks heating in response.

"It's, um, it's good," he says a little lamely.

"Told ya," the other chirps cheerily. It's very unmanly. Not serious at all. Joseph wonders why he doesn't feel as disgusted as before. Instead, he feels wrong-footed and clumsy, something he hasn't felt like since he was nine and learning how to swing his first real sword.

He watches the younger wizard pick his own tidbits to eat. His hands are pale, his fingers, thin and delicate. They would look so small and precious splayed out against his own broad chest.

Joseph pauses. Then backtracks his thoughts before internally recoiling in horror. He wasn't, he wasn't queer. The wizard looked far too much like a witch that was all. A witch that happens to be prettier than any he had laid eyes on before. Not to mention how much younger he looks. Strangely it's hard to tell though, there's an air of maturity the other younger witch and wizard didn't have but physically this one looked younger than them as well.

"How," he coughs, "how old are you?"

The wizard chews and swallows before giving him that bemused look again, "You would ask my age before my name?"

"Oh, sorry I-"

The wizard smiles and shakes his head like such poor manners can be so easily excused. Most people here would have left in a tantrum already, most likely to go and tell his father off for such poor social breeding or some rot. "It's fine, really, I'm Harry Potter, age thirteen, a pleasure to meet you."

Joseph's eyes widened, "Harry Potter?"

Harry Potter, Boy Who Lived and recently adopted son of the British Minister, Harry Potter, shrugged. "The one and only, though I would greatly like your name in exchange."

Well. At least he knew the wizard wasn't after his titles or money.

"Joseph von Berne." He greets, he hopes he doesn't sound too eager to introduce his name. Not that would change his already cold first impression. Merlin, he's gone about everything wrong. His father was right. "Age nineteen."

"Nice name," The wizard, Harry, notes, "very fancy."

Joseph is flabbergasted. This is probably the most non-reaction to his name since the time he had accidentally introduced himself to a deaf pureblood. "Do you know, don't you know who the von Berne's are?"

"My friends said something about minor royalty but I'm still sort of new to the whole high society of wizard thing." Harry says apologetically, "I am sorry if I've offended."
Joseph feels like he wants to die. All this time he was sneering at all the uppity socialites who insist on everyone knowing who they are and what their family does and how important their bloodline is, and here he was doing the exact same thing. It's worse because Harry looks so unsure what to say because of his peacocking, and Joseph doesn't want Harry to be unsure about him.

"No, no there's no offense, none," he stammers, because he's somehow lost half his intelligence and wit after less than four minutes in front of this wizard who is as famous as a wizard engraved in history, as rich as any high noble, as beautiful as the prettiest witch in their prime. Four minutes beforehand he wanted nothing more than to leave this event immediately. Four minutes after and now Joseph finds he would want nothing less than to stay here forever and talk to Harry Potter. "Um, do you like swords?"

Well, if he could figure how to talk to Harry Potter first.

Harry Potter seemed at least genuinely interested at the topic, better than the rest of the wizards who generally feel anything remotely physical is on the verge of barbaric. "I wouldn't say I like swords, more like I enjoy interesting weapons in general. My new mother gave me this knife, gigantic one really, bigger than a pumpkin, as a hello present when we first met," Harry chuckled, "of course I didn't exactly know that so when she pulled it out I thought I was legitimately going to die."

Joseph laughed at the face Harry pulled, an exaggerated expression of horror. "Yes, I imagine some forewarning would be nice."

"I thought she was going to rip me in half with her well-manicured nails." Harry grinned, "It's one of the reasons I like her so much."

"I could rip you in half," Joseph blurts because he is a fool who does not deserve those Outstandings in his OWLs and NEWTs.

Harry raises an eyebrow and leers, "I'm sure you could," he murmurs while looking pointedly up and down Joseph's larger form so blatantly. Normally Joseph would be appalled by such behavior, but now he wishes that Harry was checking him out purposely instead of the joke it was.

He thinks maybe to be subtle. Slow. He's still not sure about his feelings on Harry, on a wizard. He needs time.

But then he realizes he has a fortnight in England at best, that he has little time to internally sort out his fragile masculine heterosexuality before he has to go and possibly never see Harry again. So Joseph decides to do what he does best.

"Do you want to try?" He asks bluntly, making sure to maintain strong eye contact to show his seriousness despite the way his skin is flaming from his own embarrassment.

Harry goes through three quick stages in rapid succession which Joseph finds himself intently memorizing like the steps to a particularly important potion, from startled, to flustered and then, most charmingly of all, pleased. "Oh, well, okay," He looks down at his plate before smiling abashedly, "can I finish my food first?"

Now it was Joseph's turn to be abashed, "Of course," he says because he wasn't going to come off as desperate. He was a von Berne for fuck's sake. They don't do desperately.

Though someone should really tell that to his pants.

They chat some more and Joseph finds Harry even more appealing than before. Harry likes to talk about bloody things, unafraid to speak of things that are considered less polite in an environment
such as this. He's even fought a basilisk! How could Joseph not be attracted, even if the wizard is a wizard.

Harry pulls Joseph into a nearby storage room down the hallway from the ballroom with a pink blush on his cheeks and a dark flirtatious look in his eyes. Joseph knows he must look the same way.

The moment he pulls Joseph inside the dark room, Joseph decides now is the time to take charge again. He is a von Berne, and von Berne's are always in charge. Shutting the door with his foot he wastes no time to crowd the younger wizard against the wall, kissing him fiercely.

It had already been a good kiss, leaps better than the ones he got at school with his girlfriends who wore too much sticky lip stuff that tasted like horrid interpretations of fruit. But then Harry opened his mouth and started kissing back and it became absolutely mind-blowing.

"God, you're, ah, you're a damn good kisser," Harry groaned when they finally parted, which is ridiculous because it was Harry who had clearly been the master. Still, Joseph feels undeniable pride at the compliment.

"May I, may I touch you further?" Joseph asks tentatively, his hands are resting on Harry's slim shoulders through sheer stubborn will power alone but he longs to move them literally anywhere as long as it was on Harry.

Harry grinned, bright and breathless, "Only if I can touch you too."

The image of those delicate hands against his own chest from before burst into his mind and Joseph nodded, a short, sharp head bob that made him look jerky, like an electric muggle toy. He watches avidly as Harry unbuttons his robe and shirt underneath. Green eyes seem to glow faintly in the dark with interest as his fingers trace some of the scars on Joseph's torso. "Gorgeous," he breathes.

Joseph puffs up, preening. He's proud of his scars, proof of his dedication to fighting, but that hardly means everyone is a fan. But of course, Harry is.

He watches with held breath as Harry moves his way up to the veins of his neck, the curve of his Adam's apple before finally pressing his whole hand against Joseph's solid body and sliding them down his chest. The sight has Joseph harder than he could believe from such a simple thing.

Unable to help himself, he steps even closer, leaning down again to kiss the younger wizard furiously. He wants to do what Harry has done in the inverse, to see his calloused hands touching that slim, pale figure. So much like a girl but thankfully so very different.

Impatiently he mutters a windless spell to undress Harry's robes before pushing his hands up underneath Harry's shirt, eager to touch and play. Harry moans a low and needy sound that goes straight to his cock.

"Mein Gott," Joseph slurred between kisses, "you're beautiful, be my Liebling."

Suddenly the door to the storeroom slams open, revealing a group of awfully familiar gawking faces. Joseph and Harry freeze, which wasn't exactly great because Joseph's hands were dammably squeezing Harry's ass to keep the younger wizard had one of his legs hooked around his waist.

"Uninterested and straight huh?" The tanned wizard, who was most likely the person who opened the door in the first place, smirks.

"Harry, what the fuck happened to playing the good son for the Minister?" A pale skinned wizard, a Malfoy most likely, drawled.
"Mother is going to murder me." Another wizard, Theodore Nott, the son of the couple whose hosting this event, bemoaned.

His father, who mortifyingly was right next to the tanned wizard and therefore could see everything, shook his head, baffled shock and vague amusement painted on his face as he says, far too loudly for his liking. "Joseph, when I said give love a chance I didn't realize it would result in you coming out of the closet not twenty minutes later," he joked because his father was the least serious and most horrible von Berne in the history of von Bernes.

It was the single most humiliating moment of Joseph von Berne's life.

Joseph still insists on owling Harry afterward.

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**That time with Harry and the twins (yes that means sexy times, you may skip)**

Harry found himself being kissed breathless. Literally. The moment one twin was finished, the other twin would tilt Harry's head toward them to continue where the other had left off. The whole thing left Harry hard and dizzy and amazingly lightheaded.

"George," Harry groaned pleadingly, "ah, nhm, Fred, come on, please,"

"I think Harrykins wants us to push a little further George,"

"I believe so, Fred,"

Hands, Fred's, George's, Harry doesn't know, were trailing over his body, unbuttoning his shirt, his pants, tugging each article of clothing off while occasionally pausing to graze across his bare skin and letting the sparks of their touches linger, like fireworks in the night. Occasionally Harry can feel ticklish soft kisses brushing the back of his neck from Fred, and far bolder, salacious licks stripping his chest from George who seemed particularly fascinated with the way Harry would react when his nipples were teased.

Harry did his best to play his part too, alternating between grinding his hips downward against Fred's clothed erection and arching upwards to better shift against George's body, panting and begging and writhing. It was overwhelming. It was amazing.

"How, mn, does it feel Harry?" George murmurs while Fred pants heavily into Harry's neck, thrusting up against the younger wizard's pliant body, his heavy cock shifting between the cheeks of Harry's barely clothed arse.

"Good," Harry sobs, "Ah, yes, so good,"

"Oh Merlin, I want to watch you wrap your lips around my cock," George groans, making both Harry and Fred moan at the idea.

"Will you Harry," Fred whispers throatily behind him, "will you take my brother's dick in your mouth?"

"Yesss," Harry hisses, gasping sharply as Fred groans again and pulls Harry's hips down so he could thrust against the younger wizard harder.

"Open up princess," George says huskily as he unbuttoned his pants, pulling out his erection and letting his length brush against Harry's slightly opened mouth teasingly, hinting at what's soon to come. Harry could taste the salt of sweat and the slight bitter but the overall unflavored taste of pre-
cum against his lips and moans, opening his mouth as ordered.

George, eager in the way all teenagers are, practically shoves his cock down Harry's throat before immediately apologizing and pulling back out as Harry starts to gag at the sudden intrusion. Fred makes soothing noises and glares at his brother who looks incredibly abashed at his actions. "Merlin, fuck, Harry, I'm so, shit,"

Harry chuckled, it's a little hoarse but George had pulled out the moment Harry had shown discomfort so the damage was really quite minimal. "It's fine George," shyly he ducks his head, "maybe, some water and kissing first before we try again?"

The twins nod enthusiastically, George, eager to redeem himself grabs a bottle of water for Harry to drink before proceeding to try to give Harry his own blowjob. Fred, who had been thinking similarly made an indignant sound of protest which caused a bit of shuffling and lighthearted arguing which consequently resulted in a bit of laughter.

The end result however was, in Harry's opinion, incredibly satisfactory as he watches enraptured as two very attractive twins were laying down on the floor in front of him, alternatively licking his weeping cock.

"Oh, ah, oh fuck," Harry groans, throwing his head up and arching his back. His hips thrust towards the pair of near identical Weasleys like a very horny compass pointing north. Fred leans up to suckle at his sensitive tip while George gives a frustratingly soft butterfly kisses at the base of his shaft, on his bullocks, face pressed against the V of Harry's hips.

After a few minutes of this relentless teasing, it's Fred who finishes Harry off. His tongue swirling around the head of Harry's dick before he swallows the rest of it down until it was all in his mouth and hollowing out his cheeks. Harry sobs out a near shriek of pleasure which is swallowed quickly by George, "I, Fred, I, ah, I'm coming!"

Fred pulls out a bit but still keep Harry's twitching cock in his mouth, swallowing down his cum like a champ. When he finally pulls away though he makes a faint grimacing expression that makes the other pair chuckle lightly, "Gonna have to get used to that," he mutters.

"It, hah, it takes a bit of getting used to," Harry grinned salaciously, still on his endorphin high, "Now let me show you two how it's done."

"Wha- the both of us?" George raises a brow.

"At, at the same time?" Fred asks in a strangled voice.

Harry gestures them to stand up, "Come on, just stand, watch, and enjoy."

The twins glance at each other and shrug. Then they look back at Harry and promptly moan as they watch the younger wizard get on his knees and grab their cocks with each hand firmly. Harry bit his lower lip in concentration before moving his hands at the same time, making a little twisting motion near the tip, making the pair of Weasleys buck their hips helplessly.

Harry smirked, emboldened by the reaction and began slowly stroking the twins to a steady rhythm. Fred and George both began panting harshly under his hands but it's when Harry presses Fred's dick between his lips do they truly began to lose their minds. Harry ends up switching between which dick to suck, bobbing his head up and down enthusiastically and changing twins every time he feels the one in his mouth is about to come, teasing them until they become babbling messes. George had enough strength to string together some pleas for mercy but Fred was doing his best to breathe at that
Finally, once Harry decides enough is enough, he gives Fred one last lick and George one last twist of his hand before putting both the tips of their dicks together in his mouth and sucking down on them hard, making an obscene noise as he does so. Fred cries out wordlessly as he orgasms while George loudly swears, both throwing their heads back at the intensity.

"Fuck!"

Harry pulls back a bit with a swallow and winces a bit as a hot splash of cum hits his face. It seemed someone wasn't done.

"S-sorry," Fred gasped. Harry smiled and wiped the streak off his face with his thumb, staring deeply into Fred's eyes and licking it off. Fred and George groaned.

"You're killing us, Harry."

Harry smirked.

And then reality came down and so did the concept of time and he groaned.

"Fuck, okay, now we really have to get going."

Chapter End Notes

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Cheers
Death's end of third year

Chapter Summary

The one where Death finishes the third year by finishing exams, meeting family in an unexpected place and getting yelled at by his friends, like, a lot.

Oh, and he finally deals with Sirius fucking Black.

Chapter Notes

This chapter was long and it was entirely my own fault. God I'm tired but I really wanted to finish this before uni started.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The one where Death finishes the third year by finishing exams, meeting family in an unexpected place and getting yelled at by his friends, like, a lot.

Oh, and he finally deals with Sirius fucking Black.

Christmas Day was pretty great.

Harry and the Fudges had a delicious meal of an assortment of Christmas waffles cooked by some still very starstruck house elves. Harry had favorited the gingerbread flavored ones while Mr. Fudge had, like his namesake implied, practically scarfed down the fudge ones. Mrs. Fudge preferred the candy cane waffles because she was a freak.

Afterward, they had exchanged presents.

From Harry, Mr. Fudge had gotten various muggle books enchanted so the book covers can change appearances into something less controversial to pureblood should Fudge want to bring them to work.

He picked Holes because of the fairy tale themes which would hopefully interest Fudge enough to get invested, hopefully picking up on a few other things as well in the process. Mitch Albom's Tuesdays with Morrie, was chosen solely because it made Mr. Riddle cry while they were both reading it. And finally Phillip Pullman's The Golden Compass, which Harry imagines would be Fudge's favourite one since it is so very fantastical, a whole different universe where his pureblooded prejudice can't exactly touch unlike the other two.

Fudge seemed to be unsure of the gift at first but later in the afternoon, Harry caught the man avidly reading Tuesdays with Morrie with tears in his eyes. Surprisingly, Cornelius was a fast reader. A skill born from necessity in his career apparently.

For Mrs. Fudge, Harry had fashioned her an intricate charms bracelet of gold. She had been pleased if a bit quizzically until Harry showed her the spell to turn weapons into charms, and the counter-
spell as well. That way she could carry all her favorite swords and knives wherever she went.

The Fudges had given Harry a multitude of gifts for his first Christmas with them, from the practical fourth-year textbooks all the way to a pair of muggle jeans he had tried on one day when he was checking out London fashion. Andrew, Beth, and Stag- his usual auror bodyguards- must have been doing more than stalking his ass then. Like checking it out.

Coupled with all the other gifts that came from being Minister and Boy Who Lived there was a veritable small mountain of presents under the Christmas tree. Well, at this point it was more like the Christmas tree was underneath the pile of presents.

"We… We may have to take a break between gift opening." Cornelius says as he eyes the gifts warily, "Merlin."

"What about we do this for an hour or so and then go play with some of our new things for a while?" Mrs. Fudge suggests, shooting a pointedly fond look at Harry who was currently eying an interesting tome that apparently was written by a medium who took down the goriest and most tragic stories she could find. Harry had to say, Mrs. Fudge has good tastes in what she perceives as children's books.

Both Harry and Fudge nod in agreement before ripping into the nearest present with enthusiasm. There were an awful lot of gifts so there was no time to mourn the fancy gift wrapping today. Harry's gifts generally ranged from a box of chocolates or something more expensive but equally as cliche like a wand holster.

The Weasely's had gifted him a handmade Weasley sweater again, as well as a homemade batch of cookies, a rubber duck, and a box of prank items. The Malfoy's had given him a small floating obsidian in the shape of a dementor and an invitation for a sleepover party at the Manor the night before their gala. The Fudges, of course, agreed so Harry gleefully wrote a response back, sending it off by one very eager house elf much to the ire of Hedwig.

Blaise had gotten him a silver spider ring that apparently can shoot sticky spider webs from its mandibles. It's anatomically wrong but a very pretty and potentially very useful gift nonetheless.

"You have very gothic tastes huh," Cornelius notes as Harry admired the ring on his hand. "Penny was a bit like that too when I first met her."

Mrs. Fudge playfully slapped her husband on the shoulder, "I did grow out of it eventually," She protests with a blush, "I only really liked the knives and accessories and such."

"Thank Merlin for that, wouldn't know what to do if you were actually interested in boiling cat heads and all that other dark blood magic ritual crap." Cornelius snorts, "Though I guess it was rather useful in the long term."

"Yes," Penny replies happily, "I am now one of the best in St Mungo's in undoing a lot of, how did you call it, 'dark blood magic ritual crap'."

She doesn't even sound offended. Harry isn't sure if she's just naturally always this optimistically chirpy, or a serious airhead.

"And I'm so proud of you for that my love," Cornelius croons making her giggle while Harry, as their new son, is obligated to make soft gagging sounds in the background.

Nott, showing his morbid sense of humor and unexpected artistic talent, drew him a very nice picture of Sirius Black dancing with a dementor. Hermione surprisingly had decided to share a similar sentiment in her present too as she gifted Harry a book on serial killers and their victims.
Severus was the only one who hadn't sent a gift, merely a message wishing Harry a merry Christmas. Which really, was just fine for Harry, because they both knew they wanted to exchange their presents in person after all.

Overall, it had been quite a lazy day opening presents, laughing at some of the less tasteful gifts from fans and suck-ups, and snacking.

"Oh wow," Penny blinks as Harry unwraps one of his last presents, taking out a brand new Firebolt out of the wrapping. "Who's that from?"

Harry scrabbles around the area for a note fruitlessly.

"This is quite the gift Harry," Mr. Fudge says approvingly, "Newest broom on the market, expensive stuff. Is it from the von Berne boy?"

"No, there's no name, nor a card," Harry answers, peering at the gift with mild curiosity.

Both Fudges frown, but in the end, they both shrug and dismiss it. If there was malicious intent the parcel wouldn't have bypassed the wards and it wasn't like getting anonymous gifts was rare when they gained the high status of Minister and Minister's wife. Still, usually, they would have an inkling to the identity of the sender, especially for a gift like this.

After Harry made the proper polite greetings with the Malfoys and unpacking with his other friends in the small ballroom they were all going to be sleeping in, Severus arrives, much to Harry's own delight. Quickly making a simple excuse for himself, Harry lets Draco and the others start playing with the Uno cards he had brought over while Harry joins the older wizard outside with a smile.

"Severus," He says, not even trying to hide how pleased he was.

"Harry," Severus replies with his own slight smile, "How has your new… guardians been treating you?"

"Very well, they've spoiled me silly the past few days really, I've chosen well for my self all things considered."

The potions master chuckles, "Not even trying to pretend you weren't completely oblivious in your adoption I see."

Harry shrugs with a coy look, "I'd like to keep some of the credit sir. Not many people can say they convinced the Minister of Magic to adopt them."

"True enough," Severus agrees, "Now about your late Christmas gift-"

"No, no, wait," Harry interrupts giddily, grinning wildly at the mention of Severus' gifts, "may I give my gift first? Please? Please?"

Severus feels like his insides are melting and squishing together pleasantly at the younger wizard's puppy-like enthusiasm. "Of course Harry."

With a beaming smile, Harry gifts him a black serpent-shaped bracelet with green eyes that shine almost as brightly as Harry's own. "Whenever you need it, it can inject small amounts of either pepper up potion or bezoar extract." He explains, very proud of himself for the making of the charm responsible. Handling a healing item like a bezoar was much harder for him considering his affinity and current physical weakness, but after getting Penny to test it out he's rather confident of the result.
Severus looks touched as he slides it onto his pale wrist, Harry can't help but look heatedly at the contrast between skin and metal. His hands should wear jewelry more often in his opinion. "Thank you Harry," he rumbles. "Really, this is... it's beautiful."

The Boy Who Lived blushes and preens.

"Okay, Okay, my turn now."

Severus pulls out a young pale silver rose from his robes, light dancing on the edges of it entrancingly. Harry blinks and looks cautiously at Severus, "Severus, this is gorgeous but…"

"Take it," The man says firmly, his dark eyes glinting playfully, "You'll understand when you do."

Tentatively, Harry complies, hoping fervently that the delicate plant won't wither. However, the moment he held the flower, he gasps. "This, this isn't real," Harry says in awe because it certainly looked like a real rose, colouring aside. And it even felt like a real rose save for the slightly sticky surface of the petals.

"No," Severus agrees smugly, "try consuming one of the petals." He encourages.

Deftly, Harry plucks one of the rose petals, watching intrigued as the rose grows back the lost petal slowly. Popping the soft silver and apparently edible flower piece into his mouth, Harry cannot help but giggle in pleasure as it dissolves on his tongue, like minty pop rocks. "Oh, oh! Oh wow," He looks at Severus with utter delight, "this is fantastic!"

"It also serves as a muscle relaxant and a headache reducer," Severus informs, proving the gift was made for more than just aesthetic appeal, not that Harry was surprised. Severus was a very thoughtful man, he could argue too thoughtful with his need to overthink everything. Still, Severus wasn't the only one touched at his gift. "I know you complain a lot about your stiff muscles and tension headaches so I thought I could adept the current potions solutions to- mnffh!"

Harry drags Severus down and kisses him fiercely, arms thrown around the man's neck once he could reach, and standing on his tip toes. Severus kisses back, just as fiercely, his own large hands supporting Harry as they splay themselves on Harry's back, pulling the younger wizard closer toward him. Harry could feel Severus' tongue, prodding questioningly at his mouth for access which he was about to willing allow when they hear Draco's voice.

"Harry!" Draco calls out from around the corner of the hall they were in, "We're doing a four on four quidditch game and I need you on my team to beat Nott's dumb-"

"Draco, language!" Narcissa calls out from somewhere.

"Sorry mother..."

Pulling away Harry shakes his head with a grin, pressing one last soft kiss against Severus' lips and backing away wistfully. "I guess I better go, see you at the gala?"

Severus sighs a put upon sigh, but the faint smile on his face betrays him, "Yes, I suppose you shall. I implore you not to traumatize your friends tonight, Lucius will never let it go if you mentally scar his precious son."

"Psh," Harry grinned, "who do you think I am?"

"-and then Jesus says, 'Well that's not a brown cow.'"
Everyone stares.

"Harry," Draco finally says, slow and horrified, like even his words didn't want to move out of his mouth, "that is the worst thing I've ever heard in my life."

"You dared me to tell one of my dirtiest stories."

Nott groaned as if in physical pain as Draco splutters and Blaise chokes on disbelieving laughter. "I cannot believe that you, you are the savior of the Wizarding World. We're doomed. Doomed I say."

"One of- what the fuck do muggles do in their free time?!" The Malfoy heir shrieks while everyone shushes him loudly for fear of summoning an irate Lucius or Narcissa into the small dance-room they've all camped out in.

"Come on let's talk about something else," Daphne sighs.

She and Pansy were also here because they begged not to be left out resulting in their respective families forcing every boy present at the slumber party to swear upon their magic not to touch them inappropriately. Well, except for Harry who had made it pretty darn clear where his allegiances lie if you know what he means.

"Okay, what about this, where do you see yourself in twenty years?"

"Twenty years from now I can guarantee you I will be Greengrass' second husband." Blaise declares immediately as if foretold by the stars.

"What happened to my first husband?" Daphne asks with mild curiosity.

"Nothing you can prove." Blaise says with a dark glimmer in his eyes before turning to stare at Theodore, "Isn't that right, Nott?"

Theodore gulped, "I really, really don't want to know. Let's do something else. Please."

"Have you ever hear of the game 'Fuck, Marry, or Kill?" Harry questions with a grin.

"I'm intrigued," Pansy leans forward from her mattress which they've all arranged to form a circle.

"I'm scared." Theodore volunteers dryly.

Daphne snorted, "You're always scared."

"And that shall be your downfall in Year Fourteen," Blaise ominously murmurs, rubbing his hands together slowly.

Draco sighed defeatedly, "What the hell, let's do this."

"That is not true!" Blaise laughs.

Draco, for his part, was positively pink in embarrassment.

"I would never have guessed Malfoy," Pansy drawled before descending into giggles, Daphne who's mattress was beside hers was biting the corner of her pillow to prevent some unladylike laughter coming out.

"Someone has a clear Gryffindor kink," Nott observed with a shit eating grin. Harry tutted and
wagged his finger at mock disapproval at Draco.

"Honestly Draco, where’s your House Spirit? Killing off Severus in favor of sex with Professor McGonagall? For shame."

"Not to mention marrying James Potter." Blaise snorted.

"Well I couldn’t exactly kill him off could I?!" Draco burst out.

Harry, son of James Potter, raised an eyebrow, "Uh, yes you can mate, kind of the point here. Honestly, it would’ve been less weird if you did kill him off. I killed him off in my choices." Mainly because the man would probably interfere with his metaphorical plan of marrying Severus and fucking McGonagall.

"Yeah, well," Draco gestured incoherently, embarrassed, "Fine. He’s not bad looking for a bloke and he is a rich pureblood, happy now?"

Everyone chirped their agreements with varying levels of satisfaction.

Draco groaned in relief, "Finally, okay my turn to pick- fuck, marry, kill; Dumbledore, Bellatrix Lestrange, Theodore Nott."

"I don't like how I was grouped into there but I applaud your horrible options, even if you are an utter wanker," Theodore says dryly while everyone silently contemplates. "Also, I would kill myself so I wouldn't have to stick my dick in any of the crazy."

"Nope," Harry grinned, "We already agreed that the person killed always happens after the fucking and marrying so you would still have to do the do before offing yourself."

"Bullocks," Theodore swore.

"This is a hard one," Pansy admitted.

"It's only hard because none of these options are particularly attractive for either fucking or marrying." Blaise hums. Theodore reaches out and smacks the young Zabini on the head.

"You've got one more minute," Draco hisses with a victorious smirk. Apparently, he was feeling vindictive from the last four rounds. But really, it was his own fault he kept not killing the Gryffindor options, once was ignorable, twice can be understandable, three times is more than a coincidence and any more is a straight up kink is what it is.

"You gotta marry Dumbledore." Daphne decides like she's slowly unlocking the pieces of a very intricate puzzle. "It's the only rational option."

"The only rational option?!" Theodore gives her an offended and betrayed glare.

"Politically and magically powerful, Wizarding England's constant darling for the last century practically so good standing, not poor and is old enough to die from mysterious circumstances if he gets too annoying." Harry nods, "Yeah, I can see it, but let me play devil's advocate here and say- marry Lestrange."

Everyone made a range of doubtful and disgusted noises.

"Harry, Bellatrix is my aunt and even I'm not biased enough to not see that woman is batshit insane." Draco points out.
"Yeah, but she's insane and in Azkaban." Harry stresses, "From what I understand, your mum is all Malfoy now, there is another sister who's married a muggle or something and cast out, and Sirius Black was not on good terms with his family, had to be to buddy up with my parents right?"

Everyone winced at the reminder of Harry's past, and how some of said past was too uncomfortably in the present.

"Sirius Black was disowned as well I think." Draco mutters, before his eyes widen, "And if Bellatrix is in Azkaban, then marrying her means-"

"Bingo!" Harry finger guns Draco, "Instant Black fortunes."

"Ohh, shite I never thought of that!" Pansy squealed.

"That is a lot of gold," Daphne reluctantly agreed, apparently she wasn't much of a fan of the idea, her dislike of Bellatrix outweighing the greed. Which tells Harry quite a bit, because there is a lot of gold involved and Daphne is quite greedy.

"Not to mention, insane aside, she's pretty hot," Blaise leers.

"I have the worst feeling you guys are going to kill me off." Theodore groaned.

"I'm sure someone won't." Pansy soothes.

"Is that someone you?"

Pansy coughs awkwardly, "Um..." Purposely not looking at Theodore she declares, "Marry Dumbledore, fuck Bellatrix, kill Theo."

"Kill Theo, marry Lestrange, fuck Dumbledore," Harry says next.

"Kill Theo-" "Oh come on!" "-fuck Lestrange, marry Dumbledore."

"I guess I'll fuck Theodore if no one else will," Daphne says long-sufferingly like she had volunteered to be martyred for something painful and tedious, "Kill Bellatrix and marry Dumbledore."

"Thank you."

"Hello," Harry smiled cheekily as he extended his hand out to greet Severus with, "Harry Potter, nice to meet you."

Severus, immediately catching on, shook his hand, letting it linger provocatively before he let the hand go, "Charmed to meet you Mr. Potter, Severus Snape."

The younger wizard's smile widened, clearly pleased Severus was willing to play along with him. "Severus Snape," Harry purrs, "What a gorgeous name, how very.. fitting."

The professor raised his eyebrows in mock surprise, "Mr. Potter, are you flirting with me?"

"And if I am?"

"Well, then," Severus says smoothly, tilting Harry's chin up with a finger, his breath ghosting over Harry's face. Harry closes his eyes and readies himself for the kiss.
And then the bastard backs away, "I would have to respectfully decline your advances as you're currently far too young to be legal."

Harry opened his eyes and blinked. And then he scowled. He likes his Severus kisses.

"Okay, so roleplaying isn't one of your strengths, we'll work on it." He mutters with faint irritation.

"Au contraire, Mr. Potter," Severus purrs, pushing his slightly less greasy locks from his face with an uncharacteristic cocky smirk and a, wait for it, a *wink*, "I am very good at roleplaying."

"O-oh," Harry can feel himself grinning stupidly as his face overheats. Absentmindedly he fans himself. He's never actually done roleplaying before unless you count the whole evil overlord and captured hero thing and all the various shades of that theme but it quickly grows stale in all its repetition. He's vaguely always wanted to try out new scenarios but the urge has never been as prevalent as right fucking now. He's honestly so excited he's speechless. "Uh, well, um, *wow.*"

Severus chuckled, "I'm glad to know I can affect you the same way you always insist on affecting me." Mercifully, the potions master doesn't comment on Harry's flustered state and moves on to other topics of conversation.

Harry ends up having a lovely time chatting with Severus during the Christmas gala after that. There was only one minor problem during the whole time they were together-

"May I have this dance?"

Harry and Severus stop their rather fascinating conversation on butterflies to stare at the newcomer- a handsome looking wizard with wine red robes and a cocky bad boy smirk that is surprisingly uncommon around these parts. You generally get haughty noble types or sunny puppies with very little variation in between. Harry would normally have been intrigued if not for one major factor.

"I'm sorry," Harry apologizes with a sweet smile before turning to gently but pointedly brush his hand on a glaring Severus' arm, "but I'm currently busy."

"Oh," The newcomer frowned, looking between Harry and Severus doubtfully, "Well, I'm sure you could-"

"Are your ears as second rate as your robes sir?" Severus sneered, "Mr. Potter said he was busy."

Luckily, the newcomer wasn't one of the elite guests invited and therefore more easily cowed by the tall, intimidating form of Hogwarts' resident potions master. Harry shook his head as he watched the man scamper away like a field mouse and Severus the irritated raven. "That is the fourth time already," he sighs, also frustrated. Harry had wanted Severus all to himself tonight.

"Indeed," Severus coolly murmurs, "your admirers seem to have grown to an international degree I see." The older wizard sounds very bitter and tired at the observation, unhappy at even more people to compare himself to Harry suspects.

"Hey," Harry grabs Severus hand, using his thumb to swipe back and forth soothingly against warm, rough skin, "The only one I truly want to be admired by, is standing right in front of me, sir."

"Dreadfully sappy of you to say," he retorts, but by the way Severus' shoulders relax to something far less tense, and how his eyes glittered, the comment definitely pleases him and his incredibly insecure ego. "I had thought you were enjoying the attention."

Harry shrugs because he's not wrong. "Of course I like it, to be perfectly honest I like it a lot but it's
hardly a contest between the clamor of strangers and you," he squeezes Severus's hand, blushingly demure. Romance was so embarrassing.

Severus squeezes back, letting his own thumb mimic Harry's previous motion of rubbing the other's hand in a calming gesture. They stand in silence for a minute, doing nothing but basking in each other's company and looking almost shyly at their entwined hands.

"You know," Harry finally says, breaking their very nice moment, "we could probably ward off more of my suitors if you would just claim me already."

Severus gave him a flat look, "I have repeatedly informed you that I refuse to do go any further until you become legally an adult in the eyes of the Wizarding world."

"I said claim, like, you know, marking a territory?"

"And you're the territory," Severus deadpans, "So essentially I should unbutton my trousers and piss all over you is that what you're implying?"

"Well, at least it's something," Harry mutters. Jesus, he meant a ring but whatever.

"What?"

"What?" Harry mirrors innocently.

"Harry..."

"Anyway," Harry rolls his eyes, damn Snape and his stupid dumb virtues, "It's not like I was asking you to let me kneel down in the middle of Malfoy's ballroom and finally get a taste your large, fat cock while everyone watches."

"That was," Severus' cheeks were a dark pink at this point, eyes straying almost unwillingly down at Harry's lips every few seconds as he licked his lips, "awfully specific."

"It is," Harry agrees, moving even closer until he and Severus' bodies just barely touched. Green eyes flashed daringly at the professor's. "Too bad we can't do anything about it."

Severus growls throatily, "Merlin, the moment you become legal I'll-"

Harry shivered, God, he loved that almost primal rough voice the potions master's tenor had dropped to. So full of dark promises. "Yesss," he hisses, "what will you do Severus?"

"I'll-"

"Excuse me, may I intrude and ask for a-"

"NO!" Both Harry and Severus snarls, causing the poor wizard to 'meep' and scurry away under the heat of two equally irate glares.

"Fifth time,"

"I see the intelligence of staking my claim on someone as attractive as you." Severus gritted through his teeth but after taking a deep breath, visibly calming and gathering his decorum in just one exhale. "However, you are still underage."

Harry pouted, "I guess," he sighs, "I am sorry I'm so impatient, it's just,"
"I know Harry," Severus equally as worn down, understandably, "trust me, I know far better than you."

"Probably, yes," Harry chuckles.

"Now, while I will not stake any such claim on you, I do think a small statement shall suffice, therefore," Severus offers Harry his elbow in an invitation, "may I have this dance Mr. Potter?"

Harry grinned and took his arm.

"I thought you'll never ask."

The rest of the holidays wasn't much to write home about, Harry had met up with the Weasleys a few times, the Grangers twice- Mr. Fudge was vaguely intrigued by the muggle electronics the first time around, the television especially. He had written weekly training regimes for Lupin that he expects him to do to the letter lest there be consequences. Visited the Ministry almost every other day for a few hours while Fudge had to go work, and made out with Severus numerous times whenever they 'coincidentally' met at the Malfoys.

Lucius, who had caught them the third time they did this- in his office no less- had not taken it well at first. Like, really not well. Some may even say hysterically terrible.

Severus says Lupin was still more fearsome in response to the revelation of their not-relationship relationship but Harry pointed out Lucius could blab to his wife at any time which was the scariest thing of all.

In the end, it all resolved quite nicely after Harry convinced Fudge to pass a particularly controversial extension for the number of dark items one could legally keep in one household, and Severus made a few very useful, very expensive potions to so kindly 'gift' to the Malfoys.

It turned out Lucius had admitted that after some thought he wasn't really that horrified, age difference aside. He had already conceded Harry to be intelligent and manipulative enough to know what he was getting into, though he was surprised at Severus for his lack of… well, a lot of things really. Lucius had also been and still is, horrified on Harry's personal preferences in men but that was a different sort of horror, which really wasn't that important. Of course, it still didn't stop him from demanding more stuff, to soothe his, and Harry quotes, 'irreparable mental disfigurement of all things decent'.

Either way, as enjoyable as it all was, Harry could say he was rather glad to be back in Hogwarts.

Mr. and Mrs. Fudge was great, but Harry had found he had greatly missed Severus' constant company that came with living with the dour man.

On the train, Harry had found that Hermione and Ron, while still on rocky grounds, seemed to have finally cooled down after a few weeks of separation. Neville had apparently been gardening all Christmas and had been loving it. And Blaise had invited Jonathan Perkins over to his manor during the last week of the holidays.

Blaise had admitted that tidbit of information very sheepishly, and while Harry had been disappointed in him for breaking their promise, strangely enough, it seemed like Blaise was more disappointed in Harry's own lackluster response.

Percy got a girlfriend, Penelope Clearwater, apparently, they've been circling around for months. Harry had earnestly congratulated them when he found out. Penelope had winked and
offered Harry a standing invitation for a threesome anytime. Apparently, she had insisted on some sort of list, which she had explained in depth to Harry while a deeply red Percy shoved his face into his hands and groaned. Harry liked Clearwater far after that. Ravenclaw has spunk, Percy deserves some spunk.

Sirius Black, crafty bitch, has still not been found. The dementors have been very apologetic when he had questioned them, the aurors assigned to the case though had been far more distraught at their failures, particularly the half creature ones. Harry really needs to talk to Fudge about looking into the Ministry's training regime for aurors. Because. Wow do they all sort of suck.

"Oh Harry, it's not fair to say all the aurors suck," Hermione says while she flips through her rune dictionary. Harry had decided to hang out in the Gryffindor common room the second evening back since he hadn't spent as much time with his friends of gold and red nearly as much as the ones of silver and green.

"My personal bodyguards all dressed as what they thought were modern-day female clothing for muggles when I wanted to go check out the muggle shops," Harry shook his head, "they came out in essentially Victorian ball gowns to my embarrassment, only one of the aurors was actually female. Didn't even think of using a notice me not spell until I demanded it, they were that confident of their disguises."

"Oh," Hermione looked up from her book with a frown, "Okay so that's pretty bad."

"They need to at least have a basic awareness of muggle culture," Harry complained, "I'm trying to convince Fudg-Cornelius to join me on my muggle explorations next holiday, he's already interested in the stories I got for him so it's a start."

"That's amazing Harry!" Hermione enthusiastically agreed, "I mean, even muggle studies here is frankly, so absurd. Like, the things they say.-"

Suddenly, a strangled yell of pure fury echoed down the boys' staircase, causing all the Gryffindor common room to fall silent. Harry straightened up from where he was sitting and frowned. That sounds like it came from where Ron was, he had gone off to give Scabbers medication just a few minutes ago.

Everyone watches the entrance to from where the yell originated, in wary anticipation as hurried footsteps echoed louder and louder, they even felt angry. Harry had a bad feeling.

Ron practically leaps out of the entrance, his face contorted in a near-feral snarl as he tightly grips a bedsheets. He snarls wildly at the curious onlookers before catching sight of Hermione and Harry and stomping over, face crimson with rage.

"LOOK!" he bellowed, shaking his bedsheets at the pair, "LOOK!"

Harry and Hermione exchanged bewildered, and to be honest, rather frightened glances. They have never seen Ron this upset that wasn't Malfoy-associated.

"Ron, what are-"

"SCABBERS! LOOK!"

Harry squinted at the sheet waving around in their faces, "Oh damn, is that blood?"

Ron nods like a mad person, "YES! BLOOD!" Ron screams, "SCABBERS IS BLOODY FUCKING GONE!" He chokes, looking grief-stricken for a moment before anger resurfaces back
as he turns to a wide-eyed Hermione and bares his teeth in the worst attempt at a smile ever, "AND YOU KNOW WHAT WAS ON THE FLOOR?"

"N-no," Hermione whispers shakily.

Ron violently threw a bunch of long, ginger hair strands onto Hermione's homework. Cat hair strands.

"W-well," Hermione tentatively says, "you know, that doesn't count as proof that Crookshanks actually—"

Harry closed his eyes. Well. That was certainly not the thing to say right now.

"OH COME OFF IT HERMIONE!" Ron burst out, so red he's puce now, "WE BOTH KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, IT WAS CLEARLY YOUR STUPID MANGY BEAST THAT KILLED SCABBERS! THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT, YOU NEVER TOOK MY COMPLAINTS SERIOUSLY AND NOW SCABBERS IS DEAD, DEAD I TELL YA!"

Hermione, so very different yet so similar to Ron at times, responds by standing her ground and shouting back, "YOU HAVE NO PROOF!" She stomps her foot, "CROOKSHANKS WOULDN'T DO THAT! THOSE HAIRS MAY HAVE BEEN THERE SINCE CHRISTMAS YOU DON'T KNOW! YOU'VE ALWAYS HATED CROOKSHANKS SINCE THE VERY BEGINNING, MAYBE IF YOU WERE LESS OF A PREJUDICED WANKER—"

"HOW DARE—"

"OKAY!" Harry shouts, letting some of his magic flare out suddenly, effectively silencing the Gryffindor pair. Immediately, Harry felt his human body ache in protest, much to his displeasure. He's more or less recovered but apparently, that was too much, too fast. Jesus, why is life so hard? "Okay, first off can someone get Ron a cool drink?"

Colin Creevley, always enthusiastic to help, trots up to pass Ron his bottle of water which Ron immediately gulps down. Yelling that much is always a bitch to your throat.

"Thank you, Colin," Harry politely says, making Colin blush, before turning back to Ron and Hermione, "Now, as for you two- Ron, I am so sorry about Scabbers, Hermione, while the hair isn't definite proof it's pretty damning considering the circumstances. House-elves would have cleaned the rooms during break so your excuse is not valid."

"But-!" Harry held up a hand to stop Hermione's protests.

"However, you do have a habit of letting Crookshanks run astray, something I've heard Ron complain about constantly, so there is a chance the cat is innocent and may have just rolled around Ron's bed before or after Scabbers'… disappearance." Now Ron looked like he was going to object, Harry quickly moves on to his conclusion, "therefore, I suggest maybe we look for Scabbers if he isn't… eaten, he should still be around somewhere in the area."

"I could do a 'Point Me' spell to see where Scabbers is," Percy steps in, much to Harry's relief.

"Please do."

"Point me, Scabbers," Percy intones, and everyone watches intently as he places his wand on the table, letting it spin. And spin. And spin.

Percy frowned. "Well. That's not right."
"I knew it, he's dead!" Ron wailed.

The prefect shook his head, "No, if Scabbers was dead the wand wouldn't have responded at all. Or at least, it would have worked and led us to his corpse."

"If he's hidden somewhere with a privacy charm or something similar, that could explain it?" Katie Bell mused.

"I don't know," Fred frowns, "A lot of people have privacy charms on things but you can usually do a Point Me on them."

"Well, that's the item itself," George argues, "it may not necessarily work if the item you're searching for is inside that. I got to agree with Bell here."

"But we don't do privacy charms on our trunks do we?" A second-year questions unsurely, "I mean, I just have basic locking charms and stuff." There's a lot of people that nod in agreement.

"Well, for the ones with larger expansion charms, generally we add extra things like privacy and warding." One of the older Gryffindors points out, "but honestly, I can't see a kneazle being able to figure that sort of thing out anyway."

"What if Weasley's rat escaped to the Forbidden Forest?" Lavender Brown pipes up, "I heard all the magic concentrated in there can mess up basic spells and stuff."

Someone else snorted, "You're not wrong, but if the rat found itself in that forest of nightmares it's pretty fucked either way."

"Oh yeah? But what if-" And then the whole tower descended into petty squabbling and conspiracy theories.

Harry turns away from the ruckus to look at Ron who looks to be near tears. Giving a brief look at a sullen but guilty Hermione who seems to be hesitating between edging closer or further away from Ron, he waves her off, giving her a way out which she quickly takes with a silent apology. "Hey," Harry murmurs, patting the morose redhead on the back and leading him away from the common room, "why don't we go down to the kitchens for a bit, we can eat and I can ask the house elves to keep a lookout for Scabbers?"

"That, that sounds good," Ron mumbles back, wiping his eyes with the back of his hand as they walk, "can we, uh, can we go flying afterward?"

Harry smiles, "Sure Ron, someone gave me a Firebolt for Christmas you know? I was wondering if you want first go?"

"Yer the best mate."

While Ron calmed down since then on his overall grief on losing Scabbers, who hasn't been found for days since the disappearance, his ire at Hermione however, failed to be extinguished. It didn't help that the equally stubborn Gryffindor witch refused to back down on her cat's innocence. Ron's even gone so far as to actively search out Harry even while knowing Harry was hanging out with the Slytherins, which, if you knew Ron, meant serious stuff.

It wouldn't have been a huge problem if it wasn't the fact that when Ron seeks him out, its usually after some sort of argument or passive aggressive whatever which of course meant Ron wasn't exactly the pinnacle of calm when he came. And of course Draco, for all his goals of being a stoic
pureblood noble, was easy enough to rile up resulting in constant fights.

And if there wasn't fighting, you could bet there was at least some bemoaning about Hermione. Harry sort of forgets everyone is still thirteen, fourteen-year-olds but at times like these he remembers and he wants to die.

