The Walking I*N*F*E*R*I*

by Antigonesev

Summary

What if eleven-year old Harry's family fled to Atlanta to escape all of those letters from Hogwarts...right when the Dead rise. Abandoned by the Dursleys, Harry makes sure he stays alive with a little of innate magic and a sheriff named Rick Grimes. The two run across a doctor with wartime AND medical experience, named Dr. Hunnicutt, who has seen this malady before in Korea. Rick, Harry, and their companions pick up a few strays and make their way to the CDC to make sure they survive and end this apocalypse.

Notes

I want to thank the wonderful human being Star who beta-ed this work for me, and made sure my writing was readable for all of you to read. Also, I want to thank the wonderful Rickyl writers who supported me through nursing this fic to life. :) You guys are amazing, every one of you. Thank you! This is for all of you, in every one of these fandoms who have made me smile, laugh, and even spit out my tea while I work on this monster. Thank you all. <3
Chapter 1

The last thing Rick remembers is a flash of heat, Shane’s face, and a brilliant blue sky. The sky of Georgia, warm Georgia dirt under his head, and the smell of gunpowder…

WAKE UP!-- the small voice shrieked in his head.

…..Shane?

WAKE UP! NOW! The voice commanded sharply,, filled with panic and fear.

Too young to be Shane- Carl? Carl…

NOW!

Rick’s eyes popped open and he saw a small, thin boy clutching his blankets and his hand. The boy's green eyes were wide behind the over-sized spectacles and the boy let out a sharp breath.

“Mr. Grimes, we gotta go. It’s getting bad.” The boy replied breathlessly, his eyes moving to the door and the noises beyond. Every now and then, gunshots rang out beyond the door. In the room, Rick could see the door was latched shut, with small hospital dressers shoved up against it and another bed, which had clearly been slept in and used, joined the barricade.

“What.. what happened?” Rick asked, the sheriff in him starting to kick in as his mind started to clear. He tried to sit up, the small boy moving quickly to remove the I.V. cords from Rick’s arms. “You.. you shouldn’t be here.”

“I’m here anyway. Look, they’re killing people, so we have to go if we want to stay alive, okay? Mr. Shane told me to stay here with you.” The boy replied in a voice that showed a maturity beyond his young years. “Come here- I can help.” the boy commanded Rick, helping him to the wardrobe and tugging out his uniform. “Do you need help dressing?”

“N-no…. Water. Please.” Rick said as his voice cracked, leaning against the spare bed to help himself get leverage to dress. The boy disappeared into the bathroom, exiting with a large plastic cup
filled with water, the water sloshing over the sides. “Th... ta.” Rick said with a smile as he drank down the cup carefully, he didn’t want to gag.

Silence filled the hallway, the occasional growl and clatter the only noise from beyond. Rick glanced at the strange boy, wondering what the hell happened here.

“Everyone got sick,” the boy started to explain. “Then people came back and started eating each other. So Mr. Shane took Lori and Carl out somewhere safe. I had to stay, no one came for me and you needed me anyway.” the boy replied in his somber fashion.

“Who are you?” Rick managed to get out as he handed the cup back, indicating he would like one more cup before moving the barricade. He figured he had plenty of time since Shane apparently had Lori and Carl safe at the moment.

“I’m no one. Just Harry.”

“Well Harry, You can call me Rick, Mr. Grimes can be a mouthful. What are you doing so far away from home? England?”

“Yeah, Surrey.” Harry muttered with a sigh. “Uncle and Aunt had to take me with them on vacation- Mrs. Figg was sick and couldn’t care for me.” Harry shrugged as he leaned out to look out of the window at the pavement below. “I think we can come out now; no one’s shooting or eating anyone anymore. Everyone’s gone.”

Rick and the boy- Harry- stared at each other for a long moment while Rick wondered what exactly was going on. He couldn’t afford to be picky, though since right now it was all about survival, and Harry was the key to his survival.

“All right, Harry. You’ll have to help me- I’m not exactly in my best shape.” Rick said as he tried to move through the remains of the barricade in front of the door, Harry trailing behind to make sure Rick didn’t hurt himself too much.

“I wish we had a doctor. Or medicine.” Rick murmured quietly to himself as he moved along with the help of the small boy down the dark hallways. Blood was smeared everywhere, and the smell kept making Rick want to gag.
“There's some medicene here, Rick. I can get some for you.”

“Look for the bottles that say Morphine or Vicodin,” Rick said with a sharp sigh. “Tylenol or aspirin will work too,” Rick added as he leaned against a wall to rest briefly as Harry hunted through a few shelves in a mostly bare pharmacy, people clearly had picked through the strong drugs.

“Tylenol?” Harry asked, handing Rick a large bottle of the Tylenol 3.

“Perfect.” Rick let out a grunt as he opened the bottle and took a dry dose of the medicine, putting it in a bag he had slung over his shoulder.

“Let's go to my house, Harry. I know there has to be something there. I know Shane must have had a plan. Did he say anything about where they were heading?” Rick asked the small boy as the two picked their way through the rubble and carnage that lined the hospital.

“Mr. Shane said to go to the mountains. He knew a place called a quarry?” Harry asked as he tugged at a door. Rick loaned whatever strength he had left, and between the two of them, they managed to wrestle open a door to exit the hospital.

The stench hit them like a hot wave of putrid humidity. Rick and Harry gagged, Harry throwing up on the pavement of the sidewalk that led down to the street.

“It's okay, Harry.” Rick clenched his teeth against a wave of pain and disgust at the rotting corpses before them. Bodies had been laid out in the parking lot and shot, covered with white sheets and black tarps. Military vehicles lay abandoned on the lawn before them; the two slowly picked their way through until Rick found a car that had keys still in them and enough gas to see them to Rick’s.

The small Toyota Yaris was perfect for navigating the crowded street, abandoned cars and various wreckages blocking the intersections. Rick was watching carefully for any sign of his wife and child on the way. Harry’s green eyes took in the strange landscape of dead bodies and smoldering wreckages of cars, not feeling any interest in knowing the whereabouts of his family, they had abandoned him.

“There's my house- and my neighbor looks like he's home. Let's go.” Rick let out a sharp breath as he checked his slightly bloody bandage. It didn't look good, the wound was leaking, indicating something could be wrong. Rick didn’t want to scare Harry, so he kept his bandage semi-covered up with his uniform shirt, but loose enough he could pull it up and keep an eye on it on occasion.
“Let’s see if there’s anything left. I know some of Carl’s things could fit you, we may need to run and I don’t want you to trip up on anything.” Rick said gently as he eyed Harry’s too-big pullover hoodie, sneakers, and jeans. It looked like the boy had been through hell before THIS hell, so he didn’t want to say much to spook the boy. He could find out more later.

“Thank you,” Harry replied in a soft voice, his wide green eyes watching everything around him. It was quiet, albeit from a faint growling from the bodies that lay strewn on the ground, unable to move themselves to chase fresh human quarry.

Harry and Rick moved through Rick’s home, Rick packing a large bag with whatever Shane and Lori had overlooked in their hurry to get the essentials. Harry wandered up into what seemed to be Carl’s room and carefully picked out an Atlanta Braves T-shirt, fresh underpants from a laundry basket with freshly laundered and folded clothes in it. Harry knew it was a safe bet to get clothes from the basket. He didn’t want to pass up the opportunity to dress in clean, fresh clothes that FIT him well. After he dressed himself head to toe in sneakers, socks, jeans, underpants, T-shirt and sweatshirt, Harry pulled up a jacket and cap, he wasn’t sure how long they would be away and he knew from experience, to always prepare for the worst.

“Harry?” Rick called out after hearing the rustling and quiet noises of a boy getting dressed. “I think I’ve got everything- but take whatever you think both you and Carl will need. I don’t think like a ten-year-old.” Rick said with a smile as he found Harry walking down the hallway.

“All right, Mr. Rick,” Harry said with a shy smile, holding up a deck of cards and a few comic books. “I think I had the same idea.”

“Good thinking, Harry,” Rick said with a smile as he ruffled Harry’s hair and gulped slightly. He could feel blood dripping down his side, but he wanted to at least make it to the car first. Harry looked like one of those resourceful kids, the ones who figured out things. “Harry, do you know how to drive?” Rick asked as he did a final sweep of the bathroom, grabbing a box of tampons and pads, he knew Lori would want them, women were always needing them, if not Lori, someone else would. It would be a valuable bargaining chip, thought Rick as he closed the bathroom door out of habit.

“I think so?” Harry asked with a shrug as the two walked back to the front foyer of the house, Rick having packed up everything he could, including food, in a large duffel bag he had used to use for long trips to conferences with Shane and other police officers.

“I’m not feeling too well, and I may need to rest and sleep on the way to Atlanta,” Rick said slowly and carefully as he sat down on the front steps, bag at his side as he started to see black spots.
After a moment, everything went black, with a scream of *MR. RICK!*--
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Help arrives for Harry and Rick

Chapter Notes

Again, thank you to my wonderful beta Star! and all of you who read and reviewed this fic. Your feedback has been wonderful. Let's see how far we can go on this journey!

MR. RICK-

HELP-

NOW!

Harry’s mind screamed, and his Magic reacted yet again, bursting forth from him and finding the closest target for help, which was the old man next door. The man sitting on the couch, with a doctor’s bag at his side.

BJ Hunnicutt looked up out of the window, a heavy feeling of fear, dread, and unease filling his stomach. Someone out there needed him, and he had to go help. He wasn’t sure why he was doing this, but he had experience from his time in Korea to not question his instinct; it had served him well over the years and kept him and his best friend Hawk alive through scrapes.

Help.

NOW!
Erin, watch the door. I think something’s out there.” BJ said quietly as he handed his daughter a rifle, and took the small hammer with him- quiet was always best, he had learned over the last week or two when everything had gone to hell in a hand-basket.

“Hello?” a small boy called out to BJ, who was standing on the porch steps to the house next door. A sheriff lay unconscious, slumped over a large duffel bag and blood pooling at his feet.

“Was he bitten?” BJ asked gently, his Korea field medic experience kicking in. Even if it had been over thirty years since the war, he still remembered well what it was like out there; to be afraid and traumatized. He didn’t want to risk the small boy running off and getting eaten, or attracting more of those dead things to the house. Erin was in there, and his objective was to protect his little girl, even if she was twenty-six and nearly a pediatrician herself.

“No,” the boy said with a shake of his head. “He was in the hospital. I tried to help him when everyone left. He’s Sheriff Rick. I’m Harry.” Harry said in a rush, his little-boy lungs not quite big enough to fit all of those words in a breath.

“It’s okay- I’m a doctor. I was actually a doctor during a war, so I’ve done this before. It’s easy, but I will need a helper, okay?” BJ replied gently as he unbuttoned Rick’s shirt expertly, handling the bandage carefully. Harry nodded, large green eyes boring into BJ’s soul as he licked his lips and thought about what the small boy could do for him. The small waif-like child reminded him of the orphans he had seen during the war, and he decided purely on instinct to treat him like he would one of those children that Father Mulcahy would bring in the MASH unit to feed and clean and care for.

“My little girl, Erin, is next door. She’s a nurse. I’ll carry Rick over, and can you take the bag and tell her to get my medic kit ready in the dining room? She’ll have to prep for OR.” BJ tried to keep the words simple and his voice soft. The boy reminded him of a skittish, terrified Hawkeye. The boy nodded and began dragging the bag quickly next door, his small frame surprisingly strong and used to hard work. BJ picked up Rick carefully and laid him on a cloth, using it to drag Rick’s prone form, walking carefully and slowly not to attract any undue attention- they had been lucky not to have had many herds of those things trampling through the neighborhood. It also helped they were on the edge of a suburb, so not many looters had made their way this far.

“Daddy!” Erin shouted the minute BJ had entered the door she had opened immediately for him upon Harry’s message, Harry by her side with the medic kit.

“This is Mr. Rick, and we will help him,” BJ said simply as he and Erin stretched Rick out on the dining room table. “Harry can be our assistant if he can help us?”
“I can!” the boy said, pushing over-large spectacles up on his nose. “What do I do?” he asked as BJ and Erin took out their tools and bandages, and various implements.

“You can keep an eye out of the windows from upstairs, and make sure no one gets too close to the house. If you see people coming, run down quietly and tell us, okay?” BJ wasn’t sure if people were still around, or it was just the dead ones, but he didn’t want to get interrupted while working on Rick. He could send out Erin, who had become a quick shot and had been on the softball team in school, so she had quite a hand with a baseball bat. “Erin will help you with that.” BJ outlined his plan for Erin and Harry, and the two nodded, Harry taking a baseball bat up with him for his sentry duty.

“Let’s go, sweetie. Work calls.” BJ hummed softly as he began cleaning Rick’s wound, which seemed to be on the mend, but close to getting infected. He had caught it in enough time, that with a good cleaning, and some medicine and rest, Rick would be just fine as rain. BJ reopened the wound and drained it, cleaning out the wound and sewing it up again, applying a fresh bandage and antibiotic cream on it. It was a benefit, from having a nurse and medical student as a daughter, living with doctors as roommates, and a father for a doctor, that they had a nearly fully-stocked pharmacy on hand for any kind of emergency.. Even the end of the world, apparently.

“We’re done,” BJ said quietly, not to scare Harry. Harry was at an upstairs window, watching the dead people mill about in vague circles and paths, going nowhere.

“Thank you for saving us,” Harry said softly, smiling at BJ with a small, thin mouth and large green eyes that spoke of hard life experiences.

“It’s my job. I want to see people live- good people like you and Rick.” BJ said after a moment of silence. “You’re from England?” BJ asked as he held out an arm for the bat, and put the other arm around Harry, who stiffened slightly. The boy relaxed after a moment, trusting BJ with his presence.

“Yes-- We- I lived in Surrey, England. It’s near London. We got a lot of letters, and we came here to get away from them. Then this happened. My aunt and Uncle- Cousin too, they’re gone, I think. We had gone to hospital because a man bit Aunt. They left me with Mr. Rick so they could go home.” Harry said with a shrug, not at all sad. He was happy to be rid of his relatives and glad to have better things than Dudley’s hand-me-downs.

“I see,” BJ said after a moment, understanding more about Harry after the quick commentary. The boy must have had a rough life with a family who apparently didn’t care for him well if at all. It reminded him of the orphaned children that Mulcahy took care of in the orphanage during Korea- all of those children had similar haunting eyes, just like Harry’s.
“My friend- who is a priest- took care of kids like you. If I had a phone, I would call him. He’d know what to do.” BJ said with a smile, remembering the mean right hook Mulcahy had. “Now, let’s look in on that sheriff of yours. Are you going anywhere?”

“We’re going to a place called a.. Quarrel? Quarry?” Harry asked as he corrected himself. BJ glanced to Erin, who nodded with a smile. Clearly, Erin knew the place. Perhaps they should head there if things went bad down here. Or what would be considered worse than they currently were experiencing?

It was the next morning when Rick woke up, the sun streaming through the windows and Harry curled up next to him under a thick blanket. BJ was checking up on them when he heard Rick’s breathing change.

“Welcome, our ape overlords will be thrilled you’re with us,” BJ said gaily as he watched Rick open his eyes. Rick’s eyes widened slightly before he let out a small chuckle. “My daughter and I patched you up- you’re lucky your boy got to us when he did.” BJ grinned a large smile, showing off his bright white teeth behind a cheesy white 70s mustache.

“Oh… I was shot.” Rick replied lamely, his hand gently stroking Harry’s hair. “How long has it been?”

“Only a night. I’d want to keep you for observation, but looks like you have somewhere to go? Harry mentioned a Quarry.”

“My partner Shane- he took my wife and son down there. It’s safer- away from all of those things walking around, I’m sure. Harry’s going with us. His family abandoned him. Bastards.” Rick said as he breathed deeply and slowly.

“Well. That happens more than you would think at times… well, like war.” Bj explained as he scratched his mustache. “I was in a MASH, mobile hospital unit in Korea, there was an orphanage down the street. Full of little orphaned and abandoned buggers. Father’s usually a soldier, mother and family kinda dumps them or parents die…” Bj shrugged sadly at the memories of Father Mulcahy and the orphanage in 1953 Uijongbu.

“I'm BJ Hunnicutt. My daughter, Erin. She was a Med student, pediatrics, in Atlanta.” Bj introduced as Erin came in. “And how’s the little guy doing?” Bj asked.
“He’s of course, terrified and drained, but he will be fine now that Rick is up and about.” Erin nodded as she watched Harry sleeping at Rick’s side. She knew her father was letting her take over Harry’s care, due to her recent training in Pediatrics, so he could take over Rick’s care.

“Listen, you’re always welcome to join us over at the quarry. I’m sure we could use your experience, Dr. Hunnicutt.”

“I don’t know… I just can’t leave Peg.” Bj said forlornly. His gaze landed on somewhere beyond the outside window. “Peg…”

“‘Mom would want you to help Rick and Harry. You know there was nothing we could do for Mom. She went the way she wanted, taking care of us.’

“I know, I just… I just miss her.” Tears filled Bj’s eyes as he let out a long sigh and quiet sob. “It’s been a week or two and… yeah, we do have to move on to a better location. I just don’t want to bug out without her.”

“You have her, Dad. I’m here. She’s still here with us.” Erin said as she drew the older man in a hug. “Okay? I will pack up the car and do all of the work, you take your time with Rick and Harry, say goodbye to Mom. Okay?” Erin squeezed Bj’s arm as she moved out of the room quietly. Erin had come to terms with her mother’s death a few days ago, and the arrival of Harry and Rick had helped her move on. She knew she had to keep going, and mourning could come later when they were in a safer place.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Rick, Carl and the Hunnicutts head out to the Quarry. Whatever shall they find on their way?

Chapter Notes

Again, eternal thanks to the wonderful human being, Star, who without this would not be possible at all, and the wonderful people who read and reviewed, and left kudos. I love you all!!

Rick loaded up the Suburban with what he had gathered from his home, while BJ and Erin entertained Harry, keeping everyone relaxed and calm as much as they could before they set off to the police station, then - Atlanta, or at least the southernmost tip, they had to pass through there to get on the road that led to the quarry.

“Police station, eh?” BJ asked as he peered at the locks that separated them from the weapons inside.

“Yes. I figured it could be of use if no one else thought to come here, if Shane hasn't beaten us here already.” Rick nodded as he got out to unlock the main doors, careful for any of the dead to lunge at him, but it was completely silent.

“Open sesame,” Rick said with a wink to the others as he waved them over and had BJ park near the rear entrance so they could load up and take off if they had to. While they were there, everyone took advantage of the fresh, hot water and electricity, having long showers and using hair dryers and whatever else they could find to make themselves feel human. Erin even did as much laundry as she could, while she picked up fresh clothes for her father and Harry.