"Aw come on Ron, can't you be a little nicer?" Harry sighs, already tired at all this squabbling, apparently, Hermione cried when Ron ditched her for Harry for the nth time, "I mean, you didn't even like Scabbers that much. And he's a pretty old man already, so,"

"Harry, Scabbers may have been old, and boring, and smelly, and-" Ron shook his head before he went deeper, "the point is, Scabbers was still mine, and he's like, he's practically family you know? Been there since I can remember really."

Harry nodded solemnly, maybe he was being a bit harsh in regards to Ron, he supposes this was just his way of working through the grief. Harry isn't sure he's gone through real grief before. Sort of hard to when you hang around with people generally with a status of, equal to, or above, immortal god. Even the mortals he does grow fond of, he keeps after their death in his collection room until he puts them back into the reincarnation cycle which he could always watch over anyway if he desired. The last time he checked, his favourite bloodthirsty werewolf was one of those gruff hard-boiled detective cops with some angsty revenge backstory that involved the death of his wife because of cop reasons.

God, Harry is so over cop reasons. They're bigger cliches than vengeful ghost reasons.

Anyway, back to Ron. Harry gives him an apologetic look and a one-armed shoulder hug that was only slightly awkward, "Sorry Ron, I guess that was pretty shitty of me to say."

"Yeah well," Ron shrugs, "I mean, I guess I still have my family and-"

They stare at each other. Harry with an eyebrow raised and Ron looking incredibly guilty as he rewound what he had just said.

"Well. That was a shi-"

"That was totally a shitty thing to say."

They stare at each other some more.

"So."

"So." Harry echoes.

"Even?"

"Totes bruh." Harry drawls in his best dude voice.

Ron shook his head and laughs, "Honestly, mate, you say the strangest things sometimes."

That night Ron got a midnight visit by a knife-wielding Sirius Black.

Really, this poor kid could not catch a break here.

Neither could Neville really. Honestly, he's got to stop writing those Gryffindor passwords. Harry quietly snatches up Hermione that afternoon and asks her to help Neville with his memory problem.
While grateful for one of her friends still talking to her, she had to apologize reluctantly as apparently, she was far too busy with all her schoolwork to help. Harry, seeing Hermione's fear at him getting angry at her, tries to smile reassuringly at her.

So, maybe Hermione's not having the best year either. Honestly, it's *Harry* who's meant to be pursued by a serial killer and yet it seems he's having a pretty fucking good time so far. Huh.

"It's okay Hermione, I'll go ask Diggory or something," Harry pats her shoulder, "Maybe even get a hot Ravenclaw to give me tips. Anyway. Why don't we go to the library to study for a bit later?"

Hermione beams, "Yeah, I, I would like that Harry. Thanks."

"No problem, despite what Ron feels right now, we are still friends, *all* of us. He'll realize it eventually." He probably would realize it faster if Hermione admits even the possibility that her cat is to blame for Scabbers but Harry decides to not say that part lest she bursts into tears. "But seriously, I hear Neville isn't exactly in a good place with everyone either, it might be nice to spend some time with him."

The bushy haired witch looks thoughtfully at that. "I guess that's true… I mean, I could always help him out a bit while I work, he's rather quiet anyway."

Harry silently cheers. Two birds, one stone. "That's fantastic," he tells her, "Well, I gotta go try and convince Severus to finally let go of his inner urges and ravish me already, I'll see you at around four?"

Hermione shook her head, but she was grinning outright now, "You're not even trying to hide your weird Snape thing anymore."

"Severus did say that as long as I'm considered a proper wizarding adult in the eyes of the law he'll consider it," Well, consider is quite a weak word. That implies the man actually has something to *consider*. Of course, Harry's not dumb enough to tell Hermione that. It's alright if people know of his infatuation but a whole different story the other way round.

"Oh, well," The girl frowns slightly before shaking her head again. Hermione really likes to shake her head at a lot of things actually. She giggles impishly, looking far less sad and tired than she had been for days, "I guess I'll cheer you on? Not that you really need it but Professor Snape is quite-"

"Quite what, Miss Granger?" The smooth, baritone voice of Severus Snape slid into the conversation, making both Harry and Hermione jump. Honestly, Harry's senses weren't the best in human form but he should have noticed *something*. For a wizard with billowing robes so dramatic they should have their own red carpets rolled out for them, Snape was very good at sneaking up on people.

Hermione pales, making a faint noise much like a baby sheep in response. Harry, heroically steps in with a sly, flirtatious smile. "What I'm sure Hermione was going to say, *Professor*, was that Professor Snape is quite the dashing gentleman who will be quite stubborn to seduce."

Severus raises a faintly disbelieving brow, "Is that so Miss Granger?"

Hermione chokes. Harry has to cover his mouth with his hand to hide his snickering.

Taking that as answer enough, Severus nods with faked seriousness and then wordlessly walks away. Harry exaggeratedly cranes his neck in the man's direction to pointedly check out his professor's figure as he leaves. Hermione smacks him upside the head.
"Are you serious?" She hisses, looking dreadfully mortified.

Harry laughs. "I know, Snape has such a lovely sense of humor doesn't he?"

"That's humor?!"

Harry shrugs, "Well that was him playing along, he's very good at that, sometimes even I have trouble telling if he's joking or not."

Hermione stares at him before she shakes her head again. "I like you, Harry, I do, but you have such weird taste."

Harry hums, neither disagreeing nor agreeing. "Yes, well, I really must go, I do need to ask Sev-Snape about something and I might as well do it now."

"Right, good luck then," Hermione smiles, Harry smiles back.

"So that's how they did it."

Harry shrugs. Severus doesn't notice, too busy glaring at the parchment spread out on their dining room table. "You have to admit Severus, it's pretty cool,"

"It is an elaborate piece of charms work," He grudgingly admits as he traces his name written into the map, exactly where he was standing. It was a little unnerving. The potions master looks up at Harry, "Who else other than the twins know you're in possession of it."

"No one else really, and honestly, I would like to keep it that way."

Severus nods, "Fair enough, I would like to show the other head of houses and Albus though."

Harry thought it over but shook his head, "No, only if you really think you have to but I rather not show this off unnecessarily. The twins may have only kept the Marauders Map secret for pranking reasons, but, like,"

"The consequences for such a map are far-reaching, especially considering the type of defense professors Albus likes to hire," Severus finishes for him. Harry flutters his eyes and only half-jokingly swoons.

"Have I ever said how attractive you get when you verbalize my thoughts before I can figure out a way to?"

Severus gave the younger wizard an exasperated yet affectionate look, "You have an incredibly irregular view of attractiveness, I hope you aware."

Harry grins cockily as he slides to sit next to his favourite professor, pushing up against his side much like an affectionate cat, "All I'm hearing is I have far fewer rivals to contend with."

The older man snorts at the idea, Harry can practically feel Severus' dubiety and self-loathing exuding out of him. Hoping to rectify some of that gigantic pile of insecurity, Harry wraps his arms around Severus' own arm in a tight hug. Severus doesn't comment on the action but seems to relax into Harry in response.

"Anyway," Harry continues, taking the Slytherin's cue and ignoring the rather intimate positions they were in, "we can close the map by touching it with our wand and inciting 'Mischief Managed'." He mirrors his own words while he one-handedly hugs Severus arm devotedly. "Want to try?"
"Surprisingly yes," The man gave him a rather nasty grin that made Harry's heart flutter a little, "I quite like the irony of using this against Black." He taps his wand against the parchment and gleefully intones, "I solemnly swear I'm up to no good."

No map was revealed. Instead, to their confusion words appeared on the smooth surface of the parchment. Briefly, Harry is reminded of Mr. Riddle's diary. Even Mr. Riddle seemed to be intrigued at the similarity, Harry could feel him peering out at the forefront of his mind

'Mr. Mooney would like to scoff and say Snape is always up to no good.'

Harry could feel Severus' arms tense, his body stiff like a frozen corpse. Harry squeezed the man's arm harder but this time was ignored in favour of the continued writings scrawling onto the map.

'Mr. Prongs agrees with Mr. Mooney and would like to add that Mr. Snape is an ugly git.'

Well. This is not going to go well. Harry can tell.

"Mr. Padfoot would like to register his astonishment that an idiot like that ever managed to get his dirty smelly hands on this paper in the first place."

Oh shit. Harry thinks Severus is literally trembling with rage. He hopes the map is fireproof. Actually, he hopes Lupin is fireproof. Either way, he's fairly sure Severus is going to set something aflame.

'Mr. Wormtail bids Mr. Snape good day, and advises him to wash his hair, the slimeball.'

Well. This was certainly a very new level of petty going on here.

Harry at this point was pretty much koala bear-ing the furious potions master's arm to keep the wizard in his place. Severus has gone from trembling to vibrating with anger.

"Those bastards," he snarls, understandably upset.

Untangling himself from Severus, Harry sits up and quietly coaxes Severus to look at him with gentle but persistent touches, "Hey, hey," he shushes much like one might do when trying to calm a wild beast or frightened prey, "None of that shit is true you know?"

Severus rolls his eyes and scoffs his protests but Harry shushes him again, leaning up to kiss him once, twice, and another for good measure. "Well, it's hardly true to me," he amends, because he's the entity of death, and therefore never have or probably will be an expert in mending anything, much less Severus' insecurities, and other such issues. In fact, he finds the brokenness rather quite enchanting. "Besides, like, two of them are dead, one is an insane criminal escapee and Lupin, well, he's doing better now but he was kind of a wussy pussy."

Severus coughs in a failed attempt to hide his unseemly snort of reluctant amusement, "I, well, I do suppose you're right."

Harry gives him a wry look and a crooked grin, "Of course I am, you should know I am almost always right."

"There is a staggering amount of evidence that says otherwise," The Head of Slytherin finds the corners of his lips twitching upwards, he sighs, "but I do suppose, in this instance, you are correct."

"I'll take it," Harry chirps, then a little more seriously he adds, "I am sorry for… that."
Severus sobers immediately at the reminder, "No, it's hardly your fault." He mutters but its clear that the bitter resentment provoked by the map will hardly fade so quickly. Harry wonders what had happened to cause such animosity between the two parties, the map must be keyed into Severus' magic in some way or form to even recognize him. That's some serious amount of effort to add onto the already delicate charms work of the map itself. It's frankly amazingly impressive all things considering.

Not that Harry was stupid enough to say that out loud.

"So, now that you're feeling a little better," Harry begins casually, leaning into Severus' side and looking up at the wizard with wide green eyes and a flirty smile, "shall we improve your mood further by figuring out how to best defend against Sirius Black with his own map or," he caresses the sharp angles of the older man's face suggestively, "you can desecrate it by making out with James Potter's gorgeous and very willing to the point of desperate son on top of it instead?"

The potions master made a thoughtful humming noise as he stares down at Harry with dark eyes and his own faint smile, "I believe," he begins, voice solemn and low, "we may have to test both those options thoroughly before I can make an informed decision."

Other than Hermione finally snapping and leaving Trelawney's class for, most likely, good and Smith's appeal to execute Buckbeak failing, not much has happened since. Sirius Black seemed to be almost forgotten, with only a few whispers and rumors to remind everyone he was still around. The upcoming exams, however, were hardly as subtle and soon enough everyone, even Harry, was hitting the books.

Percy, with his dreams of joining the Ministry, had become increasingly on edge for his NEWT exams, which makes sense since those are the tests that really make or break a student. Hermione however, has somehow gone above and beyond even Percy's stress levels which is frankly, quite mental.

"She's got like, two exams happening at the same time," He whispers to Harry as they walk to the library. Harry had asked Ron to come along to study with Hermione and he had surprisingly agreed. Apparently, even Ron, with his current resolve to ignore the girl, was getting increasingly concerned for her. "I mean, it doesn't look like she's slept for days either, the exams are really getting to her I think."

"I wonder if the professors are just letting her do certain exams at different times," Harry muses, "I mean, how else could it be done?"

Ron shook his head, "That's just it mate, they're not. I have no bloody idea what she's supposed to do but they aren't giving her, her own personal exam time or anything."

"Well, that's ridiculous," Harry scoffs, "it's not like it would be that hard for them to do so, I mean, at least for the more theory-driven stuff like arithmancy or history."

Unfortunately, Hermione had little patience for Harry and Ron's questions and concerns, getting snappish and defensive on the topic. In the end, the boys quickly realized they were getting nowhere and decided to stop in favour of recalling the sixteen most common uses of potions generally made under an eclipse. Somewhere along the way Draco and the other Slytherins, slithered in to join them.

Harry hardly had to worry about his own marks, save for the practical side of Herbology which really couldn't be helped. He thinks his black thumb has honestly gotten worse since the coma. He's
going to unashamedly and unreservedly blame Fawkes, the stupid overgrown candlestick, for that too.

Either way, after almost two grueling weeks of studying and examinations, Harry finally came to his last exam, divination. Thank god. The class where the bullshitting of the talentless is not only punished but rewarded by the dumb and gullible. No offense to Fate. But seriously.

"She's seeing us all separately," Neville informed them as Harry and Ron went to sit down next to him. They all then cracked their copies of *Unfogging the Future* open at various different chapters. Because you may be able to bullshit the stuff you see in a teacup but these people are very strict with the symbolism of each image presented. "Okay. So. Am I just a moron or have you guys been pretending to see things in a crystal ball too?" Neville groans as he furiously traces a single sentence about what a hedgehog would represent for men and how the colors alter the interpretation.

"I'm gonna level with you Neville," Ron says, doing something similar, "I don't think anyone has been seeing anything in those balls."

As the line to the classroom grew shorter, the people still waiting grew proportionately more agitated, it didn't help that the people who had finished the exam were adamant they not tell anyone about their exam lest they incur a terrible tragedy as foreseen by Professor Trewalney.

"It's pretty smart of her," Harry comments idly as the eighth person scurries off with fear in their eyes as they ignore everyone's insistent questions to know more, "I'm pretty sure she made up that accident thing, I mean, eight times is too much of a coincidence really, but no one is going to test that if they had the chance."

Ron ground his teeth as he tapped his textbook anxiously, "You know, maybe Hermione was right about her being, being absolute rubbish, a fraud, I mean, it's not like we haven't had idiots with no clue what they're doing teach us before."

"I don't think she's completely a fraud," Harry murmurs as he skims through the chapter on key symbols to remember, "she's worked here far too long to be one, though I do believe she plays up a lot of her accusations as actual prophecy which can easily be self-fulfilled as long as you believe in it hard enough."

"Yeah, well, wish she could hurry it up either way b-"

"Ronald Weasley," Professor Trewalney calls out as Lavender Brown comes down the ladder.

"Hey," Harry giggles, "that was pretty good timing for a fraud isn't it Ron?"

"Aw, shaddup," Ron grimaces before he goes to climb up the ladder, leaving Harry alone to twiddle his thumbs and reread his quick notes on colour symbolism.

After fifteen minutes Ron reemerged looking a mix of exhausted and relieved. "Did shit," he tells Harry, "Didn't see a damn and made some stuff up, but she didn't seem very convinced and I forgot what orange means-" Then he grins, "But whatever, I'm done at least, should I wait for you?"

Harry shook his head, "Nah, I'll meet you outside Hagrid's hut later? Hagrid invited us over partly to celebrate the whole 'not letting Smith kill Buckbeak' and also he said he had a surprise for you especially Ron."

"Sweet, hope it's not another new rock cake recipe," Ron pats Harry on the back, "good luck mate, not that you need it."
"To be fair, you should've studied a little more,"

"Ugh, you sound like Hermione."

"Well-"

"Harry Potter!"

"That's your cue, Harry."

"Yeah, yeah, see you later then."

Harry has to admit, out of all the classrooms he's been in, the divination room is possibly the worst. Especially in summer where the limited ventilation, over-generous use of incense and candles, and the absence of dusting really maximizes the total lack of comfortability in the overall atmosphere. At least the seats are nice.

Professor Trelawney gestures for Harry to sit in front of her, where a large crystal ball sits on the desk between them, "Come, come, my dear, sit and gaze into the orb."

Quietly Harry complies with a sweet smile that Trelawney mirrors dreamily.

"Now, take your time, tell me what you see, don't leave a single detail."

Harry sighs but leans forward to gaze intensely into the crystal. This was so utter trite, they only had a week with the crystal ball and months working with teacups, yet the whole exam relies on one aspect of divination. Didn't she say everyone responds better to different types? God.

Staring so hard, his nose could've brushed the surface if he even breathed too hard, Harry half-heartedly wills the damn thing to show him something, anything other than the swirling mists of white while mentally trying to construct a believable lie much like Ron. Possibly something about death, because he's very good at that.

"Um, okay, so the mist is slowly getting less foggy and I can see, uh, a- wHOA!" Harry yelps and almost tips his chair back in shock as a large hand suddenly leaps out of the fog, hitting the glass surface right in front of his eyes.

Professor Trelawney sits up, just as startled at Harry's reaction, "Wha-what is it, Mr. Potter?"

Harry doesn't say anything, just stares in mute bewilderment as the hand quickly wipes away most of the fog like it was a misted bathroom mirror before revealing the grinning face of Fate. Fate waves and winks. Harry's mouth drops open. He can't hear her but it's not a very hard estimate from the way her shoulders shake and one hand delicately covers her mouth while the other points at him, that she's laughing at his dumbfounded face.

"Mr. Potter?" Professor Trelawney tentatively prods. "Care to explain what you're seeing?"

"Umm," Well, at least he doesn't have to lie about this, "Okay so out of the mist comes out this hand-"

"A hand?" The woman's eyes light up with eager curiosity before scribbling into her parchment so quickly it could rival Rita Skeeter and her Quik Quotes Quill. "Interesting very interesting, did this hand reveal anything, my dear?"

"A woman," Harry says, then with a sharp grin he adds, "one with too much make up," Fate gave an
exaggeratedly hurt expression, "it looks like she's in agony."

"Oh my." The divinations professor breathes out, "tell me, do you recognize her?"

"Yes, but not in this lifetime," Harry says as stoic and solemn as he could possibly muster while his fellow entity made crude gestures and funny faces at him. Jesus Christ, he's admittedly missed her but this was so inconveniently annoying that he's surprised that it wasn't planned by- and now a grinning Chaos pushes Fate to the side and waves at Harry, at Death. "Now there's a man there by her side."

"Does the man happen to have dark messy hair like yours perhaps?" Trelawney prompts, "and the woman might be a redhead?"

Oh, she thinks it's the Potters he's seeing. Fuck he should have done that instead, what an easy win that would've been.

He shakes his head much to her obvious disappointment, "The man has red hair, but not Weasley red, sort of like a burnt orange, it is pretty messy though," Chaos looks deeply offended as he pats his hair as if comforting it, Harry can practically hear the ridiculous things he's cooing to his hair to soothe its nonexistent feelings, "and the woman has hair that's black at the top but gradually turns white when it reaches the end," Harry looks at his professor and says with a straight face, "I think she represents old age."

Fate flips him off while it seems like Chaos is howling in delight. Harry can't help but feel warm at the sight.

'Who are they?' Mr. Riddle, attracted to the change in Harry's mind comes out of whatever shadowy part of the mindscape he had been before to peer into the forefront of his mind curiously, 'I've never seen them before.'

'You wouldn't, they're two of my siblings,'

Tom's shock was palpable. 'You have-

"Well Mr. Potter," Professor Trelawney says, sounding very satisfied if a bit puzzled, "this has been a very... enlightening session. I can't exactly take points for your lack of interpretations since we've never gone over what you should decipher when you see humans in your predictions, no, no, it's quite rare you see? Something we were supposed to touch next year. However you have done quite a marvelous job, a hand sweeping through the mist, a red-headed man and a woman with unusual monochrome hair, such intriguing visions..."

Harry politely thanks her for her time, though he's sure she didn't hear it, too lost in her own musings. Taking advantage of this, Harry takes one last long back at Chaos and Fate who seem to be squabbling about their hair from the looks of it. With a gentle tap on the glass to gather their attention, Harry smiles at them and waves, to which Chaos grins brightly and waves back. Fate, however, apparently had other plans as she waggles her perfectly trimmed eyebrows and points behind her where Trelawney was.

"IT WILL HAPPEN TONIGHT."

Harry snaps his head up and sure enough, the divinations professor had changed, looking like she was mid-seizure as her head was thrown back, eyes unfocused and mouth gaping unnervingly open. Out from her mouth came a voice harsh and loud, so different from her usual light and dreamy tone.

"THE DARK LORD LIES ALONE AND FRIENDLESS, ABANDONED BY HIS FOLLOWERS."
HIS SERVANT HAS BEEN CHAINED THESE TWELVE YEARS. TONIGHT, BEFORE MIDNIGHT... THE SERVANT WILL BREAK FREE AND SET OUT TO REJOIN HIS MASTER. THE DARK LORD WILL RISE AGAIN WITH HIS SERVANT'S AID, GREATER AND MORE TERRIBLE THAN EVER HE WAS. TONIGHT... BEFORE MIDNIGHT... THE SERVANT... WILL SET OUT... TO REJOIN... HIS MASTER..."

"Isaiah?" Harry blinks, a revelation dawning onto him quickly, "The Prophet, Isaiah, is that you?"

"... LORD DEATH?" The harsh voice brightened into something far more friendly, "OH HELLO SIR! I HEARD YOU WERE ON VACATION?"

"Yeah, that's why I'm here," Isiah laughs, his voice still booming and loud, but generally that's what happens when you speak through a human mouthpiece. "I'm surprised you're doing this sort of grunt work Isaiah."

"BEING A PROPHET OF THE LORD IS SORT OF BORING WHEN YOU HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO SAY NO ONE LISTENS TO YOU ANYMORE ANYWAY," Isiah sighs mournfully, "JEREMIAH AND EZEKIAL HAVE TRIED TO SPREAD WORD ON THE HEATING OF THE EARTH BUT IT WAS APPARENTLY, AND I QUOTE, 'EASIER TO CONVINCE PEOPLE OF THE EXISTENCE OF HEAVEN AND THAT HEAVEN WAS FILLED BY MAGICAL BIRD PEOPLE.'"

"Yes, well, can't really help you there kid," Harry shrugs, "So that's why you volunteered to do this then?"

"WHY NOT?" If Harry could see the prophet he is sure he would be shrugging, "NEW UNIVERSE, NEW EXPERIENCE AND ALL THAT. DIDN'T THINK I WOULD SEE YOU HERE SIR, AS THE BOY-WHO-LIVED TO BOOT!" The voice of Isiah devolved into laughter again. It wasn't that funny. Really, this is why Death had insisted to put the prophets back into reincarnation once they've had a hundred years of heaven but no, Fate had insisted they'll attain a similar status to angels and now there's a lack of jobs available for prophets and as a consequence they're all half mad with boredom.

Harry sighs again. "So what's with this prophecy then?"

"SORRY SIR, CAN'T SAY," the prophet chirps gleefully because half the pleasure of being a prophet is to watch people flounder over what they say until they're reduced to tears and paranoia. This is why prophecies suck. "AND MY TIME IS RUNNING OUT. GOOD TO HEAR FROM YOU AGAIN THOUGH SIR, HOPE TO-"

Professor Trelawney shudders herself back awake, completely unaware that her body was used as a mouthpiece for one of the four major prophets in the Old Testament of the Bible. "I'm so sorry, dear boy," she said dreamily, "the heat of the day, you know... I drifted off for a moment..."

"Ah, yes, don't worry Professor," Harry quickly assures. "For a moment I was quite worried for your health."

"You are such a sweet child," she croons, "it is such a pity you are constantly surrounded by marks of death."

Harry choke on his laughter, "Yes, a pity indeed." He murmurs with a smile before leaving.

His mortal life was really quite ridiculous.
Harry ends up meeting Cornelius, much to his pleasant surprise and Cornelius' obvious delight, on his way to Hagrid's hut.

"Cornelius!" Harry greets, before flusterling as he switches to, "I mean, dad, no, father, sir."

"Harry, I keep telling you it's okay to call me whatever you feel like calling me," he guffaws.

"Yes but I'm in some sort of purgatory transition thing right now," Harry sheepishly explains, "When I figure out what I'm most comfortable with I'll tell you... dad... Cornelius... Mister C?"

"Okay, maybe not the last one," Fudge shook his head with a wide grin, "So how was your exams, Harry? I hear you're quite a little honors student, not that I really doubted that but, well,"

"My exams were fine Cornelius," Harry reassures with a smile, "Though I wouldn't hold my breath on my Herbology grade, got a bit of a black thumb." They both laugh at that.

"I wasn't very good at Herbology either, to be honest," The Minister confesses with a wink, "Potions and Transfiguration too but I was quite handy with my charms."

"So what brings you here sir?"

"Well, it's been almost a full year since Sirius Black escaped as you know," Fudge shudders, "I've come to double check security here, Amelia Bones has suggested we tighten defenses around Hogwarts you see? She's currently looking to converse with her aurors and some of the professors to determine what measures should be set."

Harry nods his approval. Finally, some proper protocols and decision making happening in the wizarding world. He's proud of Cornelius for even considering Bones' advice since Harry knows, just months before, the man probably wouldn't have done half as much as he had now. "That's great! Will you be staying for dinner at least?"

Fudge hums, "I suppose I could stick around, I do miss the Hogwarts house elves' custard tarts."

The younger wizard grins, "Awesome, listen, I have to meet some of my friends but maybe I'll meet you at dinner then?"

Fudge smiles back. Really, the minister doesn't want to brag but he may have the best child in the wizarding universe, adopted or blood-related. "I'll be happy to see you at dinner Harry, I'll even ask Dumbledore if you can sit at the teachers' table with me as a special treat." He indulges.

"Wow, really? That will be swell!" Harry gushes, a little part of him wants to die at how thick he tends to lay it on in front of Fudge but the results really do speak for themselves as Fudge puffs up proudly.

"I'll probably go see Argus before then if your meeting with your friends ends early and you still want to talk to your old man."

Harry chuckles, "I'll keep that in mind. See you later then."

"Don't get into too much trouble Harry."

Harry trots off with a roll of his eyes. Honestly, when has he ever gotten into trouble?

"Wow, Hermione, Ron, you've multiplied." Harry comments mildly.
"Hardy har, Harry," Theodore deadpans. "I see Blaise hasn't fucked a sense of humor into you yet."

"To be fair," Draco drawls, "Blaise has a pretty shite sense of humor so we can't know either way."

"Wow, someone's jealous that they screwed up the last potions question." Blaise shot back. Harry raises his brow and looks questioningly at Draco.

"What, seriously, that one about Pepper up and Calming potions?"

"Even I got that one," Ron pipes up.

"I misread the question!" Draco burst out, clearly, that has been eating him up for hours, "So sue me, I made up for it in the practically bit." He grumbles.

"So," Harry says, ignoring Draco much to Draco's indignation, "seriously what are you doing hanging around Hagrid's place?"

"We weren't," Blaise shrugs as he kisses Harry on the cheek, "but we saw the Gryffindor duo heading out here and we figured if we tagged along you'll show up eventually."

"Essentially Harry bait." Hermione summarizes with a wry smile.

Theodore shrugs, "Not like Ron hasn't treated us like that the past few weeks."

"And that's how they convinced us to let them tag along," Ron finishes.

"Well," Harry says, "then what are we waiting for? Let's go see Hagrid and what he has for Ron then."

Everyone cheers with varying enthusiasm.

The overall enthusiasm of the cheers increased exponentially when Hagrid reveals what he has, or who he has to be exact.

"SCABBERS!" Ron cries out with relief, grabbing the rat from Hagrid's giant hands reverently.

"Huh," Harry says, "so he did hide out by the Forbidden Forest. I think someone in Gryffindor has won a great deal of money."

"Found 'im in the milk jug," Hagrid explains, "poor thing slipped right in."

"I hope you didn't drink the milk afterward," Draco sniffs, sipping his tea as he eyes the interior of the hut with horrified awe, like he couldn't comprehend anyone, certainly not someone as large as Hagrid, to be able to live here voluntarily.

"Of course he didn't," Hermione smoothly replies, "he wouldn't have enough for your tea after all."

Draco promptly spat out his tea causing everyone to laugh.

"But seriously, Weasley, no offense but your rat looks terrible," Theodore observes as the group bids Hagrid farewell and begins making their way back to the castle. And it was hardly something anyone could deny looking at the rat. Scabbers was the thinnest he had ever been, there were bald and uneven patches of fur and his he smelt like old milk and morning breath.

"Yeah he does but, ah," Scabbers was writhing in Ron's grasp, looking desperate to free himself. "Scab- what, Scabbers, it's okay Scabbers there's nothing here to hurt you!"
"Maybe he's hungry?" Draco asks at a safe distance from Ron and the dirty looking rodent. "Blaise has some bread in his pocket still I think."

"What happened to 'all snakes have to stick together'?" Blaise grumbles but fishes out a small piece of bread from his robe pocket which Harry took to try feed Scabbers. The rat pauses for a moment to gaze up with faint adoration at Harry and the offered bread but quickly resumes his quest for escape.

"Well that didn't work," Harry frowns, "he must be really spooked about something."

"It can't be Crookshanks," Hermione says, Ron glares at her, "No, I'm serious, Crookshanks isn't here right now, why would Scabbers be still going mental?"

"The fear of your cat could've made Scabbers gone mental in the first place!" Ron hotly argues, "And- Scabbers seriously, you, damn, it's me Ron Scabbers, you bloody dumbass, Scabbers, stop, stay still- SHIT!" Ron yowls, "He bit me!"

"Oh shit, that's blood," Blaise mutters.

"Um, Hermione?" Harry pipes up as he sees wide yellow eyes skulking toward them under the fading light of the setting sun, "What is your cat doing here?"

Everyone turns their attention to where Harry was looking at with wide eyes. Scabbers, taking the lull of attention to his advantage wriggles out of Ron's fingers, hitting the ground and running away. Crookshanks in response immediately sprang up after him.

"Oh Merlin, Ron was right," Hermione moans, "Crookshanks go away! Please! Leave!"

Ron wasted no time and immediately sprints in the same direction. After a moment's hesitation, everyone else follows.

Harry, with his lowered physical abilities, found himself at the back of the group with, unsurprisingly, Draco who Harry has personally never seen lift more than two textbooks. Crabbe and Goyle usually help hold the Malfoy heir's heavier items. "Fucking, hah, fuck," Draco groans as they sprint around a tree, "Weasley better, better, Merlin, shit, my sides hurt,"

"I, ah, I think he got him," Harry pants as he looks at the distance. Sure enough, they meet the rest of the equally sweaty and tired looking group, surrounding Ron who was sprawled on the ground with his hands tight around a quivering furry lump that could only be Scabbers.

"Merlin, you guys are all so out of shape," Blaise observes, he was the least exhausted looking and the only one to keep up with Ron's long-legged dash. "Like, really, other than Harry what the hell is wrong with the rest of you?"

"Wha- how come you're so fit then?!" Theodore wheezes indignantly.

Blaise smirks, "My mother likes to have certain standards in all the men in her life."

"Well, that's a little disturbing," Hermione mutters through harsh breathing.

"Only if you think about it," Blaise shrugs before turning to Ron still trying to contain a squirming Scabbers from escaping the pocket he's all but shoved into, "Where did the cat go by the way?"

"Hell if, oof, I know," Ron grunts, "Scared the beast off somewhere but, shit, Scabbers stop, probably nearby."
"I think I can hear something coming," Draco cocks his head, "Think Granger's ugly cat is coming back for round two?" Hermione glares at him.

Harry frowns, "No, whatever it is sounds… bigger."

Everyone fell silent as they heard the soft pounding of paws. Large ones from the sound of it. And it was coming closer, quickly. "Guys," Harry begins warily, "I think maybe we should-"

An enormous black dog leapt up, tackling Harry who shrieks in his surprise as he falls down. "SON OF A- FUCK!" The dog is heavy, the impact is hard, Harry is fairly sure he broke a rib because of it and if he has, he will be pissed once he gets over the pain. Seriously, all he asks is one year where he doesn't have a medical emergency. One. Year.

"Harry!" Ron yells out first, scrabbling to his feet and gaining the beast's attention. The dog focuses on the redhead, springing toward him and biting down on Ron's arm before running off, dragging a screaming Ron behind him like he was a successful hunt. "AAAAHH!"

Harry, despite the pain, stood up as fast as he could, feigning dizziness by covering his eyes for a moment to hide the black seeping into them. "Theodore, you go find a professor," he orders in a dark voice that brooks no defiance, "the rest of us will follow Ron."

Theodore nods and whispers a quick Point Me spell before running off.

"Harry, are you okay?" Blaise asks concerned.

Harry shook his head, "No, but Ron's not either so let's fucking go already."

Hermione, Blaise, and Draco all shares looks of equal worry and doubt but decide to do what Harry says. Blaise, being the most athletic of them all speeds off first with Hermione following and Draco accompanying Harry from behind. "You know," Draco says as they jog as fast as they can, "when I insisted to join you and your Gryffindors on your next big adventure, I didn't realise it was going to be like this."

"You, ah, didn't think we were going to, hah, rescue Ron from a, ah, ah, giant dog?" Harry wheezes. "Well, to be, shit, perfectly honest," Draco pants, "thought Sirius Black would be involved."

"Ooh, you are so going to, ugh, to regret that." Harry giggles breathlessly before wincing, touching his ribs tentatively. Draco frowns at the action but thankfully doesn't comment.

"WHAT THE-" Blaise shouts in the near distance.

"LUMOS!" Hermione shouts and even Harry and Draco can see that the spell has revealed the silhouette of the infamous Whomping Willow, it's branches creaking ominously in the wind. As they join the other pair they see Blaise had narrowly dodged one of those branches with a look of fear.

"Blaise!" They all cried, the tanned teen scrambles back up and points to the base of the tree.

"I'm okay! I saw the dog drag Ron into the gaps of the roots!"

Another branch whipped down at them, clipping Harry, because of course, it does, before promptly retreating. From the light of Hermione's lumos spell they could see the branch blacken a little.

"Well," Harry mutters as he tightly grips his right arm which had been hit by the tree. That was totally going to bruise. "at least my black thumb is useful in this." In a louder voice he shouts,
"Follow me, the tree won't try touch me a second time!"

They all run up to the gap of the roots where Blaise saw Ron get dragged into, crawling headfirst with little hesitation. Harry swore under his breath at the pain that surges up from his chest at the movement but there really wasn't much time for moaning right now. Unfortunately, the tunnel they found themselves into was very low and very uncomfortable even for the healthy bodied.

"When does this end?!" Draco moans at the back of the line, Harry at the front answers, recalling his brief once overs when he scanned the Marauders Map with Severus.

"Should, shouldn't be too much longer," he estimates, he hopes. They move as fast as they can and slowly but surely the passage gets mercifully bigger and less claustrophobic.

Finally the tunnel twists, "I see light!" Harry declares in a relieved whisper. They all take the opportunity to pause and catch their breath before drawing their wands and edging carefully forward, unsure what to expect at the end.

What was revealed in the end, was a very disordered, dusty room. Stains, broken furniture, boarded windows, peeling paint and all. Draco and Harry share a glance of disgust after they all came out of the hole where they came from. It's hardly like they can really complain though since they just crawled out of literal mudhole but still. Ugh.

"Harry," Hermione whispers, eyes wide, "I think we're in the Shrieking Shack."

"The Shrieking Shack?" Draco re-evaluates this place with new, terrified eyes, "You mean the place that is apparently haunted in the worst ways?"

"Well." Blaise says, "This just keeps getting better and better doesn't it?"

Harry shook his head, if there were ghosts here he would be able to tell, and there's barely a scent of death in this place, "I don't think it's actually haunted." Something clicks. "Still, it's a good hideout place since no one else would go in because of those rumors."

"Hideout place?" Hermione questions, catching on quickly, "You don't think-"

At that moment, there was a creak overhead. Something was moving upstairs. Both Hermione and Draco jumps and grips Harry's arm at the sound, making Harry swear with quiet violence as his injured arm throbs painfully. "Sorry, sorry," Draco murmurs.

"There are two perfectly good arms over there," Harry gestures to Blaise.

"It's because you're cuter," Blaise winks, "but seriously, we gotta go."

Quietly as they could, they crept out of the dusty room, into an equally as dusty hallway and up an even dustier staircase, following the clean lines produced by Ron being dragged around the place. Absentmindedly Harry wonders how dirty Ron is going to end up being when they see him. Draco and Blaise must be thinking on similar lines because they keep muttering various cleaning charms under their breath.

When they finally reach the top, they see only one door was slightly ajar, the drag marks lead toward there as well.

"Nox," Hermione whispers, letting the light of her wand die out. Tiptoeing with wands tightly held in their hands, they slowly open the door, revealing a large four-poster bed where, out of all animals, lay Crookshanks. What a plot twist. On the floor, curled up in a ball was Ron with a bleeding arm
and a leg that was sitting at an unnervingly unnatural angle.

Hermione wastes no time dashing toward Ron, Harry takes a step toward him before swiveling around suddenly, "Draco, Blaise! There's a-

"Expelliarmus!" A gravelly voice croaks, disarming everyone's wands and letting them fall into the hands of the crazed looking Sirius Black. The criminal closes the door behind him, leaving everyone trapped in the room with him.

"Sirius Black." Harry greets coldly. Black's eyes glitter darkly as they fixate on Harry.

"I thought you'd come and help your friend," he says in a hoarse whisper, Your father would have done the same for me. Brave of you not to run for a teacher. I'm grateful... it will make everything much easier..."

"Actually-" Hermione's voice was muffled by Blaise quickly covering her mouth.

"Merlin Granger, don't," He hisses. Luckily, it seems Black was too into his own mutterings and staring at Harry to actually notice.

"He's... dog... animagus," Ron grits out helpfully, pulling himself up with some significant effort, before glaring hatingly at Black, "If you want to kill Harry, you'll have to kill us too!"

"Um, not all of us share that opinion," Draco pipes up like a wanker.

Black flickers his eyes toward Ron and his expression spasms a bit in something almost like guilt, "Sit back down," He quietly orders, "You'll hurt yourself even more."

"Did you hear me?" Ron snarls, ignoring him, "You'll have to kill all five of us!"

"Seriously Weasley, please stop including all of us," Draco groans.

Black looks at Draco like he'd only just noticed him there, and sneers, "What's a Malfoy doing here?"

"He's my friend." Harry defends before smiling cruelly, "and it's not like you can talk about friendship can you?"

Black looks infuriated.

"Oh Merlin, we are going to all die now," Draco, the dramatic shit, moans into his hands.

"Don't worry," Black smiles a nasty smile, "There'll be only one murder here tonight."

Harry shoots him a nasty smile back, "You're right, unfortunately, the casualty will be none of my friends, nor myself."

He raises his hand up at Black, then flicks it to the side.

Black doesn't even have time to raise his wand before he too, is flung in the same direction as Harry's hand gesture, hitting the wall with a loud bang and a choke. Everyone stares at the gaunt form of Sirius Black slumps over, unconscious, before staring back at Harry.

"Mate," Ron says astounded, "I totally forgot you could do that."

Harry grimaces, turning away from Black to bask in his friends' awe. "Yeah, Madam Pompfrey said she'll drive her wand into my balls and cast Alohamora if I did any proper wandless magic
until her say so."

"Alohamo-"

"Yeah, trust me, you don't even want to understand." Harry shudders and stares pointedly at everyone, "For the love of god no one tell her."

"I mean, I don't think anyone is capable of actually lying to her face but yeah sure, we'll do our best," Ron laughs weakly with everyone else joining him.

"How are we going to bring him back though?" Hermione points out after the laughter which was much more a product of general relief than any real humor.

"Drag him," Ron says immediately.

"I have to admit Weasley, I like the way you think right now," Draco grins.

Harry shakes his head but moves toward the fallen man, "Fine, but everyone is helping because I really cannot- FUCK!"

The wands still held in Black's hand sent a jet of bright sparks up at Harry's face, temporarily disorienting him as Black took the opportunity to lunge up, his free hand closing against Harry's throat. Because of course, he was playing dead. Inwardly Harry curses his stupidity as he chokes.

"No," he hissed, "I've waited too long-"

In the corner of his eye, he sees two feet, Blaise and Hermione's to be exact, kick out forcing Black to let go with a grunt of pain. At the same time as Harry tries to force more air into his lungs, Draco tackles down Black while Ron limps quickly to sit on the older wizard's wand hand.

"Black, argh, you fucker," Harry coughs as he forces himself to sit up, his eyes glowing a furious green as faint flecks of darkness corrode the whites of his eyes. "I'm going to enjoy this," He raises his hand up again, "Draco, Ron, move."

Harry screams as claws tore into the already bruised flesh of his arm.

"No, Crookshanks!" Hermione screams in horror.

Crookshanks. He had forgotten about Crookshanks.

"Crookshanks," he hisses in agony, "I command you to get the fuck off me."

Crookshanks hesitates, looking fearful for a minute but just digs his claws in even deeper, making Harry fall back on his back with a howl. He wants to deaden his nerves to stop the searing pain but he knows he can't use his affinity, not if he wants to completely disrupt the delicate balance of his body once again.

Ron was right, that cat was a bitch.

Hermione manages to pry Crookshanks off Harry, throwing the cat out of the way with a ferocity Harry didn't fully believe she was capable of given her fond feelings of the feline. "BAD CAT!" She screams incensed before helping Harry up, "Harry, Harry, you okay?"

"Could be better," He slurs slightly, "Guys, move away."

The rest of his friends didn't need telling twice. Black, despite the disadvantage in numbers, had
managed to push off the boys on top of him and fight back. Draco is cradling his bruised chin and split lip, Ron, who wasn't exactly peak human condition before was going from pale to a concerning pale green. Even Blaise had more than a few bruises, swearing viciously when Black got a lucky shot at his eye. Thankfully Black hadn't come out unscathed either from the roughhousing, with a pattern of angry bruises and a bloody nose to match.

With the help of Hermione, Harry walks slowly toward Black, looking down on him with a scowl.

"Going to kill me, Harry?" Black whispers.

"You have caused me a shit ton of grief lately," Harry spat, "Also I think you're forgetting that you helped kill my parents first, so, what comes around and all that."

Black stares back up at Harry, his eyes were sunken and worn. Harry wishes that the man looked less pathetic, it was sort of off-putting. Some part of him frowns at this unusual hesitation to death but quickly dismisses it. Obviously, he wouldn't want to murder someone so sad in front of his very impressionable young mortal friends.

"I don't deny it," Black says softly. "But, but, if you knew the whole story-"

Harry takes a deep, deep breath, before exhaling, forcing himself to calm and distance himself from the pain, if only slightly. It helps that Mr. Riddle has become more active, whispering calming words and logic in his mind. "Then…" Another deep breath before he grits out, "better speak fast."

Disbelief and hope lit up the man's eyes, "You… You really will give me a chance? After all, I did?"

"Seriously?!" Draco sounds less than impressed. Ron groans and mutters something like, 'I knew it,' and 'stupid fuckboy,' and 'daddy issues have killed us all.'

Sensing the older man was this close to groveling, Harry raises his hand- his non-injured one this time- threateningly. Crookshanks actually bounds in front of Harry to sit protectively in front of Sirius, once again defying Harry for his friend. Hermione sobs a little, clearly feeling betrayed as the cat once again makes it incredibly obvious where his allegiances truly lie.

Rolling his eyes, Harry lowers his hand, "Christ, I wasn't actually going to, I was just going to make Black talk a bit faster." Crookshanks purrs satisfied at Harry's decision and plods away to sit in the corner.

Harry sighs and turns back to Black, "Now, where were we-"

The door to the room slams open, and Lupin bursts in. He takes in everything, nose flaring as he scents the blood. The Defence professor roars, "BLACK!"

Swiftly Lupin is in front of Harry, much like Crookshanks had done, but this time defending Harry instead of defending from him. It was very heartwarming if incredibly unnecessary. "How dare you!" He snarls furiously, "To attack mil-Harry! I will rend you limb from limb you bastard!"

"Um, we were attacked too but whatever," Ron mutters. Hermione, Draco, and Blaise nod in agreement but were justifiably ignored in favor of the drama.

"Uh, professor," Hermione tries to call out, her eyes darting a little fearfully at Lupin's enraged state, "Black was just about to explain himself? So, um, maybe…"

"Settle down Lupin," Harry commands sternly, touching the werewolf’s back lightly which immediately relaxed under the pressure. "I've got this under control."
Lupin made a petulant whining sound but complies, stepping back to stand side by side Harry. Hermione, watching observantly, narrows her eyes and then gasps, pointing at Harry accusatorially, "You knew!" She says.

"Knew what? Knew what?" Ron asks, looking back and forth. The Slytherins mirror the motion but far more subtly.

Harry gazes up to Lupin meaningfully, letting the decision solely on the man's shoulders. Lupin's gaze, no longer so skittish and afraid, looking steadily back at him before turning to face the other children with an anxious half-smile. "I… I am a werewolf."

Silence.

And then Ron groans loudly, "Fuck. Werewolf. Are you fucking serious mate?"

Harry stares at Ron, "Wha- you're blaming me?!"

"Damn I should have known he was some creature, always teaching us about other creatures," Draco sneers, "Thanks a lot Harry, now I lost six galleons because I thought he was helping Sirius Black."

"Et toi Draco?"

Blaise hits his forehead with his hand, "Oh Merlin, that explains Professor Snape's lesson. Fuck, we're so dumb." Finally, a decent response that doesn't irrationally blame Harry.

"Hold up," Ron narrows his eyes at Hermione, "When did you know about Lupin?"

Hermione looks down and shuffles her feet on the dusty floor, "Um. Snape's lesson sort of-" She sees Ron's expression and immediately defends herself, "Hey! We weren't exactly on talking terms!"

"Well, what's your excuse, Harry?" Draco asks, indignantly, "You were certainly on speaking terms to all of us!"

"Um." Sirius Black speaks up, "Is anyone interested in what I actually have to say?"

"Does it explain why my boyfriend keeps keeping secrets?" Blaise questions irritated.

Black blinks, "Boyfr- Harry you're dating this Slytherin?!" He sounds aghast.

Harry gives Black an 'are you fucking with me right now' look then focuses back at his irate friends, "The secret wasn't exactly mine to tell," He tries to explain, "I am sorry but come on, if it got out Lupin was half-wolf we would've lost our only good defense professor."

"That's true," Blaise decides after much thought, Ron muttering his reluctant agreement behind him. Draco rubs his forehead but also agrees.

"I don't like that he's a werewolf but I can't deny he hasn't eaten any students yet." The Malfoy grudgingly says. Lupin flushes at the praises and the fact that it seems he has been accepted.

Harry beams. "Great, now that, that's over, let's get back to Black." Immediately he raises his hand again, eyes glowing intimidatingly bright in the murky dimness of the room, "Now. Talk."

Black gulps, "I'm not here for you Harry," He confesses in a rush, "I mean, I am, but not really. I'm here for Peter Pettigrew."
Lupin blinks, "That's impossible," he states, "Peter's dead."

"No," Black shakes his head, Draco is looking at his wild unwashed hair with more fear than the first ten seconds he had realized Lupin was a werewolf. "He… He was the real secret keeper see? Framed me… Took, took his own finger.. easier to take the blame off him and ran…. goddamn coward…" He's devolved back into seething mutterings again but everyone could easily piece most of it together.

"Oh," Harry realizes first, "so you're here for Ron's rat man? He was Peter this whole time?" Wow, that really was a plot twist. Harry's a little impressed.

Absolute silence greeted him.

"Wha- Scabbers!? Scabbers is Peter?!" Ron spluttered. Then the Weasley's blue eyes widened and swung his head to look at Harry, "YOU KNEW MY RAT WAS AN ANIMAGUS?!" He screams disbelieving.

Harry looked equally disbelieved.

"What? I thought it was some weird wizard thing you guys did." He turned to the other shocked faces. "Is... Is that wrong?"

"Yes." Draco groaned, rubbing his forehead again, but this time in pure and utter exasperation, "Merlin yes that is, so, so, so very wrong. Why on earth would you think that? Do you see me having pet animagi just laying about?"

"I mean Dobby-"

"That's a bloody house elf you misinformed walnut! It's different!"

"Well, you, you know!" Harry sputtered, trying to defend himself from this new and sudden onslaught of hostility, "I just figured you people would like that sort of thing! I mean, Blaise's mum has one!"

Everyone swiveled to look at Blaise.

"I uh," he says wide-eyed, not expecting this turn of events, "it's, I," he stammered before narrowing his eyes at Harry and hissing, "Harry for fuck's sake that's an entirely different thing and I told you that in confidence!"

"You didn't say it was in confidence." Harry pointed out.

"It. Was. Heavily. Implied."

"Oh. Well. Uh, I'll be sure to inform you all about that next time then." Harry lamely tries to soothe.

"Next time?!" His friends shout in unison, making Harry cringe. Even Black and Remus had shouted at him with disbelief.

"Professor Snape," Hermione points out with a vicious smile, "is going to be so pissed when he finds out about this." Harry immediately balked.

"But I didn't know!" Harry wails in a weak defense.

"Snape?" Black suddenly asks harshly, "Wait, what does Snape have to do with this?"
"Snape is our professor?" Blaise squints at Black like he's lowering all expectations for the man's intellect, "Um, didn't you break into our school like six times? How did you not know?" Apparently once the heat of the moment has passed, no one no longer feels like speaking carefully to a crazy Azkaban escapee.

"I'm not surprised given Black's small-minded idiocy," Snape declares derisively, dropping his invisibility spell and revealing himself and Theodore, only lightly panting. Clearly, they've been here for a while, proven further when Severus shoots Harry and unamused look, "We'll speak of your communication issues later Mr. Potter."

"Oh come on," Harry scowls. "And when did you get here?"

"Theodore had the foresight to seek me out after Weasley's kidnapping," The potions master nods slightly in approval at his student who smiles smugly, "It was really just luck that Lupin was with me at the time, he ran ahead. Unfortunately, it seems he hadn't killed Black in a fit of irony as I had hoped."

Black's face contorts, he looked like he hated Snape more than he hated Pettigrew at this moment. Black tries to point his wand up but Severus is faster, disarming him with his own wand. "Don't try that again Black," he sneers, looking down at his former bully, "Innocent as you might be, you're still an escapee from Azkaban, not to mention," Severus' eyes flick to the students' injuries, lingering particularly on Harry, "physical assault on minors."

"Merlin this is hot," Harry muttered, and it seems Ron had enough strength to drag himself toward Harry and pinch his leg, "hey!"

"Really Harry?" Ron despairs. "Really?"

"That reminds me," Lupin interrupts, "Ron, pass me the rat."

"Oh, right," Ron mutters before pulling out the frantically squirming rat out from his pocket, "Shit, stay, fucking," Scabbers, Peter, twists out of Ron's grasp, desperately trying to run.

Lupin and Snape incant a spell at the same time, blue light from their wands hitting the rat, making it twist and grow until a man stood where Scabbers had been. Everyone recoils a little at the man's appearance, Black may clearly look like a deranged serial killer but Peter Pettigrew looked, just, ugh.

Ron, who essentially lived with Peter for most of his life was gazing at the man with horror and repulsion. "Merlin's tits," he says faintly, "He used to sit on my lap."

"Wow, and I thought Black was going to be the worst thing we face today," Draco says.

"R-R-Remus," Peter stutters squeakily, though, at seeing Lupin's glare turns to Black for some reason, like he was going to be the more merciful one after all the shit he has gone through, "S-S-Sirius, my friends, my dear old friends,"

"Well. This is pathetic." Blaise says, almost impressed by the rat man's audacity.

"Are we killing him?" Theodore asks curiously, making Pettigrew's face pale further and starts to sweat heavily.

"N-no! You, you should be killing Black!" He shrilly denies, "He's the Death Eater! Come on Remus, you, you can't actually believe his nonsense?!"

Lupin makes a tentative before covering his nose with a frown. Harry has to sympathize, his newly
sensitized nose must be reeling at all the unattractive smells around here. "You just lied about Sirius being a Death Eater." He declares mildly, a twinkle of fierce anger hiding under his demeanor.

"And I have trouble believing an innocent man would hide as a rat for thirteen years," Severus drawls.

The color of Pettigrew's face grew ashen as his eyes dart toward the windows and door, looking even now to find a way out.

"What is going on right now?" Ron whispers loudly.

"Lupin has werewolf senses that can scent out untruths," Harry explains back, with the rest of his fellow students listening in, "Peter is screwed because he is a traitoring traitor piece of shit."

"Then what was Black's problem?" Draco comments, "Why didn't he just say that in the beginning?"

Harry blinks and then calls out to Black who had been busy verbally eviscerating whatever nonsense Pettigrew was spouting in an attempt to turn the tides to his favor. "Yo Black, you said before you didn't deny killing my parents- what was up with that?"

Black blinks, torn away from his taunting to look at Harry, pained, "Harry... I as good as killed them," Black croaks, looking guilt-ridden. "I persuaded Lily and James to use Peter at the last moment as the Secret-Keeper instead of me... So.. I'm to blame, I know it... That night, I checked on Peter, make sure he was safe you know? But, but he'd gone, no sign of a struggle. It felt off. I rushed to your parents' house but it was destroyed, their bodies... I realized what Peter must've done... what I'd done..."

Harry squints, unmoved, "Yeah, okay but you could've made it easier for yourself by, you know, not making it sound like you were the one who personally shanked them with a knife in an alley or something," Harry scoffs, "I mean, for fuck's sake man, did you say this shit when you got questioned by the aurors or did you just keep insisting you killed them? I know you were grief-stricken but seriously, what is wrong with you?"

Black looks indignantly at the lack of sympathy from his godson, "Excuse me?!" He asks, strangled.

Harry turns to the rest of the group, "Okay, hands up who thinks it's sort of all Black's own fault he got immediately thrown into wizard prison."

Everyone puts their hands up, even Pettigrew who shrugs, clearly having given up his pleas for the moment now that he realizes Remus wasn't lying about the lie detector thing. "Even I was surprised it had been that easy."

"They should have done a trial anyway," Hermione argues, it's a valid point but it's not very strong at the moment considering her hand was up too. "Also, how on earth did you manage to escape Azkaban because I heard you did it by dark magic but Harry insists the dementors wouldn't have been tricked like that."

"They wouldn't've!" Harry insists protectively. "My dementors are very smart they wouldn't have been deceived by this stupid douchebag's magic!" Everyone but Black had to try to stifle a chortle and the offended look on Black's face. Clearly, he wasn't expecting this sort of attitude and sass toward him from his best friend's kid.

"Wow," Black replies dryly, "this may be the most painful thing that's happened to me today." He continues, "No, I didn't use magic... when, when it got too much there I would transform back into a dog. The dementors... they sense my thoughts are less, well, complex as a dog and they seem to
leave me alone when I do. Of course, if that was all it took I would've been out ages ago," Black snorts derisively.

"See it was when I saw a picture of the Weasleys in the Daily Prophet, won some trip somewhere, and they were holding Pettigrew." Black pulls out a crumpled old newspaper clipping from his robe. You know. Like a normal person would've. He shows it to everyone. Except for Snape to which he purposely snatches away before the potions master could even lean over to look. Severus grits his teeth but remains silent for now, intent on hearing the whole story. "I was filled with... resolve? No, obsession. I realized he was at Hogwarts with Harry, that he could act at any moment, ready to strike if he even hears a single hint that the Dark Side was coming back... I couldn't let that happen."

"And the dementors wouldn't recognize that as a happy thought," Harry finishes off, "So you gathered enough mental strength to escape as a dog and..." Harry trails off, furrowing his brows as he looks thoughtfully at Black. There's something at the back of his mind, in his memories, that is niggling at him for attention. Something vaguely important that he's forgotten.

"Believe me," croaked Black, pleading and desperate, "Believe me, Harry. I never betrayed James and Lily. I would have died before I betrayed them."

Then it hits Harry.

"Wait! I remember you!" Harry shouts, his hand snapping as he finally recalled why the dog form of Black was so familiar. "You're the Grimm that humped me back then!"

"What." Peter Pettigrew mutters, not exactly sure what's happening right now.

"What?" Ron, Hermione, Theodore, Blaise, and Draco says incredulously.

"What?!" Remus Lupin yells, shocked and appalled.

"What?!" Snape hisses, turning on Black furiously.

"Uuuuuuhhhhh." Sirius says awkwardly, blinking owlishly, "I, uh, have to go?"

"Oh no you don't," Severus snarls, his wand pointed back at Black, "I think you may need to extrapolate further on what Harry had just said."

"Look this really isn't important right now-"

"I beg to differ," Severus says darkly.

"And I beg for you to let me get down on my knees for you Severus, but we all can't get what we want." Harry butts in smoothly because really, he sorts of regrets moving away from the conversation now. It's getting late. He's tired and needs medical attention. If this was a story he was sure the author writing this would be absolutely hating themselves right now.

"I'm sorry what," Sirius says.

"Shut up dog humper," Severus snaps, face pinkening.

"Technically he didn't hump a-"

"Seriously Weasley," Draco hisses, "is that really the point you want to bring home?"

"Look Malfoy," Ron says condescendingly, "when you hang around Harry at his horniest, you get used to certain shit okay?"
"No. Wait a fucking moment. You, you can't lov-like Snape!" Sirius objects. "He's Snape."

"Oh yeah?" Harry challenges, instantly on the defensive, putting his hands on his hips and staring the man down like the criminal he really wasn't. "Give me one good reason," he looks at Severus' expression and quickly amends, "other than the age difference thing because that's obviously obvious."

"He's, he's, he's," Black splutters, looking actually more demented than before which was quite the achievement, and then finally he seems to mentally grasp some sort of trump card as he declares with a dramatic point in his school rival's direction, "He was in love with your mother!"

Severus flinched so hard he might as well have been hit by a beater bat. All the color fell from his face at possibly the exact same speed as Harry's stomach fell to the floor.

Well. That was. That was quite the trump card.

Harry turns to Severus, staring anxiously at the man's stricken expression. "That, that's not true. They were just childhood friends." He denies yet everyone could hear the waver of uncertainty in his voice. Because he already knows the answer. How could he not when the guilt was so starkly in front of him?

"I," Severus hesitates and then looks away.

"It's completely true," Black crows, victorious, "He's been obsessed with Lily since the very beginning, loves her with all his shriveled black heart he does."

"Shut your mouth Black," Severus snaps but Harry notes he doesn't deny it. Doesn't deny any of it. Of course Black didn't shut his mouth. Instead, it widens into a large, manic grin, "Aw, what's the matter Snivellus? You decided if you couldn't have Lily you'll have to settle for the next best thing? Why-"

"Sirius," Lupin says, low and threatening, the hint of an inhuman growl in his voice, "Shut your mouth, or I'll do it for you."

Sirius does, but not without one last, "See Harry? How does it feel knowing that pervert just wanted you because of your mum?"

Harry isn't so sure what he feels. After all, having someone attracted to you despite being related to someone is very, very different to having someone attracted to you because you're related to someone.

"Wow, Harry's weird Snape thing just got a whole fucking lot more weirder." He can absentmindedly hear come from Ron through the buzz of emotions trying to fight it out inside his head right now.

"Shut up Ronald." Hermione hisses and it's the sound of Ron's noises of pain at being hit by his fellow Gryffindor that snaps Harry back to the reality at hand. This was not the time to do this.

"Where's Pettigrew?" He snaps, "Cornelius should still be in the castle so let's just get the stupid fucking rat and give enough evidence to get Black out of his whole stupid fucking situation."

"Harry, I-"

Harry points at Severus and glares, "We will talk about this later." He hisses. "Now where's the rat,
"Right here," Black declares, grinning wildly like he hasn't managed to single-handedly ruin the whole mood and possibly Harry's impression of Severus depending on how the man explains himself out of this one. He gestures grandly to the spot where Peter was.

The empty spot.

Silence.

"Black," Harry finally says with a calm he does not feel, "where the fuck is Pettigrew?"

"Um."

"This is the guy that broke out of Azkaban?" Draco whispers loudly to Blaise.

"He did just say he essentially managed it as a fluke," Blaise informs loftily.

"Well." Harry takes a deep breath, "Isn't this just a clusterfuck?"

So. It turns out that it wasn't such a clusterfuck.

"Um. What?" Harry asks dumbfounded.

Cornelius grins at him, slightly puzzled at Harry's puzzlement. "Your friends brought back Peter Pettigrew about twenty minutes ago? Which really, was quite the coincidence since you had just convinced me to not immediately kiss Black on sight- Dementor's kiss of course not actual kissing." The minister chuckles and Harry joins in when it became clear it was some sort of inside joke he clearly wasn't a part of. "And now you've brought Black here like you said you would! Goodness I had quite the little heart attack when you declared that like some foolhardy Gryffindor but I see I had nothing to fear."

"Ahaha, see?" Harry waves off weakly, "I told you, sir."

"That you did my child, and I'm awfully proud of you to boot! Really, I should award you an Order of Merlin for helping me see that I truly must right the wrongs of my predecessors and give Black the trial he never had." Fudge looks at Harry thoughtfully, "Though I don't think I can give you a First Order without looking like I've given you favoritism, then again, you do deserve it…"

"Well, I had a lot of help too Cornelius," Harry quickly demurs, "In fact, it would be terrible if you only give me an award while no one else earns one."

"You're absolutely right," Fudge nods vehemently, "and it would solve the nepotism problem as well, Merlin you're such a bright young lad," he praises fondly. Now, you run off with your friends to celebrate while my aurors accompany Black back to the ministry with me and Pettigrew, you deserve it after all."

"Oh, thank you, Cornelius, I mean," Harry ducks his head, embarrassed, "dad."

Fudge beams and hugs the small child tightly before quickly apologizing as Harry hisses out in pain, "Merlin, shit I'm sorry! Maybe you should hold off meeting your friends until you go to the mediwing first?"

"All my friends are in the sickbay anyway sir," Harry smiles weakly, "but thank you for your concern."
The moment Fudge turns around Harry runs off as fast as he can. He needs to consult his friends.

"I'm sorry," Harry said. "But how in god's name did anyone grant you the legal power of time travel?"

Hermione sniffed, visibly offended, "Because I'm responsible Harry."

"You set Snape on fire in our first year!" Harry exclaimed in absolute baffled exasperation. Even going so far as throwing his hands up in the air to emphasize his incredulity. "You set me on fire! You were going to make an illegal toilet potion and you were totally going to go through with it! You set a professor on fire!"

"Technically I didn't set you on-"

"Illegal. Toilet. Potion."

"Look, that's really not the point here-"

"Hermione, I would very much beg to differ," Harry sighs, "but do go on with your plan which involves harnessing the powers of time travel bequeathed to your responsible hands for something as petty as extra homework."

Ron, Draco, Blaise, and Theodore snickered.

Hermione huffs and rolls her eyes, though her smile tells them all she can see the humor of it too. "Well, anyway, it's the only explanation for why Minister Fudge saw us before. We used, or will use the time turner to catch Pettigrew and convince the Minister to redact the whole kiss on sight thing."

"You're right," Harry nods, "Cornelius said he saw me only, so the rest of you can choose between rat hunting or making sure Lupin takes the wolfsbane potion because apparently, we did that too."

"I'll do rat-hunting," Ron volunteers solemnly, "it's, Scabbers, Peter, well, I want that rat bastard in jail."

"I'll help too." Hermione immediately jumps in.

"No, no, no," Draco denies, "As much as it pains me to admit, I'll need your help with the Wolfsbane since you're on decent terms with the man as a fellow Gryffindor."

"Oh, okay," Hermione blinks, surprised at Draco's admission.

Blaise sighs and sidles up to the Weasley, "I guess it's you and me then."

"Great," Ron rolls his eyes, "Just what I've dreamed of."

"An exotically hot Slytherin with a large penis?" Blaise winks, "My how flattering."

The Weasley stares at him in horror. "Dear Merlin there's two of them." He breathes out. Blaise smirks and blows him a kiss.

"Anyway," Draco says, "I guess the best thing to do is to go back around… two hours? Three? Whenever exams have ended."

"I should meet Cornelius sometime after he's met me after exams and before past-Theodore reaches Severus to tell him about Black." Harry muses, "Draco and Hermione would have to steal the freshly
brewed Wolfsbane potion and sneak it on to Lupin's desk for him to drink."

"I can cast a pretty good disillusionment charm on myself," Hermione offers before frowning, "Though I'm not sure if I can extend it to more people."

"I'll tag along with your group then so it seems like me and Draco are hanging out, we can serve as any distraction." Theodore volunteers. "Not to mention Draco's more familiar with how to access Snape's potions lab."

"Well, we need to use Harry's invisibility cloak to catch Scab-Pettigrew." Ron quickly calls dibs.

"You have an invisibility cloak?" Blaise questions Harry incredulously, "Do you know how many public blowjobs we could have had if you told me that before?"

Ron stares at Blaise, "I. I don't think I want to share the cloak with you anymore."

"You've gotten sleazier Blaise," Draco mildly comments as observes Hermione's time turner with evident interest, "as much as I enjoy Weasley's disgusted face, please do try to rein it in."

"You're right," Blaise says, "I'm sorry, clearly I should have saved it all for you Draco."

Draco made his own face of disgust, "Actually, I changed my mind, sleaze away my friend."

"It's a good thing we already know we succeeded or I would be incredibly worried." Hermione sighs, Harry laughs.

So. In the end, Black is freed from suspicion and earns a very hefty sum of galleons as compensation for the false imprisonment. Pettigrew, in a frankly breathtaking show of his own cunning and the aurors' incompetence, escapes again. Fudge in response quickly put more focus on auror training which had satisfied the public enough to praise him for sorting out the whole scandal in the first place.

And Harry finds himself staring down Severus for an explanation.

"So. You and my mother huh?"

"It wasn't like that," Severus denies. Green eyes bore silently into Severus uncomfortably and accusingly until Severus caves, "Fine, it was a little like that."

Harry crosses his arms.

Severus can never tell anyone that was all it took for him to break. He desperately hopes the Dark Lord never rises like Dumbledore keeps implying because he fears his spy skills have been rendered useless. Damn Harry Potter with his pretty, pretty face.

"I- Lily really was, is my childhood friend. She, we," He starts, feeling incredibly out of place as he tries to bare his vulnerabilities. Harry, as if sensing his difficulties, visibly softens.

"Okay, maybe we should sit on the couch," Harry amends, Severus nods wordlessly, throat clenched. The younger wizard side-eyes him with open concern, "Look, we don't have to go into any details about this, I'm not exactly excited to broach the topic either but, well, I really do think we should talk about it lest it comes back to us in the worst way possible and I'm forced to bludgeon you to death with one of Hagrid's rock cakes."

The Head of Slytherin snorts, "That was oddly specific," He comments as he seats himself stiffly
onto the couch. Harry smiles crookedly as he joins him, putting himself close enough to Severus that he could easily lean against the taller man. It assured Severus at the very least the Harry was not as upset as initially assumed, bolstering his confidence a bit.

Still, he treats the confession like a bandaid, quick and painful, "I don't think I was ever really in love with Lily," Not the way was in love with Harry at least he quietly amends, "She was smart and pretty and knew about my less than stellar childhood, supporting me when my home life was too much to bear."

Harry makes a soft noise of sympathy and reaches out to curl his fingers around the older wizard's wrist, squeezing it gently.

"When it turned out we were both going to Hogwarts, I genuinely thought we were meant to be together, of course, that was nothing more than a child's stupid dream," The older man says bitterly, "Black wasn't wrong when he said I was... obsessed, I could see Lily had been slipping from me and I, well, I clung for a better lack of word." He doesn't say any more, he can't. Anymore was too much. He didn't want to say more.

"Okay," Harry closes his eyes and breathes in softly. Severus watches him, the way his dark lashes flutter close, contrasting against his perfectly milky skin that furrows into a thoughtful frown. "I, I won't pry any further but," he opens his eyes, green and glowing hypnotically fierce and pleading, "you have to tell me if me being the son of Lily Evans is the reason for your affection for me, even if it is only a minor part of it."

"No," Severus breathes out, completely truthful, "You look almost nothing like either of your parents Harry, nor did you inherit their personalities. I can only see you as your own being even if I tried otherwise. And only you, as yourself," Severus runs his fingers through the younger wizard's messy black hair, "can enchant me this way."

"Severus," Harry flushes under such sweet words. He fidgets, both embarrassed and pleased. "Thank you."

"Honestly your parents are both grossly unfavorable factors that work against my attraction along with your age," Severus sighs. Harry in contrast laughs, cheered.

"That I can work with."

"I have no doubt you will." Severus murmurs fondly, pressing a kiss on Harry's lips lovingly, before quickly amending, "once you become legally adult of course."

Harry pouts, "You had to end it there hadn't you?"

Severus just smiles and kisses him again.

Chapter End Notes

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Death's World Quidditch Cup thing

Chapter Summary

The one where Death has a stalker for a godfather instead of a parent-murderer, gets bribed to a sports event with hot dudes by his adopted father and then it all immediately goes to shit

Alternately, the one where the forest is so fucking huge, like where the fuck is this World Quidditch Cup anyway, god I hate sports

Chapter Notes

FOURTH YEAR! YEAH, BABY!

WARNING: From now on we're gonna do more snarry smut. Anyone not cool with that but still willing to read on tell me (nicely) and I'll see if I can book in some warnings but the smut will slowly integrate into the real story so it'll get harder and harder to skip the smut without losing some plot in my opinion, sorry.

Also, tell me if I'm writing the smut ok. Because I get way more self-conscious with the smut stuff than the actual plot tbh (no kinkshaming lol, though tbh most of the main kinks have been pretty much hinted already I think)

Um. I think that's it for housekeeping? So.

Enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The one where Death has a stalker for a godfather instead of a parent-murderer, gets bribed to a sports event with hot dudes by his adopted father and then it all immediately goes to shit

Alternately, the one where the forest is so fucking huge, like where the fuck is this World Quidditch Cup anyway, god I hate sports

So. Sirius Black is sort of a fucking lunatic.

"Oh my god," Harry says, glaring at the pardoned criminal hiding behind a statue of a marble statue of an elegant lady tangled in flowers which sits silently in the corner of the foyer of the Malfoy home, "Are you serious? Don't you have a life to get together? What do you want from me?"

"Sirius," Narcissa sighs, the woman had been sitting primly in her seat sipping tea in the same room, "please do desist, you are embarrassing me."

Lucius, who had led Harry to the room in the first place wisely stays silent even though it looks like he desperately wants to say something at Black who was sulkily coming out of his hiding place to
flop unceremoniously onto the nearby couch next to Narcissa. Much to her dismay as evident by the way she inelegantly shuffles further from her estranged brother.

"Harry please," Black wheedles plaintively, "give me a chance."

"Black..." Harry sighs.

"Call me Sirius," Black pleads.

"You can't just keep showing up and pestering me like this Black," Harry groans and rubs his forehead vigorously like it could stave off the Sirius Black sized headache brewing in the distance of his mind. Mr Riddle is never pleased when he gets headaches, apparently, he gets nauseous, therefore he is hardly a fan of the white sheep of the Black family. "The only reason Cornelius hasn't called the wizard cops on you when you showed up for the third time at our family dinners is that the Ministry still feels incredibly shitty for not giving you a trial and the whole Azkaban for a billion years thing."

"I, I, It was a coincidence?" Black tries. Pathetically Harry may add.

He stares at the older man, unimpressed, "This is the fourth day since school has ended. And only one of those family dinners was at a restaurant."

Narcissa has thrown away all sense of decorum and summons a bottle of wine to pour into her porcelain teacup. Lucius looks at her, torn between disappointment, amusement and being utterly besotted with her. It would have been sort of gross if it had been someone else that didn't have the hair of angel. "I am so glad mother cut you out," she says viciously as she downs her teacup full of liquor, "Merlin I had almost forgotten you were like this."

"Lucius, I got the message you had sent, what was so urgent tha-" Severus looks like he had just stepped in a large pile of wet owl feces when he caught sight of Black. "What are you doing here?"

He sneers.

"I could say the same to you," Sirius sneers back attitude immediately shifting to the defensive.

"He was invited here, unlike you," Narcissa rolls her eyes.

"By me," Lucius adds because he's always needed to be a part of a conversation. Especially the important ones.

"And me," Harry also pipes in because he knows it will offend Black to his very core and honestly, his ribs are still bruised and his arm is in a cast because of him so forgive him if he still doesn't feel very forgiving. He smiles at Severus sweet and coy, Severus, sensing the intent and clearly relishing it, smiles back smugly.

As expected, Black looks like he's been skewered alive. "I, I, you, but," he chokes, eyes darting between Severus and Harry who were gazing lovingly into each other's eyes with horror, "I thought,"

"That's right," Harry smirks at Black, crossing his arms, reveling at his floundering. "We talked about my mother, and it turns out I still want to do unspeakable things to this man, so, yeah."

"You mean you haven't already?" Lucius mutters so softly only Harry who was right at his side could hear it. Clearly, he was still bitter about the desk thing. Which was ridiculous because they were both fully clothed at the time so it wasn't like they had actually defiled anything except each other's mouths. And the insides of their pants. But that's really not here or there.
"Oh, my," Narcissa says, for the first time actually interested in the turn of the conversation has took, "I didn't realize."

"Well, Mr Potter does have a surprising lack of subtlety," Severus says, almost preening at how open the teenager was with his declaration of affection. He's fairly sure Harry's doing this on purpose to minimize the amount of accusation toward Severus of coercion and rape once the news of their relationship inevitably comes out, but then again, as sly as the boy is, he clearly enjoys being naturally quite blunt, going on crude in attempts to embarrass him. And from the way he can feel his cheeks flush, and Harry's satisfied smile, it's working.

"No, no," Narcissa waves off, "I meant I didn't realize the affection was mutual,"

The flush prickling Severus' face suddenly explodes, his skin practically burning as he stares at Narcissa who takes a good and long sip of her drink. Even Lucius was looking at her with surprise. Clearly, no one else knew she had caught on then.

"Mr Potter is my student." He says with a cool stern calm he certainly does not feel. Maybe if they were alone he would have eventually admitted it to Narcissa who seems surprisingly somewhat understanding. But he would rather die than willingly volunteer Sirius Black proper blackmail toward his person.

Narcissa catches this quickly. "Well," she amends, "maybe not the unspeakable things part but it is obvious Severus how much you favor Harry here, even more than your godson really." The last bit was said chidingly. Narcissa was first and foremost, a doting parent above all other things.

"Well If Draco continues to follow Harry's trend of needing urgent medical attention every few months I may have to rearrange my priorities as you've implied," Severus smoothly replies, making the woman smile faintly.

"Ah, well, maybe there's really no need for that," she sips her liquor. Draco has come home with only minor bruising and a vial of potions but she had heard that the initial injuries would not have made a pretty sight for her heart. She's sure the boy had exaggerated his role in the exploits, but it had been enough for Lucius and her to get quite drunk late into that night and curse Sirius, Pettigrew, Dumbledore and, once they were proper smashed, the dark lord.

"Hey, I came out better than last time," Harry protests half-heartedly.

"Yes," Severus drawls, "considering last time you were in a magical coma after killing a basilisk I honestly dread to imagine you coming out worse."

"He did what?" Black squawked. Narcissa looked a little pale at the reminder. Lucius was pointedly looking at the ground.

"He's got you there Potter," Draco drawls as he and Blaise stepped into the room, clearly impatient to see why Harry had to be taken away in the middle of their game of Monopoly. "Anyway, what is-oh dear Merlin it's Sirius Black."

"Ugh, him again?" Blaise groans like the topic of conversation weren't in the room, "Merlin he's such a fucking wanker, I had to get my shoulder reset and the only difference between the magical way and the muggle way of that is that one uses hands."

Lucius looks like he wants to admonish the young Zabini for his crude language but refrains into a silent sneer. It would have been more affronting if Harry and Draco hadn't seen him interact with Ms Zabini, and therefore are now fully aware that she terrifies the Head of the Glorious House of Malfoy
to his very being. From what Draco gathers from his mother, Lucius was almost considered to be betrothed to her but the idea was never raised again once he had hit the sixth year and had apparently witnessed something that had him practically jumping into Narcissa's arms. Draco, because he loves, respects and idolizes his father has used up great deals of restraint to not bring the topic up around him but every time it's in reach you can see he clearly suffers in his curiosity, much like now.

Luckily they had more pressing matters to focus on.

"Oh bloody hell," Black says as if he just realizes he's stumbled into enemy territory, "is everyone a Slytherin here?"

"You're standing on Malfoy grounds you utter-" Narcissa leads off to furiously sip her drink before she says something uncouth in front of her son.

"Technically I'm only a quarter," Harry volunteers unhelpfully, "broke the Sorting hat down."

"I cannot believe I'm going to say this, but someone really should fetch the werewolf," Severus mutters, which really, considering his background with Remus, Harry can't help but be proud of him being the one to suggest it at all. It seems you can really bond with people through mild food-induced poisonings.

Lucius sighs but nods, "I'll do it," he says, resigned to the fact he was going to invite a bloody werewolf into his esteemed manor because his wife's crazy brother is stalking his son's best friend. You really just can't make this stuff up.

As Lucius goes to contact Remus, Harry decides to run some interference. "Black, did you even go to your Ministry appointed mind therapy today?"

"I did," Black says proudly like it was some sort of achievement. Which. Considering how hard he fought it might be. He makes an irritated face after his proclamation, "Mind Healer Windturn says it'll take around two months before most of the damage is healed, more for trauma."

Harry sighs wistfully and looks at his own injuries. Despite being nowhere as complex as Black's fraying mental state, it'll take far longer than two months for the damages in his weak body to recover. He's so fucking jealous he could actually strangle Black. "Look, Black, you're, uh..." Harry takes a moment to think, "well, you're not my parents' murderer, but really, if that's all it takes to be a godfather then there are a lot more adults out there that fit the bill a little better."

"But-

"Sirius! This is where you are?" Remus comes out of the floo, looking haggard and more than a little vexed, "For Merlin's sake I know you just came out of Azkaban but you are actually legitimately mental!"

"Moony," Sirius whines, "don't do this, you're embarrassing me!"

"You are embarrassing yourself!" Remus admonishes angrily, "I had to apologize to the Minister of Magic the other day because of you! That was the first time I met the Minister and it was to apologize for you hiding under their bed and growling. They thought you were a boggart!"

"Right," Harry winces, "Penny is afraid of large black dogs because of a thing. You know she's still sleeping with that dagger right? Cornelius is apparently scared shitless he might accidentally be skewered in the night."

"Yeah, someone should've told me about her," Sirius winces and rubs his bandaged ribs tentatively,
"I thought I was going to die."

"And yet," Harry groans, "you managed to be up and stalking the outside of the Fudge villa the very next night." Black was doggedly persistent, Harry will give the fucking psycho that. Then again, if nothing else, Azkaban and hunting down Pettigrew had given the man a mental fortitude that could probably block the killing curse. Not that it stopped Pettigrew from escaping but to be fair that was really the Ministry's fault. So.

"What will it take for you to even consider me as godfather?" Sirius Black pleads.

Harry pauses. This is the first time the man has truly asked instead of demanded and begged. He could use this.

"Well," he says in exaggerated thoughtfulness and doubt, "If you really want to be my godfather, no, if you want to start being a part of my life at all-

"Yes, anything, I want it, I'll do anything," Black agreed desperately.

Harry crosses his arms, unperturbed by the sniveling. He may be a pushover but it's not like he hasn't heard every plea in the book when sinners try to get out of Hell. "Then apologize to Severus for being such a shitty arsehole dickwad who acted like a bully overcompensating for a very, very small penis."

The room seemed to freeze.

"Oh Merlin," Remus says weakly. That was not language Harry or any young boy should be using. Even most adults really.

"Wha- I- wha-" Sirius spluttered. Harry just stares down at him serenely and sternly.

"I want those exact words," He says mildly, "with eye contact and everything." He tilts his head toward an equally stunned Severus to make sure the man knew exactly who he was supposed to make eye contact with.

"Wow." Draco breathed, even Lucius looked torn between vaguely horrified and humorously intrigued at how this was going to unfold. Narcissa looked like Christmas had come early.

Blaise just looked downright aroused, "I love it when you get all dominant like this," he groaned exaggeratedly, "so fucking hot, Merlin, tell him to get on his knees too."

Severus looked like he was shifting between wanting to suffocate the dark-skinned Slytherin and agreeing with him with equally heated fervor.

"All my friends are fucking depraved sadistic perverts," Draco muttered darkly, but he too was watching with interest.

"Language," his parents chide.

"But! Harry!- oh never mind."

"Actually, Harry is really less of a sadist, more of a-" Blaise falters under Severus' harsh and withering glare. The man had been forced to endure close proximity to dementors for weeks, near months, thanks to Harry and his unnatural affinity for them and had, as a result, evolved his evil eye to truly fearsome proportions. He once managed to cow Custard the Dementor when Harry tried to smuggle it into his bedroom and Custard tried to sneak out into their kitchen to search for the food of
its namesake. "-a chaste angel, yes, he's never done a single thing that could be construed as sinful in his life, Merlin sir, please stop, I, I think I may burst into tears, and I suddenly have a rather healthy respect for Longbottom that I really wish I didn't have." Blaise's finishes quickly.

Draco snorts.

"I-I-I-" Sirius stutters. Harry just gives him a bored look and checks an invisible watch on his wrist, do wizards have watches? He smoothly changes the gesture so it looks like he's surveying the quality of his nails indifferently instead. That's better.

"We don't have all week Black," he drawled. "My new father, the Minister of Magical fucking England is waiting for me at home so we can go vacay in Bali tomorrow." It had taken a lot of pleading to persuade the man to try traveling overseas, especially somewhere as exotic as Asia, but Mrs Fudge had been on his side so his victory really had been inevitable. It helped greatly that Harry had been so very obviously injured and was equipped with a visual explanation on female muggle swimwear.

Harry briefly wonders if it is appropriate to send his professor photographs of him on the beach, wet and wearing nothing but Slytherin green swim shorts. It's probably not. Harry is totally going to do it anyway.

"Merlin you are mean," Draco whistles impressed.

"Draco, you should take notes," Lucius orders quietly, watching over the scene fascinated.

"Snivellus-" Harry makes a tutting noise and gives the man a look that would make McGonagall proud. "Snape," Black amends with gritted teeth, "I-I-I-I-I-"

"I think you broke my brother," Narcissa whispers loudly and delightedly, "Merlin, and we only gifted you a measly dementor statue for Christmas that can float."

"Eye contaact," Harry sing-songs, giving everyone a thumbs up and a wide toothy grin.

Black makes a wounded noise before visibly steeling himself and looking into Severus dark and deeply smug eyes. "Snape." He says, "I apologize for being a... a dick."

"I believe the exact term was 'shitty arsehole dickwad.'" Severus drawls, clearly relishing the moment dearly. Harry flushes and shivers at the way the man's baritone voice curls around the crude expletives. God, what he would give to hear that voice dirty talk.

Sirius Black looked ready to fulfill the murder charge he had been just recently acquitted for, "I'm sorry for being a shitty arsehole dickwad and bullying you when we were younger like I was overcompensating for my very small penis."

"Tiny penis," Severus corrects primly.

"Oh come on! Harry didn't say that!"

"Didn't I?" Harry raises a brow, Black slumps over.

"My tiny penis." Black amends with red cheeks.

Harry decides to take pity on the man and immediately throws himself to hug Black, albeit awkwardly considering his injured arm and heavily bruised ribs. "Thank you, Black, I appreciate how much that took from you."
"Psh, it was nothing, anything for my godson," Black lies, but he's positively glowing as he tentatively hugs the boy back, "and call me Sirius."

Well, the guy does deserve to be given a bone. "Sirius," Harry agrees easily before stepping away. "But really, I was sort of doing something before you came here, so, um,"

"Oh, Oh!" Sirius flushes, finally embarrassed of his actions now that he's gotten what he had wanted. Harry wants to sigh again. Somehow he's managed to pick up another child to take care of, and unfortunately, this one came with the stubbornness of an adult and the mental instability of a legitimate crazy person.

"Yeah, course, uh, um," Sirius bits his lower lip, worrying it with his teeth, a gesture Draco sometimes does when nervous. Harry wonders if it runs through the Black family because he's never seen Lucius do that. Mr Malfoy once bit his own finger but that was probably less a habitual action and more an attempt to not scream enraged when he'd caught Severus with a hand up Harry's shirt in, apparently, his mother's favorite bathroom. Which come on. What lunatic has a favorite bathroom? Harry's been in the Malfoy Manor more than a few times now and he can confidently say, that bathroom looks pretty much like the rest of them. "So, um, maybe once you come back from uh, with your, well, Harry, do ya, well, Grimmauld Place ain't the nicest place but I'm sure by then,"

"Oh my Merlin, he's worse than when you tried to invite Harry over to your place Draco," Blaise groans.

"Nu-uh," Draco hisses, eyes flitting to his father, wary of another admonishment. Harry can relate now that Cornelius seemed to have somewhat settled into fatherhood comfortably enough to lecture Harry for a solid hour about political relations and the consequences of accidentally destroying an engagement. Which. Like. To be fair. How was Harry supposed to know the cute heir to the Valbournes of Lithuania was engaged to the youngest noble daughter of the Italian minister?

Or that the guy would be so enamored and confident that he would loudly break off said engagement to try to pursue Harry.

Or that Joseph von Berne, whose family apparently had a very intense blood feud with the Valbournes, would take great offense to this new rival and challenged the Lithuanian to a wizarding duel.

Or that it would all happen in the span of a single Ministry Ball.

Well, at least it was a memorable night.

"Will Remus be there if I visit?" Harry sighs.

Sirius nods vigorously, honestly, Harry was sure the man would agree to invite Voldemort if that was what it took to get Harry to come over. Which, you know, is sort of sweet. And exploitable. "And I can bring Professor Snape?"

Sirius makes a contorted face of pure and utter agony, more than a few of the bystanders had to look away or cover their mouths to hide their amusement. Harry grinned, "I'm kidding," he says, "I'll hang out with you and Remus for an afternoon when I come back, but it's nice to know you didn't immediately reject the idea."

Everyone laughed at the expression of relief on the man's face. Severus smirks when Black accidentally catches eye contact with the other, "Yes," Severus drawled, "how very... welcome I feel."
That seemed to be the final straw for Sirius and in the end the ex-convict had to be dragged out by a very apologetic werewolf while Severus spits curses as he cleans up his bloody nose, Narcissa sighs forlornly at her broken tea set and liquor stained antique rug, and Lucius tried valiantly to fix a broken statue that was half shattered, half ground into fine powder. Harry turns to his friends, who looked as equally bemused as he did,

"So, my turn for monopoly?"

"You." Lucius points accusingly at Harry, the bane of his house's purity, "Are not allowed back into my manor."

He was invited back less than a day after he'd returned from Bali.

"Harry," Blaise says in the middle of their date. They're sitting in a muggle cafe which Blaise had only sneered at once before he had tried the food and promptly insists on coming here near exclusively. "I want to break up."

Harry, mid-chew half chokes, half swallows down his ravioli in surprise. Blaise, because he had probably been waiting for this exact moment like an arsehole, hands him a glass of water. "Excuse me?" He asks once he had gratefully drunk the drink.

"You're excused," Blaise replies primly as he focuses on curling up his carbonara around his fork.

Harry tries to glare but the tears that sprung up subsequently from his coughing session made it hard to do it well, "I meant," he takes another gulp of water. "What brought this on? I thought we were doing okay?" Harry blinks away the excess water in his eyes and then looks at Blaise worriedly, "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Blaise dismisses, but from the way he refused to meet Harry's gaze, he could tell that the teen was at the very least uncomfortable right now.

"Are you sur-"

"Look." Blaise interrupts firmly, "This is the first time I've ever broken up with someone so just, just give me a sec, okay?"

"Okay," Harry agrees, feeling weirdly touched and proud. Sometimes it was hard to remember he is a kid and not an adult, mainly because his inner pervert is pretty damn high-level but that doesn't change the fact that he's young and maturing. There's a tiny part of him that genuinely feels guilty of being his first boyfriend, corrupting him so quickly in life, but Harry brushes it off, after all, it's not like there aren't worse people. And to be honest, with a face as handsome as Blaise's, any future breakups would wish to be half as easy as this one will be.

"I just, I..." Blaise was blushing so hard even his dark skin was reddening, "I don't, it was meant to be easy right?"

"Um. If you mean our relationship then yes?" Harry tries, vaguely confused.

"Yeah, well, it's, it was great, don't get me wrong, fantastic," Blaise splutters, "which I mean, is sort of the problem? But not really."

"Blaise..." Harry blinks, "um, I'm really trying here but you are not really making much sense right now."
Blaise coughs, the shade of his dark skin reddening further into an interesting shade that reminds Harry of something cooked, "I just think..." he says slowly, carefully, "I just think if we keep this up, I, uh," for the first time since the conversation started the Slytherin looked Harry in the eyes, solemn but strong. Harry had to shiver a little at the intensity. Yes, he didn't need to be Love to know that kid was going to break so many hearts in the future. "I won't be able to keep our relationship just casual on my part anymore."

"You mean," Harry sips his drink as Blaise reluctantly nods, "oh."

Huh.

"Well." Harry finally says, "That's.. are you sure?"

Blaise levels him with a look that truly does not suggest he may be harboring romantic feelings in regards to Harry. Hell, it's a look that makes Harry feel like he may not harbor any positive feelings for Harry at all. "I'm sure." Blaise sneers.

Harry flushes and ducks his head sheepishly, "Okay, fair, sorry,"

The tanned teen rolls his eyes, fond and exasperated and now that Harry really looks for it, a touch softer than Blaise would have looked to any other friend. Oh.

"It's hardly your fault babe," Blaise coughs again, smiling awkwardly, "I guess the cutesy nicknames have got to stop now too."

"I, well, I'll miss them," Harry confesses.

"I'll miss them too," Blaise says quietly, and somehow it didn't feel like they were just talking about nicknames. "But hey, we can still give each other shit as mates right?"

Harry scoffs, "Obviously, the only difference between now and the future is that you can't be comforted by my cruel jibes with my breathtaking blowjobs."

"Breathtaking is right," Blaise leers, and it feels a bit forced, on both ends, but the fact they can still grin and joke without either one getting mad proved how compatible they are as friends. Even if Blaise may need some time off from Harry for a while.

Leaning back on his seat, Blaise gazes a little forlornly at Harry, "But really sweetca- I mean, Harry, I think we could've been something amazing if you weren't so stuck on Professor Snape, which, as your friend I can say is super weird by the way."

"As your friend? What does that mean?" Harry asks in half-serious outrage, "You said that as my boyfriend as well!"

"Yeah, but now I can say it without fear of you withholding your pretty mouth for my pleasure," Blaise points out with a crooked smirk.

Harry rolls his eyes but it was easy to see the way his pink cheeks darkened further at the perverse compliment. "Yes, well, you weren't too shabby yourself pretty boy," Harry leers back, "and it hardly was a hardship,"

"Oh Harry, I may not have been a hardship but I was certainly har-"

"Are you kids enjoying your meal?" The waitress butts in. Well, at least she didn't ask right when Harry had stuffed food into his mouth, so that was something at least.
"It's delicious," Blaise smiles with a polite banality that completely hid the fact he was about to make what was probably a very crude dick joke.

"So good," Harry adds in, to also hide the fact the Blaise was about to make what was probably a very crude dick joke.

The waitress gives both of them odd looks like she knows they were talking about something weird yet has no evidence of it. "Well," she says a little awkwardly, her bright customer service smile still impeccably in place, "that's great."

"So great," Blaise echoes.

"Super great," Harry adds because what the fuck else could he say.