“Do you think the radio will work?” BJ asked as he gave the machine a curious look. “What I wouldn't give to have Klinger or Radar here. They would know what to do.” BJ set himself down, fiddling with the controls until he heard crackling, static, and voices.

“It's just a recording,” Harry said after a while, crestfallen at the robotic voice encouraging people to
to Fort Benning. “Do you think we will be safe if we go?”

“Shane said the quarry, not Fort Benning. I trust him and I know he must have his reasons,” Rick said with a sigh as he glanced at BJ, who had thrown down the mouthpiece to the radio in disgust or disappointment at the recording, Rick wasn’t too sure which. The older man was fairly easy to read, but he wasn’t too sure. “We’ll be fine, kid. We just have to stick together. Like we stuck together at the hospital, right?”

“Yeah…” Harry replied hesitantly, his unique green eyes moving up from the radio to watch BJ and Erin raid the medical supplies and load up the Subaru, making sure there was room for everything— and everyone.

“I think we’ve drained this place dry- but it’s a good place to come back to in case things go to shit. Has a fence and a genny and all,” BJ murmured as he cast a critical eye over the brick and mortar building that housed the King County police force… Or what remained thereof.

“I think it’s about time to go. We’ve gassed up and everything, and I’m sure your family’s waiting for you at the Quarry.” Erin said with a nod as she leaned back in the back seat, her long legs slightly cramped in the back, Harry clambering in on the other side, allowing for Rick and BJ to take the front seats.

“I guess,” Rick shrugged and got in, no love lost for the place that he had worked for several years with Shane- he could feel it in his bones, that his family was safe as long as they remained with Shane. Rick took the wheel, BJ navigating with advice thrown in from Erin, and the Subaru made its way slowly along the freeway to Atlanta, with the adults moving cars out of the way on the occasions where they couldn’t manage to drive around the snarls. They eventually made it to the correct turnway, which led past a large medical clinic.

“We should stop here just to check and stock up on medications. I’m pretty sure no one would think this place had anything, but I bet you they were fully stocked with _everything_.” Erin replied as she pointed out the short squat sign overrun with blood and gore. “This was where we would go to train, they had a huge pharmacology program, chemistry, you name it. They didn’t want anyone breaking in so they just called it a training facility. They are adjoined with an animal hospital, so… animals, people don’t associate it with medicine,” Erin continued, as she leaned over, chin resting on the back of BJ’s seat.

“You’re right, Erin. I’m sure I can find the makings of a still there too. I’m sure these cars could run on the booze Hawk and I made back in the day. Korea was good for something, I guess.” BJ said with a quiet huff and grunt as he tried to turn in the seat, his abnormally long legs folded up in the passenger seat.
“Next time, let me drive,” BJ grunted as Rick parked in a loading bay. Erin guiding them around the facility. For some reason, it was unusually devoid of anything— even gore, blood and corpses. It was as if everyone simply… vanished.

Harry could feel something in the air. It was like electricity, a quiet feeling that it would rain soon, or a storm was coming. He could hear quiet hissing, like a fire was going in a fireplace.

“There’s a fire in there.” Harry remarked as he opened the door and saw a man in all black poking the fire with a stick, a blond-haired boy next to him wrapped up in a large blanket.

“Uncle Sev!” the boy shouted, blue eyes wide with shock. “Somebody’s here- a person! A real person!” the boy gasped, the man turning quickly from the fire to open the door fully, making Harry stumble down to the floor. The man reached down and quickly picked up Harry, patting him and checking him over for injuries. Erin, Rick, and BJ hurried over to see what had happened with Harry, having heard the voices in the other room.

The adults all drew weapons, and all of them stared at each other for long moments. Dark eyes bored into various shades of blue, and green. A gasp exploded from the dark-haired and -eyed man as he collapsed to his knees before Harry, his hands grabbing the boy in a bear hug.

“Harry. Oh, Harry. We thought you had died.”

“Who are you?” Harry asked, leaning back and wrinkling his nose as he leaned closely to BJ and Erin, clasping Rick’s hand for support.

“You don’t- no one told you?” the man hissed out, moving back so quickly no one was sure that he had moved at all in the first place. “Your parents… your aunt and uncle? Nothing?”

“No.” Harry said with a shrug. “Aunt Petunia said they died in a crash. Uncle Vernon said they were drunks.”

“Lily-- no, no, no she … no.” the man gasped out as he shook his head and put his arm around the blond-haired boy who had kept silent through the entire episode. “Lily was my best friend. She.. she married James Potter. They were killed. By -- by a waste of space.” the man replied with a frown, dark eyes flashing dangerously. “Figures Tuney would tell you that tripe. She’s always been jealous of Lily and me, even if I was from Spinner’s End.” Snape grunted with a half-laugh.
“Uncle Severus, we’re allowed to tell them EVERYTHING?” the boy asked, his eyes wide and mouth slightly open in surprise.

“Draco, there’s NOTHING left at all. Nothing. You saw what happened to your parents. I’m sorry, Draco. There’s no more rules anymore.” the man replied sensibly, his hands never moving from the small blond boy’s shoulders.

“You know me, but I don’t know you.” Harry said cautiously after a moment, leaning into Rick’s arm as the trio of Americans watched the two British males move around their small suite of rooms.

“I’m Severus Snape- I used to teach at a boarding school in Scotland, just outside of Edinburgh. The school shut down and sent everyone home- we were in the middle of sending out the yearly acceptance letters when it happened. Speaking of letters, did you get your letter, Harry? I’ve got it here- Dumbledore thought you would need it. He had sent me over here to the States to find you and give it to you.” Snape said with a snort, vaguely sounding like an chuckle of amusement.

“And I’m Draco Malfoy.” Draco said regally, bowing his head slightly as he hovered by Snape’s side, refusing to leave him for a moment. “I’m supposed to go to Hogwarts with you, we’re in the same year and everything.”

Harry took the thick, cream envelope that Mr. Snape had hidden in his black jacket somewhere. It looked just like the envelopes that his aunt and uncle were running away from when they decided to go to America.

“It’s just like the ones Aunt and Uncle were running from.” Harry said as he flipped it over and tore it open carefully. “Hogwarts? Wizards? How is this real?” Harry asked after a long moment of reading the parchment, Rick having picked up the envelope from Harry’s loose grasp, reading it and handing it to BJ and Erin when he was done.

“I assure you, it is very much real.” Mr. Snape said snidely as he waved his stick around, and Mr. Rick’s shirt changed into a pink shirt, with dancing snakes on it.

“Cool!” Harry exclaimed with a grin. “Can you do anything with it?”

Groans broke through the air, and all of the adults jumped with their newly honed instincts, pushing the two boys behind them and forming a wall.
“You shall see some in a moment. Which of you tossers left the door open?!” Mr. Snape snarled, waving his stick in a slashing motion as he ran forward to the sound, seeing several of the dead trying to move through the doorway. A moment later, all five dead bodies had frozen still, and a bright red flash shot through all the bodies, and their heads rolled off. A moment later, the heads exploded with a flash of purple light.

Harry and Draco were watching from their corner of the room, the blanket wrapped even tighter around Draco’s thin form, body trembling slightly. Harry could feel the other boy was scared, so Harry reached out and gently held Draco as the boys waited for the adults to move everything and make sure the doors were closed again.

“Well… you’re more useful than the Python.” Rick said with a half-grin as he held up his Colt. “We’re headed up to the Quarry. You should join us, it isn’t safe to stay in one place too long, as you can see.” Rick didn’t blink once at the unusual display that had just taken place. After seeing the dead rise, everything else was just child’s play and taken in stride.

“I.. well, we are running low on food and I can’t keep brewing like this.” Snape said after a moment of thought. “I’ll have to have a word with Draco first, if you have transportation… ?” Snape asked as he kept Draco close to him, under his arm as a fierce hawk would shield it’s baby.

“We have a Subaru Outback, but it may not fit everyone.”

“I can fix that without a problem. I shall meet you back here when you are done loading up.” he said with a dismissive nod, closing the door on Rick, Harry, and the Hunnicutts.

“Well, he seems to not want to waste time,” Rick said with a half-grin as BJ shook his head.

“He’d get along well with Charles, that’s for sure. Both of ‘em seem quite pompous.” BJ laughed as Erin wrinkled her nose. “Just feels like I’m back over there. With all of the….stuff.” BJ sighed as his mustache twitched and Harry giggled. Rick’s shirt still sported the pink, but the snakes had disappeared.

“He’ll change your shirt back, I’m sure, if you ask him nicely.” Harry said with a nod, walking through the storeroom with Erin and BJ filling a large basket with medication.

“I’m sure he will, Harry,” Rick said with a solemn nod as he filled up his own burlap sack with
supplies he found in vending machines and various nooks and crannies.

After a while, the Subaru was loaded with supplies, and the Hunnicutts had gone to retrieve Mr. Snape and Draco. Everyone returned, BJ and Erin sporting slightly surprised expressions. The two magicians carried nothing save a single bag, and BJ explained that Mr. Snape had put everything in a bag. That was magic. That could hold EVERYTHING, Erin added with wide eyes as Draco smirked with newfound arrogance.

“Well, let me arrange things a bit.” Mr. Snape said as he glanced into the Subaru. “Draco, why don’t you sit with Harry in the back, in the center- yes, right there.” he waved his stick- or rather, wand- and after several moments, the inside of the suburban had grown a new row of seats- plenty of seating for Snape to sit with BJ, the two men having ridiculously long legs, and the boys in back with all of the blankets and ‘Muggle supplies’ Snape had grunted as he got into the Subaru, having followed BJ inside, Rick taking the driver’s wheel and Erin navigating.

They would finally reach the quarry quite soon. Only a hour or two remained of driving, and Rick was thrilled at the prospect of seeing his family again, he floored it and put the pedal to the metal. Both magicians, not used to a car, held on for the first few moments, getting adjusted to the new mode of travel.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Rick and Company arrive to the Quarry...

During the long drive to the Quarry, Draco and Harry sat in near silence, the two boys still adjusting to their new circumstances and traveling companions. Draco was still stunned at the state of the Muggle world, having been sheltered from it his entire life. It was a surreal experience, and he was glad to have Uncle Severus with him if he couldn’t have his parents with him. Draco shivered slightly at the final memory he had of his parents, his father screaming at Uncle Severus to --

TAKE DRACO- NOW! THE MINISTRY’S FalLEN. I CAN’T- I CAN’T HOLD THEM OFF- TAKE DRACO- PROTECT HIM- HE IS MY LIFE- TAKE HIM- NOW!

Uncle Severus had, and Draco had clung to the tall, sallow man throughout the ordeal, never realizing his father’s severed hand had clung to him the entire way to the Ministry of Magic in Washington, DC and the wizarding refugee center in Atlanta. Upon the grim discovery, Severus had thrown up and Vanished the hand, but not before he removed the Malfoy and the Black family rings from the hand. He, at least, had that much of his family left with him.

“You okay?” Harry asked quietly, understanding the far-away look in the new boy’s eyes. He could feel the sadness and the hurt in the air. He didn’t have a family to worry about, but he didn’t like all of the dead people coming back to life and hurting others. He had a new family now, and he would like to stay with them as long as he could. Especially if Severus Snape was right, and he was a wizard like him and Draco.

“Does it look like I’m fine?” Draco snapped, letting out a sigh. Snape turned and shook his head at Draco.

“Draco, no need to be rude. Harry was trying to be nice- we all need to take care of each other now. Especially since we may be the last three wizards left in this place. I don’t know if Minerva and Filius made it out- let alone Poppy Pomfrey, or anyone else, from England. We’re lucky to have made it this far. Dumbledore was smart for shutting down Hogwarts when he did. He’s safe over there right now with whoever was left at the school at the time.” Severus explained in a stern timber, as the others listened to Snape’s deep and powerful voice.
“Everyone could be gone? No more wizards?” Rick asked, curious as Erin pointed BJ to a gravel road that she explained was the final turn-off before they would reach the Quarry at the end, and hopefully, Shane and Rick’s family would be there waiting for them. Draco’s eyes closed and he quieted down at the reprimand, not wanting to listen to Uncle Severus explain everything again to Mr. Rick and everyone else.

“It’s possible, but I don’t know how America does things. England was quite isolated. There may be more magical beings around, just keeping to themselves, or… well, whatever it is that they do.” Snape explained as he watched the surroundings carefully for more inferi.

Rick nodded as the car pulled up into the quarry and the door opened, Rick’s tall frame moving quickly to see if he could find Shane, Lori, and Carl. It was quite easy to see who was present in the camp. Upon their arrival, people had come to surround the car, curious as to who the new arrivals were. Shane was moving through the crowd, his King County Sheriff baseball cap easily spotted by Rick.

“SHANE!” Rick shouted, excited to see his best friend- and Lori- who wasn’t far from Shane. He knew Carl was somewhere close by, probably with other children, if they had been here for long. He didn’t know how long the whole disaster had been going on, but he could tell it had been going for awhile from the shape of his hospital room and the numerous visits he had from Harry while he was in his coma.

Shane’s eyes lit up with shock and surprise when his eyes met Rick’s. Tears sprang from Rick’s eyes as he embraced his friend and then his wife, kissing Lori with all of his might, grateful that he had found his family.

“I see you found your family,” Severus said dryly, BJ and Erin standing next to the car with the two boys, who were hovering between Severus and the Hunnicutts, curious about the crowd that had drawn around them. “Boys, stay close to BJ -- what’s your name, anyway, Doctor Hunnicutt?” the young wizard asked, his hands straying to the boys’ shoulders as the crowd parted slightly.

“Call me BJ. Or Beej. Dr. Hunnicutt works fine, too.” the older man said with his beaming smile aimed at the boys, putting them at ease. He was a semi-familiar face in a new crowd and situation. Rick belatedly realized he had been ignoring his fellow companions and nodded, extending an arm to the three adults.

“Bj- he served in Korea- so he has some combat experience, I’m assuming. His daughter, Erin- “ the tall young brunette waved, her brown hair cascading over her shoulders as her head moved to peer up in the back of the crowd, her stature not quite enough to see everything. “Who was a medical student at the U of Georgia.”
“Well- doctors- we’ll certainly be needing more of you! Welcome!” An older man in a fisherman’s cap said with a wide grin, a rifle over his shoulder and a young Asian man hovering by his side with a toolbox in hand.

“Just means more mouths to feed.” a redneck drawled, standing in the back of the crowd, leaning against a motorcycle. “Doctors or not, we’ve already two of ‘em. They’re sleeping it off in their fancy Winnebago.”

“Oh, you hush, Daryl Dixon” Lori said with a grimace sent in the direction of the younger man who had spoken up. “Who are these cuties?” Lori asked, leaning down to face Draco and Harry, who in turn, cringed and hid behind Severus’s voluminous robes.

“Please do refrain from scaring the boys. Boys, introduce yourselves, we should not forget our manners in the fall of civilization.” Severus said in his most scathing, posh accent. He knew his Yorkshire accent would stand out and sound civilized compared to the honeyed southern twang of the people around him. He stood to the full height of his six feet, making Lori take a few steps back from the boys.

“I’m Draco Malfoy,” Draco said sullenly, refusing to leave Severus’s side and by extension, Harry. Draco’s blue eyes narrowed as he watched Lori carefully. He didn’t like the woman, she looked like she was hiding a lot of things, and Draco didn’t like that at all. Harry, being the braver of the two, stood his ground and looked up in Lori’s face with narrowed green eyes.

“I’m Harry Potter. I remember you from the hospital but were kissing Mr. Shane before he locked me in with Mr. Grimes.” Harry said brassily, pouting at Lori as he pointed at Shane. “It isn’t nice to lie and lock me up-” Harry was cut off by gasps from the crowd which drew around the newcomers and turned to face Shane, Lori, and Rick.

“I’ll go keep an eye on the children- they shouldn’t be here for this,” a small, grey-haired woman said as she reached out for the boys while asking silent permission from Severus, who seemed to be the de-facto guardian of the two. Severus nodded silently after a moment of staring with Draco and handing Draco their magic bag.

“Remember your wand, boy.” Snape whispered, nudging Draco and Harry to follow the grey haired woman who introduced herself as Carol Peletier, and murmured about how her daughter Sophia would like new playmates who had manners. As soon as Carol had left with the boys in tow, the adults began talking while BJ, Severus, and Erin watched the people interact. Severus pulled out a thin stick from his many hidden pockets and edged closer to Rick, eyes on Shane and Lori.
“Lori, Shane? Care to explain?” Rick asked as his eyes widened, and his stance became stiffer. He tilted his head at his friend and wife—or the woman he believed to be his wife. Rick moved a step back, nearly stepping into Severus Snape. The wizard slunk past Rick, hovering in a position ready to step in, should anything happen.

“Let me explain, all right?” Shane said with a hand out, his other hand taking off his hat. “It all went down so fast, and you were in that damn coma for so long… that we weren’t sure about what would happen.” Shane said with a long sigh as he moved his hands down to his hips and tapped his hat against his leg for a moment as he looked back up at Rick.

“Harry arrived when his aunt got bit. Social Services started sniffing around when the kid fell and a nurse saw the scars he had, and they put him in with you, Rick, when shit started going down and people started eating each other. The kid was scared and needed something to do so we told him to guard you. I honestly- I didn’t know they would kill patients. I was planning on going back to get you once I got Lori and Carl settled in here.” Rick leaned back with his head tilted as he watched Shane and Lori, nodding as he accepted Lori’s embrace.

“Well- thank you for keeping everyone safe. I really, really appreciate that. And taking care of Lori and Carl, as well. Where’s Carl?” Rick asked as he looked around for his son and the crowd began to disperse, the drama over for the moment.

“I believe Carol Peletier took the boys to play with the other children of the settlement, Mr. Grimes.” Mr. Snape replied tersely from his position nearby. “You should find your son there.”

“Of course, Mr. Snape. Yeah- Shane, Lori. This is Mr. Snape, a teacher from England who was here for work when everything went down. Apparently, he had been sent to get Harry and take him back to England.” Rick said succinctly, leaving out any mentions of magic. He didn’t want Lori or Shane to think he was crazy. “He was the biological mother’s brother?”

“No. I was a close childhood friend of Lily’s. Lily and I attended a boarding school together, the same one I worked at when I was sent to retrieve Harry for his schooling there, per his parents’ final wishes. I was the last friend Lily saw before she died.” Snape’s voice was silky and held dark promises of mystery in the simple words. The adults all walked down to the sounds of children shrieking and laughing, splashing in the water and supervised by Mrs. Peletier and a blond-haired woman that was introduced to them as Andrea.