Sometimes he thinks he gets the hand of socializing but then shit like this happens and Harry honestly believes the some social skills you just have to be born with. When the waitress leaves, going off to attend to a nearby elderly couple who had signaled for the bill, Harry and Blaise make eye contact and burst into chuckles.

"Friends?" Harry asks.

"Friends," Blaise confirms wryly.

Later, after that lunch Blaise and Harry part ways. Harry had immediately gone to the alley where his bodyguards were lurking, to apparate back home but Blaise hadn't felt the same need to leave and chose to meander listlessly around the shops. It was a good thing. What he did. Blaise knew there arrangement couldn't last. He was arrogant enough to resent his second place fixture in Harry's affections but he wasn't arrogant enough to think he could change it.

It was a recipe doomed to fail at the start really. And Blaise knew that. The only reason he decided to try in the first place was that he didn't think he would care about the result in the end.

Well. He certainly cares now.

"Zabini?"

The Italian Slytherin looks up from the pavement his feet had been shuffling him aimlessly on to see the surprised features of the muggle-born Gryffindor. The friend of the Weasley, and to a slightly lesser extent, a friend of Harry's. "Granger." He greets before wincing at the way his voice catches and wobbles.

Granger looks at him in open concern, "Hey, um, are you alright?" She steps tentatively closer, "You, ah, want to talk or-?"

That's all it takes.

Blaise bursts into tears.

Distantly he can feel Granger's arms wrap awkwardly around his shoulders and confused but soothing words.

Blaise is mortified. He doesn't stop crying.

"Seriously Severus, enlighten me," Lucius swirls his glass of red wine, the picture of elegance as he
sits on a gorgeous throne-like chair that sits perfectly behind a window that frames a beautiful scenic view of his garden and the night sky. Severus can just imagine the man torturing his house elves for days just to get the damn chair in just the right place so the moonlight could hit his figure in just the right way to make him glow, yet not glaringly so during the day. "Why have you not fucked Harry Potter yet?"

Severus chokes and then promptly glares at his friend. "He's a child." He growls.

"Doesn't stop you from sticking your tongue down his throat from what I can tell," Lucius mutters into his glass. "Or rutting against the child like a beast in heat."

The dark-haired Slytherin flushed and damnably says nothing. He's really starting to regret accepting the invitation for a nightcap. Lucius sighs and rolls his eyes.

"I'm serious here, if it was a matter of integrity that you will not touch Potter, I could understand, but at this point in your... dalliances with the cherished Golden Boy of Britain, I'm fairly sure that if you so much as even say the word 'integrity' you'll burst into flames."

"Integrity," Severus says pettily, but looks abashed nonetheless, "Yes, well, while that broom has long flown off, I refuse to cross anymore.. lines until Harry is officially considered an adult."

"Magnanimous of you," Lucius drawls, sounding very unimpressed, "and yet you happily skip back and forth the one line you have already crossed while testing the next one with the yearning curiosity of an infant. Forgive me if I don't see it."

Severus scowls darkly, "So what, you would rather I fuck a child?"

And here was the cusp of the conversation. Lucius leans back into his seat, eying Severus critically, "Of course I wouldn't rather you fuck a child Severus, honestly stupidity doesn't suit you despite it being a look you choose to wear constantly these days." He sneers.

Severus sneers back, his rage and indignation only held back by his shame. "It's not like you're the pinnacle of goodness either Lucius."

"I never claimed I was," Lucius dismisses easily, "besides, I may have done a lot of things under Imperius," Severus snorts, "But I can tell you with full confidence I have never done anything with a kid."

Severus squints doubtfully at the pureblood. "Harry told me you were responsible for bringing the diary that set the basilisk free onto the school."

Lucius sips his drink, then amends stiffly, "Fine. I have never directly done things to children. Are you happy now?"

"Nothing about this conversation is making me happy Lucius."

"Well, that makes us quite the pair then," Lucius huffs, "because Narcissa insisted we have this conversation in the first place."

Severus groans, "You're wife hasn't grown out of her love for gossip I see."

"Nor her love of the taboo," The other wizard sighs, "I've never seen her so excited. I blame her Black heritage really."

Severus widely says nothing, knowing full well, unless explicitly prompted, he was not to say a bad
word against Lady Malfoy in front of her husband. Nonetheless, he tilts his head in silent agreement. The Blacks were known for their blatant encouragement of incest and young love. Narcissa and Black's parents had been cousins engaged the moment they were born and forced to marry right after Hogwarts at eighteen. The only reason Narcissa herself didn't follow tradition was the lack of cousins and the fact the Malfoys, who were predominantly rooted in French customs that had very little incest and far more drinking and premarital sex, had insisted on waiting until Lucius made a stable name for himself at the ministry.

"Anyway, while I'm hardly as pleased as Narcissa, I will agree that Harry Potter is quite a... unique case," Severus glares at the faint flush dusting his friend's pale cheekbones. Lucius has always been a slut for power and a pretty face. "Still, you may have support for your deviances but that does not mean you can just flaunt it around like some lovesick Gryffindor. You're a Slytherin for crying out loud, the Head of Slytherin even, you don't need me to teach you discretion."

"I'll take that under consideration," Severus says icily, "though I fail to comprehend how that relates to you expecting me to... fuck the boy." He says the last part with complete distaste.

"It doesn't," Lucius swirls his wine absentmindedly. Severus knows for a fact the man does it on purpose because of how elegant it looks. The dramatic dick. "To be honest I really only said that to see the expression on your face."

Severus was going to wring the man's neck. "I hope it was worth it." He grits out.

Lucius chuckles, "Oh definitely, but I was genuinely curious if you had a reason why you haven't done so either. Not a very good reason you've given me though. I mean, as the muggles say, you either go big or you go home. Don't pussyfoot around when you're already knee deep in the water."

"How crude." Severus raises an eyebrow and ignores the insult.

"Muggles." Is all Lucius says for explanation. To him, it was probably all that was needed really. "Surprisingly on point though."

"How did you even learn that phrase?" Severus points out, "I hardly imagine you slumming it with the muggles just so you can pick up phrases to use against me."

"If you honestly don't believe I would do exactly that just to make you uncomfortable then you must think I'm less petty than I am really," Lucius huffs out in amusement, "but no, Harry, your pretty little psychopath taught me that during Monopoly. Invested everything into making hotels that no one ended up landing and went bankrupt near immediately."

Silently Severus decides not to let Harry anywhere near any form of investment or gamble or even a lucky draw in the near future. It just seems like bad luck follows the boy like a very persistent stalker. He supposes in a way it's fair. No one could be that intelligent, charming, powerful and pretty without some karmic cosmic balance to even things out.

One could argue being born as the arch-enemy to a Dark Lord would have already balanced the scales enough but to be fair Harry Potter, was really really pretty.

"Also, when you do get around to completely ravaging Potter's virginity-"

Severus groans long-sufferingly, "Must you word it as such?"

"-please refrain from doing so under my roof."
"This is going to be so exciting isn't it?" Cornelius Fudge, British Minister of Magic looks at his deeply grumpy family. Harry was glaring daggers at his tea and Penny Fudge was actually glaring at her dagger as if blaming it for them all having to wake so early. Usually, she's quick to rise but there was an emergency in St Mungos the night before and they had to wake at four in the morning.

"No." She replies curtly.

"Mblerghfm." Harry replies incoherently.

Fudge shakes his head in tired amusement, warmth clenching at his heart at the sight of his wife and his son. His family. "Come on darling, you know how much you enjoy watching the Beaters, and Harry, your friends will be waiting for you, so… there's that."

Harry had made it very clear that while he was fond of the sport, he did not share the fanatical obsession for quidditch like many of his peers. In a way, it was a relief since Fudge himself didn't feel very strongly to the game either and didn't have to try to pretend to more than he had to in a political setting. Then again, other than the actual flying itself, the only other than that keeps Harry from loathing quidditch completely is the fact that there are a lot of attractive male players out there. And after seeing the way his adopted son had pretty much decimated the next generation of politicians into pining messes, Cornelius had little interest in expanding the boy's… hunting grounds.

They always said kids were difficult. Though he had never really understood how until he had to shoo off Harry's international and influential suitors off his lawn like pigeons. Some of them were older than he was for Merlin's sake! One of them was the emperor to a small island community somewhere off Brazil who wished for Harry to join his harem in exchange for thirty years of ore mining trade.

Cornelius had almost decked the man right there and then. As if his boy is only worth harem status. He deserves consort of higher at the very least.

Oh, Merlin, Cornelius fears Harry's flippant attitude on his sexual matters was rubbing off on him. Other than being a serial flirter though, Harry was almost the perfect child.

If only his ability to flirt wasn't so powerful.

"Nblupherlynniff," Harry groans. Apparently, the bait that is his friends, is still not enough to reel in the teenager's enthusiasm at such an early hour. At least Penny seemed slightly more enthusiastic. Then again, Fudge thought Lucius Malfoy attending a muggle farm for charity would be more enthusiastic than Harry right now.

Fudge sighs fondly at Harry being such a teenager. It was adorable. To be fair, the boy was adorable in general but watching him grumpy was like watching a kitten sulk. Still. He had important networking business to conduct, the Quidditch World Cup is the perfect place to do so, and Harry was far superior in the art of networking then his wife, as much as he adored her.

Time to pull out the big guns then.

With a flourish, the British Minister of Magic pulls out a photograph and slides it to Harry. "This," he states solemnly, "is Ivan Krum. Victor Krum's older brother. Eighteen. Working to be a Mediwizard that specializes in massage."

Cornelius could feel Harry's interest rise as green eyes glanced at the photograph and then refused to look away. Not that he could blame the boy. He wasn't gay but even Cornelius could tell Ivan Krum was quite the well-built treat.
He decides to up the ante. Ever since he'd figured out Harry's... interests, like the good politician Fudge is, he's been building up a folder of bribe material to corral Harry at his worst. So far the folder mainly contained a list of Harry's favorite food, shops, friends and a large number of eligible bachelors to potentially seduce. While he's not happy of Harry's strange vice, it is a fairly easy one to fulfill given Cornelius' position.

"This one is Francis Colman," he pulls out a second picture, this wizard is of a more common British wizarding build, thin and pale, but tall with curly blond locks and the face of a Greek god. "His family owns the largest magical botanic garden in Europe, though from what I've heard through the grapevine, the poor boy isn't taking over on account of his black thumb."

Harry snorted, his amusement brightening up his previously dim eyes, "Oh really?" he murmurs with a faint flush on his cheeks. Definitely on the hook.

One more push then. Fudge grins inwardsly.

"And this-" he begins, sliding the last photo to his adopted son, "is Raphael Mathis Malfoy. Lucius Malfoy's very single cousin. Twenty-two years old. He's coming as an important up and coming French diplomat."

Fudge didn't say any more. He didn't need to. Harry took one look at the photograph, gasped and ran off to his room to get properly dressed. "Jesus Christ!" Fudge could hear him curse through the walls, "No one told me the World Cup was a hottie convention! Where the fuck is my favorite robes?!"

"You're wearing them, dear!" Penny calls out, earning the couple more cursing from their teenage son. She giggles, "Harry is such a teenager when it comes to matters of the heart. It's so cute."

"Heart is not the organ I would use to describe these matters," Cornelius mutters with fond exasperation. "Goodness me, I think the world of the child but his lust rivals those Greek gods from myth."

"Oh Corny," Penny giggles, "don't be so dramatic, the boy just likes to flirt, make out a little, you do remember who his real father is don't you?"

Cornelius snorts, "True enough, true enough. When you say it like that I'm surprised that Harry's not more of a troublemaker, though his flirtations have a far higher success rate than James Potter ever had." He thinks he should worry about how proud he sounds about that. Then again, after the von Berne-Valbourne incident, Cornelius thinks he's learned to see the bright side of a truly ridiculous situation.

Quietly he decides that he doesn't mind who Harry ends up with. Only that the man, and he's got no lingering delusions that it would be otherwise now, be kind to Harry and that it wouldn't cause some sort of magical world war that even Grindelwald could've only dreamed of. Honestly, Harry could make a very good dark lord. Fudge shudders at the thought.

"Harry hurry up or we'll be late!" He shouts. To be fair, they were all fairly early. The actual games started hours away and they hardly had to worry about seating. Still, the time before big events such as these was made for mingling and networking, and Cornelius would prefer not to waste any more time as much as he adored watching his usually intelligent and composed son squawk around like a headless rooster looking for a hairbrush.

"Coming, I'm coming!"
Penny hums as she pours something steaming hot into a muggle thermos Harry had impulse bought a while back. Penny loved the thing, takes it everywhere now. Admittedly it was quite amazing. A metal container that will keep liquids hot for long periods of time. No runes or charms necessary. Cornelius had to admit, muggles were pretty darn creative to make up for their unfortunate lack of magic.

"Tea?" Cornelius questions.

"Hot chocolate." Penny smiles.

Cornelius smiles back as Harry skids into the kitchen, notably more awake and smelling faintly of lavender and pine, a scent Cornelius had painstakingly chosen to gift him when he came back from Hogwarts.

"Perfect." He says.

The Quidditch World Cup was not as bad as Harry had thought. For one thing, the eye candy was top quality stuff. For another stringing along all the politicians and political heirs to curry favor for his adopted father was far more entertaining after watching Quidditch nonstop for an hour. And, best of all, Harry got to absolutely horrify all his friends by not being subtle at all about doing that last thing.

"Harry, my father will freak." Draco moans as Raphael Mathis Malfoy reluctantly leaves their conversation in order to respond to an apparently urgent owl message. The Malfoy diplomat shooting Harry one last mournful look over his shoulder before hurrying to finish his business. "I cannot believe I'm jealous of the Weasleys in their poor common people area."

"Honestly Draco, you are exaggerating, me and Raphael only chatted for a few minutes." Harry loftily replies, but the sly smirk curling the delicate line of his mouth told a whole different intention.

"Oh no you don't," Draco hisses, "don't you act all innocent and like I wasn't there for the last 'chat' you had. That man with the blackthumb or whatever is still giving you looks like a besotted eighteenth-century lady."

They both glance at the far corner of the booth they were standing in, and there stood an awkwardly lanky, but rather attractive man holding a glass of something sparkling and staring at Harry through his thick glasses. When Harry made eye contact with him, the man immediately looked away with an embarrassed red flush crawling quickly up his face. Draco silently gestures to Harry, his body language practically shouting at Harry to see the devastating effects just one chat had reduced what had been probably a very aloof wizard to.

"I don't see the problem," Harry smirks. "If anything your father would be disappointed that you haven't been chatting with anyone but me and the other Slytherins, didn't he drag you from your binoculars so you could mingle more with the big boys."

"One," Draco pinched the bridge of his nose to stave off his oncoming headache, "you don't seem to see a lot of problems. It's a running theme with you actually. Two. Fuck you, Potter. Three. Raphael is the rising star in French Politics and to have him fall because he was too busy drawing tiny hearts everywhere would be a huge blow to my family. And four. Fuck you, Potter."

An elderly couple gave Draco the stink eye as they pass by. Harry shot them a pleasantly bland smile when they glance at him as he replies mildly, "I notice you didn't comment about your father being disappointed at you for your lack of mingling."

"I did," Draco sneers haughtily, "that's what the 'Fuck you's were for."
Harry tuts, "Really Draco, how crude."

"I learn from the worst."

The pair both grin, mischievous and Childishly sly.

"Want to see if I can flirt our way into meeting some of your favorite Quidditch players?"

"It's about time you used your powers for the greater good." Draco sniffs.

It turns out, maybe going off on a quest of seduction wasn't a great idea.

Mostly because of the whole Death Eater raid thing.

Which. Harry would like to point out. Really not his fault whatsoever.

"Harry what the fuck," Draco hisses as they hid behind the flimsy cover of a Bulgarian flagpole to avoid the crowd of utter chaos and discord that swam around them. "Did you make out with a death eater when I wasn't looking or something?!"

"Uhhhhhh.…" Technically Harry's made out with Mr 'I am Lord Voldemort' himself but he doesn't think that is the answer Draco was looking for.

'Damn right you did,' Mr Riddle says in his mind, smug and completely unasked for.

'This is technically your fault,' Harry accuses the half-soul internally.

'And technically I'm a part of you, so, the blame is shared,'

'That is NOT HOW THAT- ' Harry broke off from his initial thought as he glimpsed a flash of long platinum blonde hair. "Hey, is that Mr Malfoy?"

Draco perks up visibly at the mention of his father, "What, where?"

"Um, he's over there, by the green tent, the one next to the one just set on fire, with that tall death eater-"

Immediately the Malfoy heir balks, "Death eat- no, no you must have made a mistake."

Harry looks at Draco with a mix of pity and offense, "Draco… I really don't think I did." He could never mistake that hair. That glorious, glorious hair. Quickly he changes the subject. "Look, it's really not that important, right now we need to regroup with… someone. But not my fucking useless auror bodyguards who really should have been here what the fuck, honestly."

It works. Slightly. Draco couldn't hide his distress from his eyes but he did give Harry a wobbly smile, taking comfort in the familiar rant about Harry's incompetent bodyguards during the midst of all the screaming disarray. Then, his eyes widened, "Shit, Harry, we gotta go."

He follows Draco's gaze and stiffened as one of the hooded death eaters not a few meters away, was staring right back at them. Specifically at the scar on Harry's forehead. "Fuck," Harry agrees vehemently before grabbing Draco's hand tight, "follow the crowd, don't let go, head to the forest."

Draco nods, his jaw clenched in determination while the rest of his body trembles faintly. The immortal in him croons at the front of bravery. Such a sweet soul. Outwardly, Harry shows none of this, of course, his face serious and calculating. "Don't look at the guy, pretend we haven't noticed
his attention," Harry murmurs.

The blonde Slytherin cracks a weak smirk, "So, the complete opposite of what you've been doing today."

Harry huffs and rolls his eyes amusedly, "Yes you ponce, the compl- NOW!"

He's not sure, but among the shouting and screaming crowd, Harry thinks he heard the death eater curse his name. He didn't look back though. Not when he had Draco to consider. The pair's slight stature worked well for them in this particular instance at least, easily slipping between gaps between the frantic crowd and shifting into the shadows of the forest once they reached there.

"I, I think we lost him," Draco murmurs. Harry cocks his head to acknowledge his words and they both loosen their grip on each other to slump down onto the ground with short panting breaths. "Hah, shit, these shoes were not meant for, ah, Merlin, running."

"Ugh," Harry groans, "I know, my, fuck, my robes are ruined."

Draco grins, looking half high from the adrenaline and the ridiculousness of their complaints, "My hair."

"My skin," Harry makes an exaggerated face of agony, "like, damn I need a bath."

"Ugh, tell me about it, and don't even get me started on my-"

"Ah-hah! I knew I recognized that whining!" Ron triumphantly declares as he marches through the bushes behind them, causing Harry and Ron to make some distinctly unflattering sounds that may or may not be akin to a startled dolphin. Ron looked both gleeful and admonishing, "Oi, as funny as this is, you guys gotta be quiet or the death eaters might come."

"I don't know," Hermione pops up behind the redhead, pale but faintly amused, "they might think another death eater was terrorising a couple of girls and leave us alone after that."

"Mean," Harry accuses with a pointed finger, "Very mean."

Suddenly a trio of teenagers around the Weasley twin's age burst onto the scene with wands out. When they see Ron, Hermione, Harry and Draco, they all blink and look around warily. One of them, a short brunette steps forward, "Uh, we, um, we hear… girls skrem? Trouble? Bad? Help?"

Harry and Draco looks long-sufferingly at each other as the Gryffindor pair snicker. "Um." Harry picks himself up and smiles sheepishly at the foreign newcomers. French it seems too. "Non, pardon. Mon ami et moi avons été surpris. C'est ce que le bruit était. Encore. Pardon."

The trio relax at the explanation. One of them even chuckles a little while the other two just looks relieved. "Grâce à Merlin." The brunette breathes, before looking wary again. "Still, we must, uh, leave. Time short."

"Je comprends, merci." Harry replies, turning to his friends and gesturing him to follow as the group all move deeper through the forest.

"Since when do you know French?" Hermione questions.

"The Malfoys are French and attractive. I hedged my bets." And it clearly worked if the way Raphael Malfoy swooned was any indication, "I'm also trying to learn Italian for similar reasons, I mean, I haven't learned much since Blaise and I broke up-"
"Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait." Draco stops mid-stride to stare at Harry. Ron too had abruptly halted at the same time. "You two broke up?"

"Yeah, mate, what the fuck?" Ron splutters, then his eyes narrow as they catch sight of the way Hermione didn't look very surprised about this sudden revelation. Ron has gotten far more insightful these days. Harry isn't sure what to feel about that since he's really only eagle-eyed in matters related to Harry's numerous fuck ups and eccentricities. "Hermione, did you know about this?"

Hermione bit her a lip. A glaring siren of guilt.

Harry sighs. He needs to teach this girl how to lie better because come on, she wasn't even trying. "Oh shove off, Blaise dumped me like, a week ago guys. I was going to tell you both after today. Hermione knows because apparently she and Blaise stumbled across each other not too long after the actual breakup and now they're buddies. It's kind of weird but I'm rolling with it."

"Serious Harry, I love you like a brother- a brother," Ron repeats with a glare when Harry pointedly leers at him, "but your communication skills do need some work."

"Hear, hear," Draco agrees.

"Oh shove off I'll work on it."

After a while trudging through foliage like the worst hike ever, they all stop as they begin to hear the sound of increasingly desperate shouting.

"I once skewered a Kraken with only a toothpick!"

"Jim you don't even like swimming in a puddle- me on the other hand, well I'm such a good swimmer the merfolk made me an honorary mermaid, er, merman."

"Don't listen to them! They're such liars, me? I'm so honest they based veritaserum on my blood!"

"What does that even mean?" Hermione whispers with puzzled bemusement as they crept closer. As they reached a clearing everyone saw five teenage boys practically on their knees in reverence as they surround three rather stunning young ladies. Harry blinks.

"Veelas," he tells them, "strong bloodline too I guess, half-blood at least."

Of course, only Hermione and the French brunette are listening. Draco, Ron and one of the brunette's companions were staring at the veelas with dreamy desperation and hunger. The other French companion must be smarter or just more experienced at handling Veelas because he was facing away from the beautiful girls, eyes shut and muttering something in French.

"Ez part Veela. Small, small part." The brunette explains at Harry's curious glance. She shoots Harry her own befuddled look, "Et toi?"

"Gay." He answers with a crooked grin. "Very much gay."

"Ah," She nods in faint understanding, now more amused than anything.

"I once flew to Jupiter on my broom!" Ron was screaming in the nearby distance and oh, it seemed the boys had all run off toward the veelas then.

"That's nothing, Jupiter once flew to me when I was on my broom!" Draco shouts like for some
reason these poor girls were hard of hearing or something. Then again, they might be after all this.

The French boy also yells out something French and boastful.

Honestly, Harry wonders how none of the death eaters have caught them yet. Also, how big was this fucking forest?!

"Ron! Malfoy! Get back here- oh dammit!" Hermione grouses as she jumps out to try pull her fellow students away from the Veelas.

"Fredrick!" The brunette snaps, but to little avail and quickly joins Hermione in trying to move the lovesick boys away.

Harry glances at the still muttering other French guy before sighing and walking toward the loud decelerations of frankly embarrassing lies. Once close enough, he raises his hand, his relatively uninjured one, and raises his companions up and back toward the bushes they had come from. "Jesus do I have to do everything here?" He mutters as he shakes his head at the sound of their yelps of indignation. He's been sternly warned to minimize his magic output lest he slow the healing process of his arm and ribs which have been lightly fractured or heavily bruised but he figures that simple levitation wouldn't do much to him anyway.

The show of magic does a lot to the Veelas though. Immediately after he makes himself known, Harry finds himself surrounded by three gorgeous young ladies, giggling and fluttering their eyelashes at him. "Seigneur la Mort," the tallest one breathes out reverently, "I had thought you to be just a myth, a fairy tale."

"You certainly look like you belong in one," the second one giggles.

"So pretty, so powerful," the last one coos, her fingers hovering above his head as if aching to run her fingers through his wild hair.

"Oh, this is just unfair now!" Harry can hear Ron shout in the distance. "No one should be that gay and be that attractive to women that attractive!"

Harry smirks for all the wrong reasons.

The Veelas swoon anyway.

"Fuck, I think I lost my wand."

"Ron what the fuck." Harry groans.

"Speaking of what the fuck," Hermione smoothly transitions. "Harry your Veela friends are stalking us." The French brunette who introduced herself as Dee nods in agreement as she glances back warily when one of said Veelas make jealous hissing noises.

"No but, like, that's really not an issue," Harry dismisses and Dee mutters something sarcastically in French about her corpse. "Ron, we are running away from Death Eaters, your wand has literally never been more important right now."

A rustling noise nearby distracts everyone, even the Veelas who haven't stopped staring at Harry with awe for the past six minutes, and they stare at a house-elf tumbling out of the bushes. Female, Harry absentmindedly thinks, he can feel it in his bones. She seemed to struggle to move like she was walking through water.
"There are bad wizards about!" she squeakily mutters as she laboriously tries to run. "Bad wizards everywhere! Winky is getting out of." The house elf pauses, looking up as if scenting the air before her head swivels toward Harry with wide eyes and makes an even higher pitched noise of wonder like she had just discovered the house elf equivalent of Santa.

"Oh come on!" Ron exclaims.

Unlike the veelas though, the house elf leaves, but not after giving Harry a very big bow that had quite hard to explain away.

After fifteen more minutes the group expands to fit five goblins who had been cackling over over a sack of gold they must've won in a bet that had passed by, did a double take at Harry Potter and backed up with big toothy grins, staring at Harry like he was the biggest sack of gold they've ever seen. At this rate Harry wouldn't be surprised if a herd of unicorns joined the party, this whole situation was ridiculous and seriously this forest was fucking huge. What the fuck.

"We got five goblins, three Beauxbatons students, three Veelas, two Gryffindors, one blond Slytherin twink with daddy issues, one house elf and one Boy-Who-Lived." Harry counts with his fingers before sighing loudly, "And yet not one hot dude."

"Well fuck you too Potter," Draco mildly says, "Also, why was I singled out ther-" Harry covers the other boy's mouth with his hand, silencing him.

"We got company, well, more company." He says and everyone else stills. The goblins snarl, showing off their very sharp teeth in the evening light.

"Who, who's there?" Hermione calls out nervously when nobody comes out.

"MORSMORDRE!"

Everyone gasps as something green, and glittering erupts from the darkness at the corner of their eyes, flying upward until it shoots past the tree canopy and bursts into the sky like a firework. It takes a moment for Harry's eyes to adjust, but when he does, the symbol hovering in the darkening sky was unmistakable, if a little sparkly.

The Dark Mark.

'Well. That's one way to get the message across,' Mr Riddle says in his mind, peering curiously through Harry's eyes. 'A little gaudy though,' he adds critically, sounding genuinely irritated at the artistic rendition of his little terrorist insignia, 'I mean, I get that it has to stand out in the night sky but it looks like a four-year-old dropped their glitter collection onto it.'

Harry snorts. Because it so does.

Nobody else, however, seems to share his humour as the woods all around them erupt with screaming and just generally even more panic than before. Harry actually jumped at the sounds, the sudden shift between tense silence to surround sound screeching fear was jarring, to say the least. "Shit!" He swears, his sensitive ears ringing at the cacophony.

"We have to go!" Hermione shrilly yells, not helping Harry's plight at all but it does get everyone moving at least. Draco tugs Harry frantically until he follows in a stumbling groan.

"Come on Harry," He hisses.
"I got it, I bloody got it," Harry mutters, picking up the pace, but it was for naught really as a series of popping sounds snapped around them, revealing the arrival of at least two dozen wizards all pointing their wands at them. "Ah, fuck me, see if I ever go to this stupid event again, not even for the hot single Malfoy."

"Harry can you not be appropriate for a single moment?" Ron hisses.

"Also," Draco says affronted, "what the fuck do you mean by the hot single Malfoy."

"Clearly not you," One of the goblins has the absolute gall to say as he ignores the team of wizards in favour of critically assessing Draco's looks and looking dreadfully unimpressed by what he finds.

"Oooh," Harry 'oooh's with glee's, "I like you, what's your name?"

"Drigbite, Mr Potter," Drigbite introduces with a smug smirk while his fellow goblins glare hatefully at him for capturing Lord Death's favour with a single insult. "And may I say, you look-"

"OH MY GOD, SERIOUSLY?!" Ron shouts, completely done, "NOW? YOU WANT TO DO THIS NOW?!!"

"Ron, do you really think this is the right time to be yelling?" Harry admonishes while Ron stares at Harry with disbelief at the sheer hypocritical shit spewing out his mouth. Harry inwardly grins and thinks Ron's face is probably a national treasure. Like. The expressions he can make. Just simply amazing really. "Honestly, there's a time and place and- EVERYONE DUCK!"

"STUPEFY!" Apparently, the surrounding wizards had, had enough. Luckily everyone obeyed the order and the spell had missed by a hair. Harry can feel his eyes glowing and the creeping darkness moving in as he rage toward these insolent mortals rose. How dare they-

"STOP! STOOOP!" Harry blinked, anger and darkness vanishing as a familiar voice rang out. Everyone turns to the source and out from the bushes came a terrified Arthur Weasley, "That's my son!" he yells out.

"And that's MINE!" Fudge bellows not too far behind him, his face red and panting from exertion and rage. "What are you people doing?!"

The wizards all stepped back, looking fearful when they recognised their Minister. So not Death Eaters then.

"Minister," A surprised voice greets, "Minster, you do not understand,"

Cornelius Fudge narrows his eyes, "Mr Crouch, what is the meaning of this?" He asks, taut with a cool fury and looking every inch like a man who runs magical Britain every single day.

"It's, well," Mr Crouch falters, his sharp eyes switch targets and he turns toward Harry's group, "Which of you did it?!" He snaps, "Which of you conjured the Dark Mark?!"

"We didn't do that!" Ron shouts, which is followed by various forms of indignant agreements all round.

"What proof do you even have anyway?!" Draco sneers, "Wait until my father hears this!"

"Your father is probably leading this whole mess!" Mr Crouch snaps, making Draco rear back as if he had been slapped. Draco couldn't say anything to that and helplessly looks at the ground with clenched fists. "And do not lie! You have been discovered at the scene of the crime!"
Well Draco may not be able to say anything but Cornelius certainly had no qualms.

"Discovered at the- are you absolutely serious?!” Fudge yells, Harry has never seen him so angry, "Most of them are children! He's the Boy Who Lived! The redhead is a WEASLEY! The girl is MUGGLEBORN! The young Malfoy's father is one of my most trusted aides!"

By now all the Ministry wizards have lowered their wands and looking extremely uncomfortable. Mr Crouch was still the only one with his wand up but he was clearly weakening his resolve to do so under his irate boss' glare.

"I- they were walking in a suspiciously large group," He tries.

Fudge glances at Harry's entourage and snorts loudly. "They're grouped with a bunch of creatures and French kids- hardly a stereotypical death eater rally," He points out dryly. Harry doesn't think he's been prouder of Cornelius.

"Kids, do you see where the dark mark came from?" Mr Weasley asks, still looking a bit shaken but far more reassured now that he realises he has the actual Minister of Magic on his side here.

"Over there," Hermione points at the place where they had heard the voice. She was doing remarkably well under these conditions. Actually, all his friends were. The French students and Veela looked more than vaguely traumatised. Clearly, they've never gone through the shit he and his friends have gone through then. "There was someone behind the trees and they shouted words, it was some sort of an incantation-"

"Oh, stood over there, did they?" said Mr. Crouch, focusing on Hermione with mocking and triumph on his face. "Said an incantation, did they? You seem very well informed about how that Mark is summoned, missy-"

"Did you not hear what I just said Crouch?" Fudge demands, "She's muggleborn, as if she is a death eater. Also. ALSO- ARE YOU FOR FUCKING FOR REAL HERE?!!"

Mr Crouch shrinks into himself, "Minister Fudge I-"

"Do you honestly believe there aren't other people in this forest? That the culprit would have, oh, I don't know, immediately run from the scene of the crime? Disapparated maybe?"

"Well-

"And were you really going to accuse the fourteen year old girl about knowing too much about the dark mark just because she said that she heard an incantation?" Cornelius angrily accuses, "because I have some terrible news to tell you Mr Crouch, because I don't know what special magic voodoo you've been using but most of us have been using incantations to cast spells." He turns on the rest of the Ministry wizards, "And what are you all doing?! Check where the girl pointed, maybe there's a clue or something."

"O-of course!" They shout and quickly make their temporary escape, hoping desperately the Minister doesn't remember their faces from tonight.

"Not you Crouch." Fudge orders curtly as Crouch had been edging away to leave. Crouch stills. "Right now I couldn't trust you to find your own nose much less an actual criminal."

"I- yes, sir."

"Yes! We got them! There's someone here! Unconscious! It's- but- blimey…”
"You've got someone?" shouted Mr. Crouch, sounding highly disbelieving but incredibly relieved that maybe something was going his way tonight. "Who? Who is it?"

One of the male Ministry wizards reemerges from behind the trees, followed by his fellow coworkers looking equally as shocked as he was. He was carrying a tiny, limp figure in his arms that Harry recognised as the house elf they saw from before.

Mr Crouch did not move or speak as the wizard places his elf on the ground at his feet. "That… this, this can't be…" The other Ministry wizards were all staring at him.

"Isn't that your elf Crouch?" Fudge says coolly. "Wonky was it? I remember thinking she was very loyal indeed."

"No- this- no!" Mr Crouch starts to run toward the place they found the elf but was stopped by the wizard who had carried her in the first place.

"No point, Mr. Crouch," He says firmly, "There was no one else there."

"Good job Mr Diggory." Fudge compliments, but his voice still lacked his usual joviality.

"Diggory?" Harry perks up, and ignores Ron and Draco's frantic whispers of 'Harry please no,' and 'Harry heel!,' and 'For fuck's sakes Harry,'. "You wouldn't happen to be Cedric's dad would you?"

Mr Diggory puffs up, his wand still trained at Mr Crouch but he really needn't have since all the other witches and wizards had followed suit and Crouch wouldn't have been able to sneeze without getting at least nineteen spells to the face. "Yes, indeed I am. My boy has talked about you a few times, Mr Potter, I greatly enjoyed hearing about the times you jumped off various floors in Hogwarts with varying results."

Harry immediately flushes and curses Cedric. At the very least, Mr Diggory seems to like him, even if it was because he had found his embarrassing escapades hilariously ridiculous.

"IT WASN'T ME!" Mr Crouch shouts frantically, bringing the situation quickly back at hand, "IT, IT WASN'T ME!"

"It would make sense if it was," One witch says, "I mean it would be just like a death eater to trick the Ministry to do their dirty work for them."

"NO!"

"Out of all the people we attack, we attack the group with the Boy Who Lived, a muggleborn, creatures and Beauxbatons students?" Another wizard points out, "It's a hell of a coincidence."

"If we had actually hurt them the public would have rioted," Another gasps in horror, "the Ministry's reputation would have crumbled!"

"And those weak accusations too!" Someone else shouts in realisation, "There was no way someone competent could have actually believed that tripe unless they were desperately finding a way to pin the crime on someone else!"

"And if that person had to have happened to be a muggleborn…."

"NO!" Crouch yells desperately, looking quite mad, "NO, NO, NO! IT WASN'T ME! I DIDN'T ORDER- WINKY DOESN'T EVEN HAVE A WAND!"
"Actually," Mr Diggory says solemnly, "she did." He pulls out a wand that Ron instantly recognises.

"Hey! That's mine!" Ron exclaims, surprised, "I lost it a while back!"

The ministry wizards were outright glaring at Crouch now. Somehow Harry thinks Crouch wasn't exactly a very popular person in the workplace if everyone was so quick to turn on him. Respected maybe. He was the previous minister if memory serves well, recently even, during the first war and known to be quite brutal. With a personality like that, he would definitely feared at least.

"That's clause three of the Code of Wand Use broken then." A younger looking witch sneers.

"Not to mention stealing a wand, clause six, from a child too."

"Disgusting."

Just then there was another pop, and a new man appeared right next to Mr Weasley.

"The Dark Mark!" he pants, and wow was he late to the party. He looks inquiringly to his colleagues. "Who did it? Did you get them? Barry! What's going on?"

"It seems Mr Crouch used his elf to cast the dark mark, Ludo." One of the Ministry wizards, Barry, spits.

"Ludo Bagman," Draco whispers informatively to the rest. "Head of the Department of Magical Games and Sports."

"Barty?" Bagman questions fearfully at Crouch.

"No, it, it's not me, I'm innocent." Crouch quivers.

'Good,' Harry viciously thinks, 'Now he knows how it feels.'

"Mr Diggory, let's question the elf," Fudge says, the stern voice of authority, "no violence, threats and, if needed, veritaserum."

Mr Diggory nods, looking unsurprised at being placed as the new leader. Crouch, sensing this, glares hatefully at the man.

Diggory raises his own wand at Winky, "Ennervate!"

Winky hysterically denies it all. No one would listen though. Hermione had to shout out for the poor elf's innocence, saying the voice that chanted the spell was far lower before the interrogation backed off somewhat. Though it hardly mattered for Winky who had to endure the insults and abuse from her infuriated master. It seemed Mr Crouch had decided to blame everything on Winky then.

They ended up having to bring both master and elf into custody for veritaserum and further interrogation. Cornelius gave Harry a huge hug and a promise that they'll get everything sorted. "I sent Penny back when the commotion started, but when I realised you were gone, you could not believe how scared I was," Cornelius says, making Harry feel incredibly guilty and every bit the child he wasn't, "heading to the forest was a good idea, but don't think for one second you're not getting your lecture for running off without telling me later."

"Sorry, dad." Harry hung his head.

Cornelius hugged him tighter before backing away with a tired smile. "Mr Weasley will bring you to the burrow, Penny should be arriving there soon when she gets my message and then she'll bring you
"And you?" Harry asks, concerned.

Fudge has a steely determined look in his eyes. It's a rather new look but Harry finds he likes it. "Don't worry, I'll be fine. Even if Crouch is innocent, he's two incompetent to maintain his high position. That's two false accusations against prominent individuals now." Oh right, Crouch would have been the one to condemn Sirius. Clearly, he has a habit of false accusations then. "Not to mention, he's effectively lost all trust with his coworkers. We can't exactly kick him out completely but I'm going to make sure the man won't ever get back his influence again." Fudge nods to himself, "Our Ministry needs to change. Make sure nothing like this happens again."

Harry steps forward to hug Cornelius, "I'm really proud to call you my dad." He confesses, because, well, it's true now. Harry is honestly happy to see the man as a father figure now, less like a puppet he could play with. Right now, Cornelius Fudge wasn't anyone's puppet.

Cornelius pauses, then, with a suspiciously croaky voice he says, "And I'm really proud to call you my son, Harry. You've changed me for the better." With a loud sniffle, Cornelius reluctantly breaks up the hug, "I really do have to go, son."

He walks toward the few Ministry wizards who had been waiting on him. Their own eyes were suspiciously wet as they watched them. Harry suddenly felt quite embarrassed that such a personal scene was witnessed. Then again, if it brings Fudge more supporters he's happy despite the intrusion. Revamping the Ministry will no doubt cause more than a few enemies to emerge after all.

"Be safe, dad." He calls out and he swears one of the ministry wizards actually sobs.

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Coming back to Hogwarts was a bit of a relief really.

Not that Harry didn't enjoy his time with the Fudges. Their trip overseas had been fantastic, Cornelius found an interest in the ocean, and Penny had developed a bit of wanderlust after the trip. And then after the World Cup debacle, he and Fudge really bonded as father and son.

Afterwards, it was found that Winky had been imperio-ed, and that Crouch, after a wand check, was declared officially innocent. Unofficially though doubts of his character ran rampant through the ministry, news of his accusations toward the Boy Who Lived and his muggleborn friend spreading quickly, only being fuelled further by his drop from Head of Department of International Magical Cooperation to Advisor of Department of International Magical Cooperation, which everyone knew was a fake job since the new Head barely even acknowledged the furious man, much less listened to his advice.

Crouch may have wanted revenge for the consequences of his fake accusations but he hardly had the sway to carry it out. Most British wizards were peace-loving individuals who agreed more with Fudge's simple ideology than Crouch's, seeing his violent side more as a necessity during wartimes but unacceptable nowadays, and even if they didn't, the article Rita wrote smearing his name did it quite well convincing them otherwise. And it wasn't like Crouch could have asked help from the Death Eaters, not after what he did during the war. So that was wrapped up pretty neatly.

Winky had been unsurprisingly kicked out from serving Crouch, she works under Hogwarts now but Hermione had been furious when she heard the news. Apparently her main focus this year will be Freeing all the House Elves. Harry has been slowly but surely convincing her why that was a very well-meaning but ultimately not great idea.
Anyway, the rest of the holidays had been great. Fantastic really. But for the last two weeks, Cornelius had been incredibly excited and incredibly annoying about something that he refuses to inform Harry about. No matter how wide Harry's eyes get or how far his lower lip juts out poutingly.

It had been nothing but wide grins in Harry's direction and 'Oh nothing,'s and 'You'll find out soon enough,'s and, worst of all, 'You'll love it, don't worry.'s. Harry had been ready to scream and wring his neck if he had to endure another day of Cornelius hiding his work documents with his body and winking at Harry. It didn't help that Penny already knew and was just as happy to keep him in the dark like a tease.

Hogwarts seemed to share the same feelings of being happy to have Harry there by immediately tripping him the moment he stepped into the castle. But. In a fond way. Probably.

The castle has more or less cooled off her shenanigans toward Harry since he'd been in a coma—mainly because playing pranks with a coma patient is a dick move of the highest proportions, physical incarnation of death or not- but now that he was back to almost working shape, it seems Hogwarts is ready to be a complete shit again. Harry thinks he has to reevaluate his level of masochist now as he realizes he'd almost missed the harassment in a weird way.

"Harry!"

Harry pauses his stroll with Draco and the other Slytherins and turns to smile at his Gryffindor friends. "Hey guys, heading to lunch too?"

"Duh," Ron says like Harry was insane to imply they would skip the first lunch of the school year. "By the way, what's up with your living situation?"

Harry flushes lightly but grins at how astute Ron is, no one else has even questioned where he was staying in Hogwarts yet. Though it wasn't like he'd wanted any questions raised really. "I'm sort of hoping no one else brings up the fact I'm still living with Severus still and that will last for at least four more years."

Ron snorts, "Oh come on, no self-respecting teacher would forget an underage student is living with a professor for essentially no reason."

"You wanna bet?" Harry challenges.

"Don't do it, Weasley," Draco drawls, "remember our professors let a dark lord, a fraud and a werewolf teach us and literally no one made any actual fuss or complaints."

"To be honest they problem made more of a racket about Lockhart than the other two." Blaise snorts.

"Well you can't exactly blame them, Lockhart was pretty annoying," Nott mutters.

"I wonder what sort of defense professor we'll have next," Hermione muses.

Harry laughs darkly, "New year, new possibly homicidal defense teacher. I'm so looking forward to it."

"Lupin didn't try to kill you," Ron points out sympathetically.

"Yeah because we thought there was already a serial killer after Harry for the majority of that year," Nott rolls his eyes before focusing on Harry, "By the way, did you manage to bond with your crazy godfather during the hols?"
Harry shrugs as he briefly recalls the two stilted dinners he had with Black and Remus, the one time he had gone to accompany the pair on the full moon which Padfoot tried to jump him again—much to Black’s mortification and Remus' outrage, and finally one mildly successful afternoon where they chased a snitch for three hours. "Eh," he says giving the universal hand wavy gesture of so-so, "once or twice, we're getting almost halfway there. Sorta. The whole fracturing my arm and being a general raving lunatic thing is hard to get over. He's stopped stalking me at least. So."

Everyone shakes their heads. Only Harry.

"Honestly I cannot believe we lived till fourth year." Ron jokes. "After the last one, fourth year is gonna be a breeze really."

"Well don't jinx it! Good god Ron," Hermione slaps the boy's upside his head and sighs, "Next thing you know we'll be fighting dragons or something!"

"Psh, Harry'll probably seduce them or something with his androgynous body and doll face."

Harry shrugs. It was true. Well. Unless they were mother dragons or something. Parents get real protective when you potentially mix the concept of death and their children together for some weird reason.

"Wow Weasley," Draco whistled, "didn't know you knew big words like that."

"He didn't," Blaise pipes up, "Hermione taught him it."

Ron looks between Blaise and Hermione with narrowed eyes, "So. This Blaise Hermione thing is still a thing then?" He scowls.

"What, you have your own gay friend, why can't I have mine?" Hermione quips.

"Blaise isn't gay though!" Ron protests, "It's different!"

"Don't worry Weasley," Blaise rolls his eyes, "I'd hardly make a move so soon after Harry and I split apart. I wouldn't want to look crass."

"You are the literal embodiment of crass," Nott scoffs, "it's just that nobody notices because of your accent and pureblood manners."

"Also, what do mean 'make a move so soon'!" Ron squawks indignantly. "Why would you even try to make a move on Hermione!"

Hermione's face flushes in indignation, "Oh, I see, I'm not good enough to be flirted on am I?"

"What- no!" Ron protests but you could already tell from his floundering that he was going to sink and drown very fast here. "I, I just meant he's not good enough to flirt with you! Yeah! That!"

Hermione had jumped straight from indignation to outrage, "How dare you, Weasley! Blaise is my friend! You're so, so, argh!" She throws her hands up and stomps furiously away.

After a moment of watching her leave, Ron looks at his friends, confused and concerned, "So, uh, what."

"GO AFTER HER MORON!" Everyone shouts and he does.

Nott shakes his head, "Well, at least we're normal enough for teenage drama then."
"Yeah, it's a nice change from the Misadventures of Slut King Zabini and Horny Potter." Draco snorts.

Harry and Blaise exchanges deeply unamused looks, silently agreeing that their friends were all assholes.

"Fuck, Severus, please," Harry moans, grinding his erection shamelessly against the man's stomach. It had been at least ten minutes between Harry stepping into Severus' quarters, trunk in hand, and now, enthusiastically snogging his professor in the living room, with Severus sitting on the couch, below Harry and in between his slim legs. "More."

The potions professor groans as he lazily thrusts upwards against Harry's pert bottom, taking in the way Harry shivers at the contact and kissing his delicate pale collar bone apologetically, "Harry, you know we can't."

"Can we at least-"

"No."

"But what about if we just-"

"No."

"I'm just saying, maybe-"

"No."

"You didn't even let me finish!" Harry huffs, smiling exasperatedly. They played this game more than a few times now but it never hurts to try again.

"Darling boy, I let you finish plenty," Severus murmurs into his ear, giving it a little nip as he leans back to enjoy the way Harry gasps and flushes.

"That's, ah, that's not what I meant and you know it," Harry sulks for better lack of any come back because damn. Feeling his legs ache, he sits back down on the older wizard's lap, biting his lip as Severus' hips instinctively jerk at the pressure, reminding him once again on what exactly he is missing out on. "Severus," he whines.

"Merlin, you are exquisite when you beg," Severus breathes, pulling Harry closer against him, swallowing his gasps with a fervent kiss. Large hands cupping the younger wizard's ass, massaging and groping it as he exchanges slow open-mouthed kisses, enjoying the ecstasy of being able to just entwines his body against Harry's. Even with clothes on.

The ugly gnawing feeling of guilt still twists viciously inside his stomach but the bliss of feeling Harry's hands squeezing against the base of his neck and running through his hair is enough to ignore it. When Harry makes those slutty little whines Severus so delights in, and writhes wanton and needy against his body, Severus can almost forget the guilt in the first place. It's agonising not to go further. He refuses to even let his hands go up under the boy's shirt anymore, half-afraid that he'll finally snap and just end up stripping him completely.

"Uhnm, Sev, I'm, uh, I," Harry pants, moving back a little and squirming desperately against Severus. He's crying, and Severus cannot help but be enraptured once again by the sight. Severus has never thought he would be the type of man to be aroused by tears, but then again, he had never thought he would be the type of man to lay his hands on an underage teenager. What's developing
He tilts his head down to lick up the tear tracks running down Harry's soft cheeks, hot and salty. Severus can feel Harry's breath hitch in his throat at the action before the teen moans his approval, pressing his lips against Severus' and tasting the salt of his own tears for himself. Severus gently maneuvers the younger wizard so he lays on his back on the couch. "You're close?"

Harry nods and almost shyly he asks, "Could I- could you, um,"

"Yes?" Severus coaxes, wondering what his darling little incubus was going to ask. Usually, Harry just grinds up against him and climaxes, his sensitive body requiring little to tip itself over the edge, sometimes multiple times. They don't really do anything different, not when Severus had firmly laid down his rules and restrictions that don't really allow for much else. So he was curious at what Harry might propose, even if he had to ready himself to reject it.

"Well, I ah, I," Harry closes his eyes and shuffles so his face is mashed into the corner of the couch, "Oh god, never mind, kill me now."

"While I have no interest in your demise," Severus drawls, even more curious and a little amused, "I am certainly interested in hearing what exactly you want me to do, after all," he lowers himself and takes a hold of Harry's chin to tenderly angle his face to look at him, at this distance, his nose barely grazes Harry's own and he smirks, "I would hardly think you would want to walk away now," Severus lightly nudges his knee in-between Harry's legs, grazing the throbbing flesh of his erection through the fabric, making Harry convulse at the touch.

Harry half-heartedly glares, "You, mhnn, you fight dirty," he accuses.

"You like it." Severus snips back.

Harry does.

Defeatedly Harry rolls his eyes before becoming shy once again, "It's just, I, maybe you could, it'll be the same as usual but maybe you could, um," his voice lowers into a soft bashful whisper, "hold my arms down… or something?"

Severus suddenly could not breathe, arousal slamming into him so hard and sudden he was almost certain that if he was twenty years younger he would have come immediately. Sometimes he really wasn't sure Harry was real. *Fuck.*

Taking his silence for something else, and not the soul-consuming lust Severus was currently struggling to contain, Harry pushes his head back into the couch, "It's, I mean, it wasn't against any of the rules," Harry blabbers, sounding muffled as he speaks through the cushioning, "and, like, it was just a suggestion, if you're not, oh god, let me die, just kill me, end me, here, right now, I'm sorry, if you don't want to-"

The potions master pulls Harry up and crashes their lips together with a searing ferocity that makes Harry yelp in surprise before quickly melting into the heat. "Harry," He practically purrs, deep voice sinfully rough with want, "I would be delighted to."

"O-oh," Harry grins with manic relief and giddy arousal, "well, that's, that's pretty bloody great huh."

"Indeed," Severus smiles back, before pushing Harry back down again, this time using his hands to bring Harry's arms above his head, his own willing captive.

Harry whines, high and desperately needy. "Yessssss," he hisses as he squirms around, trying to gain
some friction to rub his aching dick onto.

After watching for a minute or two, Severus finally takes pity on the increasingly frustrated wizard and releases one of his hands from the delicious job of restraining Harry, to lay against Harry's crotch. Both Harry's wrists were slim enough, and Severus' hand large enough, to still effectively pin him down regardless. This sudden realization and the pressure of Severus' other sizeable hand against his dick was enough for Harry to spill over with a strangled cry.

"Fuck," Harry breathes out when he was finally finished being completely incomprehensible with pleasure.

"Indeed," Severus repeats roughly. He kisses Harry soft and affectionately before reluctantly getting off the couch, "I should…"

Harry grabs the edge of the older man's shirt, "You know, you could just," he makes a vague gesture at Severus' obvious erection, "here. I, it's hardly like it makes a difference, and um," Severus watches as Harry shrugs, trying so obviously hard to pretend whatever he was going to say wasn't much of a big deal to him, "well, I feel bad since you never…"

Severus bends down to kiss him again, stroking through Harry's hair and down the back of his neck, "Don't be Harry," he assures, "I love watching you come undone for me, but I'm not, I wouldn't feel right if I." Severus falters, because it seems stupid when he says it aloud. There was absolutely no difference if he got off in front of Harry instead of climaxing a room away but to him it was huge.

Sensing his discomfort, Harry sighs wistfully and drops his grip on Severus' shirt, "I don't really understand," he tells Severus, "but if you really don't want to, I can't force you to," Harry shrugs again, "I just, it makes me feel a little, well, like I'm not, um, sexy enough for you." Skin that had only just reverted back to it's usual paleness flushes a pretty pink all over again as Harry confesses his insecurities. He's always been so confident and assured, Severus felt terrible at being just a tiny bit relieved that the gorgeous child could be apprehensive.

Even if it was all complete hogwash.

"You are a fool," Severus tells him fiercely, "my darling boy, you have no idea how just your mere presence rattles all of my control. You're so naturally provocative, you should be illegal- you are illegal." Severus amends, making Harry smile a little regretfully at the reminder, "That is the crux of the problem. Certainly not any lack of attractiveness."

"I am sorry," The Boy Who Lived murmurs, "you must be suffering and yet I…"

"Harry, don't apologize," Severus sighs, "my choice to pursue and accept a sexual relationship with a minor is mine and mine alone."

Harry pulls himself off the couch, his legs a little wobbly as he makes to stand up. He takes Severus hand into his own, looking at the obvious size difference and sighs, "I wish there was some way I could at least be legalized. But… I suppose two more years is still bearable."

"Your devotion is admirable," Severus tells him, genuinely touched at how far this beautiful creature was willing to wait. For him of all rewards. It was mind-boggling. "At least you will have your… sidepiece to keep you at bay." He can't help the note of distaste in his voice. Despite Harry's faithfulness to their relationship and Severus own insistence Harry shouldn't just hold out for him, he was still blindly jealous at the idea.

Harry blinks, wide green eyes still shining brightly from his tears staring up at him, "You mean
Blaise? Oh, well, we broke it up after the holidays."

Pure joy lights up in the potions masters chest but his face shows none of it as he solemnly says, "I'm sorry to hear that."

Harry grins and squeezes his hand tightly, "Oh come off it Severus, I'm sure you aren't, you jealous, jealous man."

"I have no idea what you mean."

Green eyes glint knowingly. "Of course."

"The Welcoming Feast is in an hour or so, we should probably clean up," Severus says, changing the subject.

Harry's gaze lingers at the large bulge in his professor's pants, "Yes," he murmurs, "I suppose we should."

"Tart." Severus lightly admonishes.

"You're tart," Harry teases and Severus feels the possessive part of him preen at the words. "Think of me."

"How could I think of anyone else?"

They kiss one more time before they part ways.

The Welcoming feast had outdone itself this year in Harry's opinion. Harry groans in bliss as he bites into his fried chicken, relishing the crackle of perfectly fried skin and the flood of warm savory juices that burst out of soft almost elastic white meat. Unable to help himself he shovels a piece of garlic bread into his mouth at the same time, delighting in the combination.

"Mate that looks so good, I'm gonna do that too!" Ron exclaims, grabbing a drumstick, "Ooh, I'm gonna put some roast sweet potato on that garlic bread though."

"Oh my god, you two are disgusting," Hermione says, but the gigantic pile of food she was hoarding on her plate negated the effect just a bit. After Ron went after her she seemed to have forgiven the redhead rather quickly. Harry supposes she had gotten tired of constantly fighting with her friend after all the arguing from last year. "Ron I understand but Harry, you're usually the epitome of decorum during a meal."

"Hermione," Harry says seriously as he swallows down his food, "have you even tried this chicken?"

"I'm half afraid it's cursed what with the way you two are acting like half-starved dogs around it," She confesses wryly but reaches out to grab a piece anyway.

"You have to try it with the garlic bread," Harry advises.

"Or the mashed potatoes," Ron pipes up with his mouth filled with chicken. "Yo, Neville, how's the roast lamb?"

"Sho good," Neville moaned between mouthfuls.

"Okay," Hermione admits as she begins shoveling buttery mashed potatoes on top of her garlic bread
and chicken sandwich, "This is pretty fantastic."

"It's definitely the spices, seems like the Headmaster finally read the petition for more international food. Or just more variety in general really." Harry muses, "I did hear from Cornelius that Britain had traded off some house elves for foreign ones, I'm not surprised if Hogwarts got one or two switched out and taught the others new recipes."

"Huh really?" Ron blinks, then carries on eating, "Well, if they keep up this standard of food I ain't complaining."

Hermione, however, purses her lips, "But isn't that rather awful? It's not like they're cattle!"

Harry gives her a pointed look, it seems she's really on this whole house elves morality thing, she's been talking about it more and more recently. "Hermione, obviously we didn't hit them over the head and shipped them off. Think of it as a student exchange program, albeit, slightly more permanent."

"I just, but they don't really get much of a choice do they?" She questions, "Like, they can't exactly turn down the request."

"Well," Harry muses as he slathers gravy over his cut of lamb, "in this case they can."

"Really?" Hermione looks intrigued, "Really?"

"Yeah, well, this is an international exchange of goodwill isn't it?" Harry explains, and Hermione nods, "If you forced a house elf out of their home, to another country no less, they wouldn't be able to handle it. They wouldn't accept the changes in culture, they'll want to enforce the strict British standards that's been ingrained into them, and while they can't disobey an order, don't think they're not smart enough to get around more than a few if they wanted to."

"That's… that's true." Hermione says, soaking up the logic of it. Harry can see her turning the information around in her head, "And it wouldn't look very good for the Ministry if they sent unenthusiastic sulky house elves."

"Exactly," Harry sips his water, "Plus it kind of helps with your little crusade for elf rights, since any unhappy house elves might just jump onto the whole exchange thing. I mean, some of them are doing it because they genuinely want the adventure and to see another country, but yeah, it's possible a few less well treated house elves joined up because they wanted a new household to serve."

"Yeah, but wouldn't that mean the foreign elves might be forced to serve under the families that badly treated our ones in the first place?" Hermione challenges.

"Huh," That was a good point actually, "okay, fair enough." Harry admits, "but to free house elves completely is a ridiculously extreme response Hermione, and I know for a fact I told you this before."

"Yeah," She deflates, "and Blaise supported the reasons too, he even asked one of his house elves to pop by and tell me her opinion about it." Hermione stabs her chicken frustratedly, "But it's still not right! I mean, yeah, okay, a lot of them are happy but some clearly aren't, they don't even have basic rights like owls- owls!"

"Okay one," Ron says, finally deciding to put himself into the conversation after finishing his second plate of food, "don't diss owls, and two- why don't you try strive for elf rights then? Stuff like mandatory elf check-ups to see none are being whacked and shit. No need for all this free them all nonsense."
Hermione blinks, then she launches herself at Ron, giving him a tight hug, "Oh Ron you are a genius!" She exclaims.

Ron flushes bright pink, "Oh, uh, it was nothing really," He stutters, a wide, dopey grin slowly appearing on his face. Though it quickly fades into an embarrassed scowl as he catches sight of Harry's shit-eating grin.

Harry gives him a thumbs up.

Ron flips him the bird.

Once most of the feast was finished, Dumbledore clears his throat and gathering everyone's attention.

"So!" Dumbledore announces with a great big smile. "Now that we are all well stuffed, it is time for me to make the usual declarations."

"Ugh." Harry groans, filled with chicken and some frankly delicious French pastries. "I just want to sleep."

"Ditto," Hermione agrees, "Am this close to a food coma. And Ron's pretty much there."

Ron doesn't answer. Food comas. Dangerous stuff.

"Mr. Filch, our resident caretaker of Hogwarts, has asked me to tell you that the list of objects forbidden inside the castle has this year been extended and the full list can be found in his office. There are about five hundred items now so do give it a quick check." Harry could swear Dumbledore snickered. He's a secret sadist. Must be. "As usual the forest on the grounds is out-of-bounds to students, as is the village of Hogsmeade to all below third year."

Harry shares an eye roll with his friends from Gryffindor and distantly he could hear Draco scoff all the way at the Slytherin table.

"It is also my painful duty to inform you that the Inter-House Quidditch Cup will not take place this year."

Now that gets a reaction from the majority of the students.

Harry looks around with vague bemusement as nearly everyone gasped or were mouthing soundlessly at Dumbledore, apparently too appalled to speak.

Nonetheless, the Headmaster went on as if he hadn't just made every quidditch enthusiastic here his enemy. "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 before the old wizard could make the grand reveal he was so obviously ramping up for there was a deafening rumble of thunder and the doors of the Great Hall bangs open revealing a man. He was leaning upon a long staff, shrouded in a black traveling cloak and just screaming mysterious murderer to anyone with sense. A fork of lightning flashes across the ceiling at the same time he lowers his hood, shaking out a long mane of grizzled, gray hair, and showing off his scarred disfigured face and one eye. His other eye had a sort of eyepatch securing a very creepy bulging eye that kept moving every which way.

More than a few people had to stifle their screams.
Harry just shakes his head and groans.

"The new defence professor is totally going to try murder me."

"You shouldn't judge people's appearance-" Hermione stops and sighs, "I can't even say it, he's totally going to try murder you."

"Yeah." Ron slurs in agreement, still stuck in his food coma, only coming out slightly to be outraged about the quidditch thing.

Dumbledore, because he fucking sucks, just smiles brightly, and gestures for the man to walk over. Once he stood by the headmaster's side, Dumbledore introduces him, "May I introduce our new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher- Professor Moody."

"Oh damn that's Mad Eye Moody," Ron mutters, suddenly fully aware of the world, "he's an auror that strikes the fear of every death eater. Harry, if he really is aiming for your life you are f*cked.""I'm so glad you're out of that food coma," Harry says sarcastically. "Really, what would I do without your constant support?"

Dumbledore clears his throat again, as if the entire student body hadn't been rendered silent by the arrival of Moody. "As I was saying, we are to have the honour of hosting a very exciting event over the coming months, an event that has not been held for over a century."

Dumbledore's eyes glitter and thunder rumbles in the distance. Always good signs really.

"It is my very great pleasure to inform you that the Triwizard Tournament will be taking place at Hogwarts this year."

Chapter End Notes

it's midnight now, I just spent the last like six hours of my free time writing the last 6000 words before my inspiration fades ugh. I rushed through editing. So. Unless I made a gigantic stupid plot hole or completely missed a paragraph or something do not call me out on the shitty grammar.

To be fair though, this fic is filled with grammar mistakes so you're probs used to it already lol
Death's beginning of fourth year

Chapter Notes

So. A lot of you have figured out the triwizard tournament smut loophole. I'm torn between genuinely happy and sad that I couldn't do a cute lil plot twist or something. I'm gonna make the scene hella cute as revenge. Probably. Meh, my shit is always hella cute- until its not. Speaking of my story, WHY DOES THIS HAVE SO MUCH SEX SHIT THIS WAS MEANT TO BE PLOT BUT I ENDED UP WITH ONE SEXY SCENE AND ONE REALLY SORTA KINKY SEX SCENE. I am saying sorta kinky instead of actually kinky but mate, if you think the kink scene is hardcore I have, *chuckles* I have some unfortunate news for you in the future. Also. It is really hard to write this shit. Well. Not hard (oh shaddup) I mean embarrassing. Like, fuck did I really write this? I am garbage.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The one where Death calls out two teachers, never gets the punishment he wants and literally, nothing else of note actually happens in this chapter.

Yeah.

Alternately, the one where the author fruitlessly tries to string a bunch of slightly smutty scenes with dialogue and something that resembles plot.

On the one hand, the Triwizard Tournament sounds like an affront to all human hazard and safety laws. Like. All of them. Kids died in this tournament. Multiple kids. As in. More than two.

On the other hand, he’s Death. And he’s always had a bit of a weakness for death tournaments and games. Hell, just competitions in general. The blood-thirst and crippling need to make their families proud, it’s like a slightly less violent war zone with fewer characters so you could better sympathize with them. It’s great. All the other entities had agreed too. And everyone but him has entered some sort of tournament more than once for the competitive thrill and delight.

And now it’s his turn.

“-it’s too bad about the age restriction really.” Seamus sighs forlornly.

“How’d you reckon they’re going to enforce it?” Neville asks.

“Uh, magic?” Ron snorts and everyone rolls their eyes.

“Whatever it is, we’re going to get around it and try our hand at entering.” Harry declares, drawing everyone within earshot to his attention.

“Wha, really?” Hermione splutters, clearly thinking that Harry was going to be one of the few people who shared her- to be fair, perfectly very logical and sane- opinion about the tournament being a terrible death trap that really must have been dreamt up by rich, child-hating psychotic perverts. Unfortunately, Harry had at the very least, two out those given character traits, so, yeah.
“Yessss,” He hisses with manic excitement. Christ he’s wanted to be in a death tournament for so bloody long after all the bullshit of last year this felt like second Christmas. Oh, oh, he hopes he has to rescue an incredibly hot wizard from near death because usually, it’s the other way round.

Christ looking back on it, he’s kind of a useless wizard saviour.

“Okay, Harry, woah damn,” Dean says, clearly perturbed. “you know, maybe you should stop hanging out with your new godparent because I think, I think I can see where some of his crazy has gone.”

“Yeah mate, what the fuck,” Ron points, looking distinctly unnerved by the wide grin Harry was sporting and the crazy glint in his green eyes, “usually you would be running for the hills at such an obvious set up on your life.”

“A setup?” Seamus questions disbelievingly, “Blimey Ron you really think so? Bit paranoid of ya.”

“Uh, legal death tournament for kids?” Ron scoffs, “That just screams Harry bait don’t you think? Like Merlin, they get more obvious each year in my opinion.” He then pauses and grudgingly admits, “Though for a moment I was sort blinded by the whole thousand galleons thing, not gunna lie.”

Dean pats him on the shoulder, “It’s hardly your fault mate, I’m pretty sure everyone’s pretty damn excited about entering after hearing about all that glory and shit. Hell of a brag.”

“Do you think Moody is in on it?” Neville worries. “I mean, he’s meant to be one of our best aurors, if he’s gone rogue…”

“Can’t be,” Fred and George lean towards the group, clearly listening in during their own conversation and shakes their heads.

“Moody hates death eaters.” Fred says.

“Who do you think took his eye out?” George mimes rather gruesomely his eye being viciously pecked out.

“Well, maybe he doesn’t like Harry?” Hermione pipes up thoughtfully, “Or just super twisted, kinda like Black.”

“What do you mean?” Ron asks.

Hermione shrugs, “Well, I mean.. He seems like the sort of man who would force Harry into the competition just to make him stronger, or, or to prove that Harry doesn’t deserve the title as wizard saviour or something.”

“That makes sense,” Dean nods, “I mean, the guy literally lost an eye and a leg to the war and all Harry had to do was cry a little when he was a baby. The potential for resentment is totally there I guess.”

“Thanks, Dean,” Harry rolls his eyes. “But also seriously, guys, I’m totally going to try enter and nothing y’all could say or do to stop me. Just a warning.”

The twins look at Harry and laugh uproariously, hitting him on the back and giving him fond, affectionate looks that are far from the realm of platonic and brotherly. “That’s the spirit Harry!” George crows.
Fred leans over to sling an arm around his neck and winks mischievously, “To tell you the truth, we’re trying to figure out a loophole too, how about you come join us for a while hm?”

“That’s insane they haven’t even hinted at how they’re going to put up the age restriction why would you even start now wh-“

“Sure,” Harry agrees with a crooked smile and half-lidded eyes, sliding out of his seat to be practically sandwiched between the twins. Ron looks utterly revolted at the way George casually lays a hand on the younger wizard’s waist. “I’m all ears.”

“Well then,” Fred purrs into his ear, “let’s go somewhere a little more... private.”

“I have just the place.” George murmurs, low and eager.

“Snape is glaring poisoned daggers at you guys, and I hope you get detention for this I really do.” Dean points out.

Harry sighs at the reminder, he adores Severus he really does but by god that romantic shite was really hard and complicated. All he wants is to have Severus. But until he hits seventeen he’ll just have to settle for a hot snogging session with some gorgeous red headed twins instead. “I’m fairly sure that he would be angrier if he knew about my plans for the tournament so it’s hardly like I’m not going to be in trouble anyway.”

“That is really not the attitude-“

“Christ!” Harry yelps and bursts into laughter as Fred took his moment of distraction listening to Hermione to literally sweep him off his feet and carry him princess style. “Oi, come on!”

“Merlin,” Fred wheezes, “You’re heavier than you look.”

“Excuse me?” Harry says affronted, “I’m lighter than a feather, it’s you that’s too weak to- son of a bitch!” He squeaks as the twins rush out of the hall, cackling and whooping like frat boys who just stolen the rival school’s mascot.

His friends all watch a shouting Harry leave via the Weasley twin express with various degrees of bemusement and irritation.

“Oh Merlin, the one who isn’t going to murder Harry isn’t Moody, it’s going to be himself isn’t it?” Hermione sighs.

“Wrong,” Ron grumbles under his breath, “it’s going to be me, and I’m going to do it with my bare hands.”

“Personally I think Snape might beat Ron to it.” Neville confides because there's nothing like contemplating a shared friend’s demise to deepen bonds.

Seamus grins with a gleam in his eye that rivals Harry’s not a few minutes beforehand. “Wanna bet on it?”

““Well, Potter’s certainly got a weakness for redheads hm?” Professor Sinistra says mildly as the staff watches the twins carry off the Boy Who Lived out of the Great Hall. “It’s really just a message
about how limited in diversity we are that the only source of carrot tops in this entire gigantic school comes solely out of the Weasleys.”

“Yes, thank you for your commentary on our school’s lack of racial variety through how many times Harry Potter circles back to the same Weasley tree.” McGonagall drawls and hides her smirk behind a chicken drumstick as Severus Snape mutilates a jacket potato with a spoon.

“Wait, so did he and Zabini break up then?” Professor Sprout questions, “Because they looked absolutely dashing together and it’s really just a right shame.”

“I liked Potter and Percy Weasley to be honest,” Flitwick confesses, “though I do still believe the Malfoy boy might have a chance to win him over eventually.”

Professor Vector scoffs, “You mean Lucius’ twink of a son? Please, Lucius would probably have a better chance of despoiling the boy in Gryffindor tower than his son getting to second base.”

More than a few professors looked at their fellow coworker aghast at her choice of crude language, even their newcomer Moody raised an eyebrow at that. Vector shrugged, unperturbed, “What? I don’t see you guys necessarily disagreeing with me. Mr Malfoy junior is far from Mr Potter’s type.”

“He does usually go for the older ones doesn’t he?” Sprout muses.

“With the exception of Blaise Zabini,” Flitwick, ever the Ravenclaw, points out, “then again,” he muses, “Zabini is quite a mature boy, very intelligent.”

“Must have quite a sizeable penis too.” Dumbledore murmurs far too loudly for anyone’s liking. Now everyone’s disgust is aimed at their headmaster.

“I hate that that’s your first contribution to this conversation.” Professor Sinistra says as she looks sickly at her buttered bread.

“I hate this whole conversation.” Professor Snape grumbles, still glaring at the door of the Great Hall where Harry and the twins had left from, nursing a very large goblet of something very alcoholic.

“I hate that you’re our boss.” Professor McGonagall mutters at Dumbledore before stealing Severus’ goblet and taking a long gulp from it before spluttering, “Merlin Severus, that’s strong! It’s only the first day of the year!”

Hey, my brother from a nonexistent mother!

So, I hear you’ve got yourself a death tournament on your hands- bout damn time really. We’re all very, very pumped to see you beat up two sixteen-year-olds with magic.

Sorry, Fate just told me it’s indirect competition, so, no bashing anyone’s heads in. I think that’s a fucking bore. But don’t worry, I’ll support you despite the fact that Fate clearly doesn’t know how to throw a good death game.

It’s honestly quite ironic that Life of all entities got to participate in one first. I thought it would be
me. Or, like, Space but he would totally get murdered immediately. Well, he did totally get murdered immediately his first time. LOL. Then again Life did temporarily lose her memories and was generally appalled about the whole killing kids for fun thing (classic Life really) then started some sort of revolution which I think succeeded? I don’t know I left after the second game she was forced to enter, I do remember a love triangle thing happening with a bread person or something. Whatever. Was not a fan. Hopefully, yours is better.

Anyway, I do so hope you’re having so much fun that you don’t even miss my brilliant personality and my somehow even more brilliant sexy bod because I know how you ache for my presence like a great drug addiction.

Everyone else misses you like crazy you know, they can’t stop complaining and whining about when you’re coming back. Super annoying really. In fact, just the other day Knowledge was totally skiving off work to drink Gatorade and gin and bemoaning about how un-fun it was without you, and I was all, “Knowledge, cease and desist your petty childish griping and do something actually productive or I’ll message Death that you are acting like a, to quote the mortals, little bitch.”

(Btw if Knowledge writes you anything she’s a goddamn liar and I recommend you burn the letter immediately. Don’t read it. She’s very mean.)

“So, ahn, I think the most, yeah, fuck, little lower, important thing is figuring out this impartial judge that, mnnn, decides the champions.” Harry moans loudly as Fred enthusiastically sucks and laves the pale skin of his neck.

“Dumbledore’s probably in charge of that,” Fred contemplates, the words slightly muffled as his mouth was still lightly pressed against Harry’s body. “He has powerful connections.”

Harry scoffs despite the mood, “Please, it’s a, mhnn, tournament for kids, I hardly think we need fucking Merlin himself for it.”

”I reckon, ah, it don’t matter- a couple of drops of Aging Potion might fool ‘em either way,” George muses as he watches Harry throw his head back when his twin suddenly sinks his teeth into the crook of his neck. He swears under his breath as the lazy grip around his cock tightens in response before Harry finally comes back from his momentary lapse from reality and continue moving his hand in a slow, languid up and down motion that makes George groan.

Harry grins at the reaction then makes a sad noise as Fred pulls away from him to point out, “But if Dumbledore is present he’ll know we’re not of age though.”

“The whole point of impartiality is that no one of bias should be able to influence it,” Harry says after wrangling his libido slightly under control, enough to bring back some higher cognitive functions at least. Clearly, the idea of brainstorming during a shirts off threesome was not the best thing ever. “So as long as we manage to put our names in we should be all considered age or otherwise.”

“The fact that they’ve had to enforce this rule suggests what they’ve been doing before was letting just anyone in which is rather crazy.” George says, “I mean, I know we’re trying to get in but I do draw the line at letting the ickle little first and second years in.”

“I, mhnn, I think it’s ridiculous that whatever higher power they’re using to pick the championship would even choose a first year in the first place.” Harry scoffs, “I mean, out of everyone in the
schools who enters they figure an untrained eleven-year-old is the one most suitable? Talk about embarrassing implications to our educational syste- oh god, yeah, don’t, ah, don’t stop Fred,”

“I don’t know,” Fred muses between playing with Harry’s nipples and nibbling his earlobe like a fucking tease, “you were making some great points about- shit,” he cuts himself off with a groan as Harry grinds himself down on him.

“I’m feeling distinctly left out here,” George pouts sulkily, Harry rolls his eyes.

“Well, maybe you should join in?”

“Maybe I should,” George grins and kneels down to kiss Harry thoroughly, “Merlin you taste good.”

“Mhnnn, I taste like the chocolate fudge I never got to finish thanks to you two,” Harry murmurs. “Sort of, ah, pissed about that by the, umnn, way,”

“Ah, princess,” Fred croons playfully, “don’t you know we’re twice as sweet?”

“Twice as fun to put in your mouth too,” George winks.

“Clearly you both have not tasted yourselves or the fudge.” Harry giggles then groans as two pairs of sly hands attack him in retribution.

“Why don’t you taste us again?” George huskily asks.

“You know,” Fred breathily whispers into his ear, “just to make sure you’re right, prove us wrong and all that.”

“Well,” Harry smiles wickedly, “I do enjoy being right.”

He takes it back. This has been a great fucking idea.

“Severus!” Harry pants out as he rushes in, cursing himself for agreeing for that third round with the twins. He’s late. Like, twenty-five minutes past curfew late. Damn all the twins. Why must there always be two of them? It’s too attractive.

“You’re late,” Severus icily points out as he sits on a chair, in the dark, because the man is not so secretly a super villain in a spy movie. It’s really hot. Harry loves spy supervillains, they’re always overdramatic, striking people who are rich enough to mask their crazy into being ‘eccentric’.

Unfortunately, his attraction is muted by the fission of guilt and unease crawling across his brain, a feeling he’s been experiencing a lot recently after his flirtations. “I’m sorry,” Harry says and he really does mean it.

“Harry,” Severus sighs, and oh god, the disappointment in his voice cuts so deep Harry’s surprised he hasn’t bled out.

“Severus?” Harry weakly says, stepping timidly towards him, “I, I am sorry, I shouldn’t have, well, I should’ve been back before curfew at least but I, well, there’s no excuse, and,”

“Come here,” Severus softly demands.
Tentatively Harry shuffles toward the man until he was a foot or so away and yelps in surprise as Severus, like a striking viper, grabs him, pulling him closer and toppling him onto the older wizard’s body. Harry groans, the noise rumbling at the back of his throat as Severus’ cold lips pushed up against his already rather bruised ones. Despite cumming three times Harry could feel himself growing aroused once again just laying across his beloved professor as the man viciously plunders his mouth like the best type of pirate. He even tastes like strong spiced rum.

Severus breaks off the kiss, barely giving them both time to breathe before he moves in to sink his teeth into Harry’s flesh, just behind the crook of his neck where no one would see it but hard enough that Harry would certainly feel it for a few days. Harry cries out breathless and wordless, his own fingers digging into Severus' shoulders at the pain, at the heat, the thrill of receiving this violent act of possession. He can feel the potions master’s cock jut from his pants underneath him, and bucks up against it, letting his own erection rub up against Severus’ robed torso in the process as he softly tears up. “Sev, ah, rus, Severu-

"Such a selfish slutty boy," Severus rumbles deeply, the irritation and fondness and lust in his voice feels like warm, spicy chocolate being poured into his body through the bite wound. He writhe, stretching and arching his back shamelessly at the imagery, half-wanting to prove Severus right. To show him how wanton he is. “Do you think you deserve to be punished?”

“Yess,” Harry groans, practically plastered against Severus now, rising up so his plea is murmured directly into the older man’s ear, “Please sir, uhnn, punish me,”

He can hear Severus swallow, and oh god, this is happening. Harry isn’t sure what ‘this’ was exactly but he knew it is fucking happening and it is going to be fucking amazing. “Do it,” Harry whispers, voice dripping with want, making sure that Severus knows that he is so on board with this that he might actually scream if the rather cowardly man backs out now. “Severus please,” he whines, needy and slutty, rubbing against Severus’ larger frame like he was an animal in heat.

Severus moans, kissing Harry fiercely at his display before demanding, “Get on the floor. On your knees.”

Harry can feel his chest constrict and his human heart beat wildly as he nods wordlessly, sliding out of Severus’ embrace, down to the ground to kneel between the man’s legs. He’s sweating and his mouth is watering but his throat is so dry it’s like it’s never touched water. Harry feels like a complex, shivering ball of contradictions and he both loves and fears Severus who could break him down like this just by giving Harry only a mere taste of what is to come.

“You look gorgeous like this,” Severus says, then in a darker tone he continues, “Tell me, is this what you looked like for those Weasley boys?” The last word was filled with casual disdain.

Harry hesitates, unsure if the jealous man actually wanted an answer or not, “Severus…”

“Tell me,” The man commands, voice curdled with jealousy but there was still a strong undercurrent of desire, of lust. Severus is striking, sitting above him, equally as flushed and sweating, his long dark hair matted against his face and his even darker eyes staring down at Harry like an emperor toward a favored servant.

And christ, how Harry wants to serve the man well.

“I, um, I did do this,” Harry mumbles, looking down at his hands, more than a little embarrassed at actually saying it out loud like this. Briefly, he wonders if this is what confessing to priests in that booth thing is like. You know. Except more explicit. And gay. And erect.
“And what,” Severus purrs, “did you do exactly?”

The older wizard is totally getting off on this, Harry is actually so hard it hurts.

Shifting his legs a bit because they were getting a bit sore, Harry bites his lip and forces his gaze to meet Severus, “I… I… I was, I was also on the floor and, um,“

“Yes?” Severus leans forward, not close enough for a kiss but definitely enough that Harry yearns for one.

“I, uh sucked George’s cock, while Fred, um, he,” Harry gasps as Severus nudges his foot teasingly cruel against Harry’s erection, “h-he was pinching, ah, me,“

“My, my, and where,” another brush against the head of his dick, Harry could actually feel the leather of the man’s boots against his groin, “exactly was he touching you, Harry?”

Harry mumbles his answer, tears already threatening to fall again. Crap his eyes are going to be so bloody tired tomorrow.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t catch that,” Severus drawls.

“My nipples,” Harry stutters out, “uh, my neck, and, ah, ears.”

Severus hums, watching Harry fidget below him, pale skin pink and shining lightly with sweat as he shyly bites his swollen lip. Severus licks his own lips and idly rubs the side of his inner thigh, barely grazing his own arousal. “And did you suck his cock too?”

Harry swears under his breath watching almost hungrily at the way Severus’ hand moves, “Yes,” he admits breathlessly, “both, at the same time, I, god, Severus,” pleadingly Harry stares up at him, “please, just,“

“At the same time?” Severus looks mildly blindsided at the idea but quickly recovers, “Well aren’t you more of a little cockslut than I thought?”

“You cockslut,” Harry groans, leaning forward he rests his cheek on Severus hand which is resting on his inner thigh. Immediately the man’s hand adjusts itself to caress Harry’s warm skin, a stray finger bruising up against Harry’s lips which the younger wizard instinctively flicks out his tongue to lick. Severus lets out a long shuddering breath.

“No,” he says hoarsely, “not yet at least.”

Severus quickly unbuttons his pants with one hand, the other still stroking Harry’s face and hair, and fishes out his cock. It’s the first time Harry has seen it and, and, and-

Jesus Christ, Severus could grip that thing with both of his hands and there will still be some length left over. Harry is both fearfully aware at the lack of elasticity in this mortal body and excited at the prospect of trying to handle Severus’… serpent despite that.

“I,” Harry coyly smiles hopefully at the man, “May I, Severus? Please?”

“Suck it,” Severus demands breathlessly.

He didn’t need to tell him twice. “Fuck,” Harry sighs as he sits up from where he was kneeling to get into a better position. Almost reverently he cups Severus’ hard dick in his hands, feeling the heat in his hands, admiring the girth, feeling the weight of it in his hands. Harry slides his fingers up and
down, for now ignoring the delightfully delicious noises coming out from Severus’ mouth in favour of marveling at the wizard’s length, his thumb rubs the head of Severus’ cock and he watches the way Severus’ abdomen tenses and how his hip thrust upward at the pressure.

Harry does it again, enjoying the way Severus reacts, he feels drunk and giddy as he pulls his thumb away to reveal the sticky residue of pre-cum dripping from the man’s cock and all over his hand. Without thinking, he pulls his dirtied hand toward him to lap at the semi-translucent, warm liquid, licking it up from the wrist to the thumb, making sure to suck the tip as he swallows down the salty, slightly bitter flavour.

Wanting more, he moves his face closer, breath ghosting over the potions master’s dripping erection. “Severus,” Harry groans, he can smell the strong musky scent of the man, it’s mixed with the scent of sweat and an earthiness that comes from handling so many herbs and all manner of potions ingredients every day. It’s intoxicating.

With his hands wandering up and down Severus’ shaft, Harry angles it toward him and gently, he softly presses his lips against the head. It’s almost worshipful and Harry closes his eyes to imprint the memory of this in his brain.

“Harry, Harry,” Severus sounds absolutely wrecked. Harry opens his mouth slightly so he can let his tongue swirl around the tip, tonguing at the entrance to the man’s urethra and, if the noises Severus makes was any indication, driving the wizard absolutely crazy. “Shit,” Severus curses as he can’t help but thrust upward into the heat of Harry’s mouth, which Harry takes like a champ.

In retaliation, however, he tightly grips the base of Severus’ dick and squeezes twice in a warning. Getting the message Severus forces his hips to still, though clearly it was no small task and when Harry glances up he can see the strain to hold himself back was palpable in the Slytherin’s body. Feeling slightly apologetic, Harry decides to stop his curious explorations and teasing for now, and let the man’s dick slide further into his mouth, forcing himself to try to relax his throat as much as possible as he does so.

“Merlin, mhn, Harry, you don’t even know how much I’ve, uhnn, thought about this,” Severus groans. “You’re, ah, mouth feels perfect,”

Harry is so glad he’s killed off the nerves for his gag reflex ages ago because fuck, this was really already rather hard enough- no pun intended- to deal with as he tries to swallow around Severus’ dick without choking too badly. To be perfectly honest, Harry is a little worried about if Severus breaks his ironclad self-control and starts fucking into his mouth with wild abandon. Don’t get him wrong, he loves the idea of it, but he is fairly sure that he may actually die from the blunt force trauma of it with his current weak, virginal body.

He lets his hands focus on cupping the man’s bullocks and rubbing firmly up and down the rest of Severus’ length, which, wow, is still just long enough to fit one of Harry’s hands when his fingers are slightly stretched apart. It’s at least ten inches. What a way to make a guy feel inadequate.

It’s been a while since he’s had anything so large in his mouth, literal decades really, and Harry has to resist the urge to bite down as he tries to swallow around the cock a second time, still trying to get used to it. He slowly massages his Adam's apple to try to make the process easier but the whole thing was still rather difficult to bear.

Severus, noticing this, reaches down to stroke his hair to relax him. Harry, enjoying the gesture feels even more determined to please the man, moving his tongue around and trying to swallow around the large cock. His jaw already hurts to the point of numbness though and Harry winces as his throat spasms, unable to swallow comfortably.
“That’s enough,” Severus rumbles above him. The hand running through his hair tightens and tugs his hair, forcing Harry to pull away.

“But- I,” Harry coughs as he throat seems to ache from the inside, though that’s nothing compared to the vague dread he was feeling that he had somehow done something wrong, “why, did I not, was I not good?”

“You were brilliant Harry,” Severus assures, voice slurring far more obviously than before, “beautiful, sweet boy,” he croons as he moves his hands down to cup his dick, massaging it right in front of Harry’s face, tempting, teasing. Harry couldn’t help but mirror him, unbuttoning his own pants to stroke furiously at his own cock. “Mhmnn, I’m close,”

“Me, ah, me too,” Harry pants out as his hands furiously work up and down the length of his erection. It barely takes any time, Harry has always been sensitive but now, aroused beyond belief, he holds no chance in holding back and with a gasp, he throws his head back and cums.

Momentarily blacking out from his own orgasm, Harry almost misses Severus own groan and the hot splatter of his cum hitting his face and neck. Some of it even gets into his mouth, the taste saltier and bitter than before. He swallows it greedily, licking his lips and lapping what he can scoop on his fingers.

“Such ah, a fucking dirty tart,” Severus swears, still furiously stroking his slowly softening dick. The sight is mesmerisingly erotic and if Harry wasn’t so tired and dazed, he’s sure he would be hard again. “Look at you, nhmnn, you’re just gagging for it,”

“Severus,” Harry whispers, throat raspy. Without averting his gaze, he wipes another stray strand of cum striped from his neck with his thumb, licking at it like a lollipop as he heatedly watches his professor, “Severus,” he repeats breathily.

“Mhmnn…” Severus groans, spurring another spray of sticky cum over Harry’s face with a low husky moan that is intoxicatingly illegal. Unable to hold himself back anymore, Harry quickly clambers up to sit on the man’s lap again, rising forward to kiss Severus, sloppy and messy and so, so fucking good.

“Fuck,” Harry whines as large hands cups his ass and squeezes lightly, “We, we ah, we really need to,” He gasps sharply as Severus lifts up his shirt and bites down on his nipple, the pain making him buck against Severus in surprise, “I, wha-”

“Come now, you still haven’t had your punishment yet,” Severus slurs, eyes hooded with depravity and sadistic lust. Harry always did have a type.

“B-but I thought,” Harry’s words are cut off with a soft moan as Severus licks his bitten nipple, laving at it like a starving cub. It was almost enough to distract Harry from being expertly maneuvered to lay on the couch. Damn Severus and his freakishly attractive upper body strength. Harry pants and groans as Severus moves upwards along his body, sloppily kissing, nibbling and teasingly scraping his teeth against heated hyper-sensitized skin. In contrast, his hands slide lower, grazing Harry’s lower back and then boldly slipping into his pants, blatantly groping his ass without the boundary of clothing much to the entity’s surprise. Severus almost never touches anything below the waist, and especially not without pants. There was unusually bold and just unusual.

“What- are you- fuck!” Harry practically chokes on air in his shock as the potion master’s emboldened fingers slip between his asscheeks and grazing against the skin around his hole. That, it, Severus wouldn’t actually- Harry can feel himself fall down a whole new level of lust as the pad of
the man’s thumb swipes his rim purposely.

Was, did Harry have some sort of concern beforehand?

Severus teases his other nipple with his mouth and Harry honestly couldn’t recall his name at that moment, much less whatever it was that he had been thinking of. Fuck. Yes. God.

He arches his back, trying to let Severus take whatever he wants, whatever Harry could give and pants heavily. The urge to twist and squirm was maddening but he forces himself still, eager and anticipating Severus next move.

Except there was no next move.

To be precise, there was no movement at all.

Severus?” Harry asks confused, then blinks as he hears the unmistakable sound of a snore rumble out of the man on top of him. “Severus? Are you, are you aslee-“ The smell of liquor, still present but now far more noticeable once his mind drew out of the gutter in his confusion, hits Harry, “oh shit, were you fucking drunk?!” He hisses incredulously.

Severus makes a snuffling sound and hides his face in between the crook of Harry’s neck and the back of the couch. That man was lucky he was fucking cute in his sleep or Harry might have decked him.

“You better remember tonight Severus,” he whispers darkly, “I’m not going to do the shitty love soap opera drama bullshit for you okay? I’m going to be incredibly pissed if you try to ignore this. Your hands are still squeezing my ass and I cannot even scratch the itch on my nose and why am I even still talking, clearly nobody is listening.” Harry groans, looking up at the ceiling balefully with the knowledge than any entity up there was probably laughing their asses off. His dick, half hard and still firmly trapped underneath the warm, hard body of his professor, throbs indignantly at the mistreatment.

This was not the punishment he had been excited for.

Severus Snape wakes up with a pleasant ache in his lower back, a far less pleasant ache in between his temples and a soft, warm body beneath him. Enjoying immersing himself in the feel of somebody in his bed, Severus sleepily tightens his embrace around the person, nuzzling instinctively into the warmth and enjoying the faint smell of lavender, pine and the slight sour-salty scent of sweat and something else.

“Mhnnmn, Sev’rus?” Harry Potter murmurs, voice soft and cottony from sleep, which, that can’t be right, why would Harry be-

And then it all comes back to him with the speed of a snitch and the force of a beater’s bat.

Severus groans, “Please,” he croaks, “Please tell me I didn’t-“

“Darling,” Harry sighs and it brings Severus a shiver of domesticated pleasure at hearing the endearment roll of the young wizard’s lips, “I, ah, know this is when you escape to your room to deeply regret and do manly crying or whatever, but I, I enjoyed last night, you certainly enjoyed last
night and if you leave now I’ll be sad and cold.”

“I practically forced you,” Severus protests but they could both hear how half-hearted it is. Severus knows Harry is right. He remembers the night clearly, albeit a little foggily, and he remembers how eager Harry was to go on his knees and practically choke on his cock with teary eyes and swollen lips… Merlin, he can feel his dick stiffen just recalling it.