“DAD!”....
Once Carl was in Rick’s arms, Rick’s crusade was complete. He had his family in his arms, and they were safe. All of the doubts and fears that had been plaguing Rick since the first moment Harry had shrieked in his head, disappeared.
Rick, Lori, and Carl immediately started bunking together in their tent. Snape, Draco, and Harry had their own tent, carried by Snape in his never-ending magic bag. Once the tent was set up, only a few people were allowed in, and Snape guarded the tent like a mother hawk on her nest, and the boys stuck with Carol and Sophia Peletier, much to the dislike of Ed Peletier, who had learned quickly not to cross Severus Snape. A few days ago Ed had thoughtlessly grabbed Sophia by the arm and Snape, being familiar with the receiving end of such treatment, did not hesitate to give Ed a thorough tongue-lashing, his Midlands accent coming out and his words echoing in everyone’s memory, giving them shivers:

“Oy, You even FINK of lookin’ you lay one bleedin’ ‘and on t’ wife an’ kid or on me boys, I’ll fuckin’ kill ya. I’ll rip ya limb from feckin’ limb and let the dead feast on ya cohrse, ya fuckin’ waste of air.”

The Snape tent was set up at the edge of the clearing, right near the Dixons’ tent and fairly close to the two RVs that were providing a large barrier for the most exposed area of their clearing. Snape was glad he had a tendency to carry an emergency evacuation bag with him everywhere he went, due to his former occupation and his experiences in the last Wizarding War. It had provided him some of the comforts of home away from England.

He knew he couldn’t put it off forever, and he would address it as soon as he could on his own terms. He had been doing the Arithmancy equations to figure out the odds of their survival together, and he needed more help doing the magical mathematical equations. His Arithmancy was good, but not good enough to calculate in the variations of each individual’s impact on Harry. Lupin, on the other hand, was an excellent Arithmancer, next to Vector and Minerva. The werewolf knew his magical equations and variables like he knew his potions- nearly by instinct and second nature. He knew he had to get to the CDC in Atlanta, they would have an answer. The numbers had shown him that much, and to get more information, he would have to convince the de-facto leaders of their little group- the two police officers: Walsh and Grimes. Grimes was easy enough, but Walsh… Shane Walsh was a loose cannon, and he could see it coming a mile away. Ed Peletier wouldn’t be a
problem any longer if Snape had his way.

“Fuck.” Snape murmured to himself as he eyed his notes, remembering what he had gone through during the first war when You Know Who had unleashed the dead upon the world. These were Inferi, but modified in some Muggle way. From what he recalled, lycanthropes were immune, and the muggle Inferi avoided magical creatures and plants. Therefore, he could devise a cure for this, and end it immediately. Unfortunately, that meant he would have to bring in someone he did NOT want to bring in.

Remus Effing Lupin.

Waving his wand, Snape cast a Patronus, the doe gazing at him serenely. The pearly-white vapor of the small animal glowed faintly in the tent. Luminous blue eyes glowed with what Snape thought as the magic of Lily’s soul should appear to be, luminous and full of peace. The doe moved slightly, its form misty and swirling about Snape as it patiently awaited the message.

“Go find Remus Lupin; bring him to Harry and myself.” He did NOT want the werewolf, but he had no recourse but to bring him so the muggles could develop some kind of cure from the only lycanthrope he knew that would leap at the chance to be of aid, especially to the black-haired boy sitting on the rug before the fireplace, playing cards with his blond-haired godson and the two other muggle children- Carl and Sophia.

Taking a deep breath, snape stepped out of the tent taking in the scenery before him. He could hear people in the small clearing, and he didn't like it. He saw the Dixon brothers outside of their tent, and narrowed his eyes in thought. He had noticed a slight estrangement between the brothers, mostly due to the older one’s posturing.

“How many of those Inferi did you kill- today?” Severus asked as he noticed the still ever present stink clung to the younger Dixon, Daryl, he believed was his name.

“Six. Yesterday it was three. It's getting worse.” He replied in a soft voice hedged with frustration, bordering on anger.

“As I thought. We need to be ready for something to happen- they won't listen unless something happens. Infernal Gryffindors.” Snape groused as he watched Rick discussing something with Shane, pointing to a bag full of guns.
“So you think a herd will come through?” Merle asked with a grunt, plunking down a bottle of alcohol.

“I have no doubt, Mr. Dixon. Be at the ready, and protect the children at all cost.” Snape threw a small bottle at Merle, narrowing his eyes. “Sober or not.” Snape turned to walk off to find The Hunnicutts, perhaps they could take him to the CDC in Atlanta. The Doe patronus would guide Remus to him wherever he went, he should as well get a head start.

"I ain' sittin' aroun' babysittin' a bunch o' kids!" Merle groused as he rose from his perch, absently pocketing the vial out of pure reflex. Snape paused mid-step, not bothering to turn to look at Merle.

"Do as you are told, Dixon." Snape took another step. He knew that the Dixon brothers were best at defense, and he wanted only the best for the children. For Draco, and for Harry. Even if he could barely tolerate the elder Dixon.

"Yeah, shut th' hell up, M'rl." Daryl grunted as he threw his rag at Merle, shoving him down slightly.

"Wha'ever ta both o' you." Merle snorted, kicking a rock with his boot. Snape paused at the noise and turned ever so slightly, his dark eyes flashing with anger and irritation.

“You dunderheads are the best there is; you know how to live off the land, ensuring the survival of my boys, those children, who can be cured of this fucking thing. Of course, you fucking will watch the kids, Dixon, or the world burns.” A moment later a purple light flashed, and Merle blinked furiously. His pleasant alcohol-induced haze was gone, and so was Snape, off talking with Rick, Shane, and the doctors.

It was not until hours later, right before it was starting to get dark when it happened. A thin cry came from the pond where Carol, Lori, and the rest of the women were with the children. Ed was supposed to be guarding them. Flashes of light could be seen in the short distance. Snape was off like a shot, a black flash and he was gone. Rick, Bj, and Shane ran after him, moving like snails compared to the speed of the tall wizard.

“It's too much!” Snape shouted, his wand a blur of light. Lori had Carl and Harry in each hand, Carol had Draco and Sophia, Draco whispering things to Sophia, keeping her calm. The women were behind Snape, Ed had a knife and was stabbing at whatever came close. The men didn't need any prompts.
“Here,” Daryl said, pulling Carol up the path, further away from the walkers. Daryl made sure the children and women were following him and Merle to camp.

“The tent, no one dead can get in. Uncle Severus made sure.” Draco said with a nod, running into the tent. Harry, Sophia, and Carl all followed with Lori and Carol bringing up the rear.

A walker wandered into camp and was felled by Daryl’s crossbow. Another followed, slightly too close to the tent for comfort, but it seemingly ignored the tent for the RV.

“The children okay?” Rick asked, running up from the quarry covered in blood and guts that were clearly not his. Severus, the doctors and Merle followed. Ed was behind them, panting and covered in snot and guts.

“Yeah, got ‘em all in Snape’s magic tent,” Daryl said with a nod as Merle grunted and narrowed his eyes at the tent in suspicion.

“That does it; we are going to the CDC. Severus was right, we are sitting ducks out here. Thank God for that tent.” Rick said with a long sigh, falling to his knees as Lori and Carl ran to him, and Shane clasped his shoulder.

*It was time to leave, was everyone’s shared thought at the moment they all could catch a breath.*
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Off to the CDC they go!

Chapter Notes

I MUST thank my wonderful beta, Star, and everyone over at RWG for their never-ending support. Also, I must thank all of my commenters and everyone who left Kudos. THANK YOU!

Things had been packed, goodbyes made. The settlement had split into two factions, those going to the CDC and those going to Fort Benning.

Rick had taken the lead, followed by Shane and Severus. Daryl and Merle were considered seconds and were surprised by their elevation in status due to Snape’s argument that the two provided for the camp and were invaluable assets. Glenn, Dale, the Hunnicutts and a surgeon named Dr. Winchester and his wife were in the RV provided by Dale, Dr. Winchester’s fancy RV lost to the ravages of the herd that had taken them by surprise. Carol and Ed Peletier with Sophia rounded up their little group going to the CDC, the navigating being left to the doctors of the group who had actually been there before.

Rick wasn't sure if he preferred Dr. Winchester’s pompous attitude or Merle’s racism, but the two of them were driving everyone batty and something had to give soon. Ed was the icing on the cake, his rotten teamwork making even the most easygoing group member want to take Daryl’s crossbow to his head.

“Will SOMEONE take this boorish fool out to go hunt? I can't take one more of his-” Dr. Winchester began protesting, leaning against a Subaru Outback they had been trying to move, Severus loosening it with magic and the other men of the group save for Dale and Ed were pushing it down an embankment.

“Shut your mouth, Dr. Windbag, and go cry to Dr. Hunnicutt.” Merle groused, kicking at a tire and scowling at Severus, who with a wave of his wand, had dissolved every bit of buzz Merle had going from the meth he’d found in a Ford truck ten vehicles back.
“Children, please,” Snape sighed. “All of you keep your mouths shut and get to work. I don’t want to hear another word unless you personally have ties to the CDC,” Snape said snidely, almost too tired to argue back or play referee. They were like squalling Gryffindor first years, all bravado until they actually had to do some dirty work to achieve a goal. “Daryl and Rick seemed to be the only two willing to get their hands dirty without complaint.

“Personal ties, you say?” Dr. Winchester asked, looking up at Snape and moving up from his slump against the outback. “My son works there, he’s a researcher, and I know he has probably refused to leave,” his uppity tone making every word sound like snide bragging.

“WHY? WHY in the nine hells didn’t you mention this when we left, Doctor Winchester?” Snape asked, whirling to face the Bostonian, the chubbier man cringing slightly, sweat soaking his fading Harvard T-shirt.

“Because… well, I don’t know what you can do.”

“He can hocus-pocus our asses outta here, right, Professor?” Daryl said with a nod, pausing in his scavenging of a nearby Toyota Yaris. “I heard you going on about how you could find how to get there through looking in someone’s head. That stuff true?”

“Yes, Mr. Dixon it is true, but it drains my magic. I’m so depleted already that I can probably only manage one or two trips, and certainly not with supplies of any type. I can take Dr. and Mrs. Winchester, and perhaps the children- but that is the extent of my magic. I’m reserving it for- this.” Snape said with a sigh, waving his wand at an oncoming inferi. “I explained this to you and the others yesterday. My magic needs time to restore. It’s like- like a battery. It needs to charge, and each spell I do takes away from the charge.” Snape explained, grateful he had kept his ties to the Muggle world, otherwise, he would have a bitch of a time explaining something like Magic to these people.

“Well- do it. Take the children…” Rick said, pushing his son towards Dr. Winchester. “They need to be safe, and the CDC is probably the safest place right now.”

“I’ll only take the male Winchester first. I do not know if it will be safe for the young ones yet. If it is, I shall make one more trip for them. If not…” Snape trailed off with a sigh. He glanced up at the small crowd that had gathered around him. He didn’t like people relying on him for survival, but if it meant the restoration of civilization.. So be it.

“Your name?” He hadn’t cared enough for the man to learn anything other than Winchester, which was how Bj introduced him.
“Charles Emerson Winchester The Third.” Charles replied in a snotty tone, straightening up his posture. “I’m from Boston, I’m a chief Thoracic Surgeon-”

“Charles. Think of your son, think of the boy in the building. Focus! His smell, the feel of his hand in yours, the sound of his voice.” Snape could feel that Charles wasn’t putting any effort into it because he didn’t believe in magic. “THINK!” Snape snarled, looking into Charles’s watery blue eyes. Black obsidian burned into blue, and with a whispered word, Snape was in Charles’s mind.

*Legilmens.*

Then they was gone with the faintest of ‘pops’.

Daryl and Merle stared at the spot where Dr. Windbag and Snape had been, and then to Rick and Shane. It was clear to them that they had a great advantage in the strange man from England, and they had been ignoring it. When Snape returned, Rick vowed he would sit down with the Professor and they would find out what exactly they could do to keep their group safe. In the meanwhile, they went back to work clearing cars and making sure the RV could manage to at least be able to run properly.

Shane and Rick had been working hard on moving a heavy Chevy Tahoe, its bright blue paint glinting in the Georgia sun when they finally had to stop and take a breath. Snape had been gone only a few minutes, but it felt like hours.

“D’ya think he really can do it? He’s pretty dangerous,” Shane asked with a frown, leaning back on the trunk of the Tahoe. Rick panted and slumped, his hands resting on the open window.

“I think he can, yeah. He’s weird, but … whatever works. He’ll grow on ya,” Rick said with a small chuckle at the end of his pause. Daryl grunted softly as he kicked at a downed walker, finding a glint of metal to be a knife, while Merle wandered off in the woods to “drop the kids off at the pool”

“He’s dangerous, though. He could kill us all and just-”

“But he hasn’t Shane. He’s helped us all, because we helped his boys.” Rick said. His back giving a faint pop as he leaned back, stretching with a slight grimace.
“What, you want him gone?” Daryl asked with a scowl, cleaning up his new find with a rag. “Done more for us than your sorry ass has.”

“Dixon, give me an excuse.” Shane scoffed, kicking at an tire and turning to Daryl, leaning forward to intimidate the hunter. “You and your brother-”

“Don’t bring mah -”

“Stop, just stop. Keep working, so we’re ready to go if we need to go.” Rick said as he walked between Shane and Daryl. “This isn’t the time. Okay? And Shane, leave the Dixons alone. There’s no more jails, there’s no more nothing. We aren’t even police officers anymore.” Rick said with an annoyed grunt, giving one last heave to the Tahoe, sending it into the gaping trench that served as a median for the highway.

It wasn’t time to fight, it was time to unite, thought Rick as he used his frustration as fuel to get the next vehicle cleared, with Daryl scavenging for supplies.

“Sorry, Rick.” Daryl whispered in the softest Southern accent imaginable, Rick blinking at the blue eyes that were watching him. Rick turned slightly to look at Daryl from his position in the front passenger seat.

“Forget it.” Rick said with a half-smile, his annoyance fading. “Shane can be an ass, but he’s a good partner.”

“Partner?” Daryl scoffed with a snort, thinking of the times he had caught Shane and Lori going at it in the woods, or the RV, or.. Well, pretty much everywhere they could with Carl somewhere else. “Sure.” Daryl said with a smirk, not wanting to say any more. Officer Friendly would soon find out, and he wanted to be there right by him with front-row seats and a big bag of popcorn to see the fireworks.

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“Winchester, hurry. You can be sick later.” Snape murmured, dragging the bigger man away from his crouch. “We’ve to hurry to find your son- do you know where he is?”

“Yes- his office is down…” Charles muttered, trying hard not to lose the contents of his meager
lunch. Snape prodded him to go, they didn’t have forever. “Here.” Charles murmured, facing a door that had a security lock. Snape impatiently waved his wand, and the door opened silently. The procedure repeated itself several times as they made their way three floors down until they reached a large laboratory.

“Dad?” a young man with curly brown hair asked, his face the picture of disbelief and shock. “How the hell did you end up here? We’ve levels of security, Dr. Jenner-”

“Later. I shall return.” Snape was gone with a pop, and Charles could only lean down and vomit in reply, his stomach losing its battle.

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Cars had been moved, but Rick didn’t want to start traveling in case Snape needed the same coordinates or whatever to return. As if summoned by thought, the dark man was back in the spot he had left from.

“It is safe. I shall take my boys and Mrs. Winchester- and anyone else?” Snape asked, his dark eyes flashing dangerously. “I must remind you, my supply is not infinite. I only can manage one trip. Make it count.” Snape turned to his two charges and knelt to look at them in the eye.

“Boys. Stay with the WINchesters when you arrive, and do not, do not use your magic unless absolutely necessary. There are trained adults there, and we shall arrive with the RV as soon as possible. Draco- take the bag. I’ll take a tent and a wand, and a mirror. Only use the mirrors in an absolute emergency, and I shall come retrieve you.” Snape held on to the boys tightly, his mouth in a stern line of distaste. He didn’t like leaving Harry and Draco vulnerable, but it was better than taking them through the inferi-infested journey for ninety more miles. Harry and Draco nodded, both boys understanding the gravity of their situation and knowing that Professor Snape had the utmost goal of keeping them safe in mind.

“You’ll come back, right? Promise?” Harry whispered, his large green eyes boring into Snape’s soul. Snape’s mouth went dry at the memory of the same eyes looking up at him years ago, as a war raged on, much like this one.

“Yes.” and with that one word, dark eyes blinked. Children were handed to Snape and Mrs. Winchester, who smiled at the children fondly, whispering to them that her name was Margaret, and she had done this before with other children in a war long ago in a country called Korea with Mr. Hunnicutt. She knew exactly what to do.
“Mr. Snape?” Margaret asked, placing a hand on his shoulder after hoisting Sophia up on her hip so she could hold on to Carl’s hand easier. “Thank you- for everything. I know this is hard for you, but I needed to SAY something. Thank you.” Margaret said with a nod as she held on to Snape firmly, and disappeared with a loud pop.

Retching filled the room, and Charles moaned, turning his head. Did this happen every time? No wonder Mr. Snape hated to do this, thought Charles vaguely as he watched Margaret hold on to Sophia and Carl. Draco was holding his own, looking slightly green while watching Harry hold on to Mr. Snape.

“How.. what?” the curly haired man asked as he watched Margaret with the children. “Mother? Oh my god, thank you…”

“Protect them until I return. Do your job and cure this.” Snape snarled viciously, his voice cold and sharp as he frowned down at his two boys.

“Harry. Draco.” He each, in turn, gave them a brief embrace and gentle pat on the head. It was as far as he would go for showing any form of affection. Severus Snape was not an affectionate man, but he wanted- needed- the boys to know he would return, and Severus Snape kept his promises. Even if they killed him in the end.

“I shall return, and if Lupin comes, Do all you can to assist him.” Snape said as he glanced up at Charles and Margaret. “He’s the cure to this. He was, last time this happened.” Snape said with a nod as he turned on his heel and disappeared into thin air with a loud CRACK that brought Dr. Jenner running.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

They’re off to the CDC!

Snape had returned and he was in a foul mood the rest of the day. He was unable to use his magic due to the strain of using it all on two large trips over such a long distance. He couldn’t do his usual hocus-pocus, the others had noticed. It didn’t escape the attention of Rick, Shane and the Dixons that Snape had no issues with doing things the ‘muggle’ way as he would say. He continued to grumble about, while clearing out a Nissan Xterra and he found a large machete under the front seat.