“Severus,” Harry murmurs, already closing his eyes again, so assured in his victory, “I’m at near full health both physically and magically. I adore you but you couldn’t force me down if, mn, you tried.” He wriggles himself closer against Severus, wrapping his arms around his torso, snuggling contentedly on his professor on the couch. “Mhnmmn. wake me up for breakfast, kay?”

Severus wants to say that breakfast is in half an hour and that they should really be getting up by now. He wants to apologise and get swallowed up by his self-pity and disgust like Harry had predicted so very accurately. He wants to take a long scalding hot shower and rethink all life decisions. He really wants to get his cock swallowed up by Harry’s sweet little mouth again. But he doesn’t do any of those things.

Instead, he ignores his doubts, his self-loathing, his practicality and his lust. He mutters a quick charm to wake them up in half an hour and he closes his eyes to sleep, heart filled with so much affection for the small wizard in his arms he could happily die like this.

After last night, Harry was exhausted. Absolutely knackered. All he wanted to do was sleep for a thousand years. Or like, an extra five hours. He was not picky. Unfortunately, bloody Herbology on Mondays is a morning class.

"I might go in for it, you know," Ron said sleepily as everyone all trudged toward the greenhouses, "if you, Fred and George find out how to. . . the tournament. . . you never know, do you?"

“Uh, I do know,” Draco drawls loudly, because Draco is irritatingly a morning person and has little regard to those still suffering from bed-sickness, “and the answer is clearly me.”

“Oh come off it,” Theodore rolls his eyes while he hugs his large scarf tighter around his body, “Clearly if it was a competition between magical power alone, Harry would throw us out of the water.”

“Yes, but if they took into account physical ability, luck and general health, Harry would be face deep in the mud,” Blaise points out with a tired smirk.

“Thanks, Blaise,” Harry mutters grumpily, “really it is just a wonder why we broke up with the way you spout such kind words about me.”

Blaise shrugs, “Some people just have no taste in fine dining and I have learned to accept it.”

Harry squinted meanly at his ex-boyfriend, “Was that a slight against me or Professor Snape?”

“Both.” Everyone says at once.

“Y’all are mean,” Harry accuses, “I don’t know why I have not made new friends yet.”
“Because everyone has now realized that you are a lot of trouble behind that pretty doll face of yours,” Ron states blandly.

Harry flutters his eyelashes at him, a hard feat to do when his eyelids felt like they were covered in cement. Ron, however, seems unimpressed by it, “Aw, you think I’ve got a pretty face like a doll?”

“Yeah, sure, if you- oh my wizard god,” Draco says as everyone stops in front of a patch of dirt that held what looked like a bunch of thick, black slug-like structures frozen at the very moment where they rose up to take their last dying breath. “Those are absolutely hideous.”

“They’re moving!” Ron says, aghast.

“What are those gigantic bumps on them?” Theodore mutters, "they look like pimples but, darker.”

“Gross,” was Crabbe and Goyle’s eloquent input to the conversation.

“Shit,” Hermione groans, “I know what they are.”

“This everybody,” Professor Sprout says to the class with a brightness that Harry already fears, “are bubotubers. Now, right now they are clearly in need of a good squeezing, so your job today is to collect the pus-“

“I’m gonna sick up,” Seamus Finnegan declares.

“- and be careful because the pus is extremely valuable-“

“Then why the fuck are they letting untrained teenagers handle them?” Harry hisses to Hermione who giggles and shrugs helplessly. Even her enthusiasm for school was curbed by her revulsion at the idea of touch the ugly plants.

“- now, I will hand out these bottles and I do expect them to be near filled when you pass them back to me, make sure you’re wearing your dragon-hide gloves kids, bubotuber pus can do funny things to the skin when undiluted.”

“Great.” Dean deadpans.

Ron turns to Harry, “If I hear you say the word facial I will deck you.” He tells him.

Harry clicks his tongue at him and shakes his head, “Ron don’t be disgusting, even I’m not in the mood to talk sex after seeing this shit, honestly what is wrong with you?”

“What is wrong with m- you!” Harry laughs and lets himself be chased by Ron until Professor Sprout comes to tell them off.

Afterward, collecting the pus was just as disgusting as imagined, unfortunately. On the flip side, at least it had not been worse. Harry, with his black thumb, was told to stand back from the activity after the second bubotuber shriveled up in his hands- an order he gleefully obeyed much to everyone else’s jealous displeasure. Seamus, true to his word, did vomit in a bush nearby though honestly, that is what he gets for spiking his own pumpkin juice yesterday and coming to class with a hangover. Draco also vomited but only because he saw Seamus vomit and the Malfoy heir didn’t exactly have the strongest stomach in the first place.

But after an hour or so, everyone did manage to fill up their assigned bottles and Professor Sprout was very pleased. Sometimes Harry thinks half of Sprout’s classes is just them doing the woman’s chores, like come on.
"This'll keep Madam Pomfrey happy," said Professor Sprout, stoppering the last bottle while her grumpy, cold students watch. "See, this is an excellent remedy for the more stubborn forms of acne. Should stop students resorting to desperate measures to rid themselves of pimples."

"Hm, maybe it was worth it after all," Draco muses, hand absentmindedly touching his face.

"Yeah, I heard last year some Hufflepuff tried to vanish hers off, lost an ear in the process," Pansy gossips.

"Considering all the fat and sugar we get every day, it’s definitely a good investment," Hermione sighs as she tries to wipe the pus residue off her uniform forlornly.

Harry shrugs unenthusiastically, not really interested, "Sure, whatever I guess."

"Just because you have skin made out of moonlight and untouched snow, doesn’t mean the rest of us mere mortals can have the same carefree attitude on skincare," Daphne sniffs.

"Uh excuse me, my skin is also made out of powdered sugar because I’m delicious and everyone wants a taste," Harry smirks.

"Hear, hear," Blaise leers.

“I don’t understand,” Theodore groans, “you guys broke up, why are you both still this disgusting?”

“My theory is that Zabini is a proper sadist that enjoys watching us despair at humanity- and that Harry has honestly always been this disgusting,” Ron says, “He just hid it really fucking well in first year… No… wait…”

“Is this about the centaur thing still?” Harry groans, “Come on Ron, I leave you out in the Forbidden forest once in the middle of the night to make out with a centaur and you’re never going to let it go are you?”

“Because you left me out in the Forbidden Forest in the middle of the night to make out with a centaur!”

“Wait.” Draco says, “What?”

Care of Magical creatures was next. Because there’s nothing like taking in the chilly morning air to the point where you start to grow icicles. Harry loathes Dumbledore for doing this to his class schedule.

“Merlin, I want to go to the bed,” Theodore bemoans.

“Kill… me…” Seamus groans as they all stagger toward Hagrid’s hut.

“Please let the creature be fire-based, please,” someone, Harry thinks it’s Lavender Brown, prays. She’s the one visibly least prepared to deal with the freezing cold morning after all. Seriously she was wearing a nice beanie but it’s not a magic beanie, she should’ve put more on.

Hagrid, dressed in gigantic furs that even Draco looked enviously at despite the ugly design, was outside his hut with a huge grin and several open wooden crates on the ground at his feet. Fang, the
lucky bitch, was nowhere nearby, probably inside since Hagrid has made it a thing to do whenever Harry comes by. From the crates, an unnerving rattling noise could be heard, followed by what sounded like a series of small explosions.

Sometimes Harry really loathed this school.

"Mornin'!" Hagrid greets, grinning at everyone like the weather wasn’t clearly a sign of Jack Frost’s impending reign of frozen terror. "Be'er wait fer y'all, won' want ter miss this - Blast-Ended Skrewts!"

“You had me at blast,” Seamus grins weakly.

“Funny, that’s the exact place he lost me at,” Draco mutters.

“Come now, gather round,” the half-giant jovially gestures to the crates.

The crates that contained what seemed to be deformed, slimy, shell-less lobsters. Today must be traumatise the students day because this was just gross. There were hundreds of them in the crates, six-inches long and crawling all over each other like gigantic pale mutant maggots, and somehow they smelt even worse than the bubotubers. Seriously. This school. Why. Just. Why.

Seamus, who Harry has quickly come to realize has way too little impulse control, reaches into the crate with the curiosity of an infant, the attitude of a teenager that believes he’ll never die and a hangover that would encourage anyone to end it all, yelps in pain and jumps back in surprise as the tail of a nearby skrewt exploded, propelling it forward across the crate. “Ouch! It exploded on me!”


“Yeah, they tend to do that,” Hagrid nods sagely, “it’s a retreat tactic, very effective.”

“Shit he’s really hurt!” Dean gasps as Seamus uncovers his hand to reveal it red and bleeding. Hagrid’s face immediately creases with worry at the sight.

“First pus, now this,” Seamus mutters darkly.

“I’m taking Seamus to Madam Pomphrey,” Dean declares protectively, nudging his friend toward the castle and shooting Hagrid and the offending crate of skrewts a glare. Hagrid’s face falls but nods in acceptance.

He turns to his class, who was looking at him with various levels of doubt. “Erm, well, I hope some of you brought your dragon-hide gloves?”

“Hagrid, our dragon-hide gloves are covered in bubotuber pus and um, do you know if they’re flammable?” Hermione asks.

“Wait does that matter?” Ron questions, “I thought the whole point of them was they were fire resistant.”

“I think we’re forgetting that our gloves do not cover a lot of our non-fire resistant bodies, plus, our robes.” Theodore frets.

“Hagrid,” Harry groans, now that Seamus was gone he was the most exhausted teenager in class and it showed, “seriously, what’s the point of these skrewts? Are they, like, you know, useful or something?”
“Uh...” Hagrid looked stumped. “Well I thought we could make this a bit of a project, they on'y jus' hatched see? So yeh'll be able ter raise ‘em!”

“Nooo...” Pansy groans into her hands, Lavender pats her shoulder consolingly.

“Look, look, today we’ll all start things nice and easy,” Hagrid quickly assures, trying to frantically salvage his failure of a lesson. Poor man. Harry’s honestly more irritated at the lack of supervision over Hagrid, the half-giant isn’t trained to teach and even if he was, Harry’s pretty sure the headmaster and assisting headmaster should be reviewing any new lesson plans in the first place. And while Dumbledore, the stupid fuck, might agree to this, Harry assumes McGonagall would have had far more sense to disprove the idea had she the opportunity to.

Seriously, what do the staff even do during their meetings? It’s just... God, if Harry was annoyed just contemplating it, Knowledge is probably apocalyptic. She fucking hates a bad education system. It’s why she almost never smiles in Harry’s opinion.

“Now er, today we are all jus’ feedin’ them. I got a few things fer you all to try- not sure what they’ll go fer, so there’s eggs, froggy livers, bit of grass snake pieces-“

Wait. Hold up.

“You don’t know what they’ll go for?!?” Harry nearly screeches in his dismay, “Are you, Hagrid, please for the love of god tell me you at least know about the very basics of these creatures you’re unleashing onto us children!”

“Well, I mean, I only just got ‘em...”

“That’s a really good point,” Hermione tentatively supports, because she is a good friend but most of all she is avid supporter of proper protocols, “Hagrid, you need to research this stuff thoroughly, there’s no point in trying to teach us how to take care of something if you don’t know how yourself.”

“Also, it doesn’t look like they have mouths.” Daphne deadpans.

“Also it doesn’t look like they have mouths,” Hermione amends, shrugging apologetically at Hagrid’s fallen expression. “Seriously Hagrid, did you run this by the other professors?”

“Well...”

Okay so maybe the fault lies in Hagrid as well. Because that man has more love for dangerous creatures than he does common sense really.

“Hagrid,” Harry sighs, “Please, just, this is dangerous. Seamus is already injured and clearly you don’t even know if they’re poisonous or something. Why don’t we just put this.. project aside for a week or so, make sure you really know what’s up, ask for help during your staff meetings, all that shit.”

“I, yer making some very good points ‘Arry,” Hagrid admits reluctantly, “I suppose I got a bit ahead of myself.”

Harry smiles and awkwardly pats the half-giant on the arm consolingly, “I know, I know, we all do it. Now, how about giving us the morning off? It’ll give you a head start on your research, see if Professor Snape knows anything of interest about the skrewts, he likes reading up on weird potions ingredients, maybe he’ll give you some recommendations.”

“Guess that makes sense,” Hagrid nods, “No point making yer all stick ‘round fer no reason. Okay,
off ya go, hopefully I get all this proper sorted by next week- bring your dragon-hide gloves!”

A loud chorus of agreements were made as everyone was already shuffling away from the hut. They kept half-shuffling, half-power-walking until they were a good distance away before the first person—surprisingly it was the Patil twin—broke into a run and soon everyone was sprinting toward the castle, eager to enjoy every minute of their unexpected break.

“Wow, mate did you just make a professor end class early and give them homework?” Ron says wide-eyed and in awe once the panting group reaches the castle, “I gotta have to seriously rethink my image of you now.”

“Eh,” Harry shrugs, “I’ve got a lot of practice playing diplomat with Fudge. Convincing Hagrid that an already terrible idea was terrible isn’t exactly too hard, especially when he already likes me,” Harry suddenly blinks, backtracking on Ron’s statement before squinting at the redhead suspiciously, “Wait, what the hell do you mean by that? What image do you have of me before?”

“That’s really not important, all you need to know is that it’s been improved now.” Ron dismisses airily.

“You’ve turned into a cocky shit, I do hope you know that.” Harry points out, jabbing Ron in the ribs and making him jump with an indignant ‘Oi!’.

“You know I’m surprised you barely said anything Draco, I thought you’ll be the most vocal out of all of us.” Theodore points out, “You know since you’re kind of-“

“Whiny.” Blaise finishes.

“-yeah. That.”

“One, fuck off, you are all wankers, and two, I was going to start complaining about it all but everyone beat me to it. After that I just felt sort of bad if I added any more shit.”

“Aw shit, are we meaner than Malfoy?” Ron groans.

Hermione grins, “I think we’re just smarter, after all he did say we just stole all of his complaints.”

“This is why you’re my favorite Gryffindor, Hopscotch.” Blaise declares, swinging a friendly arm over the blushing girl. Ron shoots him a nasty look at that.

“Hopscotch?” Daphne raises a brow.

“A muggle game. It’s an inside joke thing.” Blaise answers with a haughty sniff.

“You’re really getting into the muggle side of things aren’t you Blaise?” Draco questions, there’s a judgemental disdain and at the same time reluctantly jealous curiosity in his tone.

Blaise shrugs. Unlike Draco, his family isn’t too uptight about playing with the ‘rabble’. He may have some difficulty marrying a mudblood if he had the intention to, but other than that the Zabinis’ were relatively laidback. Then again, it’s hard for Mrs Zabini to play on the moral high ground when she’s ‘allegedly’ murdered all her spouses, blood purity be damned. “It’s hard not to be, Harry’s always bringing a lot of muggle shit into our lives and Jonathan is muggleborn too.”

“Jonathan Perkins? Are you still seeing him?” Harry inquires with interest. Subconsciously he licks his lips as he recalls the last time they had met. God, that boy was a high-quality beefcake. To get a relatively intelligent, muscular jock with a straightforward, kind personality and masochistic streak a
mile wide. Well, that was the dream, isn’t it?

“Wait, the **Gryffindor**?” Daphne demands, because she clearly also agrees with Harry’s internal assessment of Perkins, “Why haven’t I heard of this?! He’s not single?” She stares daggers at Blaise, “You defiled the hottest Gryffindor?!"

“Woah, hey, um ouch?” Ron protests.

“Name one other Gryffindor better looking than Perkins,” Daphne demands with narrowed eyes.

“Um…” Ron frowns, thinking hard.

“She’s right Ron, Perkins is the most objectively attractive Gryffindor,” Hermione chips in, her almost flippant tone making it sound like she was citing a fact in a book she’s read like it really was obvious that Jonathan Perkins was the number Gryffindor in looks.

“You two have ruined some of the best looking guys this damn school has to offer and I hate you for it,” Pansy grouses accusingly, “Lockhart, Perkins, the Weasley twins, Melweat, Simmons- what the fuck guys?”

“You nailed the notoriously Straight Simmons?” Harry asks Blaise impressed. Melweat was a very attractive Ravenclaw that had confessed to Harry a while back, but Harry had kindly rejected him with an apologetic smile and a sweet kiss. “Nice work hotstuff,” he holds up his fist for a bump.

“Notorious straight? More like notoriously repressed,” Blaise quips and fistbumps Harry with a smirk, “Seriously, that boy might love sucking cock more than you now.”

“Boy talk is gayer than I thought it would be,” Hermione comments mildly.

“Well that’s cuz half the blokes here are bent,” Ron rolls his eyes, “I mean out of all of us in this group only Nott and I are straight.”

“Oi!” Draco protests angrily.

“Sorry, sorry,” Ron apologizes then points at Crabbe and Goyle with his spoon, “those two are straight too, though you guys don’t really contribute to the group, you’re just kind of... there.”

Crabbe and Goyle both shrug in unison.

“That was not what I meant,” Draco says through gritted teeth.

Everyone stares at the Malfoy heir.

“I’m straight too!” He explodes.

Ron scoffs, “Yeah, okay, whatever mate.”

“I am!”

“Of course you are,” Theodore assures and when a more assured Draco turns away, Theodore immediately shakes his head and mouths ‘Hella gay’ which unfortunately Draco catches.

“I am not gay!” He shrieks, and after a few more giggles and jibes everyone lets it go with a clearly half-hearted ‘suree’ and a ‘don’t worry, we support you no matter what you’re into’. By the end of it Draco was red faced and pouting. Then he thinks of something and smirks.
“It’s not my fault I always maintain my appearance so carefully,” he fake sulks, unable to hide his smile as he adds, “After all it’s only my right as the hottest bloke here.

And suddenly the conversation swerved away from the young Malfoy’s possibly sexuality and onto a very heated ‘Who’s Hotter’ debate.

“Yeah but Diggory-“

“Oh come on, have you not seen me?” Blaise scoffs arrogantly, “Diggory’s had what, one girlfriend? I’ve played around with far more, both wizards and witches, what does that say?”

“That you’re a slag?” Hermione raises her eyebrow.

“She’s not wrong,” Pansy chirps and they exchange tentative grins.

“Besides, isn’t it more attractive for men to be more devoted?” Daphne says.

Blaise shakes his head in disagreement, “It’s more romantic, sure, but it’s not necessarily hotter, come on, who doesn’t want a guy with some experience? Who knows how to make your knees weak with a kiss? That’s hot.”

“Hm.. well tell me when you find a guy like that,” Daphne smirks as she glances at Blaise’s lips, “because I’ve certainly never tasted such pleasure when you kissed me.”

“Ooh, snap,” Draco and the others snigger as Blaise flushes.

“That isn’t fair I was drunk!”

“Hmmm...” Daphne hums noncommittally. “Enough of this, what did you guys think about Hagrid’s new pets?”

Everyone quickly follows the change of subject easily, Hermione answers first.

“Honestly, Harry’s right about the research but personally I think the best thing to do would be to stamp on the lot of them before they start attacking us all.”

“Hear, hear,” Draco agrees with a nod, “I mean, did you see those things? There is no way they can be tamed or domesticated. Taking care of them is begging Madam Pomphrey for a reserved seat in the infirmary.”

“Yeah, though you know, I’m pretty sure Pomphrey actually keeps a spare bed just in case Harry tries to drop dead again.” Theodore teases.

“I don’t do it on purpose,” Harry pouts.

“No, but it seems like this is the year you finally do,” Hermione points out.

Harry shrugs unrepentantly, “I mean, gotta mix it up a little, maybe this time I won’t be hospitalized again.”

“It’s kind of sad that you’re always getting brutally injured every year,” Ron says pityingly.

“I like to think of it as karma for my perfect good looks.”

“Aaand now it’s less sad.” Ron rolls his eyes.
“Anyway, now that have extra free time, me and Daphne are going to finish unpacking,” Pansy chirps as they reach a crossroads in the hall.

“Oh I need to do that too, Draco, Blaise, you coming?” Theodore questions.

“Yeah, why not?” Draco says, “Might as well do this now than before bed.”

“I’ll join you guys later,” Blaise smirks, “I’m gonna go see if any of my friends are free for some fun.”

Everyone makes disgusted noises and shooes the chuckling playboy away, Harry wolf whistles earning a kiss being blown toward him and a wink. After that the other Slytherins bid their farewells too, leaving the Gryffindors and Harry.

“Well, um, I’m going to the library,” Hermione awkwardly says.

“What seriously?” Harry asks a little incredulously, “It’s only the first day of school.”

“Exactly! No one else will be there,” Hermione beams, “It’ll be great, see you at lunch!”

Ron and Harry watch her scurry away.

“Well,” Ron huffs, “I guess that just leaves you and me- oh no, what is it now?”

“Actually…” Harry coughs, a little embarrassed, “I, uh, was going to see if Sev- Snape had any classes on right now or-“

Ron shakes his head, “Yeah, yeah, go forth and swoon over the ugly git, you did win us free time all the way till lunch.”

“If he’s not free I’ll totally find you, kay?” Harry swears.

Ron grins, “I know you will mate, besides, I still have your wicked broom that you let me borrow over the hols- everyone in my family was practically salivating over it,” he boasts proudly, “I’ll probably be hanging around the quidditch pitch for a few hours, work up an appetite for lunch.”

“Try not to get caught by Wood,” Harry smiles, “I know you want to join the team but from what I’ve seen you need to prepare for the hell that is his training sessions. The guy would be way cuter if he wasn’t so clearly crazy.”

“Well if you’re saying there’s a decent looking bloke out there that is actually crazy enough to turn you off, then I’m gonna take it to heart,” Ron says solemnly, though the effect was ruined by the smile threatening to curl up his lips.

“You are such a rude, rude bad friend.” Harry shakes his head and pouts.

“Says the guy who’s ditching his mate for his professor.”

“His smoking hot professor.” Harry corrects primly. Ron makes a face of revulsion at him.

“Eurgh… Just go. Seriously, I refuse to hear more. Go. Leave. Scram.”

“Love you too Ron!” Harry calls back, laughing as he walks away when his friend flips him off. Friends are fun.
“Oh good, you are here,” Harry grins.

Severus looks up from his book with surprise. “Harry? Don’t you still have class happening?”

“Convinced Hagrid to cancel,” Harry replies, flopping himself on the couch and leaning against the older wizard’s side. Severus leans into the other boy’s warmth as well, his flushed skin almost hot from being in the chilly air outside for so long, “He got some, uh, blasted skrewts? Whatever, they were gross and dangerous and the man clearly didn’t know anything about them. Seriously, do you guys do nothing at your staff meetings?”

“Mainly we just gossip and drink,” Severus answers dryly, still paging through his vaguely interesting book on blood magic and if the worth of a soul does actually affect a potion or is it the power of belief. Silently though he makes a mental note to check up on whatever harebrained thing Hagrid was up to next.

Harry giggles, and Severus smiles helplessly into his book at the sound. Then Harry turns to face Severus with a raised eyebrow and curious tilt to his lips, “That does remind me, exactly how smashed were you last night?”

Severus tenses, face flushing automatically as he recalls exactly how smashed he was, how bitterly jealous he was and most fervently, how fucking hot the end result had been, “Very,” he answers tersely.

Harry scrunches up his nose contemplatively. It’s adorable. Severus gives in to the urge to lean down and kiss the tip of his nose lightly which makes Harry immediately flush harder with pleasure. “Don’t distract me by being cute,” he complains half-heartedly, lips curling into a soft smile, coy and pleased.

“Me, cute? I would never.” Severus murmurs. He’s never been called cute before. And he hadn’t had much of a wish to be either. Though when Harry calls him so, the term suddenly becomes oddly appealing, something he may strive to try be again.

“You liar, you’re very secretly a very sweet man aren’t you.” Harry accuses playfully, “Also, a very skilled drunk, because seriously, I didn’t even notice until you passed out on me. Like, I was aware you had something to drink but you were coherent as fuck until near the end, but by then neither of us were exactly eloquent.”

“Harry, please drop it,” Severus groans.

Harry, because despite everything still was a mischievous little brat, looks delighted at his embarrassment, clambering on top of Severus and flinging his arms around his shoulders so Severus gets the full brunt of Harry’s blinding grin. “Why?” he teases, “I get that you’ll probably never do that again until I become legal but come on,” Harry’s voice drops an octave as he touches his forehead against the professor’s own as he purrs seductively with hooded eyes, “we had fun didn’t we Severus?”

“God, yes,” Severus croaks, and overtaken by an almost violent spike of lust he slips his hands around the young wizard and kisses him fiercely. He can feel the way Harry’s soft laughter devolves quickly into a loud drawn out moan as Severus takes advantage of his amusement to deepen the kiss.

“Hah, S-Severus,” Harry breaks the kiss, panting and flushed. Severus lets him catch his breath, a little short of it himself. He wonders when he had officially lost his self-control, or when he had
honestly stopped caring. Harry was an undeniably stunning force. And one Severus can admit he has little interest in sending away.

Severus doesn’t know anymore if he has the will to do such a thing in the first place, not after experiencing this small taste of pure bliss.

“Mm, yes Harry?”

“Do you have to teach a lesson before lunch?”

“Unfortunately yes, third years, I’m introducing them to the basics of undetectable poisons.”

The edges of Harry’s eyes crinkle up with enjoyment, “I remember that it was an interesting topic—though more than a few Gryffindors did think you were going to slip something into their food during that time.”

“That does explain why they do so well during that time,” Severus muses.

“Please,” Harry rolls his eyes, “You know exactly what you were doing, stalking around like a menacingly sexy villain, insinuating murder behind your words,”

Severus raises his eyebrow, “I hardly think I came off as ‘sexy’ Harry, I think the word you were looking for was terrifying.”

“Well,” The Boy Who Lived hums, “that’s pretty sexy too.”

“This actually does explain a lot,” Severus mutters.

“Are you complaining?”

Severus pointedly looks down at their extremely intimate positioning on the couch that they had pretty much defiled last night, “Does it look like I’m complaining?”

Harry grins crookedly, “Good,” he says decisively, “because I’m thinking… we have twenty more minutes before you need to get ready for your class and I think I should kiss you for all twenty of them.”

“I’m amenable to the idea,” Severus murmurs, “Though you should hurry, time is running out as I spea-mphf!”

“Draco is it true you got turned into a ferret by Professor Moody?” Harry asks as he invites Ron and Hermione onto the Slytherin table for lunch. Some of the younger Slytherins looked confused and disdainful at the red and gold intrusions but the older Slytherins barely bat an eye. Whatever opinions they had, they hardly could voice them against one of the most popular and influential kids in school. Now that Harry became Minister Fudge’s son on top of everything else, he was practically untouchable. “And before you ask, of course, Ron told me.”

“Sorry about that as well Malfoy,” Ron grudgingly says, “not the insults because you started it first, or the ferret thing because that was bloody hilarious but the bouncing thing Moody did was definitely a step too far.”
Draco glares at him with slightly red-rimmed eyes, “I hope Harry kills this one,” He snarls which is probably the most apology Ron was going to get.

“It was quite an overreaction on Moody’s part,” Ron admits, “I mean, yeah, Malfoy was being a right rotten twat,” Draco shrugs, looking pouty and unrepentant, “but it ain’t like we were throwing down or anything… yet.”

Harry gives them both a ‘Look’.

“I was about to throw a stinging hex,” Draco mumbles sheepishly.

“I was going to pretend to walk away before turning around to punch him in the face,” Ron mutters. Harry, Theodore, and Hermione sigh and shake their heads. Blaise just snorts. “Seriously, you two cannot go one minute without Harry around before getting into fisticuffs huh?”

“That is not the point!” Ron protests hotly, “The point is, is, uh,”

“That Professor Moody is an utter pillock.” Draco grouses.


“Oh just fuck already,” Daphne groans as she passes by.

“Harry, Blaise, you’ve done it. You’ve managed to corrupt the most dignified person in our friendship group. I hope you’re happy.” Theodore chuckles while Ron and Draco splutter and go red.

“Uh, one if you think Daphne is our most dignified friend, we are in trouble,” Harry sasses, “Two, clearly I am the most dignified friend.”

“Bull-fucking-shit,” Blaise laughs, “Half the shit you say cannot be said around small children.”

“Wow, it’s a good thing we’re no longer dating because ouch,” Harry sniffs, “Also, also, watch this.”

Harry props a hand under his chin and looks contemplatively away. His face is beautiful in its serenity. He blinks slowly, drawing attention to his long dark lashes as his face is dusted perfectly under the sun shining through the Great Hall’s enchanted ceiling. Silently he draws a soft, small smile on his pale lips, looking dreamy and enchanting and-

“Fuck, you look so fucking dignified, that is so not cool mate,” Ron spits out.

“Fucking right?” Harry grins widely, breaking his facade of porcelain beauty with his crude language.

“Oh Merlin you would make an artist very, very happy if you ever volunteered to model,” Theodore groans, “Seriously I just had a brief moment were I wasn’t sure if I wanted to paint you or kiss you, and trust me, I’ve never wanted to do either before until just now.”

“Do both,” Blaise suggests with a smirk, “Paint Harry then make out with your shitty painting. That’s what I’d do.”

“I think I should be insulted?” Harry says.

Theodore glares at Blaise, “Oh I know I should be.”
“Actually quick change of subject why are your eyes red-rimmed?” Hermione asks Harry, “I didn’t notice until you drew attention to your face but you definitely look like you’ve been crying recently.” Harry flushes a little and touches the edges of his eyes tentatively. He knew they still felt a bit puffy.

“Ooh, I know exactly why,” Blaise leers, “someone got handsy with their professor before lunch I see.”

“Oh, ew, oh no,” Ron groans, “I didn’t need to know tha- Merlin, seriously how far have you gone with the greasy- no wait, don’t want to know. Nope. Nup. No.”

“God I cannot wait till I hit sixteen,” Harry groans wistfully, “I mean, fuck me amiright guys?”

“NO.” Everyone choruses like dutiful little bastards.

“Hey, so this sort of definitely discounts the Moody is a secret death eater thing right?” Harry skillfully and not at all sulkily changes the subject. “I mean if he was he would have transfigured Ron into a red squirrel instead of Draco or something right?

“Oh my god, Ron would totally be a red squirrel.” Hermione breathes out and she, as well as everyone else, save for Ron bursts into laughter.

“Wha-I would not!” Ron nearly screeches, “I would be something super cool like, like a tiger or, or at least a wolf or dog or something else!”

“...You mean like a corgi?” Blaise suggests and then they all started howling once again with laughter at the image. Ron scowls darkly.

“I hate you all.”

“Okay-hah ha- okay, but in all seriousness does that mean Moody isn’t a bad guy?” Hermione says finally getting herself together unlike a few others who were still clutching at their sides and wheezing. “Well, I mean, not to Harry at least.”

“Ugh, well he’s, fuck my sides hurt, definitely not aligned with the death eaters for sure,” Draco groans, “he implied he was keeping an eye on me and my father. That reminds me, I should write to him about this.”

“Just because he’s against death eaters, doesn’t necessarily mean he’s against me remember?” Harry reminds them as he purposely avoids looking at a glowering Ron, lest he bursts into a fit of giggles once more. He’s delicate. If he has a laughing fit like that one more time Harry honestly thinks he may die. “I haven’t gotten a good look at him yet but I guess we’ll see what he’s like in Defense class this Thursday.”

“Fred and George said his class was pretty impressive,” Ron says, eager to move the change in subject along. “Wouldn’t tell me what it was about but apparently since Moody is ex-auror he really does know his stuff and ain’t afraid to teach us the nitty gritty shit.”

“Okay so, if he turns out to be secretly evil should we just tell Dumbledore immediately or go traditional and wait it out till the end of the year?” Harry asks seriously before turning to Hermione, who, let's be honest, was the closest thing to a straight moral compass this ragtag team had.

“Um... how good a teacher are we talking about?” She asks because apparently, their straight moral compass was hella fucking skewed, “because we kind of have our OWLs on next year right? And uh, well, education.” She concludes lamely.
“Are we still doing those? Does anyone know because Dumbledore has a tendency to cancel exams when big things happen.”

“Theodore, that only happened because a bunch of people got petrified by a gigantic basilisk.” Harry rolls his eyes, “I don’t think Dumbledore is going to cancel exams until there are four victimized students are involved at the very least.”

“Hey, that reminds me, have you and the twins figure out how to pass that age restriction yet?” Ron asks interestedly.

“Ugh, no,” Harry says, “it’s been like a day Ron, give me a break I’m not omniscient. Also, the last time the tournament was held was like two hundred years ago or something, information on it isn’t going to be like finding the definition of Wibblygook.”

“Yeah, because kids died,” Hermione sourly says, her feelings on the topic very clear, “Harry come on, usually you’re the one who leads the logic parade around here.”

“Yeah well, I’m going to let you take the baton this year,” Harry grins, shrugging helplessly, “Anyway think about it, I’m probably going to be entered either way by some conspiracy, why don’t I just embrace it instead?” He can't tell her the only real appeal to the tournament was the death. And the mystery challenges too. Ooh, Harry hopes there’s a round trying to survive the Forbidden Forest. He’ll smash that out of the park of course but it would be fun.

Maybe he could convince the Fudge’s to try camping?

“That’s... I don’t think you’re supposed to treat that problem so casually Harry...” Hermione says with an odd look.

Harry’s grin spreads wider and slaps her playfully on the back, “See, you’re doing great Hermione!”

“O-oh well, no problem, um,” Hermione flushes at the praise then she quickly scowls, “hey wait-!”

“Race you all to Defense!” Harry quickly shouts before dashing quickly away from an irate Hermione.

Harry stared at the newest Defense professor to grace the halls of Hogwarts. "Uh, Draco?"

"Yes, Harry?" Draco murmured, distracted by glaring at Moody during his speech. Ron across the room seemed pretty excited and thoroughly thrilled that the ex-auror knew his father but Harry was a bit worried for the Slytherin side of his friends in this class this time. From what he did to Draco, Moody seemed a bit too openly wand-happy for a teacher for his liking.

"You know last year when you got a little upset that I didn't tell anyone Ron had a grown man as a pet which ultimately resulted in an exonerated murderer coming after us?"

"Vaguely." The blonde replied dryly. "I also remember telling you to never do that again and calling you an ignorant almond."

"It was a misinformed walnut."
"What is your point Potter?"

"Well um, it's happening again."

Suddenly Harry had earned his friend's full attention. "What."

The raven-haired young teen tilted his head a few times in the direction of the professors' table. "That new defense professor, no idea who it is but it's definitely not Moody. Way hotter though if you want my opinion, though to be fair Moody isn't exactly the prettiest princess to begin with."

"Potter I swear to your stupid god."

"Blasphemy!" Harry shout whispers mock scandalized. Draco glares at him. "Go on."

“…I hate you.”


Draco stares at Harry, “Well, shouldn’t we- we should tell someone!”

“Now wait a minute, let’s just give the guy a bit to settle. See what his true intentions are. Scope him out.”

“… it’s because he’s cute isn’t he?”

“Well, uh-“

“Merlin, how cute can he be?!”

Harry squinted, “I don’t know, like, a six?”

“You are putting people’s lives in jeopardy for a six?!”

“Um, technically it’s probably only my life in jeopardy let’s be honest here and have you seen actual Moody? He’s like a two.”

“One, Moody is clearly a negative four, seriously your sense of beauty is so skewed, and two, you are the shallowest person ever.” Draco shook his head, “Also, three, Severus will literally strangle you.”

Harry leers, “Kinky.”

“I hope fake Moody murders you, I really, really do.”

“Who’s a fake?” Blaise asks behind them, leaning over interestedly. Unlike Theodore who was listening to Moody, Blaise seemed to have gotten bored enough to want to gossip.

“Moody,” Draco whispers, “Harry thinks he’s a different person.”

“How do you do that by the way?” Blaise asks, “I mean I didn’t question this before but unless you have one of Moody’s proclaimed magical all-seeing eyes, I don’t get how you can figure it out.”

Harry shrugs, “Maybe it’s the death magic shit running through me.” He says, quickly cobbling up a story. It helps that most of it were more or less the truth, “It’s not like, great but I can tell when the soul doesn’t fit the body. And if I concentrate hard enough I’ll see the general physical form of said soul.”
“Huh, I’ll buy that.” Blaise nods thoughtfully. “So if it really was Moody…”

“Then the soul should fit perfectly, like frozen water in a bowl.” Harry explains, “So if you take the same bowl-shaped ice out and put it in a big square container, then clearly you can tell the ice didn’t originally form in the square container. I mean maybe the ice melts a bit after a while but, like, you get it right?”

“You are lucky you surround yourself with intelligent friends, Harry,” Draco comments dryly, then after a moment he smirks and adds, “oh and I guess Weasley too.”

“You have something to say to the class Malfoy?” Moody snaps, causing the trio to snap to attention like the guilty wide-eyed schoolboys they are. “Twenty points from Slytherin.”

“Twenty?!” Draco sputters.

“And an extra ten for back talk,” Moody growls, “then again I should’ve expected as much considering your father, always talking his way out of even a prison sentence.”

Draco flushes angrily at the obvious insinuation but stays silent. Seeing the submission Moody nods and continues talking, “Anyway, do any of you know which curses are most heavily punished by wizarding law?”

A few people tentatively raise their hands but Moody picks Ron out in the end. It seems the man has clear favorites and clear dislikes already. As Ron answers, Draco whispers harshly in Harry’s ear, “Out this man as fast as you can Harry.” Draco smirks darkly, “After all, impersonating an auror is quite a criminal offense, we all have to play our parts in fortifying our defenses against the dark arts yes?”

“Ooh, how cruel Draco, I think I’m actually a little attracted to you now,” Harry gasps with a sly twinkle in his eyes. It’s not untrue, a devious Draco is actually quite a delicious Draco indeed. With a seductive smile, Harry playfully leered, flustering Draco immediately. The young Malfoy looked quite sweet with his blush, it really was a pity he was straight, not that Harry would’ve done anything to him if he wasn’t.

“Wha, uh, wait- what do you mean actually?!”

“Ten more points from Slytherin!” Moody roars, making everyone jump, “Malfoy, what’s the last Unforgivable curse that no one has mentioned yet?”

“Uh…” Draco’s already pink face colored into a deeper shade of embarrassment and anger. “The uh,” he glances over to Harry and instantly recalls one, “The killing curse?”

“Wow, that’s a little inconsiderate isn’t it?” Harry pouts.

“It’s not my fault you’re so well associated with the killing curse,” Draco mutters back to him, “You’re practically in the definition of it at this point.” Before they can go back to bantering again they quickly force themselves to pay attention to the scowling imposter staring up at them.

“Lucky guess, then again, with your background I’m not surprised you know about it.”

Draco grits his teeth and looks down at the desk, hiding his seething glare. Harry, however, has no such compunctions. “Professor Moody that’s completely uncalled for,” Harry says icily, “As you said the Unforgivables are the most heavily punished under the law, they are not exactly the evil Malfoy secrets you keep trying to make them out to be. I understand that you’re in law enforcement but please keep your prejudiced bias out of the classroom.” Purposefully Harry eyes the disfigured
figure with casual disdain and sneers, “Oh wait, maybe I should say, was in law enforcement.”

More than a couple of people ‘Ooh’-ed at that. Calling out a teacher, a famous ex-auror at that, on the first lesson was a first. And from the even more famous Harry Potter who was usually quite a polite, good student too. More than a few sheep and neutrals in the classroom quickly switched opinions of their professor, knowing full well that, between Harry Potter and a defense against the dark arts, even a seemingly powerful one, only one of them was still going to be around next year.

“Potter hmm?” Moody narrows his eyes, well, eye, “I knew your father, strong man, stubborn too. It’s a pity you’ve given your loyalties to the wrong sort.”

Harry rolls his eyes, not the least bit affected by the professor’s attempt at trying to curry guilt via memory lane, “Please sir, I don’t know what they teach in auror school back in the old yonder days, but most kids don’t end up being an identical smaller version of their father. Or mother. Parent. Whatever. The point is,” You’re being a racist bitch, no wait, that’s too aggressive, “you’re being a pretty bitch,” perfect, “who couldn’t pin whatever crimes you have on people like Lucius Malfoy and now you’re taking it out on their kids.” Harry sneers, “Also, I’m friends with Ron too, and you don’t seem to think he’s the, ah, what was it again? Right, the ‘wrong sort’.”

The sarcasm was so clear in Harry’s voice that people across the room could hear the apostrophe marks in the last two words.

Moody glares fiercely at Harry who stares serenely back. Everyone else held their breath, waiting for the inevitable eruption. Unfortunately, they were all disappointed. Instead, much to the class’ surprise, including Harry’s own, Moody laughs, a full-bodied proper laugh that sounded a little bit like a bucket gargling nails. “You’ve got spunk Potter,” He grins but Harry’s fairly sure that it doesn’t completely reach his eyes, “Anyway, back to the lesson at hand…”

The subsequent lesson was tense. It only got worse when Moody brought out the spiders and decided he was going to demonstrate personally all three Unforgiveables. More than a few of Harry’s friends exchange glances with him and each other, uneasy at the sight. Especially the Cruciatius curse one. Yeah. Neville really didn’t like that.

“CONSTANT VIGILANCE!” Moody shouts mid-way through his speech for the second time, it was equally as successful at making everyone jump as the first time. He makes his way to the last spider, only one curse left on his lips.

“P-professor,” Hermione splutters fearfully, “we, you don’t really have to-“

"Avada Kedavra!" Moody roars. Harry winces. Honestly, does he have to be so loud?

A flash of green light and immediately the spider was unmistakably dead. Some of the more soft-hearted students were crying, almost all of them were pale. Seriously, this is really bad teaching. There’s a decent point behind all this, but the whole thing was far to confrontational for normal fourteen-year-olds to handle.

With a dismissive sweep of his hand, Moody pushes the spider callously off the table. "Not nice," he says calmly. "Not pleasant. And there's no countercurse. There's no blocking it. Only one known person has ever survived it, and he's sitting right in front of me."

And suddenly all eyes were on Harry.

Taking the opportunity, Harry decides to do what all mature people with a grudge do and heckle the older wizard, “Hey, so, like, does that mean you’ll get sent to Azkaban? You know, because you
literally just casted all three Unforgivables in a row? What’s up with that?"

It’s an incredibly good point and suddenly the tides have turned back against Fake Moody who seemed vaguely irritated and blindsided at the unexpected query. Constant Vigilance, Harry’s ass. “Well, well that’s obvious Potter, it’s so all of you know firsthand what these curses are. While there’s no countercurse you’ve still got to know. You’ve got to appreciate what the worst is. You don’t want to find yourself in a situation where you’re facing it. CONSTANT VIGILANCE!”

“Sure, constant vigilance is nice, but you could’ve told us the incantation, showed up the spell color, describe in detail- you didn’t have to actually- seriously who even let you chant these spells in a classroom?” Harry rebuts. “I get you’re trying to be a hands on teacher sir, but they’re not called the Unforgivables for nothin’. While you said before, you have to really mean it to work.” Green eyes look at the man with wide-eyed innocence, “And yet here you are, throwing around like candy in front of children, I can’t help but question your character Professor.”

“Class dismissed.” Fake Moody suddenly barks, looking darkly at Harry, “If you’re not willing to listen to me Potter, then there’s no point in me teaching after all.”

Harry grins and shrugs, uncaring that the man has essentially pinned his traumatizing failure of a class on him, “Why sir, I’m flattered that you think my small disruption is enough for you to ruin everyone else’s education. You must put me on quite the high pedestal.”

Moody scowls and stalks off, leaving the rest of the class to swarm Harry with questions and awe.

“Wow Potter, I cannot believe you did that!” Seamus gushes excitedly.

“Bold Potter, very bold.” Blaise drawls.

“But can you blame him?” Someone else says.

“Yeah Moody was out of line, the Imperius curse is one thing, but the other two?” Another person agrees.

“Th-thanks Harry.” Neville shyly musurrs, looking genuinely pleased with Moody being told off about his introduction to the Unforgiveables.

“Mate you are kicking teachers out of classes left and right- not that I’m complaining.” Ron grins, then frowns slightly, “I am a bit bummed about Moody though, he seemed pretty cool.”

“I don’t trust him,” Harry declares, he knows if he does so openly he’ll be put in greater danger, but in exchange, everyone else will be far less accepting of the new professor. Constant vigilance and all. “Did you notice that no matter what I said the man didn’t even take a point off me or give me detention? He didn’t even try to scold me- clearly, he’s trying hard to cover something up by pandering to the ‘Light’ side.”

A lot of students nodded their heads, finding the argument made sense. After all, when have they ever gotten a good defense teacher that wasn’t hiding something. Their best professor had been secretly a werewolf after all. And while some of them have gotten over it, anyone with half a brain had gotten far warier and less naive about the possibility of a ‘good’ defense teacher. It was a little sad but it’s not like it wasn’t still relevant all things considering.

As Harry had expected, by the end of the day rumors and gossip quickly spread about Professor Moody. While some people still felt the need to protect the man, he was a famous ex-author after all, they couldn’t argue against the prevalent rumor that this was not the real Moody.
For once the general consensus of the Hogwarts’ grapevine was actually correct. It was about time really.

Now all he has to do is confirm the rumor and the man is done for.

That’ll teach him to be a fucking prick to his friends.

Severus was avoiding Moody’s eyes, both magical and… well, normal. Harry does have questions about that magic eye. Clearly it can’t see his true form or Harry is pretty sure the imposter would be straight up dead, but there must be something it picks up around Harry- assuming it’s the real eye of course. Also, even if it’s fake, does that mean the imposter had to gouge out their eye to make room for the accessory, because mad respect if that’s the case. Either way it must be bloody uncomfortable since the thing was made for a one-eyed man in mind, it’s a proper eyeball shape after all, not a half-assed semi-sphere bullshit.

Then again, if it’s a fake, the imposter could have always magic-ed it so it doesn’t dig into his eye. Also, and slightly unrelated, seriously how was Dumbledore considered even remotely intelligent? People who can’t hire non-evil teachers, or at least, teachers that are hiding something potentially life-threatening in their resumes like Lupin, should not be considered the, and Harry quotes, ‘Greatest Wizard of the Century.’ That is bullshit. Harry would like to have a long chat with whoever judged for that title because it is absolutely bullshit and Harry will gladly debate this topic.

Speaking of topics, Harry was getting off his initial one. And that was Severus.

“Hey, what’s wrong?” Harry asks in the evening. They’re both on the couch, full from dinner and relaxing together before they go to bed. Severus was reading his new edition of the bi-weekly international potions journal, RIP: Research on Ingredients and Potions. Harry, on the other hand, was using the man’s legs as a pillow to lie his head comfortably on as he read Rita Skeeter’s draft on her first story. There’s no title yet but the story is solid and the twists genuinely interesting, it’s a little too overdramatized emotionally but it’s meant to sell as more of a romantic fantasy adventure for witches. The potential love interests sound fucking hot, but shallow, and the main character is described as ‘ethereal’ far too much given that she’s meant to be your average pretty witch. Harry scribbles a note on that on the edges of the draft.

“Nothing's wrong?” Severus murmurs, he’s stopped reading to look down at Harry vaguely bemused, “Why, do you think something is wrong Harry?”

Harry’s eyes flicker up from Rita’s story to meet Severus’, “Moody, you’ve been avoiding him.” And making it difficult for Harry to bring him up in conversation.

“Ah,” Severus mutters, “as always you are quite keenly observant. It truly is a pity that this trait alone cannot merit you any way out of trouble.”

“Ugh don’t change the subject,” Harry groans. Severus’ favorite topic to tease Harry with was always his inability to avoid messes and problems. It wasn’t Harry’s fault that he was always in the eye of the tornado. It was everyone else’s. Seriously. “Anyway whatever grudge you have with that man, don’t bother, he’s not really Professor Moody.”

Harry indignantly shouts in surprise as Severus’ journal hit his face. He was lucky that the journal was more of a magazine than the old gigantic tomes Severus likes or Harry would have broken the
record of fastest injury that would warrant going to the infirmary. Madam Pomphrey passed by him earlier today and joked that she already had his personal bed in the mediwing ready whenever he feels like getting in the middle of something recklessly stupid again, it was funny then but Harry knew she wouldn’t be laughing if he actually took up that offer not a few hours later. “Ow! Severus what the-“

“What did you just say?” Severus asks darkly.

Harry peels the book off from his face with narrow eyes, “Moody, I saw him in defense class today, he’s not really Moody.”

“How did you know?”

Harry sighs and explains his excuse all over again, Severus easily accepts the explanation and sighs heavily. “This school can’t have one year with a decent defense professor.”

Harry pats the man’s arm consolingly, after all he knows how badly Severus wants that position. “You know, if we tell Dumbledore about Moody now he may switch you in?”

Severus looks down at him with a faint smile, “You don’t actually think that.” He says.

Busted. Harry gives the potions master a pitying look, “Dumbledore will probably want to watch Fake Moody to catch him out on whatever he’s planning. Not to mention you’re the only potions master in school. I’m sorry.”

Severus leans down and kisses him softly, “Why apologize? I appreciate the support...” he hesitates briefly before adding, “kitten,”

Harry breaks off the kiss, a little incredulous at the choice of endearment. He’s been called a few things, ‘Gorgeous’, ‘Sexy’, ‘Lord’ and ‘Master’ but he’s never had a literal pet name like that before. Well, Blaise has made more than a few but those were said as a jest than anything else so they didn’t count.

Kitten. Harry supposes it’s fitting. He’s quite cat like. He likes naps. He’s willing to wear a collar and purr and be a selfish little cuddle slut. Yes, after a moment of thought he decides he quite likes it and smiles in delight, “Am I your kitten Severus?”

“Of course,” Severus growls, eyes flashing with bright possessive fire, it made Harry shiver with anticipation and want. “I don’t want you to have any more dalliances,” he tells Harry firmly, clearly Severus has been holding this demand back for a while.

Harry smiles and pecks him on the lips quickly with a laugh, “Darling, all you needed to do was ask,” he raises his eyebrows and gives the older wizard a cheeky look, “I’ll still flirt,” he warns half-teasingly, “maybe steal a few kisses, so you should probably punish me to discourage such acts in the future?”

“Kitten I do hope you’re joking.” Severus mumbles but from his long-suffering tone, Harry knows that he knows he’s not. Harry smiles, enjoying the way Severus’ new nickname for him rolls under that deep voice, rumbling and sensual. He sits up, straddling the man and lets himself be kissed thoroughly by him, groaning as Severus’s hands squeeze his ass boldly. “After all,” Severus breathes into his ear, making Harry writhe, “If I correctly recall I never did give you that punishment from the night before.”

Harry is fairly sure he’s blushing so hard the tips of his fingers were pink. Severus has unlocked some new level of bold, teasing seductiveness that he seems to now have no qualms in using and
abusing against Harry. Where was the skittish doubting man who left the room every time they did something slightly sexual? This new audacious Severus may be bad for his weak mortal heart.

“Mmm... Severus,” Harry pants, “please do,”

Severus’ eyes flicker up and down, taking in Harry’s aroused form with an indulgent satisfaction that makes Harry want to keen. “Tell me about Moody,” he says with sudden seriousness, switching gears out of nowhere.

Harry glares at him sourly, “We need to talk about the definition of punishment soon.”

“We are both intelligent enough to know that it’s not a punishment if you want it,” Severus smirks, Harry scowls, his body still heated with lust and too young to force under control is begging for attention. Harry has half a mind to just pleasure himself right there and then, that would give this cockblock a lesson for sure. Oh god, just imagining it was mouthwatering, making Severus look on helplessly as Harry teases him with the view alone, fuck. “Harry? Ah, Kitten?”

“Hmn?” Harry mumbles as he presses up against Severus, letting his erection in his pants rub lazily against his dear professor’s stomach. There’s a small part of him that was embarrassed at how wanton and eager his body was, but it was mostly blocked out by the larger part drowning in the enjoyment of seeking pleasure.

“Moody.”

“Ugh, Moody can wait. If you were going to call out another man’s name, at least let it be an attractive one.” Harry sighs and reluctantly shuffles a little bit away from the tempting body, a hard feat since he was sitting on the man’s lap. He’s been frustrated since Severus fell asleep on him the night before and the snog session in the afternoon only fueled the flames further. This, this must be the punishment, that is the only explanation here. That or someone above is playing a very mean prank on him. Harry bets it’s Love, the bitch.

“I told you what I know,” Harry sulks, “I know it’s hard to believe but I don’t try to keep all the important secrets till the last minute, I just... forget sometimes.”

“All the time, Harry.” Severus deadpans. Harry sulks harder at that. He’s almost as old as Time! Of course, his memory was going to slip occasionally.

“Well I don’t know anything else about Fake Moody,” Harry sniffs, “he doesn’t like Draco so at the very least he’s not a Death Eater or whatever,”

Severus stiffens slightly but Harry ignores the reaction. Every wizard and witch around here gets all awkward when Death Eaters and Voldemort was mentioned, it was hardly a new thing. Harry sweetly kisses Severus on the corner of his mouth in reassurance. “Don’t worry darling, even if Moody turns out to be a horrible dirty Death Eater we’ll figure it out yeah? I’ll go tell Dumbledore about him tomorrow.”

“... that’s a good idea.” Severus finally days but he looked like he had swallowed a lemon. Harry frowns slightly, unsure of what could’ve possibly displeased the man. Seeing Harry’s thoughtful frown, Severus quickly pushes away his unease and distracts the younger wizard with a kiss, “It’s getting late, we should retire to our beds.”

Harry nods, unwilling to press the issue. He knows that eventually, Severus will tell him. Eventually. Maybe.
“Okay, good night Severus.” Harry smiles and they exchange one last kiss before they part ways. He rolls his eyes at the elegantly, dark figure retreating to his bedroom. Such a troublesome man.

Then again, so was he.

Chapter End Notes

Check out my ko fi under hweianime :)
check out my tumblr under hweianime :
Check out my- you get it
:)

Chapter End Notes
Death's teacher roasting

Chapter Notes

Well, it's been a while! I... I wanted to write something here but I forgot.

In a way, there has been some and absolutely no plot happening. Most of this seems to be dialogue-heavy and I do feel bad about that. I was moopy-er than usual this month (>﹏<)

Also, I've been distracted by my new light novel obsession (slash genre obviously). So there's that too.

Anyway, I'll try to get a new chapter up soon-ish ish or at least faster than this one ahaha

Enjoy~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The one where Death and his friends pretty much roast most of the staff then banter about various inappropriate things (Well, one inappropriate thing, I think ya'll know)

"Why?!!" Harry shouts, slamming his hands down on the desk in front of him loudly. He'd expected this, he did, but it doesn't make it any less frustrating to hear.

Dumbledore winces a little at the noise and timidly puts his saucer and teacup back down onto the tabletop. This was not what he imagined when Harry had requested they have a chat over a cup of tea. Argus is always going on and on about how great his and Harry's tea parties were. This was really deeply unfair in Dumbledore's opinion.

"Say I do believe you my boy, which, which I definitely do," he quickly reassures under the younger wizard's poisonous glare. Merlin, the boy has been around Severus for far too long. That look could make a gorgon quiver. "However we have no proper evidence against the man other than your word against his."

"No proper- HE LITERALLY CASTED ALL THREE UNFORGIVEABLES IN FRONT OF STUDENTS!"

"Still..." Dumbledore hesitates.

Harry squints at the headmaster suspiciously, "We're wizards." He states blandly, "Don't we have potions and spells for this sort of shit?"

"Language," Dumbledore reprimands mildly. "And yes my boy, a very astute observation," Harry scowls, "however you forget that Alastor Moody is an auror, a very proficient one at that, whoever got the jump on the man must be both skilled, devious and intelligent."

"Um," Given the villains so far, Harry sort of seriously doubts that.

'Hey,' Mr Riddle objects in his head. 'I resent that.'

'You resent a lot of things.' Harry mutters back inwardly.
'Can you blame me?'

"Don't worry I'll keep an eye out on Moody for now," Dumbledore's eyes twinkle brightly, "Severus will too, I imagine you've already told him?"

"Of course," Harry sniffs disdainfully, "I like him far more than I like you, sir, no offence."

"I... I, uh, find it hard not to take offence actually."

Harry turns to leave, "None taken, now, if you excuse me, Headmaster, I must go for a... thing."

"Wait that doesn't-" Dumbledore sighs as Harry leaves. What a precocious child.

As if hearing his thoughts, Harry suddenly turns around, slapping the bowl of lemon drops from the table like an incensed cat, before striding out, slamming the door as he does so. Dumbledore stares at his fallen lemon drops and sighs again. Every. Time.

"So, Moody's staying for now."

Everyone groans. Hermione passes a sickle to a gleeful Ron with a grumble, "This is the last time I bet in favour for Headmaster Dumbledore."

"The man has a history of hiring weirdos and evil people into the defence position," Theodore points out dryly, "like, if Grindelwald was a defence professor, the dark side would've won ages ago."

They all have a nice chuckle about that before getting back to the matter at hand. "I think we should publicly out Moody," Draco declares with a vicious gleam, "the Triwizard Tournament will be public enough that if we unveil him there and then, no one would question our suspicions once they're confirmed."

"I don't know," Hermione frowns, "if we do that, the chance of the imposter going on an all-out rampage is high, he'll have nothing left to lose after all. People could get killed."

"That's exactly why it should be public though 'Mione," Ron argues back, "obviously they'll be a bunch of real skilled wizards and witches around by then, not to mention aurors. It's a huge event, they'll be security, the guy would have less of a chance to escape, especially with Harry already sowing all those seeds of doubt in everyone's minds."

"I suppose that makes sense," Hermione says, still unsure.

"I've already informed Dumbledore, and Sev- Snape knows about my suspicions too." Harry assures, "They'll at the very least be ready to strike fast during the confusion. I plan to tell dad about it too since he'll probably come when I inevitably get picked for the tournament."

"I shall inform my father as well," Draco huffs, "Since he's part of the education board he'll be more willing to allow higher security to enter the school if necessary."

"Good thinking," Harry praises, making the boy preen slightly. "There's really not much else we can do right now, just keep an eye out on the guy and deal for now."

"Great," Blaise sighs unenthusiastically, "I hope next year we won't have to do this shit all over again, this sort of drama is so not good for my skin." He pauses and then arrogantly adds, "though it does do wonders for my sex life."

"Wha- how?" Theodore asks, looking ever so slightly envious. With the exception of Harry who's
love life is unique beyond comparison, Blaise is the only one of the group that wasn't a virgin. In fact, despite being only in fourth year he's recognised in the student body of Hogwarts as one of the six notorious playboys already. Simmons was also one of those six but if what Blaise said was true, this may not be the case now. His mother must be proud.

Blaise shrugs, "I'm one of Harry Potter's closest friends, and now I've even been part of a great mystery adventure where we found out Harry's crazy godfather was framed by Weasley's rat. How could I not be popular?"

"Wait that's not right, then how come we're not getting any attention?!" Draco demands, Ron and Theodore, nodding in agreement behind him. Ron especially looks disgruntled, probably because he's the one who hung around Harry the most earlier on and got caught up in the more ridiculous of adventures. The spider thing immediately comes to mind.

"You do get attention," Harry points out with a giggle, "Honestly you guys have only just gotten interested in this sort of thing so I can't really fault you but still, it's not like you're not well-known. Even Hermione has a few admirers."

"Eh, really?" Hermione flushes.

Blaise smiles at her, "Most of them are younger witches who look up to you but there are some wizards who recently noticed how much prettier you're becoming." The compliment is genuine and kind but the way he says it in his naturally sultry voice made her blush even harder. This is probably what made people so drawn to the tanned teenager more than any story, it was Blaise's natural sex appeal. His growth spurt over the holidays didn't hurt either.

Ron was gnashing his teeth unattractively, a very obvious contrast to Blaise's cool, serene smile. Harry, Theodore and Draco exchange amused glances at each other. It was interesting to see the works of young love blooming on the sidelines.

Blaise, seemingly oblivious to the hateful jealous directed at him, turns to the other boys with a lazy smirk, "I suggest using those eyes of yours to see for yourself how popular you're getting since last year. If you're interested in one of them, smile at them. I would tell you to talk to them too but that may be too advanced for you vir- people."

"You're such a twat." Theodore rolls his eyes but he's flushing, unable to deny his lack of confidence. It wasn't something to be ashamed of, Blaise and Harry were beyond abnormal in regards to these sort of things. Yes. Definitely. "Fuck you."

"Yeah, Blaise," Harry adds with cheer, "Fuck you."

"What the fuck are you doing siding with us?" Ron says with raised eyes.

Harry meets his stare with his own, "Um, I'm a virgin too? Duh."

Everyone stares at him, save for Blaise who is very aware of how virgin the wizard saviour was. Slutty? Sure. But technically, technically still pure as snow. Technically.

"Wha-" Draco and Ron narrow their eyes, looking awfully similar despite so many differing facial features, "You're having us on."

"No it's true," Blaise smoothly interjects, "Harry Potter still retains his maidenhood."

"Oh Merlin," Pansy, who was staying silent in the group alongside Daphne was now pretty much drooling, eyes bright with excitement, "so you're saving yourself for Professor Snape?" She sighs,
"How romantic. It's honestly a pity the other man is Snape."

"You people have no house loyalty," Harry sniffs, feeling a little irritated for Severus. However, he knows it would be futile to speak up, after all, it would be like trying to explain a rare flower to a bird. Their own young, limited perceptions will struggle to grasp at it and truly understand.

"Don't get us wrong Harry," Draco drawls, "Severus is a great man and a good Head of House, but he's not exactly a great teacher nor a very handsome one either."

"Though he looks like he would have a sizeable penis," Daphne adds with a sly upturn of her delicate lips.

Everyone turns to her in disgust except for Harry who gives her thumbs up.

"I hate that this is your first contribution to this conversation," Theodore mutters.

"I hate that you're apparently the most dignified person in our friendship group," Draco groans, "I mean, clearly the title should go to me by default alone right?"

"Please," Daphne scoffs, "You, dignified? I saw you scream like a girl because Crabbe accidentally knocked the smallest baby carrot onto your pants the other day."

"It was covered in gravy!" Draco screeches indignantly.

"Yeah, you're totally Triwizard Champion material," Theodore rolls his eyes and Blaise snickers.

"Ugh, this again?" Hermione sighs, "Why would you even want to be Champion? Aren't you already rich?"

"Yes, and now all he's missing is fame and glory," Daphne snidely remarks as she looks at her nails disinterestedly, "And a girl interested in his less than sizeable penis."

Draco was so red that if Harry wasn't the physical incarnation of death he would have thought the Malfoy heir was going to be the first person ever to literally die of shame, "Wha- I do not- stop talking about penises!

Daphne shrugs, "I'm a teenage girl, obviously I would be interested in this topic."

"Me too," Pansy pipes up gleefully, then purposely eyes Draco up and down, lingering at his crotch, making him instinctively cover it in defence.

"Oh Merlin, we're all slowly being infected by the idiot playboys," Theodore groans with exaggerated despair.

"Who?" Harry asks innocently, earning an evil side eye from Ron.

Suddenly Hedwig comes flying through. Harry blinks, vaguely surprised at the number of letters she seemed to be carrying in her grasp. He offers one arm for the snowy white bird to rest on while he makes a vague motion with his other hand to summon the messages to float in the air in front of him.

Everyone, being all incredibly nosy, leans into to try read the various letters spread out in front of Harry and, with an indulgent shake of his head, Harry flicks his wrists and lets the letters spread out so it was easier for the others to read. It wasn't like there was going to be anything incriminating, usually, it was just love letters or something from Sirius, at worst it'll be something vaguely embarrassing from his adopted parents.
"My dearest Harrison,"

Blaise recites pompously from another letter, "Ever since that night we talked under the stars, my mind has been filled with nothing but your lovely visage."

"Your eyes are more precious than any emerald, your skin softer than silk, paler than ivory," Hermione continues, reading the same letter as Blaise.

Daphne, with another letter, clears her throat, "You may not have noticed me at the Greengrass' Christmas Ball, but how could I not have noticed you. The moment you stepped into the room, my eyes were drawn to you. I was drawn to you." She raises her brow as she glances down at the signature at the very bottom, "Oh damn, this is from Count Vikram."

"Your words have filled my previously despairing heart with hope," Draco also reads aloud," You have touched me in a way no one has managed before. When we next meet I wish you could give me the opportunity to do the same to yo-" oh, this one got way less romantic real fast."

"Yeah, uh, me and Theo here can't read this one out loud," Ron mutters with a blush, Theodore silently pushes the floating letter to Harry who was busy reading Sirius' seventeen paragraphs about his life story and questions about Harry.

"It's straight-up porn." Theodore agrees with vehement disgust, "Also, that is not the correct usage of an engorging charm, even I know that."

"Nor of eggs in general," Ron scrunches up his nose, "Like, ew, what the fuck."

"Ooh, gimme, I want to read it now," Blaise says, perking up in interest. However, much to his dismay, Harry snapped his fingers and burnt the raunchy letter to ash. "Wha- Harry!"

"I let you guys read my mail because I have trust in your discretion and the modicum of maturity that you all own." Harry chides as he folds Sirius' letter and beckons a lavender coloured parchment that he knows is Cornelius' current favourite colour of stationary. "Those people are very genuine in their feelings, don't mock them so harshly."

"That guy wanted to put eggs up your ass!" Theodore protests," Real, breakable ones!"

"I thought they were chocolate eggs?" Ron frowns, Theodore turns to him incredulously. "Weasley, you are missing the point."

"You're right," Daphne agrees, "It's not even close to Easter, what on earth was that wizard thinking?"

"Ugh chocolate Easter eggs? How positively muggle," Draco disdainfully says, like that was the thing to turn his nose up from.

Theodore slowly buries his head in his hands as he grieves for his friends' slowly declining sensibilities. He fears that he too, shall one day succumb to the madness.

So. Harry is aware that Fake Moody was sort of, most probably evil. Harry is also aware that Dumbledore is now also aware that Fake Moody was sort of, most probably evil. So it really does bring up an important question here.

Was Dumbledore a fucking idiot?

"Dumbledore said you can illegally use the Imperius Curse on us students?" Harry reaffirms, doubt
laced into his voice like cyanide. "Albus 'Come to the Light Side' Dumbledore. Asked you. To use an Unforgivable curse. On each student in the school."

"Yes." Fake Moody replies with confidence.

Harry narrows his eyes at the man. "May I be excused?"

"You may not." Fake Moody replies with a smile that looked a little twisted thanks to his facial disfigurements.

"I have to piss."

"Hold it in."

Harry grinds his teeth but refuses to concede defeat. This was an affront to education, even by Hogwarts' piss poor standards. For the sake of the children he'll rebel. "Professor, to be perfectly candid I don't believe Headmaster Dumbledore would allow this, no matter what reason. Illegal is illegal. Unless you bring Headmaster down here to personally tell me off for my cheek to participate in this matter." He looks side to side, making sure to catch as many of his fellow classmates eyes in the process, "I will also bear responsibility for anyone else unwilling to be held under Imperius as well."

Everyone with an anxious expression immediately gives Harry expressions of relief and gratitude. Even the students that still felt that Moody was a cool professor had looked uneasy at the idea. They would have had to been dropped as a child to actually want to be put under any Unforgivable curse. Even the arguably mildest one.

Fake Moody however was none too pleased. "Well then Mr Potter," he testily snarls, "If you're willing to play martyr so much, why don't you volunteer to be our demonstration. In exchange I won't cast the spell on anyone else in the class."

Harry pauses, clearly at the least Fake Moody wants to cast an Imperius over him, meaning he's definitely got some enmity for the Saviour of the Wizarding World. Usually he would take up the challenge but since second year, he's been understandably wary. The problem is, Death is one of the few entities who barely have any defences against mind control, mainly because he's never had the need to. No one has ever tried to use such tactics against him, sure Lucifer and a few other rebellious and ambitious individuals had managed to create artifacts to bind Death and control him temporarily, but it's not like he wasn't aware of the binding and such. That was different.

'I thought my spell was only effective because you had a part of me already inside you?' Tom questions, sensing his inner turmoil.

'Yes and no,' Harry admits reluctantly, 'more like it was even more effective than if anyone else had tried exactly what you did on me.'

'Hm.' Mr Riddle hums, sounding strangely smug at the admission.

'I do have some natural resistance to mind magic I think,' Harry mutters in his mind, 'but if you add together how my natural affinity and powers are inhibited by my living physical body, I don't think I can handle anything as high tier as the Imperius depending on how it affects the victim.'

'I've been told by my followers that it feels like you're being enveloped in the most comfortable thing in the world.' Mr Riddle explains. Apparently, someone had a different interpretation of what the 'experimental age' was. 'It's so hard to resist because of how good you feel from following an order, and some people have been found that it's even harder to resist the next time round because they're
"now aware of the pleasure the spell can put you under. That's the true nature of this Unforgivable."

'Fuck, I really had hoped it wasn't something like that,' Harry groans inwardly. If there's one thing he's consistently been weak to, its pleasure. How can one deny something if it feels nice? He blames Chaos for this. He doesn't know how but he knows this is all his fault.

"Well, Mr Potter?" Fake Moody snaps, "we're waiting."

Harry frowns at the man and with a moment of hesitation quickly decides to avoid getting hit by an Imperius at all costs, "Sorry, I was just stunned at your audacity Professor," he crosses his arms and sneers in disgust, "here I am, saying how uncomfortable I am with the idea of using the Imperius on another human being in a classroom of all situations, and you are trying to blackmail me into falling under the curse by threatening my classmates?" Harry laughs darkly, "My, my Professor Moody, this isn't wartimes you know? Then again, even if it were, this still wouldn't even be remotely acceptable."

The students around him burst in a flurry of whispered conversations and side eyes at an increasingly enraged looking Moody.

"SILENCE!" Moody suddenly yells, shitting everyone up. Even Harry, who had expected the outburst, flinched at the volume. "Class dismissed, everyone out- except you, Mr Potter."

"Harry," Ron murmurs worriedly, Hermione by his side was also shooting incredibly worried looks at him. Draco sitting on his other side was packing up his things quickly, "Weasley, Granger!" Draco hisses irritatedly, "Your worry will do nothing, hurry up!"

"Wha- how dare-"

"Draco's right," Harry calmly interrupts Hermione, "faster you get out, faster you can find a professor."

The two Gryffindors catch on quick then and with a last anxious look at Harry who had remained seated, they rushed out of the room, chasing after the Slytherins. Soon Harry was alone in the classroom save for Fake Moody and technically the Dark Lord in his head.

'Hey,' Mr Riddle says uneasily, 'isn't this bad? If what you thought turns out to be true...'

'You're very sweet to be so worried for me,' Harry coos, a smile unable to stop from gracing itself on his lips.

'Wha- who, who's worried?' Mr Riddle makes a scoffing sound, 'I, I was just concerned about what would happen to me if you got Imperius-ed. That's all.'

Harry blinks, and suddenly he has an epiphany. 'Maybe I won't be affected by the Imperius after all,' he muses, 'not with you by my side anyway.'

Mr Riddle didn't reply. It was just as well since Fake Moody was standing right in front of Harry now. "What are you smiling for? Cheeky brat."

"Better a cheeky brat than a shitty professor," Harry shoots back with a nasty smile. To his surprise, Fake Moody actually grins back.

"You know Potter," Moody leans back on the desk behind him, "I don't dislike kids like you. You're smart, willing to speak out, a little too cocky for what's good for you though."
"Mn, well, that's good for you sir," Harry very insincerely smiles, "unfortunately I don't feel the same, you see, I haven't had very good experiences with Defense professors."

Moody chuckles, "Yes, yes, that's very good, constant vigilance as I say."

"What do you want sir?" Harry snaps impatiently, the thin veneer of politeness all but thrown away. Right now Harry doesn't have enough information about this man's motives and it's putting him on edge since, despite everything, this Fake Moody was still one of the most competent, intelligent and magically powerful defence professors he's encountered and faced so far. Given all the professors Harry has encountered and faced so far, that really wasn't much but still.

'Hey,' Mr Riddle who was technically one of the first of said professors mildly defended, though it was clear he reluctantly agreed that he hadn't been the smartest evil fake professor in retrospect.

Fake Moody hums, "I want a lot of things Mr Potter. This teaching year to be over, the erasure of all dark wizards... A better retirement package." Both his normal and magical eye stares fixedly at Harry's face, solemnly, "but most of all I would like to know what to make of you, Harry Potter."

Definitely a different level to his previous opponents. Not one that Harry couldn't beat down obviously. But one that Harry could acknowledge as tricky at the very least. Harry was shallow enough to admit that if Fake Moody had been hot, this would have been a huge turn on for him. Sexy villains were attractive as fuck. It was too bad there was none of those in this world.

'HEY.' Mr Riddle objects loudly, sounding infinitely more offended.

There's a small chance that living in Harry's head and inadvertently soaking up his less than pure thoughts may have altered the ex-Dark Lord's priorities a little.

Secretly the possessive part of Harry rather liked the idea. All entities had a perverse need to possess the things they like. Death wasn't the only one that collected souls after all, though anyone interested in a particular individual's soul had to go through him. He had gotten several requests from Love and Fate especially. Order was the only one that has never requested a soul, feeling it goes against the natural, well, order. Still, that didn't mean he hadn't ever clung onto his favourite mortal flavour of the millennium like the most stalkerish koala bear before.

As he was thinking of thoughts beyond any human reason, Harry loftily replies, "Me? Well, I'm really quite simple, what you see you get and all that,"

'... 'Mr Riddle's judgmental silence was deafening in his mind.

Fake Moody chuckles, "I would hardly think that everyone has layers,"

"You're right," Harry smiles, eyes glowing eerily bright as he looks up and down at Moody pointedly, "everyone has layers," His smile turns sweet to sinister, "though it's a lot like skin isn't it? Once you peel it off you can't stick it back on and pretend you didn't see what's underneath."

Fake Moody laughs like it's the funniest joke known to mankind, "Oh yes, I really do like you."

"Sorry," Harry sneers, "You're not my type,"

"Right, right," Moody nods, his eye glittering darkly, "You're type is Professor Snape isn't it? Must say, I was very surprised when I heard. You two even live together, how... bold."

"Fuck you," Harry snarls, instantly on the defensive. He doesn't like how the man says Severus' name, does not he like how ambiguous his tone is. Whoever he is, he's slippery and Harry, even with
his infinite knowledge of souls and death and other such things, never had an innate talent to read people, so in a unique situation like this, it becomes incredibly difficult to read this man's intentions. Suddenly this became less like an intriguing game and more like beginnings of a war Harry is becoming increasingly uninterested in fighting. "If you have nothing else to say I'm going to go."

As he starts to leave his seat, a wand suddenly appears in his face, "Imperio," Fake Moody, the fucking bastard, curses.

Harry can feel his mind being washed with warmth and lazy pleasure. It was like bathing in the most luxurious hot spring after an orgasm, he feels happy and dazed and somewhere between lethargic and drunk. If what he was feeling was a color it would be described as a mellow yellow.

"Hm, jump on the table,"

Just as Harry was about to climb onto his seat to jump on the table a small but sharp pain echoed in his head, popping the bubble of bliss coating his mind.

'Harry!' Mr Riddle is shouting, his small broken spirit moving haphazardly everywhere in a frantic bid to regain the entity's attentions. It was akin to a mosquito buzzing around and biting him but it was enough for Harry to focus on it, disrupting the haze of the curse invading his mind. His limbs hesitate and his face muscles spasm.

Sensing Harry's attention, Mr Riddle breathed a sigh of relief. This was what Harry had meant before about having him by his side allowing him to resist the Imperius. Truly it was only his presence alone that has saved him. The thought made Riddle feel incomparably smug and delighted.

"What are you doing? Get up on the table!"

'Focus on me,' he orders, 'don't listen to the man, focus on me, only me.'

With the help of Mr Riddle's constant barrage of coaxing persuasion and commands Harry manages to push the curse off, his glazed eyes returning back to its original clarity. With a twisted expression, Harry glares at the fake professor. "How, how dare you!" He rasps, eyes glowing brightly in his rage. It takes almost all the self-restraint he has to push down the darkness threatening to show itself.

Fake Moody's magical eye must have caught something though because immediately his apathetic expression changes into something confused and fearful. "Wait a," He chuckles nervously, "Potter it was just a test, a test! Don't be so sensitive kid, you-"

Harry raises a hand up, palm facing toward him and smiles.

Then he clenches his fist and slams the table.

"He dares?!!" Severus throws a glass, shattering it in his anger, "What is Albus even doing?!!"

Harry sighs, sitting cosily on the couch in Severus' quarters practically smothered in pillows like they were going to protect him from the cruelty of the world outside, "Headmaster Dumbledore must have his reasons," Well, he better have. Fucking crazy old man. "Look, Moody, well, the real one anyway, must be alive and most likely hidden somewhere close by so maybe that's why the Fake is still around- I mean, assuming the imposter requires Moody's body for his disguise, actually I guess you don't really need Moody alive either way then but-"

"No," Severus shakes his head in frustration, "for long term schemes of impersonation, Polyjuice potion is the only choice. The only other option is a full-bodied human transfiguration and not even
Dumbledore or Minerva would even consider it because of the problems and difficulties."

"And Polyjuice needs the target to still be alive?" Harry tries to reconfirm. Honestly, the only thing he clearly remembers about Polyjuice was that Hermione once tried to brew it in the toilets and frankly, that was a hard memory to shake.

"Exactly," The potions master nods with a pleased smile. Harry returns the smile with prideful eyes, looking like a particularly pleased pet. Severus had long ago given up resisting and Harry had quickly found his mouth occupied with another's.

Just as abruptly as he started it, the older wizard finished it, breaking out of the deep kiss with harsh breaths. "Ar, Are you sure you really resisted the Imperius? He really didn't force you to do anything?"

Harry shook his head with a sigh, "No, I told you I managed to somehow throw it off." And thrown Moody off too. Against the desk. A wall. The floor. Another wall…

Once again he inwardly thanked Mr Riddle for acting as his mental anchor. Inside his mindscape, he can feel the man's smug delight. He doesn't know why, but ever since then, Harry has found himself more... in tune toward the Horcrux. He barely had to make any effort to find where the broken soul was, what he was doing, how he was feeling. In turn, it seemed Mr Riddle could now move much more freely in his mind, less hindered by the turbulence and waves of darkness.

Harry feels like he should be concerned about such changes to his mind but since it seems to be for the better he decides to not waste his time trying to puzzle out something he most likely won't figure out.

He grins viciously, "I hope that the man will remember not to try the same trick again," Severus also had an unpleasant smile at the reminder. The potions master, after hearing about the imposter purposely isolating Harry and himself in the classroom, had dashed toward the room, frantically de-spelling the locking charm only to open the door and witness Harry punching the already rather battered-looking man right across the room.

Fake Moody had a fractured jaw, a broken set of ribs, twisted arms and more than a few other rather brutal injuries. Harry was sure that for the seven and a half hours that Moody had to wait until he was more or less fully healed under Madam Pomphrey's treatment he had suffered painfully. Ugh, Harry is incredibly jealous. Even now his muscles still get randomly stiff as a consequence of his coma and his injuries from the Sirius debacle still twinge every time he even so much as stretches for too long.

Next time he decides to body snatch, he might as well rid the original body and try shift his own form into a replica. Sure he may look slightly different, and yeah okay maybe his identity will probably be put under suspicion immediately the moment he loses concentration but the benefits are looking more and more fucking appealing.

And speaking of fucking appealing-

Caging Severus' neck with his arms, Harry pulls him down so their faces are close but not close enough. "Let's not talk about him anymore," Harry decides, his grin now lazy and full of lustful intent, looking more like the embodiment of lust than of death, "Dumbledore must have some sort of plan you can grill him about it later, right now I want to do something else."

"You little tart," Severus tuts with a playfully admonishing tone that Harry's pretty sure if ever heard by anyone else would incur school wide panic. Luckily that tone was Harry's and Harry's alone, "is
there anything else in your mind other than your dick?"

Harry laughs, giving him a quick peck on the tip of Severus' nose, "Yes, your dick," he replies cheekily.

Severus sighs though the corners of his mouth are curled ever so slightly upwards, "I suppose that is an acceptable answer."

"Ten points to Gryffindor?" Harry pushes with a mischievous lilt.

Severus growls out a, "Ten points to Severus," before passionately attacking Harry's mouth, swallowing down the younger boy's laughter like the sweetest wine.

Moody's popularity which had been relatively good in the beginning had already dropped to an all time low. Many pureblooded and even more muggleborn parents had sent various angry letters in the oncoming weeks after they heard their children had watched and even almost been subjected to the Unforgivable curses. Even if you weren't born into the magical world, the whole Illegal Unforgivable Curses thing was enough for the muggles with even a sliver of a brain cell to know that was a huge no-no for their precious children.

Needless to say, a vindictive Harry was delighted at the outcome. Even Professor McGonagall, who was apparently good acquaintances with the man was looking at him with disdain. Annoyingly, however, Fake Moody was completely unperturbed by all this hostility. Clearly, he's used to negative remarks on his person. Not to mention, because of his background and apparent willingness to throw around Unforgivables like candy, there was no student that dared to openly harass or prank the man.

Still, the rebellious atmosphere seemed to grow each passing day. While everyone still listened when Moody lectured about tactics and spells, people had begun questioning his opinions every time he brought them up.

"Professor Moody, don't you think you're being a little cruel saying everyone who has used dark magic is evil?"

"Professor Moody, isn't that a little narrow-minded?"

"Professor Moody the blood-clotting curse ain't in our curriculum, also I get telling us about it but making us cast it? Do you want us to be murderers?"

"Professor Moody, instead of telling us about all the horrible dark shit in the world, why don't you just teach us some proper defensive spells?"

"Professor Moody you bought an actual animal to cast curses against?! That's horrible!"

"Professor Moody-"

"Professor Moody-"

"Professor-"

"Prof-"

Needless to say, any storytelling and irreverent content to the curriculum in Defense Against the Dark Arts was slowly but surely cut off.
"Cannot wait for Durmstrang and Beauxbaton to come over," Blaise comments as he slowly stirs his pumpkin soup, "It would be nice to get some fresh meat in here."

"Seriously?" Harry laughs, "The only thing you're excited about for the Triwizard Tournament is the opportunity to catch some fish across the pond?"

Blaise smirks, "Obviously, it's not like I'm going to fight in the tournament. What else can I look forward to then?"

"He has a point, and I do want to try see if I can get my hands on a pretty French boy," Daphne agrees with a glint in her eye.

"Please, it's got to be a strong and strapping Durmstrang bloke," Pansy scoffs.

"Hear, hear," Harry agrees vehemently, and the two of them high five. If we're going for foreign exchange students you have to go for the punks and jocks then the preppies for a wild time in Harry's opinion.

"Nah, Beauxbaton is clearly the way to go," Nott says lazily. "I hear that you have to be a certain level of attractiveness just to get in there, not to mention, they all have to go through etiquette classes no matter what their blood status is so at the very least they wouldn't disappoint any of our parents if we ever got serious."

"Ugh, you're way too serious as usual," Blaise gags, "who's thinking long term meet the parents? Like Merlin, no wonder you still haven't caught a girl, everyone just wants to have their first snog and you're here worrying about if your imaginary lover can impress your parents with her soup eating skills."

Theodore immediately scowled and shoved a laughing Blaise halfway out of his seat, "Alright you wanker, then tell me what you think then."

"Easy," Blaise leers, "I would have two of each, male and female, a simple case of sampling the products before I determine the best one."

Everyone booed. Pansy even threw a handful of peas at him, with a sneer, "You are such scum."

Much to everyone's disgust, Blaise merely opened his mouth and even managed to catch some of the peas into his mouth, chewing on them smugly. Such a thick skinned young playboy. Truly like mother like son.

Deciding to pity Blaise and take some of the heat off him and his crude jokes, Harry also leers, "It's not a bad idea, if there weren't any females in your little harem you could count me in."

"Mmn, you can be the male representative for Hogwarts in my Triwizard orgy."

"And the winner gets to handle your trophy?" Harry waggles his eyebrows salaciously making not only Blaise but the rest of the listeners laugh. Even the upper-class noble purebloods have long gotten used to such scandalous topics after repeated exposure of Harry and Blaise in their House. If their parents realized where the source of their children's attitude on such inappropriate things stemmed from, forget the Dark Lord, Harry is pretty sure he'd be dead in a week.

"So if Harry's going to be your male representative for Hogwarts, who's the female representative?" Theodore drawls, making every girl in earshot sit up and adjust their hair and posture in the most attractive way they can. Despite Blaise's newfound reputation, or maybe because of it, every girl wanted to be considered attractive in his eyes, regardless of whether they were really interested in
him or not. Just like how everyone knew Harry Potter's taste was... unpredictable, Blaise Zabini's taste was so refined that he was essentially a famous food critic- all the girls and guys he's been interested in were all top quality lookers, and the ones who keep his attention for more than a month were already considered to also have a good personality to boot and therefore became the most eligible bachelors and bachelorettes in Hogwarts.

For over two thousand years Hogwarts has the House system to group their students. That had stayed a strong and unwavering pillar that defined the school. And now they had the Zabini system of Beauty. A system where only two could stand at the top.

And while Harry Potter was in the undisputed first place, the number one female beauty of Hogwarts was still an unclaimed spot many vie for.

Of course, while Blaise was aware of his popularity, he was not aware of just how influential he had become. The same could be said of everyone in Harry's close knit friend group. Despite only being fourth years they were the charismatic kings of the school. Not even Hermione Granger, who could arguably be excluded from this VIP circle, could even be touched. Again, none of Harry's group save for the gossipy Pansy and Daphne was very aware of this golden pedestal beneath them. If Lucius Malfoy heard about this he wouldn't know whether to laugh or cry for his son.

Oblivious to the pressure being put upon him, Blaise hums and scans the room thoughtfully. With little thought, his eyes finally stopped at someone he vaguely recalled thinking incredibly attractive but most likely a serious, hardcore romantic and therefore not his type right now. Well, if it's in his imagination it should be okay, right? "Cho Chang." He carelessly decides.

Suddenly a clueless Cho Chang became the most admired, hated and envied girl in the female student body.

"Ugh, you didn't even consider us did you?" Daphne huffs with irritated amusement.

"How could I let my good friends be corrupted by my hand?" Blaise waves off with a smile, "I wouldn't dare,"

"Oi," Harry objects.

"You can't talk Harry," Draco laughs, "you're the one that corrupted Blaise in the first place,"

Harry opens his mouth to object again but after a moment's thought, closed it and shrugged in surrender.

"So Harry," Pansy slyly interjects with interest burning in her eyes, "what about you?"

"What about me?"

"Who's your Hogwarts representative if you did a Triwizard sex tournament?" That got everyone's attention again. "And you can't pick anyone you've already kissed before."

Immediately Harry stopped his original answer from leaving his lips as Pansy added that last condition, making the question much harder to answer in the process. More than a few people actually 'ooh'ed in interest and this time it was the wizards trying to stick their chests out and look appropriately dashing. Despite Harry being known for his varied tastes being picked up by the great wizard saviour Harry Potter was still quite a badge of honour.

"Hm... it's got to be Cedric Diggory then." He decides firmly. Diggory was probably the only other close friend he had other than Blaise that he was genuinely attracted to but unlike with Blaise he
hasn't tried making a move on. The answer, in the end, was quite a no brainer.

Of course, to the rest of the students, this was cause to burst into excited chatters. Zabini's apparent dream girl Cho Chang and Harry's apparent dream (given the restrictions) guy Cedric Diggory were both already rather popular people but in the coming few weeks until the two overseas students come over they were going to be in for a faintly unpleasant surprise. Popularity was a double-edged sword after all.

When Cedric Diggory realized who was the source of his newfound increase in fangirls, stalkers and love letters, he chased Harry up and down the staircases until Harry had no choice but to do what he did in first year and jump off one of the floors into someone's arms in order to safely escape. Cho Chang also did something to retaliate in revenge for her own share of harassment. However, nobody knows what she did, only that Blaise Zabini came out of it sweating, pale and visibly shivering.

Unfortunately, the excitement of the Triwizard tournament wasn't the only thing building up in school.

"How is there so much homework now?" Ron complains as he stares at his tiny mountain of textbooks and parchment scrolls of half-finished essays and assignments.

"Maybe if you listened to Professor McGonagall you would know that OWLs are coming soon," Hermione mutters as she finishes the last foot of her Herbology essay with a flourish.

"But that's next year still!" Ron moans uselessly.

"Shut up Weasley," Draco hisses as he angrily tries to complete this weeks Care of Magical Creature worksheet. "Unless the next words out of your mouth is the answer to 'What do baby Arachne eat right after they're born?' I don't want to hear it."

"I think they eat each other," Harry answers glibly as he tries to copy down a very complicated star array constellation which will do absolutely jack shit for any length of his foreseeable future. "Baby Arachne species will eat each other until the surviving few are strong enough to leave the nest. They need to do this to get enough magical strength and stuff, classic survival of the fittest."

"Harry, every answer you've said has been nothing but some form of cannibalism this whole time," Theodore sighs long-sufferingly.

Harry raises an amused eyebrow, "And have I been wrong?"

"He has not," Draco pipes up as he furiously writes it down.

"On a slightly related subject, has anyone noticed that for people generally considered friendly and nice, Hagrid and Professor Sprout both ask a lot of questions where the answer seems to be cannibalism?" Blaise asks, "Because I have and now I'm rather terrified of them not going to lie."

"How are you just realising this?" Harry demands with a laugh, "They are literally the only two people handling the most dangerous living creatures in this place. If they go dark side, we're *fucked.*"

"Yeah, also on that, I don't have anything against Hagrid, he's my friend and all, but is anyone else mildly uncomfortable that Dumbledore has let him, a guy who hasn't finished school much less got a teaching license or anything, teach a class about dangerous magical creatures?" Ron adds tentatively.

"Oh thank Merlin!" Draco shouts, "Someone finally brought it up! I mean, Dumbledore could have fucking sent Hagrid to the Ministry so he can complete his Mastery on Creatures or something right?
That way he's eligible to go through the professor course or whatever. I mean for fucks sake he has more than enough experience for that."

"Well there's also the theoretical part he has to pass as well," Hermione rebuts but even she looks uncertain at her own attempt at an argument.

Draco, because clearly he has been bottling this up for a while, slaps his palm against the desk loudly, "Where do you think he lives?! Next to a castle of uneducated heathens?! Hagrid's allowed into the library, he's on friendly terms with other professors who have gone through the same thing, I heard he was expelled from Hogwarts, not the entire education system!" By the end of his rant, Draco's pale face was red and he was panting. Harry had to restrain himself from applauding. If Draco ever takes over Lucius' place on the School Board Harry knows he can rest easy for Magical Britain's education at the very least.

"While you make some very excellent points Draco," Blaise carefully says because Draco has been up all night trying fruitlessly to finish his Runes assignment and now looks like a legitimate insane person that could stab anyone if provoked, "maybe we should discuss this later. Dinner is in an hour."

"Oh Harry, tell the house elves to make crackling pork," Ron moans, "and, and that stuffed roast eggplant dish with extra cheese."

"What am I?" Harry rolls his eyes, "Your maître d?"

"Um... Yes?"

Later at dinner, Ron happily chows down on some crackling pork and stuffed eggplant.

It was the day that the Durmstrang and Beauxbaton students were finally coming over. Needless to say, everyone was excited as fuck. And not just because lessons will end half an hour earlier than usual. The people with family members living in those countries had been asked to scout around to guess who was coming over. Blaise's network seems to be the most effective though since he had five half-cousins, three of which were from Beauxbaton, two from Durmstrang and all were flirtatious playboys and girls that know all the gossip.