“Severus, over here.” Rick said, waving Snape over to help with a beat up black Subaru Forester, the last vehicle that had to be moved before they would be clear and could move on further to the CDC. Snape moved silently, having abandoned his jacket and vest, dressed only in his white dress shirt and black slacks. Due to the heat the usually pristine man had even rolled up the sleeves. Rick noticed faint scarring and a stark black tattoo on the inside of his left arm.

The two worked on moving the Forester, which was surprisingly easy to move, Snape taking time to scavenge in the back seat and finding card games and books for the kids. “Thanks.” Rick murmured as he and Snape walked back. Snape handed him the few comics he found in some of the cars. Snape nodded quietly, slinking up into the RV. He closed the door after Rick climbed in. They were all eager to get going, on to the CDC and the rest of their group.

Snape stretched out on a small seat in the kitchenette of the RV, leaning on the table, his head on his arms. Daryl sat in the other seat, cleaning his crossbow. Merle sat in a chair, his legs up on the edge of Daryl’s seat. Carol, Glenn, Ed, and Lori all sat on the crowded and crammed couch. Rick and Dale were in the front with Andrea and the Hunnicutts, navigating the way to the CDC.

An hour later, everyone but Dale, Rick and BJ were dozing. It had been a long day of work, but they were able to clear enough of the highway to exit to the back roads. They hope by taking the back roads from here on out they would not run into any more obstacles like the colossal road block they had just experienced.

“Rick, I really think someone’s following us. Look.” BJ said as he pointed out the rearview mirror. “I thought it was just my imagination but… they’re definitely following us. Should I wake the others?”
“No- let’s just see how things go. They may just be traveling, same as us, to the CDC. I’m sure we’re not the only people who had the idea,” Rick said as he glanced at Dale. “How’s the gas? Engine doing ok?”

“Things will be fine for awhile- but I’m sure we’ll have to stop soon, the radiator is acting up and we could find one here easier, there’s less to worry about around here. I think there’s a place up a few miles where we can pull over, I used to fish near here.” Dale said as his voice got a touch more anxious, and he started to sweat slightly.

“We’ll stop for parts, and see if they stop too. We can take care of things there,” Rick said with a decisive nod, grateful that they had no children to worry about at the moment. It still surprised Rick that Ed had allowed Carol to send off Sophia with Mrs. Winchester, but he had a feeling that Ed would stop behaving himself quite soon- he hadn’t gone that long of a stretch without him causing problems. He knew from his time as a cop that lulls in domestic violence were usually just a build up to a major blow-up.

“Turn over there, up over there on the left.” Erin Hunnicutt said in her bubbly, Los Angeles accent. Dale turned and after a long moment a gas station came to view. It was one of the small mom-and-pop places just outside of the small sleepy towns that populated the outskirts of Atlanta. They were only twenty miles away now; they could arrive there by nightfall if they were lucky and all went well. “I know they should have something at least, we always said no one came here at all. Looks like it may be true.”

The RV shuddered at a stop at the pump, Dale maneuvering it carefully so they could take off quickly if they had to. The minute the RV stopped, Snape and the Dixons were immediately awake and alert, ready for anything, while everyone else slowly woke up and blinked, looking at each other and their new surroundings.

“We’re not in Atlanta yet?” Carol asked, glancing up at Dale who shook his head and tilted it toward Rick, who was talking quietly with Shane and the British Professor in the back of the RV, the Dixons hovering nearby. “What is it?”

“Someone’s following us. Have been for the last five miles.” Erin Hunnicutt said as she leaned against her father, who held her gently. “Dad thinks it’s probably the guy Professor S was talking about.”

“It could be. With him and his kind, who knows?” Daryl murmured with a shrug. He still held his crossbow at the ready as the other vehicle pulled into the gas station. Everyone’s eyes were on the vehicle, which had tinted windows and seemed to be a former police car.
“It has plates from Canada.” Shane remarked with an half-laugh as he leaned on the door. “Ready, everyone? Rick and I will take point, Dale, you and Glenn scavenge and fill up, and everyone else, get supplies, pee, whatever but get the hell outta here the minute you hear something.”

“Gotcha, Shane.” Glenn said with a hearty nod, putting on his baseball cap with determination.

“Yes, sir.” Ed murmured with an annoyed grunt, making it clear he didn’t like taking orders from anyone, but was willing to concede in a situation that could turn into something more.

“Walsh.” Snape grunted, still scowling but looking fresher than he had been when he arrived back from the CDC. “I shall neutralize them if they are wizarding beings. If they have wands, leave them to me.”

“Of course, Severus.” Rick said with a nod, not wanting to mess with Snape after seeing what he could do against the walkers. When the R.V. door opened, everyone scattered, while Rick, Merle and Severus loitered near the RV, eyes on the other SUV.

The doors opened and two men stepped out. The driver was a middle-aged man with greying hair and a scarred face and a greying beard. It made him look like Qui-Gon Jinn had a run-in with Freddy Krueger. The scars were running along the side of his face and one through an eye and part of his nose and chin. It was nearly as if an animal had clawed his face. He was quite the handsome man under the scars, with dark golden eyes and greying brown hair that flowed down to his shoulders, in a half-tail, just like Qui-Gon Jinn, Rick vaguely recalled of the movie he had seen with Carl right before he had been shot.

The other man was older, in his sixties or possibly seventies, and he had dark skin and looked to be Middle-Eastern with perfectly snow-white hair and a large nose. It was possibly as large and hooked as Snape’s. His shirt was covered with blood and dirt, but the Toledo Mud Hens was an apropos team to be rooting for, considering the mud that covered their vehicle.

“Relative of yours?” Merle snorted, nudging Snape and tapping his nose on his way past to go hunt for game in the tall brush nearby. Snape chose not to reply, scowling at the driver instead and waving his wand surreptitiously. The tiny motion was just enough to send Merle a zap of static electricity causing Merle to squeak like a squirrel.

“Severus!” the driver exclaimed, his arms wide open as he ran over to Snape. Merle sputtered in anger and stalked off, grumbling to Daryl about ‘witchy nonsense’. The driver’s nose twitched slightly, sniffing at the air as he reached Snape, Rick and Shane. His smile was sharp and predatory. A dark shadow of something danced in his eyes, promising danger and death for whomever dared to
wake it. His thin and wiry build was all bones and sinew, thin and taut muscle was stretched along
his body, giving him a lean and hungry appearance under a brown cardigan, his outfit ripped from
the closet of Ned Flanders or some nondescript 1950s sitcom father.

“Lupin. Delighted you came all this way with- company.” the black-haired professor said with a hint
of his Midlands accent, the Birmingham leaking through his angry vowels.

“He knew people down here. So, I had to bring him along. I could have apparated, but I didn’t want
to leave behind any of our supplies- in case.” the man said with a frown, his facial hair twitching
with the slight tug of his thin lips as he spoke. “Harry?” Brown eyes searched the landscape, eager to
see a young boy.

“Perfectly safe at the CDC. I apparated him there, along with Draco and the other children. As you
are, I am traveling with the supplies and ensuring the survival of other Muggles.” The older man with
Lupin bowed showing his startlingly white teeth in a wide grin, a welcome contrast to the grim
atmosphere that had taken over the companions from Atlanta. The motion caused the other men to
start slightly.

“Max Klinger, Jack o’ all trades, really,” Max said with his hand held out. Snape didn’t take his
hand, merely staring down at it in disdain. “I see you’re like the Professor here, England?”

“Amazing, magical, observation.” Snape drawled, turning on his heel and stalking off to assure Rick
that all was well, their stalker was indeed the werewolf that would bring them back to civilization
and the sooner, the better.

“Uh- I’m Remus Lupin. What did Severus tell you?” Remus asked in a gentle voice that was a
contrast to his otherworldly appearance, a mousy man next door who looked like a Jedi Knight from
Coruscant.

“He said you were a werewolf and held a cure to this whole apocalypse.” Rick said succinctly, as
Shane gaped slightly at Rick’s straightforward nature. “Shane, we can’t afford to waste time, not
when we have a cure right under our noses, and the ability to make it happen.”

“Okay,” Shane said with a casual shrug and raise of his brows. He was starting to like this new
Rick, this Rick with a mission- even if it did chafe his ass to be second in command. It bothered him
a bit more that a stranger had rode up and immediately been accepted with no questions in their small
group. Times had changed but Shane didn’t exactly feel comfortable with all of the changes.
He could hear shouting from the other side of the gas station, and ran over to assess the situation. Qui Gon-- *Lupin* - shane corrected himself with a mumble, ambled along. He held a long, thin stick in his hand that looked similar to the wand Professor S had been using to kill the walkers with.

“The *FUCK* ?” was the last thing Shane heard before everything went black.

Three fluffy rabbits sat where Merle and Ed had been arguing, and the third sat to the side, stunned. Carol had been in a slight crouch, investigating a cardboard box that advertised the promise of Twinkies.

“He walked right into it, Rick. He’ll be fine.” Severus said with a roll of his eyes. Lupin grunted softly, waving a wand and a basket slowly formed itself out of thick and sturdy reeds from the empty lot adjacent to the gas station. “They’ll stay bunnies until they calm down. I’m not as good as old McGonagall; she can keep someone a rabbit for weeks,” he mused.

“Oh yeah,” Lupin remembered with a laugh, revealing slightly pointy teeth. “I remember that. Sirius looked just like Shane there.” Lupin pointed at the only coal-black rabbit of the bunch, the fluffy coats of the rabbits matching the hair color of each man. Carol leaned down, picking up a bulky grey rabbit.

“Ed…” Carol whispered, putting him into the basket, trying hard not to smile too much. Her blue eyes twinkling with delight as she eyed Daryl. “Ed’s a *rabbit* .”

“He won’t remember a thing. Sirius never did.” Remus said with a nod, eyebrows rising when he could smell old blood, fear, and anxiety coming in waves from the petite woman. He could tell something had happened with her, and she needed—she needed safety, a PACK, Lupin’s inner wolf howled to him as he tried to calm it into submission for the time being. It was too close to the full moon for him to risk anything with the Muggles. Severus, perhaps, but not the Muggles. They were powerless against his werewolf form, called Moony.

“Can you explain?” Rick asked, scratching his curls and leaning back, trying to make sure Daryl wouldn’t try to make things worse, his crossbow aimed at Severus as he saw a rabbit where his brother had just stood.

“The three were arguing- loudly enough to attract these inferi- and I couldn’t risk more. They wouldn’t pay attention, and were about to come to blows. I only did what McGonagall did- you know, Remus- and they’ll turn back once they have their emotions in check. I’m fairly sure Mr. Walsh will wake and transform soon, since he walked right into it, and won’t have any memory of being a rabbit. Your brother and *Peletier* - well.. Remus? It was your - furry friend- who was
rabbited. You can tell them more.” Snape seemingly slunk back into the shadows, eager to be ignored and resumed inspecting the local vegetation for any herbs or fungi useful for his potions-making, or at the very least, cooking.

“Sirius was just fine. He was a bit of a headache and - well, *pellets* for a few days.” Remus coughed, trying not to laugh too much at the memories, picking up the sleek black rabbit who was still dazed as he spoke. Pellets dropped out of the rabbit’s rear end, scattering down on the other rabbits.

“Merle,” Daryl sighed softly. He picked up the fluffiest rabbit, it’s brown fur twitching as the rabbit blinked furiously. Daryl let out a snort of amusement as he put the rabbit in the basket next to Shane and Ed. “You got what you deserved. At least you’re just a rabbit. I imagine it could have been a lot worse,” Daryl said with a huff of amusement, smiling at Carol to put her at ease.

“Is that dinner?” Bj Hunnicutt asked, walking up with their newcomer.

“No!” everyone yelled as they grabbed for the rabbits. Each fluff ball quickly found a home in someone’s arms.

“What?” BJ asked, confused. Lupin snickered and murmured explanations for the others as they all gathered to see what was going on. Rick and Severus readied the RV. Carol, Lori and Daryl secured the rabbits in the basket, making sure no one had hopped away and no one left pellets in the basket.

“Here’s some carrots for the trip, hopefully they turn back soon,” Erin said with a laugh, flopping down on the couch next to Carol and nuzzling at Shane Rabbit, who was starting to perk up. The two newcomers, Max Klinger and Lupin had agreed to drive their SUV up ahead while the RV followed. If all went well, they were to be at the CDC by nightfall. Lupin had volunteered to Apparate ahead so they could get a cure started sooner, but Severus had wanted another wizard around.

Rick realized that turning the three men into rabbits did drained Snape’s already weak magic but it was worth it, Rick thought with a tiny smile. He watched the three rabbits interact in the magic basket. Shane was still woozy, but promising to transform “within the hour” as Severus had said, and Merle seemed to be calming down while he chomped on a carrot. Ed the Rabbit just sulked in a corner of the basket, grunting and hopping away each time Rabbit Merle kicked a pellet his way. Leave it to Merle to make his point even as a rabbit.

Two rabbits, four women, five men, one wizard, and one werewolf all found themselves pulling up in front of the CDC at sunset. It was quite fitting; their search was coming to an end. Little did anyone know what would be in store for them only a few hours later.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

They're finally at the CDC... now what?

Chapter Notes

A big THANK YOU to those at the RWG, especially the lovely Star, who has helped me through this by being my beta. Plus everyone else who helped contribute to the events taking place at the CDC. Also, do leave reviews, kudos.. they help feed my plot bunnies, who in turn grow and help make this story happen. So.. feed the bunnies, guys!

Shane woke when he felt the RV rumble to a stop. He had an headache and an odd taste of carrots in his mouth. The last thing he could recall was fighting with Merle, arguing about some dumbass thing the redneck was saying about Rick. Turning his neck, he could see Lori looking at him with her doe eyes and …. was she cuddling two rabbits??

“Long story, welcome to the CDC.” Dr. Hunnicutt said with a light laugh, leaning against Shane to give him slight support so he could sit up and look around.

“We’re pulling up now. Lupin’s already at the doors and I see Winchester with the kids, they're excited to see us,” Rick said with a wide grin. He waved to Carl, knowing he couldn't see him, but waved anyway. Everyone crowded to the windows, vying to see the kids and their potential salvation.

“We’ll have to go through this herd, but then we'll be home free.” Glenn said with a slight waver to his voice, his own black eyes searching out Severus. Severus was scowling at the door, leaning against the handle as he was watching the situation.

“Do secure the rabbits- we must hurry and move fast. I doubt even Lupin in his - ferocity- can handle so many of the inferi,” Severus replied snidely as his eyes moved over Shane with a glint of malice in them. Shane could tell that Severus wasn’t thrilled with him, but some more important fish had to be fried first- such as them getting into the CDC.

“Lupin!” Severus shouted, flipping open the door to the RV and waving his wand, decapitating several walkers that had been lurking by the door. “Doors!”
“You don’t have to tell me twice, Snape!” the Qui-Gon lumberjack sprinted from the police SUV up to the doors to the CDC, pounding on them and screaming to be let in.

“Are you a wizard or not? Stupid werewolf!” Snape snarled, shooting a flash of red at the doors. Lupin shouted, covering himself from the flying glass. A moment later, the doors hissed open and a man in a hazmat suit let Lupin in, followed by the newcomer Max Klinger. Everyone else left in the RV sprinted for the doors, Rick bringing up the rear with his colt python, Snape in the front with light flashing from his wand.

“Thank you.” Rick gasped out as the door slammed shut behind them, walkers groaning and clawing at the people inside from the shattered glass door.

“Reparo.” Lupin exhaled shakily, and the glass disappeared, repaired as if nothing had ever happened. Walkers’ limbs dropped to the ground, the flesh seared through where the glass had come back together.

Carol could feel the rabbits quaking in her arms. The light, noises, and the smell was overpowering their fragile sensory systems. Kneeling to the ground now that the threat was gone, Carol gently placed the rabbits on the floor of the CDC and rose to her feet, brushing all of the rabbit hair off of her, including the unmentionable tink of pellets hitting the floor.

“Handy.” Merle grunted, shaking his head from where he had been lying prone on the CDC floor, Ed at his side. “What th’ fuck happened? My mouth tastes like carrot and … ass?”

“Long story.” Lupin said with a sigh and exhale, walking carefully to the hazmat-clad being.

“You must be our…test subject, from what the Winchesters told us.” the man replied as he took off his face mask. “I’m Dr. Bruce Jenner. The Doctors Winchester are downstairs with the children, we had to take them downstairs after Mr. Snape shattered the window.”

“Temper, Severus.” Lupin chided, as he eyed Snape carefully. He could see the faint flush of annoyance in Snape’s high cheekbones. Memories of Snape throwing deadly hexes and curses when in a temper chilled him. He didn’t want Snape to go off- at least, not yet. Lupin tried to lighten the mood with a slight smirk as he leaned against the doorway. “Lead the way, Dr. Jenner, so we can fix this. I don’t want to be here any longer than I have to, I’m dying for a cuppa.”
“Booze would be great…” Daryl murmured with a hearty nod from Merle.

“Tea, you idiots. We’re British.” Snape snarled from a dark corner where people had forgotten he existed. “Lead the way, Jenner.”

“As you wish. Everyone has to be screened prior to entry, that’s the only …charge.”

“Fine by me.” Rick said with a nod as he followed Shane and Lori, who were hovering near Jenner. “Just take me to my son.” the group followed Jenner down several floors to an elevator that he had to use a keycard to unlock. The journey continued until they were let out into a large corridor and an auditorium.

Their medical screenings were thorough, and the doctors Winchester and Hunnicutt took some time to make sure everyone was healthy and uninjured. Once the exams were done, the children were brought in, much to Rick and Lori’s delight. The three families huddled together- Rick and Lori with Carl, Shane hovering close by. Ed and Carol held Sophia close, while Remus eyed the small family with interest, sniffing the air. Severus stood close by to Lupin and the Dixons, Harry and Draco huddling close to him, practically hiding themselves in the long recesses of his wizarding clothes.

Greetings were exchanged, and people broke off in groups to find their lodgings, the Winchesters taking the Hunnicutts, Grimeses, and the wizards off to a larger branch of rooms while the Peletiers, Dixon brothers, Dale, Glenn and Andrea were shuttled off to the opposite end of the hallway to the other suite of rooms. The floor was like a large floor of a hotel, a room for each family, or individual in the cases of Andrea, Glenn, Max Klinger, and Dale.

“So this is all you have?” Snape drawled, annoyed that after all of this time, they still hadn’t evolved much further than this. “We learned this information back in 1981, and nothing?” Snape scowled, leaning against the bank of computers that made up the main room of the CDC. They had just watched Test Subject 19 die and reanimate for the sixth time.

“In Korea, they had something like this, but my notes. They’re incomplete. I know Hawkeye had more written down somewhere. He was always writing to his dad about everything,” BJ said with a sigh. “We had a patient… presenting with high fever, nausea, we thought it was a severe case of the flu and he died. He reanimated several days later and was killed when a shell hit him so no one really knew exactly what happened, but Hawkeye and I, we operated on him and we knew him and Father Mulcahy buried him, gave him last rites. Max, you remember?”

“I remember. A little too well. It was right when Hawkeye went round the bend, with the chicken...
thing and his trip to the loony bin.”

“Oh. That. Yes.. well, and Mulcahy went deaf and everything just was swept under the rug. Charles, do you have any notes, I wonder? You were always writing to your sister and family. Do they have anything?” BJ asked with a frown, leaning over a computer and hovering over Erin, who was slouching in a computer chair slightly underneath her father.

“Father wrote of something like this, I read it in his journals when I was a boy. It, it actually made me want to become a doctor.” Charles the Fourth replied with a sigh as he put his legs up on the siding next to Erin’s seat. “Grandmother burned it, unfortunately, but I managed to save a page or two. It’s actually in my bag,” Charles replied snidely. “I used everything in my research, but I haven’t been able to curb the… cannibalism. I’ve been able to slow the regression, though.” Charles said with a huff.

“Slow is good, young Winchester.” Severus replied as he turned to face Charles and his son. “Although, I would like to end it, not slow it down. Perhaps… Remus, has your wolf donated anything yet? What’s the current phase of the moon?” Snape asked, starting to pace around the room and disappearing within himself, murmuring to himself about the waxing and waning of the moon.

Everyone stared at Snape, and the dark-haired wizard glared up at them, waving them off as he murmured to himself more about doing ‘arithmancy’ on a blackboard. Jenner followed him off, trying to guide him into an office that had a white board so he could do his wizarding mathematics.

“I suppose we should go check things out?” Shane asked with a shrug. Lori nodded as she held on to Carl. “I think I saw a game room down near the living area. Let the kids check it out while we adults hunt around for supplies?” Shane tried to take the lead and have Rick and Lori follow, but everyone followed with slight difficulty, people murmuring among themselves about how great it was for Rick to have brought ‘Prof S’ to help cure the blight upon the land.

“Carol, would you mind staying with the kids here while we look things over?” Shane asked. He was leaning against the doorframe that led to a room that had ping-pong, air hockey, a video game console, and shelves full of books, games, and other forms of entertainment for anyone of any age and interest.

“Wow!” Carl and Sophia shouted, leaping forward to explore with Harry and Draco carefully walking in after them. Black-haired Harry clung nervously to the flaxen-haired youth at his side, who was murmuring carefully to him about how Doctor Winchester had brought them here once before, but Harry had been having a much-needed nap.
“And I won’t get in trouble?” Harry murmured quietly to Draco, bright green eyes hesitant, wanting to believe Draco.

“Kid, you can do ANYTHING and you won’t get in trouble. No one here will hurt you.” Shane said with a firm nod as Rick took a knee and looked up at Harry.

“Harry, you helped me find my family. You will be fine here with Lori and Carol. You were fine with the Winchesters too, remember?”

“Yeah, but I have a feeling.” Harry said with a slight frown. “Like it was before you woke up.”

“Well, Harry- If you need to get us, you can get us like you got BJ and myself, back in Atlanta. Remember? It worked, didn’t it?”

“Yeah.” Harry said with a smile and nodding with refreshed courage. He was feeling better with a touch of reassurance from Rick, who he looked up to now that Severus was gone working on the cure. Harry smiled and sat down at a nearby table with Draco, Carl and Sophia. The children began a board game, thrilled to have a new distraction now that they didn’t just have cards or comics.

The adults broke out in various groups heading in various directions to explore the CDC with newfound peace and confidence. They didn’t have to worry about any dead coming after them. The doctors all had gone off to confer with Severus and Remus, so it just left the original group from Atlanta to do the exploring with the exception of Lori and Carol.

Everyone broke out in small groups, agreeing to meet back at the game room in two hours. Shane and Rick went with the Dixons to explore the northern corridor, while Dale, Andrea and Glenn went to explore further down and Ed went to explore the kitchen with the intention of gorging himself and leaving the others to their devices, but told everyone he would check out the mechanic pool.

*****I**N**F**E**R**I**
Rick was hunting through canisters near where the Dixon’s were searching when he heard the scream. Dropping everything, Rick and the Dixon brothers ran down a corridor and up the stairs to a maze of hallways when the scream echoed again, giving them a closer location.

The wizard, werewolf and doctors came running from the other direction, the two groups meeting Glenn and Carol at the end of an unexplored hallway.

“Where are the kids?”

“I woke up and they were gone. I went to look for them… then heard a scream.” Carol said as she frantically clutched at Severus Snape, who handed her off to Remus Lupin. The scruffy werewolf took Carol gently in his arms, whispering to her that he could smell the children, he would track them down for Carol. Harry’s scent was imprinted into him, he could clearly smell Harry, Sophia, Carl, and Draco all mingled in the corridor.

“Well, furball?” Snape snapped, leaning forward with Rick and Daryl at his side, Merle slightly behind Daryl.

“This direction.” Lupin said after a momentary pause to sniff the air. “It's recent and there's no fear. Let's go.” Lupin ambled down a set of stairs, the acrid smell of urine hitting everyone's nostrils.

“Back!” Rick shouted, leaning forward as he held out his Python, Snape and Daryl flanking him with their wand and crossbow drawn, ready for action to go down. Lupin shouldered his way forward in front of the pack.

“Immunity, remember? They don't like me.” Lupin said with a scowl as he followed the scent trail to a set of double doors with a keypad.

“Snape?”

“Alahomora”
The door beeped open, leading to a long corridor. Crying could be heard further down, and all of the parents present flew down the corridor, the high, fearful cry familiar to them, the sound of a child calling for a parent after a nightmare, needing comfort and safety, but not quite enough to convey pure terror.

“Sophia?” Carol cried out, finding the girl crouched in a corner, Draco holding her and trying to comfort her.

“Draconis!” Snape cried, bolting forward to gather up the boy in his arms as Rick and Lupin looked around at the scene, trying to figure out what happened while Carol and Snape comforted the two children, the wet pants magically turning dry without a word from anyone.

“Harry, Carl? Where are they?” Rick asked after the children had a moment to breathe and reorient themselves in the arms of their guardians.

“We kept hearing a funny noise and we thought it was one of those things. We didn't want it to hurt Carol.” Draco said as he clutched Severus in a tight embrace, his face slightly buried in the robes Snape had thrown on out of habit, having been a wizard far longer than he had been Muggle.

“And?” Rick prompted gently, stroking Draco’s back. “You kids were brave, but leave the walkers to us. Okay?”

“Okay.” Sophia sniffled as she looked up from the crook of Carol’s neck. “Can you find Carl and Harry? They chased the thing away and went to kill it so it couldn't get me. I fell and hurt my ankle.” Sophia looked up at Rick and Severus with a tear streaked and snot covered face.

“We’ve got a werewolf. Of course we can.” Snape said with a frown, looking up at Rick. Moments later, two teary and sniffling children were taken up to the canteen with Carol, Glenn and the Hunnicutts so the rest of the group could hunt for the two boys.

“Sniff away.” Snape snorted, nearly tempted to put a leash on Lupin. Lupin turned and scowled at Snape, moving out of the room and further down the corridor. The small group could see signs of a struggle, strewn objects littering the corridor until they reached a junction.

“This way.” Lupin decided after a moment. “I smell blood. Old blood. I think it's the thing that went after the boys.” The group followed Lupin, weapons at the ready to blast at anything that looked dangerous. Moments later, quiet scuffles could be heard. Thumping became louder, and voices.
“Harry! Carl!” Lupin shouted, keeping Rick from taking off to grab whatever was in the room.

“We don't want to scare them. Magic can be unpredictable if it's wild and out of control.” Snape replied softly, whispering to Rick. “Can't you feel it, silly muggle?” He whispered further, gesturing to the faint smell of sulfur and electricity in the air.

“That's magic?”

“Wild magic. Untrained.” Lupin replied to Merle’s curiosity. “Have you smelled that before?”

“A few times.” Daryl remarked, staying close to his brother’s side. “A few hunts”

“Then you're not quite Muggle, but not wizarding. Just… sensitive.” Remus smiled and turned back to the doorway.

“Rick, it's all yours.” Snape moved to partially block Rick, neutralizing all magic loose in the room before Rick could rush in with his Python.

“DAD!” Carl shouted, running up to Rick, climbing up on him in an embrace, Harry right behind him. Snape stared down at the burnt-out corpse of something that used to be human. The walker, or inferi, was wearing an CDC uniform and seemed to have female characteristics.

“Mayhaps a discussion is in order.” Snape replied after a long moment, a long thin finger running along his lower lip in thought as he absently held on to Harry with his other hand.

“Then let's do it.” Rick said with a bow of his head, picking up his son and asking about their adventure, while Snape and Remus followed the Dixon brothers, while the Winchesters stayed behind to examine and take care of the corpse.

Questions needed to be answered, and quickly- after they found Lori and Shane, Rick thought. An odd feeling seemed to settle in his stomach. He caught movement out of the corner of his eye and he saw the youngest Dixon brother step up beside him. Daryl Dixon at his side as it had been, all through this ordeal.
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Shit goes down at the CDC, and the two English wizards lose it...

Chapter Notes

A big THANK YOU to Benny for help on this chapter, and my wonderful beta as always, and the wonderful people over at RWG. Thank you all!

It was the noise that caught their attention. Rick and Severus were at point, Daryl in between while Lupin held on to Harry and Carl, the werewolf the most vicious defense in case things went bad.

It was a quiet moaning that caught their attention, just like a walker that would be trapped- just like the woman Carl and Harry had to fight off of Sophia and Draco. Given their prior experience, they knew there had to be more test subjects in the CDC somewhere. The three men immediately stood by the door. Rick glanced at Severus and Daryl, Daryl returning his gaze with a slight nod to indicate he was ready to take on anything; he would be backup. Severus held his wand at the ready, eyes dark and narrowed with a pinched scowl of anger and annoyance.

_BAM._

With the single sound of the door slamming open, everyone’s world was forever changed and thrown into chaos. Lori looked right up at Rick, and let out a loud shriek of horror, while Rick held up his colt Python point-blank at Lori. The three men hadn’t fully registered the scene. Three weapons all pointed, point-blank at Lori and Shane’s heads. An acrid smell of urine filled the room, the hot liquid dripping all over Shane, who had been buried to the hilt with Lori riding him like a jockey in heat.

“Hades, woman, have you no decency?” Snape scowled down at Lori and Shane, his Midlands accent taking over, the posh London professor disappearing and the brit street urchin blasting through, with his magic crackling. “You’re fucking around while people could have DIED, your own husband and child- I can’t be arsed t’ save ya bleedin’ arse!” A flick of his wand brought Lori off of Shane, a brown trickle dripping down Shane’s thighs to puddle on the floor. Rick nearly gagged at the sight and smell, his gun still aloft, with Daryl’s crossbow slightly lowered, but still at the ready.
“I told you! It isn’t nice to do that,” Harry piped up from behind Lupin, the boys peering around the werewolf.

“How long, Harry?” Rick asked, turning to glance at the small waif-like boy whose green eyes pierced Rick’s heart with the sadness and pain, feeling the empathy emanating from the boy at being in a bad situation.

“They did a lot of stuff at the hospital. I was gonna tell you, but then they started killing people,” Harry said with a shrug. “I like you alive.”

“EFFING WANKERS,” Lupin scowled, furious beyond measure as he tugged the boys by their collars. Rick shuddered as he saw the vicious gleam in Lupin’s eye. Snape, although, hadn’t battered an eye and merely tilted his head for a silent instruction for Harry to follow the werewolf up to the canteen with Carl and to STAY THERE, a narrowing of the eyes indicated.

“You pissed off a werewolf. Not a lot of people can do that and stay alive. I can attest to that,” Snape said with a small laugh filled with pure malevolent evil that sent shivers down everyone’s spine. A lazy flick of his wand sent Shane sprawling up against the wall, brown smearing his bare thighs from Lori’s fearful expulsion. “A small reminder to you and yours if you decide to fuck…. “ Snape had begun to curse Shane with a curse that would make him vomit slugs for several hours, but Rick had interrupted him. It was juvenile schoolyard curses, but it was still worth using on a lowlife like Shane.

“Just get the fuck out of here,” Rick said with a scoff, turning on his heel and walking out of the door, but not before a faint clink of metal could be heard, a ring falling to the floor to roll over and land at Shane’s feet, a small trail of urine in its path. A slug suddenly dropped out of midair, landing on the ring. Several slugs followed, and a shriek came from Lori at the discovery of the source—herself.

“It shall wear off, eventually,” Snape said with a malevolent smile, his crooked and tea-stained teeth adding to the evil of his features as he turned to glance at Daryl and Rick in the doorway.

“We got you, Rick,” Daryl said with a small huff, nodding at Snape, who merely grunted softly and pocketed his wand, following the other two men out of the room. The three men had gone up a set of stairs and were close to the canteen when a bloodcurdling scream broke through the air.

The three of them moved quickly as a unit, slipping effortlessly in a cadence of teamwork, their
weapons at the ready and eyes all over the hallway until they reached the canteen where pure chaos found them.

“DAD!” Carl yelled.

“Uncle Sev!” Draco yelled fearfully, holding on to Harry.

All of the children ran to the men, hiding behind them as Rick finally took in the scene that greeted them. Ed Peletier was hovering over Carol, and Remus Lupin was staring up at Ed, teeth bared and dangerous. His bright eyes were changing- changing along with his hair and the rest of his body.

“DON’T YOU TURN, LUPIN,” Snape’s posh, clipped London voice was back in full effect, nearly filling the room with its deep and silky baritone, putting Alan Rickman to shame, Rick thought briefly as he watched the scene, the children secured between himself and Daryl, with Merle bringing up the rear, coming in from a side room where he had been trying to figure out where someone would hide their stash in this kind of place.

“Watch the children, Merle. You can kill, they can’t,” Severus Snape replied without turning to look at Merle, having heard the man enter the room. Merle had a distinct walk, one that Snape had found quite comforting- someone who was his equal, even if it was a racist backwoods redneck from Georgia. Merle scowled at Snape, squinting his eyes at the tall man by Officer Friendly. The dark professor had done right by them, so Merle figured Professor seemed to know exactly what he was doing. Now wasn’t the time to fight about semantics, but England was right, Merle knew how to kill, and kill properly. He’d school England later on who was really boss, England couldn’t order him around like he was some kind of nanny to watch the children.

“Come t’ ol’ uncle Merle. Wanna some sweet tea?” Harry’s hand found its way in Merle’s oversized paw, Sophia following closely, her hand holding on to Draco’s tightly. Carl wandered by Merle, clutching his plaid shirt by the tail, his eyes still on Rick.

“Go with Merle, Carl. Merle can keep you safe, I’ve got to do that right now, keep everybody safe too. I’m a cop, remember?” Rick said with a nod, leaning back slightly to nod at his son, Carl leaning in closer to Merle, following along with the other children to the side room where Merle could be heard talking with all of the children in low, even tones as if talking to a wounded or cornered animal.

“Too fucking late, Professor!” Dr. Hunnicutt yelled from his position in the corner of the room. The werewolf was large, larger than an average wolf, but not so large that it would be a monstrous being.
“Remus.” Rick began, trying to bargain with the stocky bearded Englishman who was suddenly growing an excess of body hair.

“Don’t even, Grimes. Not now.” Snape exhaled sharply, waving his wand and a red bubble enclosed the Hunnicutts, Carol, and the trio of Rick, Daryl and Severus, keeping everyone but Ed safe from the wolf. “We don’t want to become targets,” he hissed, leaning in close to Daryl and Rick to keep their bubble as small as possible to conserve space. Seeing what was happening, BJ grabbed Carol, holding her closer to himself and Erin, the small woman sobbing and pleading for Remus not to hurt Ed, it was just a misunderstanding-

“Misunderstanding!” BJ growled, still holding on to Carol and his eyes focused on the two men in the center of the room as time seemed to freeze. “Someone trying to kill you isn’t a misunderstanding, it’s attempted murder, and that’s what I saw,” BJ said, trying to stop himself from throttling the small woman sobbing in his arms. BJ looked up at the other bubble, waiting for Lupin to do something, but the werewolf was stiff, still not quite transformed completely.

BJ continued his tirade at Carol, looking up at Rick, Severus and Daryl as he spoke, trying to be as gentle as possible to the traumatized woman that Erin was trying her best to comfort. “We were trying to work with Draco and Sophia, getting them all calmed down when this asshole came in to beat on Sophia for wandering off, but Carol here did the right thing and got Sophia and Draco away-but then the idiot beat on her for allowing a filthy boy to be alone with his daughter! As if she was an object to be possessed, not a human being. He said horrible things. Things no human being should take... And she allowed it to happen. He was ready to kill her- he was choking her out, but then Remus arrived with the kids-”

“And went feral,” Snape concluded with a nod, his voice tired and worn. “Remus always has been a chivalrous knight in tarnished armor.” Snape frowned and shook his head, pinching the bridge of his nose as if to ward off an headache.

As if a spell was broken by Snape’s voice, Lupin howled, high and keening. The howl set everyone’s bones on edge, and Ed snapped, trying to fight back and screaming that he had every right to do whatever he liked to whoever he wanted to. The wolf didn’t speak, feral yellow eyes boring into Ed as he moved slowly, circling Ed.

In a flash, the wolf was on Ed, his teeth sharp and glinting in the harsh fluorescent light. Blood sprayed all over the walls and slid off the shields that Snape had enacted. Screams could be heard from Ed and Carol, Ed still fighting off the wolf as the wolf gnawed through Ed’s back, pulling out Ed’s ribs while Ed collapsed to his knees. Lying spread-eagle before Carol and the Hunnicutts, Ed grabbed for Carol, still trying to inflict some sort of pain on her to convey that this was somehow all her fault. The wolf, however wouldn’t have any of that, not at all.
And that was the last thing Carol heard, as she fainted in BJ’s arms. Lupin gnawed at Ed’s lungs, the wolf’s tail wagging ferociously as he nudged Ed’s body over to gnaw at Ed’s reproductive organs. Ed was catatonic, bleeding out and very near death. Lupin seemed satisfied with his work, finally as a final insult, lifted his leg and urinated on Ed as if setting the final word for anyone who dared harm a woman or child in ‘his’ family unit.

Snape shuddered involuntarily as the wolf loped up at him, licking its bloodstained chops and wagging his tail, bouncing around slightly as he panted happily.

“I see why the walkers don’t wanna mess with ‘im.” Daryl whispered shakily, leaning on Rick slightly. He had seen wolves eat all sorts of creatures, but never one eat an actual human being, while still alive.