Unfortunately, Blaise's cousins were also unrepentant assholes and other than a few very popular witches and wizards in school, they couldn't name anyone else who was going, instead referring to them through their best features. So while Harry knew quidditch player Viktor Krum and half-Veela Fleur Delacore were going to come to Hogwarts the rest of the crowd had consisted of descriptors like, 'the one with abs like a centaur', or 'a girl with legs so long she could be a sexy acromantula', or, and this was literally the worst thing Harry is sure he's ever heard- 'small like a imp but with a penis like a hippogriff'.

"I hate your cousins." Theodore very calmly informs Blaise. "I hate that they think their poor English can be made up by using creature references, I hate that they used said references to describe body parts and most of all I hate that I'm now fully aware that you could indeed be worse than you already are."

"That's a lot of hate," Harry comments mildly as he sips his tea. "You should have a cookie."

Theodore glares at him.

"It's a really good cookie," Draco helpfully adds, snatching another one from their gigantic shared plate of snacks the house-elves had so generously provided them with. He had been forced to
swallow down one in order to sate his own disbelief and hatred in the middle of the frightful Zabini’s gossip spiel and found that it had helped immensely with his rage. He must ask Dobby to get the recipe later.

Sullenly, Theodore takes a cookie and forces it down his mouth. Even his chewing radiated petulance. Harry laughs in vague sadistic delight at the scene. Blaise in obvious sadistic light. Theodore was such a cute person to bully. With love of course.

"Okay but seriously, they're coming soon right? There shouldn't be many of them coming so we should invite one of the school's to sit on our table, make the other Houses seethe with jealousy." Harry grins.

"I propose we get Durmstrang!" Draco suddenly declares, then in a calmer voice he explains, "Viktor Krum is more famous than anyone else there. Also, Weasley will be pissed as fuck we got dibs."

"As the House with the highest percentage of purebloods and also the highest moral ambiguity, we already appeal to Durmstrang students anyway," Daphne nods, then tilts her head elegantly toward Blaise and Harry, "not to mention we have more than a few personal connections with them."

"Look I only made out with Krum's brother twice," Harry mock sighs, "I would hardly call it a connection."

Draco narrows his eyes, "Didn't you seduce one of the professors who came to the Quidditch World Cup as well?"

Harry shrugs, "He claimed to be a professor of Durmstrang but how would I know? He could've been some cute moron who wanted to look smart. It's a prestigious school after all."

"Why would he lie in such a public setting where he could've easily gotten found out?" The ever pragmatic Daphne smiles.

Harry shrugs again, "Why not? I told one bloke that I was a secret bastard love child born from a Veela and a bloke named Rainer Nott."

"Oh my god, that was you!?" Nott exclaims. "You utter cock! We've been bombarded by constant gifts and messages about proposing marriage to some Jaime Rainer Nott!"

"Oh my god," Harry laughs, "Seriously? I'm sorry, I mean, Mr Celestino seemed like such a player, I didn't realise."

"Wait," Draco blinks, "you don't mean the youngest minister of Spain, Antolin Celestino? The only minister that has appeared in PlayWitch and was still popular enough to be elected? That Celestino?"

"Um. Maybe?"

"You're the worst," Theodore groans, "Merlin, I cannot believe I'm saying this but for the sake of Magical Britain's political climate I hope Snape fucks you soon."

Harry sighs wistfully, "Yeah me too."

Theodore squints at him dubiously, "Minister Fudge must enjoy having you as a son,"

"Merlin remember that time we went to his house to visit?" Blaise laughs.
"Oh right!" Draco grins, "The line of owls holding pink envelopes with heart-shaped seals was longer than the queue for when the Firebolt came out."

Even Theodore chuckles at the memory, "Yeah, I guess in comparison, Antolin Celestino's rose-scented owls pale in comparison to the one dyed pink right?"

"Ugh it wasn't even a nice pink, but a gaudy hot pink too," Pansy giggles. "Like, sooo tacky right?"

"Guys it's almost six, we need to go get ready to greet the students," Daphne commands suddenly. "Pack up the cookies we can snack on them tomorrow or something."

"Harry, can you clean the crumbs up?" Theodore asks, "All the staff at Hogwarts are so anal about looking good for the other schools."

Draco laughs, "Right? Remember when McGonagall told Longbottom to not reveal his incompetence in front of any Durmstrang students after he screwed up a switching charm. Like, that was pretty hard to watch."

When they entered the entrance hall they found the majority of the students standing in line with the professors circling around them like gigantic perfectionist vultures, eyeing up every crease and wrinkle in their uniforms.

"Weasley, straighten your hat," Professor McGonagall snapped at Ron before turning to her next victim. "Miss Patil, take that ridiculous butterfly pin out of your hair."

"Harry my boy!" Dumbledore, who had been tweaking a bewildered first year's tie, noticed the group and came toward them with a smile. "Come, come, you'll be standing in the front when we wait since you're not in any house."

"Oh, okay, that makes sense," Harry nods before bidding his friends goodbye before they were hurried into the Slytherin line.

As Harry and Dumbledore lead the school to wait outside, Harry quietly asks the older wizard, "Have you found the real Moody yet?"

Dumbledore shakes his head subtly, "Unfortunately not Harry, though I do at least have a vague idea on the man's identity." He smiles with twinkling eyes, "By the way, you've done a marvellous job suppressing him. I heard you even sent the unfortunate man to the infirmary."

Harry looks at the headmaster disdainfully, "Better than you anyway. Seriously sir, no disrespect but what the hell have you been doing while I was protecting your students from Imperius curses?"

Dumbledore blinks, "I don't think you really meant it when you said 'no disrespect'."

Harry ignores him, instead purposely looking away from him and up at the dark sky. "Oh look, is that one of the schools coming in?"

"I, uh, I-" Dumbledore stutters, thrown by the sudden non-sequitur before squinting up at the sky, "Oh you're right!"

Harry laughs.

"Of course I am."
Chapter End Notes

Ko-fi, check me out, hweianime, donate, support, review, you get the gist
Okay. So. Originally I was going to write a really long chapter but it's been two months and I've not been the best mentally? So I cut my plan in half and hopefully ya'll are fine with just 7900 words lol. I really wanted to put more but if I did you guys would probs be waiting for a while. I'm gonna aim for shorter chapters = shorter waiting period. Hopefully it helps.

Anyway,
Enjoy~

The one where Death meets the hot foreign students... and doesn't snog any of them.

Also, seriously, fuck the age line.

Madame Maxime, headmistress of Beauxbaton and Headmaster Karkaroff of Durmstrang both arrived in a rather spectacular manner. It made Harry sort of wish Dumbledore had come with an interestingly flashy way to greet these schools as well because it was a little embarrassing, to be honest. They bring flying horses and a submarine ship and what did they do? They stood in evenly spaced lines.

Harry fucking hates Hogwarts sometimes.

Luckily, at the very least the foreign students were impressed by Harry's looks and had taken more than a few double-takes at Blaise, Draco, Cedric, Daphne and a few other attractive students.

Beauxbaton after some thought had chosen to sit with the Ravenclaws during the Welcoming Feast and, just like Harry and his friends had planned, Durmstrang readily accepted their invitation to join their table.

"You are Harry Potter yes?" Viktor Krum asks once he settles between Harry and an incredibly smug-looking Draco Malfoy. "My older brother spoke of you, he thinks quite… highly of you ever since he met you during the World Cup." His expression seems a little complicated at that. What Harry doesn't know is that Ivan Krum, Viktor's mediwizard brother, has talked non-stop about Harry Potter ever since then. Viktor had been playing at that time so he never got to meet the younger wizard but it certainly feels like he has with all the news Ivan sends pertaining him.

It would have been funny if it hadn't been so annoying.

Still, looking at Harry Potter in the flesh, Viktor had to admit his brother was right about one thing. Potter was the type of stunning that bordered right between holy and unholy. All forty-seven paragraphs he had been forced to read about those bright green eyes, milky white skin, soft pale lips and raven locks almost didn't do the real thing justice. Almost. There were a lot of words.

"Your brother thinks very highly of you too Viktor Krum," Harry smiles, "he enjoys talking about you quite excessively when he isn't talking about medi-magic. For a seemingly stoic, no-nonsense
man, he certainly enjoys chatting."

Viktor chuckles, "Yes, once he relaxes his mouth will never stop moving if you don't stop it."

"It's very cute," Harry laughs, "ah, don't tell Ivan that."

Viktor laughs and finds the tension in his muscles easing. Truth be told, Ivan's blabbermouth was possibly one of the only reasons why he gets constantly rejected and had been secretly made of fun of when he was younger. Harry didn't seem to be lying or being polite either. Viktor thinks if it was Harry, he supposed he wouldn't mind his brother dating him.

"Ah," Draco says, unable to stop himself as he senses the Bulgarian quidditch player's thoughts, "yeah, no, Harry looks sweet but he's an incurable flirt and already emotionally taken with our resident potions master."

Viktor and the other Durmstrang students stare at him. Then they blink and turn to stare at Harry.

Harry on his part looks irritatedly at Draco, "You don't have to tell them on the first day Draco, for fuck's sake I didn't suddenly blurt our that you have a picture of Krum here in your diary."

"Harry!" Draco says aghast, face red.

"Oh no," Harry exaggeratedly widens his eyes and covers his mouth, "did I say that out loud, how thoughtless of me. It must suck to reveal certain things about a person in front of new people we have to live with for half a year huh?"

"Fuck off," Draco mutters much to everyone's amusement.

"So.." Krum slowly starts, "what is a, ah, incuhrahbul flirt?"

"Oh right, language barrier huh?" Theodore mutters making Harry and Draco give tiny sighs of relief. Of course, that relief was short-lived.

Blaise grins, "I can fix that," he declares and shoots out some rapid fire Bulgarian that makes Harry and Draco bury their faces into their hands in despair. Who knows what Blaise's dirty, liar mouth is going to exaggerate or add to their already slightly tarnished reputations.

"I'm never going to get to snog a hot Bulgarian bull," Harry whines before noticing a smirking Blaise pointing at him, "what are y-don't repeat what I just said! Stop it! You know I can understand Bulgarian too!" Unfortunately, it wasn't a language he actually practised using often so it's not as strong as his French or even his, well, Mermish for example.

What? Ghost mermen were crazy attractive. And surprisingly talkative. Sue him.

His French was pretty faultless though. He'll have to use that to spread the fact Blaise has a tiny dick or something among the Beauxbatons. Draco who is also fluent looks like he's planning something similar if his resentful look is anything to go by.

"What?!" One of the Durmstrang girls listening to Blaise yelps in surprise, capturing the Slytherins' attentions, they too had been quite lost once Blaise slipped into Bulgarian so they were all quite relieved once someone came back to English. "That one?"

Blaise, enjoying the attention, the whore, nods like some sort of wise sage, "Yes, that's Professor Snape."
Harry has a feeling he knows what they were chatting about while he was too busy thinking of horrible rumours that would actually shame Blaise. Unfortunately, Blaise was a shameless, shameless person and therefore it was a problem that probably even Knowledge herself wouldn't be able to solve.

As he feared, the conversation once again turns back to Harry.

"Your.. Professor Snape," Viktor begins haltingly, his accent thick and deep through his words, "He is uh, what do you say, quite a, ah, hardass yes?"

The Slytherins laugh, and Harry sighs before going with the flow and slapping the quidditch player on the back good-naturedly, "You're telling me Krum!" Harry grins, "I've been trying to get that man to sleep with me for ages but no cigar."

The Durmstrang students laugh with the rest of the students of green and silver, albeit a little awkwardly, unsure why this joke was so funny.

"You," one of the Durmstrang girls starts, looking doubtfully at Harry, "would wish to have sex relations with him?" She nudges her head toward the professor's table where the potions master was seated. Said potions master was scowling ferociously at something McGonagall was saying, not exactly highlighting his best features at the moment.

"Isn't he gorgeous?" Harry sighs dreamily while his Slytherin friends rolled their eyes and groaned.

"Merlin Harry, you have such bad taste," Draco says dryly.

Blaise huffs, annoyed, "Oi, I wouldn't say that- Harry dated moi after all."

"Such bad taste." Draco shakes his head sadly.

"But, but," Viktor Krum looks flustered, unsure of how to say what he intends to say without sounding rather rude to their host school's students and teachers, "You are.. you. And he is... him."

Harry raised a brow and waits for further explanation, his friends offer no help to the Bulgarians.

"What Viktor is trying to say," another male Durmstrang student tries awkwardly, "Is that, you are like, uh, ah, pretty flower bud that blooms under whole moon light," the Durmstrang student is blushing violently as he finishes his clumsy praise, his fellow students coo and slap him on the back teasingly.

Harry smiled sweetly, his cheeks a little pink at the compliment, it's been a while since he's been showered by flowery words, and the stumbling way the other said it had been... charming. "Thank you, um-

"Kurt," Kurt says a little too enthusiastically, "Kurt Dobrynsky."

"Harry, Harry Potter," Harry introduced back, and soon everyone was introducing themselves, exchanging names with their fellow stranger. Kurt was looking at Harry with wide eyes, apparently he was determined to win the wizard savior's favor despite his apparent interests in the resident potions professor. Viktor frowns, if anyone should win Potter's favor it should be his brother. It seems he must at least try play the wingman for Ivan who couldn't fight for himself here.

Blaise too was not unaware of Krum's determination and the other student's besotted look and leaned into Harry's space to whisper a curious, "What do you think?"
Harry just smiled and shrugged, "Not bad, we've never had these sort of people in Hogwarts before so it's a nice change."

"These sort of people'?

"Hot foreign buff dudes."

Blaise made a very salacious expression as he eyed up the new meat, "Indeed." He agreed. "How likely do you think I can bring down Krum?"

"Jonathan's really molded your type huh?" Harry chuckled, "Krum seems like quite the alpha male, I mean, he's one of the top students, a star quidditch player, a real leader of the pack, you'll have quite the fight on your hands babe."

"Well I've always wanted to take on a challenge, gorgeous."

"Calling me easy?" Harry teases.

"No, didn't you hear me?" Blaise smiles, stealing a kiss on the cheek, "I called you gorgeous."

After that the conversations between Slytherins and Durmstrang students became notably more relaxed once they found a shared point of interest. It was really too bad that shared point of interest was Harry's love life.

"So he likes red hair?" A stocky Durmstrang student doubtfully says as he side eyes the Weasley twins.

"Not necessarily, I mean," Pansy hesitates, trying her best to use simple words, "no. Harry has vary-I mean, hard to understand taste in boys."

"That pretty boy too?" Another student across the table points at Diggory. A seventh year Slytherin shakes his head.

"Nah, Cedric Diggory is one of the few Potter has definitely not snog- erm, kissed."

"So no girls at all?" A female Durmstrang student sighs.

Blaise leans toward her and flirtatiously touches her hand, "Unfortunately Harry is as straight as a flobberworm, fortunately though you have me," the female Durmstrang students all giggle coyly. Harry who was sitting nearby rolls his eyes.

"At the very least have the decency not to compare my sexuality to those disgusting worms Blaise," Harry complains.

"I could tell them about the time you ruined dinner because your half-vampire and half-Veela auror bodyguards ended up fighting over you instead," Blaise hums.

Harry smirks, "Oh please, be my guest," it was hardly an embarrassing story nor was it one that would shine a negative light on him, rather, now that everyone knows his less than chaste ways it'll just make Harry seem even more attractive.

Blaise must have realized this too, and with a thoughtful look he tries to take it back, "Actually maybe-"

"I want to hear it!" One of the girls protests.
"Yes, yes," another nods, "do not, uh, tease Zabini."

"Please tell us, please!"

"Yes, please!"

Seeing all the attention, Blaise preens and quickly changes his tune, "Well, I suppose I could… So, it was-"

Harry sighs and looks at the one person who hasn't been swept up by the wave of Potter gossip. "So Krum, you seem, uh, surprisingly happy?"

"Mn," Krum smiles, "yes, it is, ah, new not being centre of um, focus. It is new and nice," His smile widens as he looks at Harry, "Very nice."

Harry narrows his eyes, "You know, if I ignore the accent, I'd think you were teasing me."

It was clear Krum wasn't fully clear about what he was saying but he seemed to get a good grasp from Harry's half-indignant tone and chuckles, "Who knows?"

Harry laughs too. "I like you."

Viktor made a strange face, "I, um, I'm sorry, I'm straight."

With a playful leer, Harry looks at the quidditch player up and down, "Sorry Krum, but you should be more worried about Zabini than me."

Viktor blinks, "I, I don't understand."

"Oh, trust me," Harry laughs a little darkly, "you will."

Once everyone had settled into their seats and the hype of meeting the foreign students had finally simmered down a little, Dumbledore stood up and got everyone's attention. "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, ghosts and - most particularly - guests," he says Dumbledore with a beaming smile. "I have great pleasure in welcoming you all to Hogwarts. I hope and trust that your stay here will be both comfortable and enjoyable. The tournament will be officially opened at the end of the feast, so, for now, I now invite you all to eat, drink, and make yourselves at home!"

When he sat down, everybody once again burst into excited chatters. The last part of the short speech especially capturing their attention.

"I am so pumped for this tournament!" Pansy is practically shaking with her excitement, "Who do you think will be the champions?"

"Krum of course," One of the Bulgarians immediately say, with immediate to the point of fanatical support. Krum looks embarrassed but doesn't deny it. Harry raises a brow at that. A little cocky huh? Very cute.

Blaise seems to think so too. Despite his cool smiling face, he's staring at Krum with the dark eyes of a predator. Harry feels a prickle at the back of his head and turns around to see that across the room over on the Gryffindor table, Ron Weasley and the current seventh-year prefect Jonathan Perkins were staring darkly at them, though Harry suspects for slightly different reasons.

Hm. It seems Perkins might be feeling a little threatened by the similarly-built, similarly-athletic but pure-blooded Krum. This may be quite an interesting development.
"And Hogwarts? Do you have thought on Hogwarts champion?"

The Slytherins all look at each other before saying simultaneously, "Potter." A few have some differing opinions like Cedric Diggory or Jonathan Perkins but the main consensus was that Potter was going to claim the role by hook or by crook. More than a few foreign students were confused.

"But… isn't he underage?"

The Slytherins shrug. Even the ones that still held animosity for Harry were resigned to it. His penchant for trouble and bullshit was considered fairly standard after three straight years of solid proof.

"Who do you think will be Beauxbatons'?" Draco gossips, "I heard from my cousins that the veela, Fleur Delacore is the most popular choice."

Everyone was excited at the mention of a female veela. Even Harry was vaguely interested.

"Oi, oi, isn't that her?" Draco nudges Harry with his foot as he glances at someone walking toward them. He looks entranced, "Wow," he breathes. "She's beautiful."

"Huh," Harry says, "it always surprises me how you're actually straight."

"Shut up she's going to hear us!" Draco hisses.

"Who eez going to 'ear who?" A melodious voice tinkled out.

Harry turns around to see the veela in question. Even among veelas she was admittedly beyond compare, with her tall figure, silken waves of silvery blond hair that fell to her waist and large deep blue eyes. She was the very opposite of Harry's own short stature, dark locks and bright green eyes, and yet somehow just as gorgeous to look at. Arguably even more so depending on one's taste.

"Oh, Merlin I think I just had an orgasm just looking at you two," Blaise mutters as he unabashedly drinks in both Harry and Fleur's contrasting beauty. A few strained laughs were heard scattered across the table but there were many faces flushed red and fidgeting legs which betrayed how much they agreed with Blaise's crude assessment.

Fleur, on her part, looks completely unimpressed with Blaise and the wave of pubescent hormones she had inadvertently stimulated around her. "I would like to, ah, talk? Speak? Yes, speak to…" She glances down at Harry. They're close enough that Harry can see her pupils dilate slightly as she looks at him, "..Mister Potter pleaze."

"Of course," Harry agrees quickly, better to do this somewhere private after all. "Let's just go out of the hall for a minute."

The veela stiffly nods and she turns to stride forward before hesitating. With a timidity unbefitting her queen-like looks, she bows ever so slightly and allows Harry to walk in front instead. Harry accepts the gesture with a smile. This young lady has either high restraint or pride or both to still keep her composure like this at such a young age.

Once they close the door behind them, instantly muffling the bustling lively sounds from the Great Hall, Fleur immediately gets on one knee to bow like a knight awaiting commands. "Seigneur de la Mort." She greets hoarsely.

"Salutations," Harry greets warmly in french, "please rise, it would not do if anyone saw you like this."
The veela shakily stands back up, fiddling with her hands awkwardly as if she doesn't know quite where to place them. Harry feels a little bad for her, there was no etiquette book in the world that could teach you the proper ways to greet the physical incarnation of death. With a giggle, Harry shrugs, "Please young veela, don't be so tense, I'm only here for fun after all."

"You..." She says in faint disbelief, "Here? For fun?"

Harry nods, "Have you never heard of the stories were gods come down to the earth as humans? It's like that really."

"I... see..." She struggles out, still looking a little lost. "You are very different from what I've imagined." She confesses.

"I doubt you've spent that much time imagining what sort of person Death is," Harry laughs, before his expression quickly turns serious, "Of course I expect you wouldn't end my fun early would you? It would be quite a right shame if you do." He briefly contemplated sounding more threatening before dismissing the idea immediately. It wouldn't do if she acted too afraid of him, the effect would be highly suspicious and counterproductive to his needs after all.

Thankfully she was a smart girl and quickly nodded with a pale face, "Of, of course, milord. I, I would not even dare. I'm honoured to keep this secret with me to my grave. My sister too, she is young but she understands the importance of secrecy."

"That's very good," Harry praises, giving her a regal smile of appreciation. Almost against her will she blushes and fights the urge to bow again.

"Come, let's go back before people start talking even more than usual," Harry says as he opens the door back into the hall, "And remember, I'm just Harry Potter, you can call me Harry."

"Okay..." Fleur nods, before shyly adding, "...Harry."

Once they re-enter the hall, once again a new round of whispers start-up like ripples in a pond. Harry honestly has no idea what on earth they were going to be gossiping about. Everyone clearly knows he's gay as hell, then again, just like love, rumours have no boundaries.

"I'll see you around Fleur," Harry dismisses with a bright grin, his eyes glow inhumanely for a moment, "I hope we can be good friends."

"O-of course, Harry," Fleur replies, flustered, giving him a quick smile before hurriedly leaving.

Harry lets her go and saunters back to his seat in Slytherin where Draco, Theodore and anyone else interested in Fleur immediately pounces to question him.

"Why did she call you out?"

"What were you guys talking about?"

"Did she ask you out? Does she know you're gay?"

"You did tell her you were gay right?"

"Did she smell nice?"

"Were you-"

"Oh my god," Harry groans, "Shut up, she just wanted to scope out the prettiest wizard saviour this
side of the world. We chatted, we've come to an agreement, and now we're friends."

"Lucky son of a bitch," Theodore grouses.

"Oh look," Harry changes the subject, "Isn't that uh, Ludo Badman and my father heading up to the staff table?" Harry barely remembers their faces when Cornelius had introduced him to them during the World Cup event.

"It's Ludo Bagman." Daphne corrects, "It's probably because they helped organise the Triwizard tournament. Well, Mr Crouch actually helped do most of it but since he's still under questioning I suppose Minister Fudge stepped in."

"I thought they released him from questioning already?" Draco says curiously.

Blaise snorts, "So what? Even if he didn't do it, it's scandalous enough that someone managed to take his house-elf under his nose and caused the whole shitshow. For something as prestigious as the Triwizard tournament do you really think the Ministry would put someone with that sort of reputation as a figurehead?"

Theodore nods in agreement, "He's lucky he still has some semblance of a job honestly. Though from what my father says, since he's done so much work on this, he's still got a gig doing basic management and labor for the tournament."

"Oh, oh, maybe he's the one who'll force you into participating in the tournament Harry?" Pansy jumps in her seat excitedly, "I mean, I bet he's pissed about being downgraded and humiliated by you so, therefore, he wants you to publicly lose face yourself, maybe even lose your life too." Some of the surrounding Slytherins seem to agree with her theory, nodding and adding their own two knuts in while others seem to disagree and argue for Moody or a third party. Meanwhile, the Durmstrang students just seem confused at the sudden debate. Blaise and a few others who can speak the language were kind enough to give them a quick rundown on this year's Potter drama so far.

"The Dark Lord, Ex-head auror Professor Moody, Ex-Minister Mr Crouch, you've got quite a few enemies this year huh Potter?" Marcus Flint laughs as he passes by to grab the bowl of sausages.

"Okay, but to be fair," Harry laughs merrily back, "I'm pretty sure the Dark Lord hates me every year, god knows why though."

"Oh, I don't think you need to be a god to know why," Theodore dryly replies.

"Hey, there's no proof I killed him," Harry points out, "it could've been a hitwizard bodyguard from the shadows or something."

"Merlin, have you been reading Pansy's conspiracy trash they call Freedom Fox Magazine?" Draco sighs.

"They make some valid points!" Pansy defends shrilly.

"You British are much more... energy than I thought." Krum mutters under his breath, but he was smiling amusedly as well. Harry chuckles and passes the older Bulgarian some cheesy mash potatoes.

"It's energetic, and yes we are. I'm not sure what Durmstrang is like but Hogwarts can get pretty insane."

"In..sane?"
"Ah, crazy? You still don't- um, oh right, луд?"

"Ahhh," Krum nods looking enlightened, "insane, луд, I understand."

"Oi, Potter don't teach Krum bad things about us!" Someone calls out nearby while everyone laughs.

"Yeah," Blaise says flirtatiously as he looks at Krum with heated eyes a devilish tilt to his lips, "that's going to be my job."

Krum wasn't a hundred percent sure what Blaise meant but was flustered nonetheless. Harry doesn't blame him. Not even he, the resident primordial force of death and relatively experienced sexpert in homosexuality, could fully withstand the full brunt of Zabini's signature smoulder without flushing a little. Honestly, if Blaise was a few years older, Krum wouldn't have stood a chance.

"And that's my cue to point out that Dumbledore is standing up again," Harry points out mildly.

Sure enough, Dumbledore was watching everyone patiently with twinkling eyes until everyone finally noticed and waited quietly and eagerly. Finally the older wizard clears his throat, "Well, I hope everyone had enjoyed their meals. Now, the moment that everyone has been waiting for," Dumbledore's smile widens, "The Triwizard Tournament is finally about to start. Now, firstly I would like to say a few words of explanation before we bring in the casket-"

"Casket? Is that how they're going to pick the champions?" Harry wonders out loud. His friends shrug. They were all equally as clueless, even Draco had gotten nothing from his father.

"- though before I forget, let me introduce, for those who do not know them, Minister Cornelius Fudge," - there was a smattering of polite applause, Harry grins and applauds the loudest much to his adopted father's obvious happiness, "and Mr. Ludo Bagman, Head of the Department of Magical Games and Sports."

Funnily, there was a much louder round of applause for Bagman than for the actual British Minister of Magic. Apparently Bagman used to be a famous beater so he was more widely known and appreciated even among the foreign schools. Harry sighs at the terrifying dominance quidditch seems to hold in almost every wizard's mind. Bagman laughs and acknowledges everyone's enthusiasm with a jovial wave of his hand. Cornelius also seems vaguely bemused at Bagman's obvious popularity.

"Mr. Bagman and the British Ministry have worked tirelessly over the last few months on the arrangements for the Triwizard Tournament," Dumbledore continues once the clapping dies down, "and they'll be joining myself, Professor Karkaroff, and Madame Maxime on the panel that will judge the champions' efforts."

"It's a bit biased," Blaise notes, much to the Durmstrang student's agreement, "I mean, that's three judges for Britain and one per foreign country."

"I'm sure they'll do something to.." Draco shrugs helplessly, "I don't know, yeah it's pretty biased."

"Now then, back to the casket. Mr Filch, if you please," Filch approaches Dumbledore, carrying a large jewel-encrusted chest. Harry was sort of aware of this but Argus is a surprisingly strong old man. The casket looked ancient and important, just the sight of it made everyone practically buzz in excitement.

"There will be three tasks in this tournament, spaced throughout the school year, and they will test the champions in many different ways.. their magical prowess - their daring - their powers of deduction - and, of course, their ability to cope with danger."
"Well, you've got everything but the last thing Harry," Theodore snarks.

"Hey!" Harry hisses, "I have the ability to cope with danger!"

"Yeah, a bad ability," Draco snorts.

All the nearby Slytherins and Durmstrang students snicker.

"As you know, three champions compete in the tournament," Dumbledore continued, "one from each of the participating schools. They will be marked on how well they perform each of the Tournament tasks and the champion with the highest total after task three will win the Triwizard Cup. The champions will be chosen by an impartial selector: the Goblet of Fire."

Harry, as well as everyone else in the hall, straightened their backs with interest.

Dumbledore took out his wand and tapped three times upon the top of the casket. The lid creaked slowly open and what Dumbledore pulled out from it was a large, unremarkable and frankly kind of ugly wooden cup full to the brim with some impressive dancing blue-white flames. The goblet was carefully placed upon the casket it came from, clearly visible to everyone's hungry eyes.

"Anybody wishing to submit themselves as champion must write their name and school clearly upon a slip of parchment and drop it into the goblet," says Dumbledore. "Aspiring champions have twenty-four hours in which to put their names forward. Tomorrow night, Halloween, the goblet will return the names of the three it has judged most worthy to represent their schools. The goblet will be placed in the entrance hall tonight, where it will be freely accessible to all those wishing to compete."

"Oh," Harry deadpans, "So it's an over-glorified raffle draw."

Fucking wizards.

Well, at the very least, since the goblet seems to have some sort of magical sentience it'll be no problem getting chosen.

"To ensure that no underage student yields to temptation," Dumbledore continues, "I will be drawing an Age Line around the Goblet of Fire once it has been placed in the entrance hall. Nobody under the age of seventeen will be able to cross this line. I wish to impress upon any of you wishing to compete that this tournament is not to be entered into lightly, once a champion has been selected-" Dumbledore kept talking but at that point, hardly anyone was listening. Once the talk finishes and Dumbledore dismisses everyone, they all went wild.

"An age line!" Draco exclaims, "Damn, so the goblet itself won't be able to tell your age huh?"

"Mn," Blaise nods thoughtfully, "So really it's just a matter of passing that and you're home free."

"Easier said than done," Theodore rolls his eyes, "Dumbledore himself created it, no one under seventeen stands a chance."

"You are, as America says, a downer," Krum notes with a smirk, making the group laugh.

"Harry!" Fred and George practically jumps over the heads of the smaller students to get to the group. They were followed by a faintly embarrassed Ron and Hermione.

"An Age Line!" Fred crows, eyes glinting, "Do you think it could be fooled by an Aging Potion?"

"I don't think just any normal ageing potion will work," rebukes Hermione, "honestly, we just
haven't learned enough to…"

"Speak for yourself," George replies shortly, it's clear no one was interested in Hermione's controversial attitude toward the tournament. He turns to Harry and smiles widely, "You'll try and get in, won't you, Harry?"

"Try?" Harry laughs, "You fucking morons, I've already thought of a way to get past."

They all goggle at him.

"You're joking," Ron says in disbelief.

"But... the age line..." Hermione protests weakly. If it was anyone else she would feel confident in saying they couldn't be able to pass the age line that Dumbledore himself drew, but this was Harry Potter who defied all logic.

Harry scoffs, "Fuck the age line," he gestures the group to follow him to a nearby empty classroom and closes the door. The solution to the ageline is fairly simple but if the teachers overhead it, it would be just as easy to rectify the loopholes. "First," he starts, "I would like to point out the stupidity of any wizard or witch who has not thought of this solution, as well as Dumbledore who actually thought this was a legitimately good attempt to discourage and prevent students from trying, furthermore."

"We get it mate," Ron grouses, "we dumb, you smart, now can you tell us what it is now?"

With a wink, Harry shakes his head, "Better yet I'll show you. Right before curfew, meet in front of the goblet of fire. If you're interested in putting your name in, bring a note with your name and school on it so we can all do this at once."

"May I come?" Krum, who had followed them, asks interestedly.

"Of course," Harry smiles, "Actually if you all know anyone else interested tell them too. I don't want people getting pissy that I left everyone out." Then as an afterthought he adds seriously, "Well, maybe not second years and younger, they shouldn't get picked in the first place but still, I'll feel a bit shitty"

"I'm not going to lie, Harry," Daphne says, "You're so confident I really hope this all goes miserably for you."

"Thanks, Daphne," he replies dryly, "too bad you're going to be bitterly disappointed, anyway, see you all later, I'm going to go see my dad before he leaves."

"Sounds good," Draco nods before immediately switching topics, "Hey Krum, do you want to go see the quidditch pitch?"

Ron glares at Draco furiously, "Hey! Wait a moment! You and all the other snakes already had dinner with Krum, it's time for him to meet some other people now! I'll take him to the pitch."

"As if you-"

"Oh, yeah well-"

"They're going to be at it for a while," Theodore sighs, "I'm going to the library to read up on age lines and this Goblet of Fire. Harry may think he's got it sorted but I just want to make sure just in case."
Hermione immediately brightens up, finally another sensible person, "I'll join you!" She says happily, Theodore shrugs but does open the door for her as he leaves.

"I suppose we should go spread the word then?" Daphne looks at Pansy who was literally vibrating. There was nothing better to her than being in the position of having information that no one knew that they desperately wanted.

"Yes!" She shrieks before covering her mouth. With a cough, she repeats in a much meeker voice, "Um, I mean, yeah, sure, let's go."

The pair of girls left leaving Ron and Draco still arguing while Blaise and Krum stand by the sidelines.

"I… I do not vant to quidditch." Krum clumsily confesses to Blaise a little anxiously as they watch the argument devolve into a screaming match.

Blaise, who had been waiting for this, gives the older boy a reassuring smile before gently patting his shoulder, his hand lingering there for a moment too long. "Why don't I give you a tour of Hogwarts then?" he asks in Bulgarian, "It's quite a big place but I'm sure we can see some of the more interesting stuff before we meet Harry."

"Ah," Krum nods feeling strangely coy under the Italian teenager's gaze, "Sure, I guess that sounds good."

"Perfect," Blaise purrs before leading the quidditch player away.

"-you posh wanker!"

"Well excuse me for wanting to show Krum a modicum of class!"

"I can show him around the classrooms!"

"Merlin, you are so dumb."

"Oh yeah? Well, let's see what Krum thinks!"

"Fine!"

"Fine!"

"Hey, Krum which- everyone is gone."

"Huh."

"Fuck."

"Good evening everybody!" Harry grins as he stands on his conjured box that was placed right next to the age line surrounding the goblet. "Are you ready to put your names in the Goblet of fucking fire?!"

A chorus of "YES!"s fills the hall.

Getting excited Harry shouts, "Can I get a 'Hell Yeah'?"

"HELL YEAH!"
"I can't hear you!"

"HELL YEAH!"

Harry bursts into laughter, this was fucking great, fourth year is definitely the best year so far. "Okay, okay, now get ready to watch me blow your tiny mortal minds."

Just as he takes his folded piece of paper out, Hermione suddenly shouts, "Wait! Harry!"

Harry pauses and the crowd groans in disappointment. "Hermione? Is something wrong?"

"I, I," She stutters looking self-conscious, "Are you sure about this?"

"Why not?" Harry asks.

"Well I mean, you're breaking the rules!"

"Rules?" Harry scoffs, his eyes glowing vibrantly green. With the flames lighting his delicate features he looks unearthly, like an arrogant young deity, "Rules are just vaguely amusing obstacles imposed by society to be circumvented at my leisure."

Hermione made a horrified offended sound while Ron nods and gives him a thumbs up. "No idea what you just said, mate." He admits, "But I do like what I think I'm hearing so I'm in."

"Yeah go, Harry!" Fred and George cheer, which was soon followed by a few other enthusiastic students.

Hermione throws her hands up, "Fine! Whatever! I did my part! I don't care anymore!"

Harry grins, "Love you too Hermione," he teases.

"You better fucking not die and win this dumb thing Harry," Hermione mutters sulkily with flushed cheeks.

Blowing a kiss to her to reassure no hard feelings, Harry looks back to his audience with bright eyes. "Right, now on to what everyone is here for- watch this," Then, he crumpled up the note with his name into a ball.

And threw it into the goblet of fire.

Absolute silence rung throughout the halls with the exception of the crackling of flames inside the goblet as it absorbed Harry's piece of parchment.

Finally, Ron breaks the silence, speaking what was on everyone's mind. "What the fuck, that's it?"

Harry bursts into hysterical laughter, "Oh, hah, my god, you, hah, ah, faces!" He wheezes.

"No, but, what?" A bewildered George says, "Seriously?"

"Ohhhhh, oh my god we're idiots," Hermione smacks her forehead, "No one says we ourselves have to pass the age line in order to put our names into the cup."

"Shit how did no one but Harry figure that out?" Draco groans, "We learnt how to levitate feathers in first year! We could just levitate our papers in!"

"We're all morons!"
"Dumbledore's a moron too! How did he not think of this?"

"For fuck's sake it was so simple!"

"Ugh, my mind... it's blown."

While they continue to verbally demean and belittle themselves for their narrow-mindedness and appalling lack of creativity, Harry was still laughing to the point of tears. This feeling of humorous satisfaction was something he swears to remember till the end of time.

The next morning all the Hogwarts students had come into the Great Hall whispering and chuckling energetically, more than a few exchanged knowing glances with each other, the goblet of fire and at Harry Potter who was calmly nibbling at his french toast over at the Gryffindor table.

There was still a lot of people unaware of what happened last night, mainly because Harry had insisted on not letting any second years or younger gain wind of it. On top of that many students were wise enough not to spread the information to anyone over seventeen since they might feel resentful about the discovery and tell a professor. Still, those that were present last night were looking at Harry with worshipful eyes. Even though it was pretty much impossible for them to be selected, they were all grateful to get a chance to even try.

The mood in the great hall was so good that everyone clapped and cheered for any Hogwarts students that went up to the goblet and entered their names, no matter which house. It was truly a fine show of school unity.

"Hey, Ron," Harry nudges, "Beauxbatons, coming in at eleven o'clock."

Ron immediately swallows his mouthful of waffles and attempts to neaten his hair as an orderly line of Beauxbatons students file into the hall, lead by Fleur Delacore and Madam Maxime. As they take their turns to drop their names into the goblet, Ron, who hasn't taken his eyes off Fleur once, whispers, "Hey, do you think they'll um, they'll hang around Hogwarts even if they don't get picked as champion?"

"Yeah probably," Harry shrugs as he reaches for a banana, "the headmasters are judges and the general point of this is to promote friendly relations between France and Bulgaria so it would be a waste of resources and time to immediately send away the rejected students."

"Good," Ron nods and mutters to himself, "Good, yeah, that's, that's good."

Harry looks at Hermione, expecting to both share a long-suffering look but she was too busy glaring irritatedly at Ron. Harry sighs and decides to share his long-suffering look with Neville who was sitting across from him.

Taking a sip of his water, Harry stands up, "Well, since we have no class today and the main event is tonight, I'm going to see if Fleur and Krum's groups want to hang out sometime today."

"How forward of you," Hermione observes, breaking out of her jealousy-induced staring.

Harry shrugs, "Normally I would let them find me but Cornelius asked me to try my best to encourage a good impression from the foreign schools." He scowls lightly, "Apparently I shouldn't interpret 'good impression' as a euphemism."

Hermione laughs, "Minister Fudge knows you well,"
The Boy Who Lived scowls even harder, "I have Se- Snape."

She narrows her eyes which were twinkling in mirth, "I heard the Durmstrang Professor of Transfiguration had fallen for you during the World Cup."

Silently he curses to himself. Okay, maybe that professor was telling the truth about himself that time. Fuck. If Severus finds out…

'Serves you right,' Mr Riddle says, a little too gleefully for his liking. 'It's about time you got some consequences for literally dicking around.'

'Oh shut up,' Harry grouses. 'Fine, next time no more professors.'

'…So there's still going to be a next time huh?'

'Of course.' Harry replies unrepentantly. He's developed quite a taste toward shameless flirtation. No wonder many of his fellow entities like Chaos and Fate enjoy it so. Besides, the time until he can make Severus officially his is close, so who knows when he can indulge himself like this again?

"Well," He says to Hermione, "Let's not tell my dad that little tidbit shall we?" Hermione laughs. With an unbiased eye Harry scrutinises her. She seems to have grown into her looks a little more and had become much prettier. "What about you Hermione? Want to help with the tour and see if any cute foreign blokes catch your eye?"

She flushes, making her look even better. Harry notices that her lips have a faint sheen of alluring pink and nods to himself in understanding. It seems encouraging a friendship with Pansy and Daphne showed some results even if they don't hang around together that often. Hermione definitely needs to have more female friends. Or maybe another potential love interest.

Not that there's anything wrong with Ron. But. Well. You have to sample the other vegetables before deciding to eat carrots your whole life.

Also, Ron was kind of a nag.

Seriously, the centaur thing was one time.

"I don't know..."

"Nonsense," Harry dismisses with a snort, "you know Hogwarts' history better than anyone here. I need you. Besides, I'm bringing Blaise who'll probably bring Theodore because he'll be too busy trying to increase his favorability with Krum. Ron, Draco, Pansy and Greengrass will probably tag along once they hear Blaise and Theodore are coming so it's not like you'll be surrounded by strangers. It'll be fun."

Hermione bit her lip, but it was clear from her eyes that she was already planning the most interesting and informative places to visit. With a grin, Harry pats get on the back and laughs, "We all meet at noon, let's catch up a little earlier to string together a good plan to wow our hot foreign school rivals shall we?"

Hermione giggles, "Oh, I suppose I must."

After a very successful tour- if you ignore the fact that Blaise ended up skipping off with Krum midway to god knows where- the satisfied and cheerful group of people entered the Great Hall for dinner. During the tour, many friendships were made, so various Beauxbatons and Durmstrang
students had scattered to different tables. Though as expected they seemed more inclined to either Gryffindor and Slytherin.

"That was good!" A Durmstrang girl compliments heartily, "I like, um, uh, wet big many leg fish."

Harry nods amusedly, "Yes, the giant squid is quite exciting." In order to appease Ron, he had brought himself and Viktor Krum to the Gryffindor table. Everyone was in great spirits throughout the Halloween feast, but it was clear they were all infinitely more excited for what would come afterwards.

At long last, the empty plates disappeared from the table and so did the noise in the Hall as Dumbledore got to his feet. On either side of him was an expectant Professor Karkaroff and Madame Maxime, while Ludo Bagman and Minister Fudge were sitting down with smiles on their faces.

"The goblet is almost ready to make its decision," Dumbledore announces. "I estimate that it requires one more minute. When the champions' names are called, please to come up to the top of the Hall, walk along the staff table, and go through into the next chamber" he indicates the door behind the staff table with his wand, "where they will be receiving their first instructions."

After a minute of everyone impatiently fidgeting and checking their watches, the fire in the goblet suddenly turned red and spark began to fly. A small pillar of flames shot upwards before falling back into the burning cup, a charred piece of parchment fluttering down from the action, making the whole room tense and hold their breath.

Dumbledore, in a show of surprisingly good hand-eye coordination for an old wizard who's probably never caught a ball for decades now, catches the piece of parchment single-handedly, reading it by the light of the flames, which had turned back to a blue-white color.

"The champion for Durmstrang," he reads, in a strong, clear voice, "will be Viktor Krum."

"No surprises there!" yells Ron as applause and cheers swept the room. Harry grins and pats an embarrassed but not surprised Viktor Krum who rises up from his seat. He smiles and waves as he heads to the chamber, making the crowd cheer loudly. Not even Blaise’s catcalls could be heard.

"Bravo, Viktor!" booms Karkaroff, so loudly that everyone could hear him, even over all the deafening applause. "Knew you had it in you!"

Once Krum left, everyone quickly settled down again, waiting with eager anticipation for the next name. They didn't have to wait long.

"The champion for Beauxbatons," said Dumbledore, "is Fleur Delacour!"

Somehow the cheers were even louder. Harry couldn't help but notice that it was thanks to the enthusiasm of most of the male population. It seems that even quidditch could not compare with a pretty girl.

When Fleur Delacour also vanished the ensuing silence became almost electrified. After all, Hogwarts was next, and the one they were all most invested in.

The Goblet of Fire sparks and turns red once more, fire shot up even further and brighter than before like it was showing off, and from the aftermath, Dumbledore catches the third piece of parchment.

"The Hogwarts champion," he cries, "is Harry Potter!" Dumbledore pauses, as if unable to comprehend what he had just said. "..Wait. What?"
However, his disbelief was drowned out by the unprecedented roar of noise and liveliness invoked by the whole hall. The adults, however, were not reacting quite as optimistically. Fudge had choked on his butterbeer. McGonagall had gone deathly pale. Moody was completely expressionless. And Severus especially may or may not have thrown his goblet violently down on the table with a very ugly expression on his face.

Suddenly, as Harry was about to stand and leave to the chamber, the whole hall fell silent almost as one.

The fire in the goblet had just turned red. Again.

Automatically Dumbledore took the parchment, still feeling quite numb as he opens the slip. He clears his throat and says, with a decidedly smaller voice, "Harry Potter?"

Harry blinks. Stunned. He wasn't the only one.

The third and fourth years were there when Harry had thrown his name into the goblet. He had clearly only put in one. They whisper this to the older and younger students, spreading the word and insisting on Potter's innocence while being genuinely confused about the matter. The smarter ones pieced this new information together with the usual pattern of Harry Potter's hijinks and immediately all came to a conclusion.

Someone had tried to set Potter up.

Chapter End Notes

ALSO I am really proud of the goblet thing, like, if it turns out that canonically it's not feasible (I did try and check and I didn't see anything that said otherwise?) feel free to tell me but you gotta be aware that there is no way in hell I'm gonna change this plot point now lol.

So. Yeah.

:D

Works inspired by this one

Harry Potter and the man of Paradox by ryotigergirl

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