“Is this cannibalism?” Rick asked vaguely, not quite coming to terms with the situation he had just witnessed. Snape snorted lightly, waving his wand and taking down the shields. Everyone slowly came together, carrying Carol into the other room to be treated by the Hunnicuts and eventually the Winchesters, who had come up from their study with Dr. Jenner just in time to miss the show from the werewolf Lupin.

“What’s a wolf doing here?” Charles asked snidely, his pompous attitude never quite able to leave him, but people were starting to recognize his snobbery as an innate part of him, hard to erase but tolerable, much like Merle’s racism.

“You don’t want to know. Really,” Rick said with a weak nod, stretching out on a bench seat with Carl in his arms, and Harry by his side, with Draco and Severus at the other end. Daryl lounged with Merle against the counter, eyeing the mess in the other room with a frown.

“That bad, baby brother?” Merle asked Daryl, tilting his head and trying not to see the blood and gore oozing out on the floor near the doorway, the stench starting to seep into the room they were into.

“I saw less blood in the OR in Korea.” BJ said with a slow sigh, looking up at Merle, recognizing a fellow Vet by sight, the military bearing hard to scrub. “You?”
“Never got outta Basic.” Merle grunted with a frown, slightly surprised by the general acceptance from the old army doctor. “Saw lotsa stuff tho’ on … well, stuff.” Merle trailed off, eyeing the kids and feeling suddenly, self-conscious that he had people around him and his brother—people that actually looked at him and wanted to listen to him speak and actually GIVE to the group.

“Well, now that we know what Remus can do… can he do more?” Rick asked Severus, who was getting up and spreading his large magician’s cloak over the boys. Straightening up, he looked every inch the proper man from England from the soles of his black Docs, Black wool pants, black vest, and white button-up shirt. There was even a cravat, a black cravat to complete the image of a schoolteacher from England. He even has the voice to match, thought Rick vaguely as Snape eyed everyone in the room for a moment before speaking.

“He can cure us. Jenner, Winchesters, Hunnicutts- you take samples from him, and fix this thing.”

“I wish we could… but we can’t.” Jenner said with a grunt and a sigh. “We’re all infected.”

“So? A cure can fix it.” Snape said tiredly, turning to Jenner with dark eyes filled with a tired anger that no one wanted to find out about, having seen only the barest bit of his temper with the rabbits.

“We can’t,” Jenner hedged- the CDC is set to self-destruct when the generators run out of fuel. There is a timer, “he pointed to a red number counting down on a nearby screen. . You know the procedure, Charlie.”

“But- don’t we have the backup generators, and we surely can leave at any time?”

“We’re on our last twenty minutes of fuel, Charles.” Jenner said tiredly, leaning forward on the counter and eyeing everyone in the room.

“Wait.. are you telling me, that after all of this SHITE, we will go up in flames?” Snape shouted, as everyone began to shout at the revelation of their impending doom. “When were you PLANNING ON TELLING US THIS ?!” Snape shouted, his rough end of England showing, the scrappy little boy of Cokeworth’s streets coming out full-blown at Jenner, fists flying.

“Easy, Professor, can’t you magic us out of here?” Daryl and Merle asked, the brothers holding Snape back from thrashing Jenner fully, Remus the wolf growling viciously from behind Snape, shielding the children from any accidental harm.
“My magic’s fucking depleted, you cocksucking fuckwits, we’re fucked.” Snape cursed like a sailor, his English accent slipping into something resembling cockney, making Rick think of an filthy chimney sweep with Alan Rickman’s voice. “The shields were it. Jenner, you-”

“Snape, down! Let’s get outta here, we gotta bug out, Charles.” BJ barked out with authority, his military training taking over. “We did this in eight minutes, Charles, we gotta do it again. Margaret, you and Carol get the kids with Merle-”

“*The fuck am I -”*

“You’re the best, Dixon, next to Snape and Rick.” BJ replied smoothly, not missing a beat. Charles snickered, but then stopped with his smirking when Daryl shot him a murderous glare.

“Charlie, you and Erin get the medical supplies to the RV. Rick, you and Daryl get everything we need from here. I’ll get everyone else, and tell them we’ve got to bug out” BJ continued in a voice that conveyed authority and knowledge. Everyone instantly jumped into action, even Merle- there was no time to waste, no time for any who wanted to live to see the Georgia sky once again.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Everyone has to bug out ASAP! Let's follow the countdown......and see if EVERYONE makes it out!

Chapter Notes

As usual, thank you to the wonderful people at RWG, especially my beta, Star, the readers, and of course, those who leave reviews! :)

20:00

Rick kissed Carl goodbye hastily, promising he would find Lori and send her off to the RV, along with Shane. There was no time to dwell on what had just happened, it was just survival at the moment, and that urge drove Rick to allow Merle- *foul mouthed, unpredictable Merle* - take his son’s hand while picking up Harry and hoisting the boy on his hip, Draco following with a death grip on Sophia’s hand and Margaret’s, Carol following Merle with a vague inkling of life sparking in her eye. The only reason he had allowed Merle Dixon to take his boy and the other children was the fact that he was Daryl’s brother, and the professor apparently put a lot of trust in the man, and *if a wizard trusted someone- you trusted him too...*

19:00

“Shane, Lori- y’all have to leave. The place’s gonna blow,” BJ said as he ran down the hall, his filthy faded red converse hi-top sneakers squeaking with each step. “Take what you can get and go to the RV- the kids are with Margaret and Carol. Just get outta here! Now!” BJ panted, waving a hand at Shane and vaguely wondering why the whole room smelled like shit, but not bothering to dwell on it as he followed a mysterious slug trail that tapered off into nothingness, finding Max Klinger with Dale, Andrea and Glenn.

“Guys, the place’s gonna blow in twenty- just get outta here to the RV. Now!”

“What do you mean?” Dale asked with a frown, turning to face BJ as the white-haired Arab man sprang into action, pulling together a variety of things into a bag, murmuring about camels and a
Colonel Potter.

“Jenner has this place wired to blow when the genny runs out, and it will- in 20. Hurry!” BJ said with a frown, tugging at Dale to urge him on slightly.

“Is Jenner going?” asked Dale.

“No. He’s insisting on going with the place,” a voice joined BJ, panting as Charles Winchester the elder patted at his bald pate with a handkerchief.

“Why? He should WANT to live.” Andrea said sharply, turning to look at Charles with mild surprise and shock.

“Not when we’re all infected.” Charles’ upper-crust Boston accent served only to grate on everyone’s nerves, except for BJ and Max, who were apparently used to his attitude and approach to things. “Why are we wasting time? We’ve got to go- NOW!” Charles tugged at BJ, who in turn, tugged at Max while Glenn just sprang ahead to the room he had claimed to grab his things and run upstairs to the RV.

15:00

Charlie was grabbing at any medications he could find, dumping it in the big bag that Professor S had enhanced for him before leaving with the werewolf on a makeshift leash out of a curtain cord.

“Dump whatever you want in there- the magic will only last a hour, mind you,” he had said after waving his wand over a knapsack that Charles had been carrying full of his research when they had been interrupted.

“Grab these too, if this bag’s bottomless, why don’t we just grab some equipment?” Erin asked, her sensible side showing as she shoved a portable EKG kit, along with several pieces of surgical and medical supplies that she deemed useful for their needs. Who knows when they would run across another medical clinic?

“Grab those medications as well - we do have some older people with us. Dad, remember? They’re not as young as they used to be,” Charlie huffed under Erin’s bossy tone, muttering to himself about
grabbing as much as he could, consequences be damned. Glancing at the clock, Erin grabbed Charlie and dragged him off into another room up a flight of stairs, Charlie panting heavily. He wasn’t built for this, he had inherited his father’s slower metabolism. “Screw your metabolism, Charlie, we’re gonna die if we don’t leave,” she growled.

“Screw you, Hunnicutt.”

“Less love, more moving.” Erin snapped, half-laughing at Charlie’s grumbling. She was used to the Winchesters’ pomposity, and apparently it was inherited in this case. The two young doctors moved quickly and efficiently through the pharmacy area and Infirmary, shouting to each other to get a move on upstairs.

“We’ve only ten minutes left, sweetheart, less talking and more running.”

“Were you a runner, Hunnicutt? I bet your ass you were,” Charlie grumbled as he lumbered up the steps, his slightly stocky frame and wavy brown hair covered in sweat.

“Varsity track, Stanford,” Erin quipped as she pulled open a door that led to the front of the CDC and to their salvation, the large RV glinting in the sunshine before them. And more walkers.

“Shit.”

“No Charlie, that’s just Shane and Lori with Dad.” Erin said dryly as Shane and Lori ran up the steps, each of them carrying a duffel bag, BJ right behind them with a metal baseball bat. *Daddy to the rescue as usual,* thought Erin as she blinked in the bright sunlight, the sound of squishing and groaning ringing in her ears.

10:00

Dale sat with Edwin Jenner, begging him to leave, not to waste his skill and knowledge. Jenner refused each plea that Dale had made.

“At least don’t die alone.” Dale said with a sigh, settling himself on the seat next to Jenner. “No one should die alone.”
“It was my wife, Dale. The walker that had the boys… I tried to save her. I tried.” Jenner sobbed in his hands. “You should go, just go…”

“No, I’m not going anywhere. My wife’s waiting for me, and so is yours. You’ve given me a choice, and I’m taking it with you. I’ve had an hole in my heart ever since she died.. and I don’t want to live through a walking nightmare when I could die at any moment, and take down others with me. That’s just … not me.” Dale said softly as he leaned against Jenner.

The two men shared a bottle of the best whiskey in Georgia. It was a way to go, and they both eagerly awaited the opportunity to reunite with their loves. Daryl and Rick had left them behind, at their insistence. Someone had to live, to ensure the survival of the human race. The ragtag group heading up to the front entrance would make sure it happened; they were good people, thought Jenner as he watched the red numbers count down rapidly to the moment he would see his love again.

8:00

Glenn and Andrea followed the loping wolf, Max Klinger right at their heels. They were joined by Charles and Margaret, the two having ducked into their room to gather their bags and weapons. The small group moved quickly and efficiently with the guidance of Moony, Lupin’s wolffish form.

“Anyone find this strange?” Margaret asked after a moment, adjusting her grip on her knife.

“After Korea, no.” Charles murmured with a sigh.

“Yeah, that place was just practice for this.” Klinger said with a nod, his eyes darting everywhere. “Just no uniforms this time around.”

“Does it make it more dangerous that way?” Glenn asked, moving his baseball cap to rest backwards, gripping the handrail in the stairwell with a strong grip as he followed Andrea and Moony up the steps.

“Undoubtedly.” Charles huffed slightly on the steps.
“Look where you’re going!” a rough voice burst out from a side corridor. Merle was gripping a boy in his arms, while another clung to his hand. Carol was at his heels, peeking over his shoulder at the werewolf who huffed lightly, almost as if he was laughing at Merle.

“This the way out?”

“Yeah, I think so.” Glenn said with a nod, as Charles nodded, staying in the rear with his axe.

“Move over, so’s wolfie and I can get th’ door.” Merle grunted as he put down the boy. “Boys, stay with Carol. Doc, watch the kids,” Merle said with a scowl as he held on to the door, peeking through the small window at the walkers near the RV. He could see a door on the other side of the lobby fly open, BJ Hunnicutt with a metal baseball bat, bashing in the heads of the walkers. Taking that as his cue, he pushed open the door, allowing the werewolf to leap forth and put the sharp teeth to good use. Walkers moved slightly out of the path of the wolf.

“RUN!” Merle shouted, brandishing his own makeshift weapon.

4:00

“Come on, move faster.” Snape growled up at Rick, who was hurrying up the steps as fast as he could, his face practically in Daryl’s rear end as the huntsman hustled up the steep steps, his crossbow bouncing against his back.

“I’m doing all I can.” Rick panted as they arrived at the landing that led to the lobby. They could see the others running towards the RV, the children and the wolf nearly at the door, Carol and Merle bringing up the rear.

“Thank god, the kids are good to go-” Rick whispered half to himself, half to Snape, who was leaning heavily on Rick. “You okay?”

“Magic…. Almost gone.” Snape whispered as he let out a long grunt, moving so Daryl could spear a walker. “Go, run- just go,” Snape exhaled slowly, watching the second group move out of the lobby and towards the now-occupied RV, Carol ready at the wheel, shouting at Glenn to hurry and move faster.

“C’mon.” Daryl scowled down at Snape, grabbing his arm so he and Rick could carry the wizard
between the two of them. A small rumble shook the ground beneath their feet, and Snape knew there was no chance they could make it to the RV in time, unless…

2:00

“Run as fast as you can, and don’t look back.” Snape said as he pushed away the two men, raising his wand to his forearm where the dark tattoo stood out, stark black against his pale skin. It was a final gamble, one he had been holding on to for this very kind of moment. A doomsday prayer in case he had been captured by Voldemort and sentenced to death- he was screwed anyway, so he may as well save the others, especially the boys...it was all for Harry and Draco, thought Snape as he moved his wand from the black mark, using the residual magic inside as a final reserve of magical energy.

“You’re going with us, Snape.”

“DON’T.” Snape shouted, screaming as he pushed his wand upward into a graceful arc, purple-black flames shooting from it, a ring of fire flashing forward and dissolving each and every walker within a radius of a hundred feet, buying them time to run to the RV and get away with a clear path, the walkers piles of ash, the RV standing intact with everyone’s face pressed to the window in shock and awe at the purple flames that had licked at the RV, leaving it burn free and pristine.

Snape collapsed to the ground in a graceful arc of black cloth, down for the count. Lupin was already on the move, Merle and Shane on his heels to help drag the unconscious Snape into the RV, there was no time to waste.

MOVE!

With the cry from Rick, Carol floored it, and navigated the RV through the parking lot just as the ground rumbled even louder, the heat waves and rumbling propelling the RV further down the road just in time for everyone to feel the explosion right behind them, the black-purple flames fading within the orange-red of the CDC.

Or what used to be the CDC, thought Daryl with a light fading from his eyes.
“Snape? Wake up, Snape!” Shane shouted, shaking the wizard that was sprawled over Dale’s couch.

“He won’t wake up, will he?” Harry asked the wolf, who nudged his snout under Shane’s hands.

“I don’t think he will for awhile, kid,” BJ said with a sigh. “He explained it to me on the way, his magic needs time to power up, like a battery. So he just needs to sleep and rest until everything’s all charged up. I just don’t know how long it will be. Can’t you tell us, Remus?” BJ asked the wolf who propped himself up on Snape with his front paws, licking his face.

“I think Lupin’s trying to say thank you to Snape?” Draco asked as the boy’s hand gently nudged Snape’s hand, moving it up to rest on his abdomen. The wolf huffed and his tail wagged.

“I think we need to stick with yes or no questions for Lupin for awhile.” Max said with a laugh, running his hand through the fur. “Can you change back?”

A small yip.

“Now?”

A sad whine.

“When... oh, the next full moon?” Rick asked, putting two and two together. “Well, we’ve a wizard down for the count, but we’ve got you for awhile. We’ll be okay, we just gotta find somewhere to hole up until the next full moon.”

“Rick?” Charlie asked, raising his hand timidly as Erin hit him on the shoulder with an annoyed grunt. “I’m telling him NOW, Hunnicutt! Jesus.”

“Yeah, Charlie?”

“I... well, I was friends with a psychologist over at a prison. Mental hospital, really, but. A bit of both. Anyway, he’s one of those guys who is always ready for shit to go down. He said he’d go there if anything like this ever happened.. I’m pretty sure he’ll be there and have stuff ready.. and it IS a hospital, so we can fix Lupin and Snape, too.”
“What about Fort Benning?” Shane asked, leaning forward in the small swivel chair that was across from the couch, his eyes on Snape’s prone form. Lori moved to lean against Shane, showing her mutual support of his suggestion. Glenn turned to look at Shane, then up at Rick with a shrug indicating he was up for whatever that Rick decided.

Max shook his head, his bright brown eyes dark with worry. “Remus and I went to Fort Dix, then Fort Meade. each place was overrun. Nothing left but these ugly dead walkers. Everything was sucked dry or ripped to pieces, or inaccessible. It’s impossible to get through those areas. I’d guess Benning’s the same,” Max shrugged sadly as he crossed his arms and leaned against the couch, careful not to nudge Snape.

“I.. I’d go with the prison then, if you know where it is, Charlie? A cure would be great, but also thick walls.” Rick smiled weakly as he leaned against the tiny booth seat at the edge of the kitchenette.

“Yeah, yeah I do,” Charlie said as he switched seats with Glenn up front, Carol moving to herd the children to the bedroom in back, so they all could have a nice, quiet rest.

“I’ll go with Carol, come on, Margaret,” Erin said with a nod, following Carol with Margaret trailing behind, a small smirk dancing on her lips at the sight of her son scowling at the brunette Hunnicutt.

“I guess that means we’re the doctors on duty now,” BJ said with a laugh, opening up his medical kit. “Let’s do triage, Charles, just like the old days.”

“Yeah, whatever,” Charles grunted softly as he took a pack of gauze and bandaids from BJ’s bag. The next few hours were spent quietly treating superficial injuries from the hurry to escape the CDC and trying to glean information from the wolf through yes-no questioning about what to do with Snape’s condition and how to treat the children using the wizarding remedies left in the magical never-ending bag.

By the time night fell, everyone had settled into a nice contemplative quiet, ready to find a place to pull over and stop for the night so Glenn and Charlie could have a good, long rest.

“Here’s a good spot. It’s a big pile-up over there so we can work there in the morning, clear the road all day tomorrow and then get moving the day after. We can take it easy,” Rick said with a nod as he pointed out a large snarl a half-mile down the road near a large rest stop. “We can hang out in the rest area tonight. They may have something for everybody.” Glenn followed suit, navigating the RV
through an off-ramp into a fairly secluded rest area that had remained empty due to the overgrown trees blocking it from the road. It was a wonder that it had remained seemingly untouched.

“Let’s clear this area, then just rest.” Rick pocketed his Python and knife, looking up at the adults present.

“Where’s Dale? Didn’t he…?”

“He wanted to stay with Jenner,” Andrea said with a thin frown. “He said Jenner shouldn’t die alone. He missed his wife. So, I guess he went the way he wanted to go.” Andrea crossed her arms defensively, leaning back as she glanced at the rest of the group. Everyone hung their heads in silence for a long moment as if in memory of Dale.

“All right.. all right.” Rick said after several long moments of silence. “Margaret, you and Charles stay with Snape and the kids in back. Merle, Daryl, you’re clearing the bathrooms. I don’t care which, just clear one of ‘em. Carol, Glenn, Max, you three stay in the RV and get things ready and make sure the RV’s ready to go any second. Shane, you’re our sniper. Lori… you go with Erin, Andrea, BJ, and Charlie to find supplies, food, whatever we can use. I’ll help the Dixons clear. Alright, everyone?” Rick asked as he looked at each and every person in the RV that was apparently becoming dependent on him and looking at him for leadership. He had taken the leadership from Shane, simply because of that one look from Glenn, the smile from BJ, and the silent, unexpected support from the Dixon brothers.

“Sure.” And with that simple word filled with absolute trust and faith from Dr. BJ Hunnicutt of Mill Valley, California, their routine for the journey down to the prison had begun.
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

The gang are prison-bound.. and they find the prison, and ... things happen. A little bit of comedy ensues as well to lighten the mood. :)

Chapter Notes

As usual, THANK YOU to the lovely people at the RWG which feels like a second home to me, and my wonderful beta Star, and Benny for the help with Remus/Moony. I'd like to apologize for the long delay, life has been keeping me busy! :)

It was several days of the same routine of moving cars and scavenging what they could out of them before they finally saw the sign that would lead them to the prison.

“COKEWORTH, that’s it,,” Charlie called out excitedly, pointing out the sign to Glenn who had assumed the role of driver now that Dale was absent. “Sixty miles, do you think we can make it today?”

“More like next week, earlier if Snape wakes up soon, or Lupin changes back,” Max said with an easy shrug. “Docs?” he added, looking up at Charles and BJ.

“He’s perfectly healthy. It’s.. it’s as if he’s just in a very, very deep sleep,” BJ said with a shrug as he turned to look at the far end of the RV where Snape had been moved to lay down in the oversized bed in back. The children were playing cards next to his prone form, and the wolf lying sprawled across his long legs. “Margaret and I have been making sure to roll him over, keep him clean and fed. It was good of Draco to fetch those things from the bag for us.”

“That bag, I don’t know where we’d be without it,” Rick said with a thin smile. “Let’s clear and scavenge, teams,” Rick told them with a clap of his hands, as Glenn pulled the RV over to a spot slightly clear of the large snarl in the highway.

Remus ran to the door to sniff the air, nearly knocking Rick off of his feet. The werewolf was always the first to inspect the area before anyone else was let out; he was their early security system. Once Remus gave the sign for the all clear Andrea took the sniper’s roost on the roof agreeing to switch out with Shane and Merle as the day went on. Charles and Margaret watched Snape and the children
in the RV with Remus lolling around in the sunshine like a giant version of a house pet while everyone else broke out in pairs to scavenge and move vehicles. They moved fairly quickly and were able to move the RV a few miles per day if they didn’t encounter too many roadblocks during their journey.

“Rick?” Harry called before the officer had a chance to step out of the RV.

“Yes, Harry?” Rick asked, crouching down to look at the intense green eyes of Harry.

“Do.. do you think I could wake up Mr. Snape like I woke YOU up?”

“I think you could try but for some reason I get the sense that Snape really needs his rest.” Rick said with a smile. “I don’t know much about this magic stuff so maybe you could work out a way to talk about it with Remus, see what he says?” Rick suggested as he looked out the window at the wolf who was sniffing away at a Dodge Caravan that had just been pulled over to the side of the road.

“Okay,” Harry said with a small nod, smiling up at Rick and turning to wave at Remus. The big wolf lumbered over toward them. Rick smiled at Harry, who had come a long way from that day he woke up in the hospital. The little, scared boy had grown in in several ways. He seemed to be growing into himself with the help of the other children of the group and though he was still weary of people he was beginning to trust them. Carl and Sophia had been exactly the influence Harry and Draco needed, the two boys growing as close as brothers. It vaguely reminded him of his own former relationship with Shane, when the two would go on patrol and have lunch breaks at the drive-thru, talking about women and Lori, and Carl, and whatever game was on that week….

Typical bullshit, thought Rick bitterly with a shake of his head as he kicked the tire of a Plymouth Neon. Daryl, who was standing near by, turned to look at Rick with his squinty eyes, hiding behind his fringe of hair. “Bad day?” Daryl asked dryly, tugging open the cargo door of yet another minivan, digging through the back for anything useful.

“Try bad apocalypse,” Rick huffed with a faint smile, his head tilting up to look at Daryl, moving idly to check out his boon. “My ex wife is sleeping with my former best friend, and we’ve still got to work together. Carl’s been great though, helping with Harry, Sophia, Draco…” Rick shrugged as he reached for a bag of jerky in the Neon he’d just assaulted.

Daryl snorted with silent amusement, his blue eyes brightening up and tilting his head so his hair fell out of his eyes. “Yeah, was hard not to notice the fucking. Sorry you had to find out that way though.”
“Mmhm. Has it really been that bad before I got here?” Rick asked with a trace of amusement in his voice.

“Man, you have no idea,” Daryl barked out with laughter, leaning against the door as he scoffed with amusement. “Half the time the moans were from the walkers, the other half..” He shoved his hands in his pockets and shrugged, “I can see why you loved Lori, but she isn’t my… thing.” Daryl trailed off, suddenly unsure of himself and shrugging slightly, letting the rest of his comment go unspoken. Daryl had surprised himself, becoming so comfortable around the sheriff. Ex-sheriff, really, Daryl corrected himself as he gave a shake of his head.

“Yeah, your brother’s been a great nanny too, speaking of surprises,” Rick said without missing a beat. “Even has the bag, like Mary Poppins, all we need’s the umbrella,” Rick teased with a half-smile as he pulled out an umbrella from the backseat, which sent Daryl into hysterics. The two men had no idea why they found that so funny, but the laughter helped let off the dark tension that had been threatening to break over them like a dark thundercloud. Instead, the sunshine had come out and their laughter had chased away the darkness.

All over a fucking umbrella, Rick had barked out in between belly-rumbles of laughter, Daryl’s eyes red and leaking tears.

“Damn, yeah, we gotta thank Merle,” Daryl said with a long sigh, after their laughter had finally died. Rick nodded and straightened up slightly, his bow legs making it impossible. “Lunch?” Daryl asked with a rolling shrug as the children ran up to them, chattering loudly about what they had helped Carol and Lori prepare for lunch from the “magic bag”.

“Lunch,” Rick said with a nod, allowing Carl to drag him away, and tilting his head down to Draco, who had cautiously taken his hand as well. He couldn’t hide his laugh when Harry and Sophia grabbed Daryl’s hands and dragged him along for the ride.

“Don’t go, Rick. Please?” Harry pleaded, all green eyes and sadness. “It’s rainy and scary and everything. I don’t want you to go. Uncle Sev needs you, too.” The children had started referring to Snape as Uncle Severus as Draco had done from day one, since the man couldn’t wake and scold them to the nine circles of Hades, as Draco had put it one night after a scolding he had received from BJ about being careless and going off alone.
“I’ve got to help clear the road. We’re only twenty miles out. We’re so close to a nice, warm and dry place to eat and sleep,” Rick said as he was kneeling in front of Harry. “Stay with Snape, he’ll want to listen to you read. Why don’t you read from one of the magic books you got in that bag?” Rick said with a smile. “We’ll all be right outside, Carol’s in here and Merle’s right up on the roof. Knock on the roof for Merle if you need anything, okay?” Rick soothed before patting Harry’s shoulder and heading out to help the others. Harry scowled slightly and flopped down on the bed next to the unconscious Snape and wolfish Remus. He was being made to stay in the back because of his stupid cold while Sophia, Draco, and Carl were allowed to sit in the front away from him because of something Margie had called a “contagion”, but Harry thought it was just a fancy way of saying “cooties.”

Harry swore he had closed his eyes for only a minute, but ended up falling asleep and dreaming of his life before Inferi, before he had been saved by Rick, Uncle Severus, and BJ. He could feel the rotting bodies of the dead crawling over him and trying to eat him… Uncle Vernon, Aunt Petunia, and Dudley.. All rotten and wormy and… A lady with bright green eyes and bright red hair chasing them away like an angel.. a man with black hair and glasses saving him and giving him to Merle and Severus to take him away from the monsters...

“MERLE!!” Harry screamed, bright green eyes flying open, yet unseeing behind over-sized spectacles. Harry gripped Severus’s wool trouser leg in a death grip, another hand open and seeking for Merle.

“MERLE!!” Harry screamed, sounding like a young Daryl, screaming for his big brother. Merle’s synapses fired as he ran toward the frightened child, the man reacting on pure instinct to such a call. He hadn’t done it in years, not since Daryl was a small boy, since he had tried to shield Daryl once, from their father…

It took a long while and a lot of pleading and fussing, but eventually the ladies had left Merle alone to calm Harry. Daryl stayed, leaning against the doorway as a barrier between them and the rest of the RV as everyone else settled down to start their journey again, having the road cleared they didn’t want to waste time when they were so close to the prison, besides, Harry had refused to talk with anyone but Merle or Daryl Dixon.

Merle sat, holding Harry up against him, the boy finally relaxing in his arms. Merle looked up at Daryl with slight incredulity in his eyes. How had he gone from badass Merle Dixon to nanny for some magic brats? He looked down at Harry who had his hand in Snape’s, his head lolling against Merle’s chest, legs curled up in a fetal position. His eyes were closed, and his breathing was starting to even out. Merle knew Harry wasn’t quite asleep, but he was asleep enough that he wouldn’t comprehend anything he heard.

Merle saw Daryl’s smirk and let out a small snort of disbelief and amusement, looking at his baby brother. An idea that had been niggling at the back of his head was brought to the forefront, and out
of his mouth. “Y’know that idea… I had earlier, before England came?”

Daryl’s eyes took on a hard stare as he looked at his brother. “Yeah?”

We shoul’ get that bag an’ just… go.” Merle said with a raise of his brows. It was clear that the only ones who really could survive were himself and Daryl, and he didn’t want to be stuck with so many people anymore- everyone always into each other’s business.

“How can you say that, Merle? The kids need us- Harry needs us, Draco, too- those boys have no one,” Daryl snapped angrily.

“Darylina, come on. We had no one and we were fine,” Merle scoffed. When Daryl turned to walk away Merle reached out just enough not to disturb Harry, grabbing at Daryl’s shirt. The angle and pull were just enough for the thin fabric to rip. Dark and angry scars peeked out at Merle. All kinds of colors and shapes… it made his breath catch in his throat.

“Fuck,” Merle spat out, startling Harry out of his sleep enough, that he fully awoke. The four of them were connected, holding on to each other when it happened. Harry’s shirt shifted, the thin shirt bunching up to reveal some scars on his side. Merle stared down at the small boy in his lap and up at his baby brother, who was staring at Harry with wide blue eyes. The two Dixons stared at each other for a long moment, Harry and Snape nearly forgotten, until…

“He’s got ‘em too,” Harry piped up, poking at Merle. “Uncle Severus an’ me.. We’ve got ‘em too,” Harry said with a solemn nod as he lifted up a small corner of Snape’s shirt. Merle could see a jagged white line trailing along the man’s too-thin hipbone, right into his black wool pants. An odd feeling stirred into Merle, something he didn’t like acknowledging- that someone just may actually have gone through as much hell as he and Daryl had, if not more.

“The red haired lady in my dream said you can take care of me, Merle. She gave me to Uncle Severus an’ now she’s giving me to you,” Harry said casually, as if he was used to being pawned off on just anybody. Perhaps he was, a tiny voice in the back of Merle’s head piped up. A whine came from the forgotten werewolf, whose wet nose nudged Harry’s at the mention of the red-haired woman. “The lady laughed when I told her about you, Remus. She said you’re a good boy an’ Paddy will find you.” Remus panted happily, his tail wagging and thumping on Snape’s face.

“Wha’ lady you talkin’ ‘bout?” Merle asked with a frown, while Daryl hovered in the background, Rick walking up to join the small group in the back, curious as to the sudden tension in the air.
“The red lady, she’s got red hair and she comes when I dream. She holds me an’ sings to me...she tells me stuff.” Harry said with a casual shrug. “I hear her screaming and then a big green light an’ then someone... laughing.” Harry said with a shudder that shook his tiny body, Merle feeling the tiny bones shift under the thin skin that rested against his body. Remus snuffled into a near howl, nudging Harry’s hand. Harry’s hand shifted, and Merle moved to stop the boy from falling off the bed. It was all a coincidence really, Merle’s hand moved to catch Harry who had one hand on Snape’s bare arm and the other clinging to Daryl’s hand. The combination created an energy circle between the four of them and with a loud crackle of energy the air became heavy with the smell of sulfur.

“Magic?” Rick gasped.

“Magic,” Daryl said with a soft nod to Rick’s question. He’d read about it in one of the magic books the kids had out.

“Do it ‘gain, Merle, I can wake up Uncle Severus!” Harry said with childish delight, yanking Merle’s hand and placing it squarely on the faded black tattoo of a serpent crawling out of a skull on England’s arm then moving himself so that he was still touching Snape and Daryl. Merle blinked, feeling like he was high on one of his trips, but there was no happy high, only... a strange, quiet stretching of time, and a heat filled the room.

“Can you feel it?” Harry asked, looking up at Merle and Daryl, the brothers leaning over the prone form of Snape, Rick leaning over Daryl, resting a hand protectively on his hip. Remus let out a mournful howl making Rick jump, his hand tightening on Daryl’s hip. Daryl moved back a step, the two men pinned back in the small space between a mournful werewolf and Merle with Harry. Something was happening, and they couldn’t figure out what it was.

“Everything okay?” BJ asked, peering into the back with wide blue eyes.

“Just tell Glenn and Charlie to keep driving. I think they’re waking up Snape,” Rick said with a nod, not realizing he hadn’t moved his hand from Daryl’s hip. BJ’s wide blue eyes blinked once, and the older man disappeared into the front of the RV, shouting something about Snape waking up soon, to keep moving. Remus put a paw on Snape, and another paw on Rick and Daryl.

“Does he want us to make a circle?” Rick asked, trying not to feel too weirded out he was talking to a wolf, using a little boy as an interpreter. When Harry nodded they all moved their hands until they formed a circle, each of them touching another. “Okay, now what?”

“We just tell him to wake up. Like I did with you, he just needs ... more. More people like him to tell
him to wake up,” Harry said with determination, his green eyes practically glowing with magic, and the air growing heavier.

It grew harder for Rick to breathe, Merle was stone still, and electricity suddenly crackled into the air, and Snape sat bolt upright, his dark eyes full of ice and fire, his thin mouth bared into a feral scowl. A half-second later, his eyes rolled back in his head, his body collapsing onto Merle, the bigger man moving to support Snape. Merle was surprised such a large man as Snape weighed so little. And he could feel the ugly rope of scars under the thin cloth; for such a dark and scary man, he looked… like Daryl, the traitorous voice in his head whispered to him.

“Shut up.” Merle whispered as he shoved Snape back to his former position on the bed, Rick and Daryl turning to go fetch BJ, their hands still entwined whether it was for support, or something else they weren’t willing to give voice to just yet.

“Beej, Charles- could you look over Snape? I think he’s woken up,” Rick asked, tilting his head to the back of the RV.

“Just in time, too,” Charlie said with a grin, as they turned down a long paved road that led up a hill to a… fortress, Rick thought with a dry grin, pulling Daryl into a hug to celebrate.

“We’re HERE!”
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Severus is awake; silliness and a happy moment ensue. Everyone needs a bit of happiness at the moment, right? :)

Chapter Notes

As usual thank you to Star, Benny, and the RWG! Also all who left reviews and commentaries. You guys are awesome!

“Is he really awake?” the children asked, climbing over Carol and Margaret like puppies, in their eagerness to see Snape.

“We’ll see what the doctors say, okay? Remember, whatever they say goes,” Carol said with a smile, gathering up Draco in her arms, careful to give him some extra loving.

“I’m perfectly fine, you fuc-” Snape growled.

“Kids,” BJ scolded, tweaking Snape’s nose as he examined the sardonic Englishman, no more a Professor than he was a doctor anymore in this day and age. Remus, or Moony, as the children had begun calling him, was sprawled at Snape’s side, his muzzle buried in a fold of the blanket Snape had refused from Carol and Margaret. “I think I can declare you healthy and off bed rest, but do take care not to drain too much of your magic for the next few days… we may still need you around, you know.” BJ said with a chuckle, straightening up to his full six-foot-three frame, his head bumping the top of the RV causing the kids to giggle.

“Yes, Doctor,” Snape said dourly, frowning as he smoothed down his ruffled button-up Oxford, looking for his vest as he shooed away Moony. “Where are we, anyway? Have we found a safe place?”

“We’re at Cokeworth,” Rick said with a nod. Daryl was hovering close behind him, along with Merle and the two boys, Harry and Draco, who had snuck up from behind, having escaped Carol’s mothering embrace.

“COKEWORTH?” Snape exclaimed, his English accent thick and hardy; like someone from Doctor Who, thought BJ with faint amusement. “There’s a … cokeworth.. In bloody GEORGIA?” England dripped from Snape so smoothly, Rick could almost taste the bitter tang of English beer on his tongue.

“Language, Sev!” Rick scolded, shooting a glance towards Merle subconsciously, wondering how someone could be even more foul-mouthed than the eldar Dixon.

“You frog scr-” Snape snapped.
“Duct tape him, Rick. Just do it,” Shane cut Snape off with a scoff, handing Rick a roll of duct tape. The threat rendered Snape quiet though he was still snarling, as he gave up his hunt for his waistcoat and cravat he’d been searching for. “Yeah, that would do it,” Shane whispered with a snigger. Snape glared darkly at Shane, twitching a finger threateningly.

“Ah-ah, doctor’s orders,” BJ admonished with a manic grin. “No magic for the next two or three days. You woke up just in time, we’ve found a fortress, thanks to Charlie here.” BJ nudged Shane, who was loitering around, ordering him out of the back bedroom to go annoy Lori for awhile. “I don’t want anyone turned into rabbits again, no matter how entertaining that was.”

“I was a rabbit?” Merle scoffed, glaring at England darkly. No one had told Merle exactly what happened when Snape cast the spell because they didn’t want to deal with his anger. No one turned Merle Dixon into a rabbit and got away with it. Not at all, thought Merle as he scowled down at the slim and prim Englishman in his fancy duds. “You-”

“Take it out of the RV, away from the kids,” Rick cut him off with a weary sigh, glancing at the two men who had turned into thirteen-year old schoolboys scrapping for a fight, two over-sized, foul-mouthed boys, but still behaving like children.

“We ain’t in England, no more, England,” Merle growled. Remus barked happily at Merle’s sneering words and bad imitation of Snape’s lower-class accent. The wolf licked and nosed at Rick’s hand.

“What is it boy?” Rick asked, feeling silly after he had spoken to a Werewolf like a family pet. It wasn’t fucking Lassie, it was a werewolf named Moony, who nipped at him with a slight growl as a reminder. “Sorry- Moony, what is it?” Rick rephrased, as Daryl snickered softly from behind him, the warm breath tickling the back of his neck. The two wizarding boys laughed and chased Moony as he turned round, running through the RV to the front exit, sniffing the air and pawing at the magic bag.

“I think he smells magic, right?” Harry asked, as Draco sniffed the air, picking up the bag.

“That revokes your orders, Hunnicutt,” Snape said, rising from the bed carefully as he smiled darkly in Shane’s direction. Lori shivered remembering her last encounter with the wizard and moved further into Shane’s embrace as the two stood near the driver’s seat of the RV. Glenn remained seated, not wanting to risk anyone’s ire- especially the dangerous British wizard in their midst, or the werewolf.

“Only if it’s needed, Severus- life or death, not squabbles, no matter how much Shane or Merle -” BJ started.

“Hey, I was a victim!” Merle cut him off, angrily.

“Merle- irritates you,” BJ continued over Merle’s interjection, choosing to treat him as he would a mild irritant, just another Charles for him to deal with. He could have done without the language, or the crankiness, but it was the potential danger of the magic blowing them up to kingdom come that had BJ pulling his stern doctor persona on the wizard, instead of his usual gentle, grandfatherly manner that reminded Remus and Snape of Dumbledore.

“Are you a Dumbledore?” Snape wondered aloud.

“What?” BJ asked, confused.

“Never mind,” Snape sighed, the fight and fire leaving him as quickly as he had gained it at the
thought of his elderly headmaster stuck behind the walls of Hogwarts, and his current mission- duty-to Harry and Draco weighing on his shoulders. “I can feel shields around this place. Wards. There’s a wizard or two here that knows their stuff. Remus, get ready.” Snape turned into the war wizard he had been trained to become. Dark fire lit his eyes, and his posture changed from surly Englishman to polished wizard, barking his orders left and right as an experienced leader.

“Walsh, Grimes and Daryl, with me. Lupin, you have Hunnicutt, Winchester junior and Senior. Let’s go,” Snape said succinctly. “Ladies, with Dixon- mind the children, please. Mr. Rhee- you must be ready to move at a moment’s notice. I’ll send a Patronus.”

“A what-us?” Glenn asked, confused.

“You’ll figure it out, boy,” Snape snapped, waving his wand at the door and blanketing it in a shield of red, reminiscent of the shields that had protected them from Ed and the werewolf. “No one move a fucking toe out of line until we come back, or… otherwise,” Snape said with a final wave of his wand, and the door flew open. “Go. Now.”

Remus Lupin leapt out of the RV, his wolf form scaring off a few inferi that had been lurking nearby the fence. It was a prison, Remus could tell from the large sign at the front gate. He could feel protective wards woven through the gates and large fences. A transfiguration master was at work here. He barked, nuding his nose at the fence. Snape swept up to him, less intimidating in his black trousers and white oxford, but still overwhelming nonetheless with his black hair and dark eyes blazing with ferocity.

“This can only be Minerva’s work, or a student of hers. Either way, someone from Hogwarts made it this far,” Snape said with a lilt to his voice. “Let’s hope it’s Minerva- we could use her help with you,” he said to the wolf. Lupin barked happily, doing a small jaunt as he leapt in the air briefly, acting like the dog Rick had accused him of being. “Celebrate later, we need some blood-,” the wizard glanced around his group. “Yours will do, Walsh.”

“Me?” Shane’s mouth went dry. He didn’t like Snape or his magic, not one bit.

“Yes, you, Shane. I haven’t been turned into a rabbit by Minerva, but you have been..in a sense, under her influence because the spell I used was hers.. Your blood will unlock the wards and let her - or her student- know we are here. Think of it as a Key and Lock.. you are the key, Walsh.”

Shane couldn’t help but feel Snape was getting some sort of perverse pleasure from this. “Why not Merle or -... oh.”

“Yes, indeed, Walsh,” Snape said with a smirk. “Let’s hurry, we don’t want to become someone’s lunch.” Groans could be heard coming from the nearby woods. The smell was unbearable, with a faint undertone of what Shane was learning to be Magic.

“Fine, fine,” Shane sighed, taking a pocket knife and poking a small wound in his finger. “This enough?” he huffed.

“A bit more, enough for a rune,” Snape said with a grunt as he made the wound bigger. Taking Walsh by the hand and placing the wounded finger onto the lock of the gate, rubbing it in so a good-sized smear of blood was left. “Thank you….for your…. Donation,” Snape smiled thinly with a Rickmanian drawl.

“Like I had a choice,” Shane scowled, wrapping a cloth around his finger.
Snape shrugged as Lupin nudged Shane, as if to tell him to shut up. Rick, Daryl and the Winchesters chose to stay out of the line of fire; it was best to leave the magic to the wizards, even if they did have a mouth and temper on them...

“Open Sesame,” Snape said with a dark grin, waving his arms wide as the gates opened before them. Waving his wand, a silver doe leapt forth. The doe pranced happily around them before Snape gave it orders to have Glenn take the RV through the gate- it was safe.

Rick and Daryl smiled at each other, grateful they had found a place to regroup and get themselves, hopefully, a cure. The group went forward, walking up a paved walkway to another set of gates. Snape raised his brow at Shane, and Shane scowled.

“Again?”

“Minerva’s no fool. I’m pretty sure it’s Minnie. She’s thorough,” Snape said with a small wicked grin, not caring one bit for Shane’s opinion. Lupin huffed and nudged Shane, who obliged once again with his blood. The small group opened the gates, just enough for the people to go through.

“Yes, It’s Minerva- I recognize those wounds,” Snape said with a nod as he hovered over a corpse. “She did the same thing in the first war with the Inferi, when she couldn’t use the fiendfyre. Quite the spectacle, really.” Snape noticed Rick’s expression. “You just had to be there, Grimes,” Snape remarked conversationally, making Rick shudder slightly, edging closer to Daryl and the Winchesters as they walked through a sea of walker corpses, right up to the front door of Cokeworth prison.

“Anyone home?” Snape asked, holding his wand to his own throat, his silky voice filling the air as if he were speaking over the PA system.

“Severus Snape, is that you?” A Scottish brogue responded in kind, filling the air.

“No, it’s Dumbledore riding in naked on a horse,” Snape said sarcastically. “Yes, you bint, it’s me.”

“Severus, please, I don’t need the imagery,” she scoffed. “Thank you, young man.” The voice faded away, and the doors opened to reveal a tall and slim woman that seemed to be in her late fifties or early sixties, wearing what looked to be a plaid shirt with a pair of jeans.

“Jeans, Minerva? Truly, have you gone native already?” Snape smirked at the older woman who didn’t reply, drawing him into a hug in lieu of any commentary or comeback. “Woman, unhand me immediately, I don’t need to be strangled just yet.”

“Severus, Oh, I knew you would find us! Have you found Harry?” Minerva asked, her wide blue eyes surveying the group of people with Snape, including the wolfish form of Moony. “Oh.. my, is that Remus? What happened?”

“Ed happened,” Shane quipped dryly. Daryl and Rick smothering any smart remarks while the Winchesters looked on with mild surprise at the reunion of the two Hogwarts professors. “He ate Ed. Ate. Him,” the former deputy still somewhat in shock over what had happened.

“Just his - um..” all the men subconsciously moved their hands to cover their groins. “Well you know,” Rick said mildly, not sure what word the British used.

“Ed was a piece a shit,” Daryl supplied as an explanation.

Rick agreed weakly as he glanced at the Winchesters who were now approaching having missed the
entire scene. “I’ll explain later.” he mouthed with a nod, tilting his head to Lupin.

Minerva blinked in mild surprise, her mouth opening slightly to reply, but she closed it again with a shake of her head. She didn’t want to know. Not at all. “Come in, boys- are there more of you? We’ve more here.” Minerva said with a wave of her hand, the doors opening fully to admit the others from the RV who had come to join them inside the prison.

“Oh, Harry! Draco! I’m so happy to see you boys!” Minerva brushed past everyone, swooping down to pull Harry and Draco in a large hug, smothering them with her firm hug. “Lily and James- oh, Lucius and Narcissa… didn’t make it?”

“No,” Snape said succinctly, frowning down at the ground as if it were his mortal enemy. He didn’t want the memory to bother him, but he knew he wouldn’t sleep well tonight. “We’ve our own… group… at present,” Snape said with a weary sigh, making the introductions to Minerva for everyone in the group.

Minerva smiled and nodded at each person, taking the time to shake their hand and greet them with a warm ‘welcome’ in her Scottish brogue. “I’m Minerva McGonagall. I was the Transfiguration Professor and Deputy Headmistress at Hogwarts before…. before it was closed. I’ve Poppy with me, Severus. She and I were in Diagon Alley when the wards went up- We couldn’t get in. Albus locked us out and sent us after you, we were the only staff members caught out of the Wards.”

“I see,” Snape murmured, leaning against a doorway, watching Minerva with hooded eyes. “I was in- in Diagon as well with Lucius and Narcissa, taking Draco for school supplies. We had just gotten his wand.” Snape let out a thin sigh, “I tracked Harry down to Atlanta- but he ended up finding us before i could find him.”

“He found you?” Minerva asked, surprised as she looked down at the boys who had moved up to stand next to Snape, their hands clinging to him. “How fortunate. Well, we can all exchange stories later. We’ve got to get you sorted, and lock this down- I know Poppy and Hawkeye will want to-”

“Hawkeye? Hawkeye Pierce, from Maine?” Charles asked, raising his hand automatically out of habit when he knew he was talking to a teacher. “Pierce truly is a cockroach, if he has lived through all of this already-”

“Charles, I say this with love, shut up,” BJ said with a nudge and roll of his eyes as he grinned madly. “Take us to Hawkeye, won’t you? I’m sure he’ll love to see ALL of us, especially you, Margaret.”

“BJ!” Margaret scolded, with a smile as she smoothed down her hair. “I’m married to Charles, if you hadn’t realized.”

“He’ll be in the infirmary, right up this way,” Minerva said with a sniff, eyeing BJ and the winchesters sourly. “I suppose the more, the merrier, then?”

“Absolutely, Minerva- they have part of the cure, from 1950,” Snape remarked with a hint of glee in his voice at Minerva’s double take. “If we are fortunate… we have everyone that was there that day in Korea, when the inferi began to rise. Day one, Minerva, they were THERE when it BEGAN. They can FIX this. We need them.” It was the first, and only time that anyone had seen Severus Snape with a boyish look on his face, it was as if Father Christmas had Apparated on their doorstep.

“1950?!” Minerva gasped, her hand flying to her chest as she gaped at the others in the hallway. “Oh dear… we can really fix this?” For the first time in days, weeks, and even months, hope could be seen in the eyes of every person in the room, promise for a life and a future free of the horrors of the
The small group made their way into the infirmary, which was a large sunny room where beds lined one side of the room, and there was a small cubicle, and beyond that was a door that led to what Rick guessed was a bathroom, based on his experience with the judicial system. Rick hovered by Daryl and Carl, his arm around his son protectively. Lori stood nearby, Shane at her side as they watched an older man enter the infirmary, followed by a woman wearing an old-fashioned nurse’s uniform straight out of another century.

“I’m loving how out-of-touch these wizards are, it’s so funny,” Rick whispered to Daryl, pointing out the old-fashioned clothing that most of the wizards were wearing— it was easy to identify them now: Severus with his white shirt and black trousers, the nurse, and Minerva McGonagall in her old-fashioned plaid shirt and jeans, looking like a fifties housewife. “Especially their names… I mean, Severus and Remus, and now Minerva and Poppy?”

“Laugh now, you’ll be begging us for the cure,” Snape grunted softly from his position near Rick and Daryl, Merle at his side, the boys hanging on to Merle, like little book-ends, one with black hair and one with pale blond hair.

“Or you’ll be begging US,” Charles piped up snidely, smirking at Merle as the boys pouted up at Merle, asking him about the animals outside of the window.

“I’d know the sound of pompous windbag anywhere. Hello, Charles.” the tall doctor in the white coat said with a wide grin.
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

The final member of their group is introduced, and ... stuff and thangs start happening!

Chapter Notes

As always, THANK YOU to STAR.. my lovely beta and the people at RWG for their encouragement and input. I love you guys!! Also, my lovely readers, especially those who leave reviews. :)

“Pierce,” Charles said with a nod of his head and slight posturing of his ample chest. “Imagine finding you here in the middle of the apocalypse. I’d expect you to be the cause, no less.”

“Funny as ever, Charles,” the tall man, Hawkeye Pierce said with a dry laugh. “I see we have company, and even more playmates for Hermione and the twins. Hello, boys,” Hawkeye said with a smile, standing back and surveying the small group. “Everyone looks fine, I imagine, with you taking care of them, Beej?”

“Hawk- how-.” the man had to fight back tears at seeing his old friend. “Thirty years..” BJ managed to croak out, his mouth slightly ajar.

“Magic?” Hawkeye said with a shrug of his shoulders.

“That would do it,” Minerva said with a nod and impish smile at Hawkeye’s joke. “I heard from Benjamin and - “

“I’m Hawkeye or Dr. Pierce, woman,” he rolled his eyes “I’ve told you time and time again-” Hawkeye said with a slight sigh, having gone through this twice already. Minerva seemed to be one to take things to a whole new level of formal. She would get along well with Charles and Margaret, thought Hawkeye waspishly as he smirked slightly at the sight of Merle with the boys.

“Bring your sons over here, “ he waved with his hand.
“They ain’t mine.” Merle scowled, his eyes dark with annoyance. He held on to Harry and Draco nonetheless in a protective gesture, Severus also drawing close to the two boys. “They’re his,” Merle added as he tilted his head towards Snape. Snape scowled slightly though the scowl didn’t quite reach his eyes.

“This is Harry Potter .I was close friends with his mother,” Snape finally said in a soft voice. Hawkeye leaned in ever so slightly to hear the British man speak, fondness smoothing Snape’s rough emotion. “Harry’s seven- his birthday’s July 31.” Snape said, smoothing down the unruly black hair of his most recent charge.

Draco edged slowly out of Merle’s shadow and into Snape’s, his eyes watching the Muggle doctor with suspicion and wariness- the last doctor had tried to blow them up. “Are you going try to kill us like the other doctor did?” Draco asked bravely, his pointed chin jutting out stubbornly.

“Someone tried to kill you?” Hawkeye’s eyes got wide.


“Ok,” Hawkeye nodded then looked back at the blond boy. “No, I’m not going to try and kill you. The food might though,” he teased, a smile on his thin lips. “If you can eat it at all. I mean, I’ve ate food worse than this and lived to tell the tale. Beej, too, as well as- Klinger and Charles, and Margaret.. We were all together in a war like this, long ago,” Hawkeye said conversationally, kneeling down to face Draco and Harry, talking while his hands were lightly examining the boys. Carl leaned forward, wanting to listen to Hawkeye’s story, Sophia hovering between Carol and the dog-like Moony.

“BJ told us stories. Are you really the same Hawk who crashed a tank into an outhouse and made it blow up all to pieces? Fred an’ George Weasley do that., I heard their mother yelling at them in Diagon- when…” Draco trailed off remembering the night all of this started. He leaned into Snape and gripping his hand tightly.

“Draconis was with his parents and myself when… things happened,” Snape said with a thin sigh. Hawkeye frowned and nodded, patting Harry ever so gently on the shoulder and rising to his full six-foot plus frame.

“Francis can help with that, he’s good with traumatized children. He’s worked with orphans for over twenty years. You’ll have to speak up a bit though, he’s quite deaf.” Hawkeye said with a slight chuckle as Charles, Margaret, and Klinger all murmured among themselves.

BJ nodded with wide eyes of recognition. Somehow, everyone from the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital unit in 1953 who had handled the first corpse- patient zero- had come together in this very room.
Magic, indeed, thought BJ with a shiver shooting down his spine. Recovering himself, he asked Hawkeye how he had ended up here with the two women and Francis, while Hawkeye examined Sophia and Carl. The two youngsters whispering and giggling about Moony, who kept bouncing between both sets of children and trying to herd them towards Hawkeye, keeping them all in one place.

Hawkeye shrugged and glanced up at everyone in the room with a weary look in his eyes as he organized his thoughts. His group had come a long way, to end up right here at the Cokeworth Prison in Northern Georgia, a far cry from his native Maine or Francis’s beloved Philadelphia, and of course, as far as they could get from Korea… but Korea still came back to haunt them. He only mourned the fact that the Colonel- Potter, who reminded him so much of the boy Harry- couldn’t be here for this.

“Francis and I were in Philadelphia when it happened. We saw a man eat a woman- eat her,” he said in disbelief. “Francis just looked at me and said ‘oh dear’ in that voice of his and … we just ran, taking the couple’s daughter with us- now she’s our Hermione.” Hawkeye said with a shrug. “Been running ever since. We ran into the ladies somewhere around Christ Church Cathedral, when Francis ducked in talking about something he and Hermione both had read- read in a book somewhere - “ hawkeye said with a high-pitched laugh. He nudged Sophia to move over, her exam was done and he moved on to Carl and took a moment to continue his story. “We were hunting through the vicar’s rooms- Francis has a nose for churches, knows where everything is hidden- and we found these lovely ladies with two girls. How about you continue, Minnie?”

“Very well, Benjamin Pierce,” Minerva said with slight sound of annoyance. Minerva moved to settle herself on a small cot near the small circle of children, Moony resting his head on the bed to listen to her story. Snape moved closer to the Dixons and Rick, while Shane, Lori and Andrea gathered on the other side, Glenn and Carol on another, the doctors and their adult children settled themselves on the beds, clearly used to the hospital-like atmosphere.

“The girls and I had gone to Diagon Alley, to see Madam Malkin, as well as go to the Apothecary, and do the small errands that Albus always puts off until the last possible moment- you know how he can be, Severus-” At the sound of his name, Severus grunted softly, his arms crossing across his sinewy chest, the white oxford stretching to its limits, his black hair tumbling down over his face hide his eyes from Minerva, and anyone else who looked in his direction. “We saw these muggles running down the street. “You know, it’s impossible for muggles to get through… unless the Leaky was compromised,” he voice broke. “Tom. they ate Tom, Severus. Ripped him apart before he could Apparate out.”

“Muggles?” Merle asked, realizing the word for what it was, but not quite understanding it. “Y’mean like-”

“Merle .” Snape cut him off sharply, his voice caressing the man’s name with danger, eyeing him
with dark eyes and a slight frown. “There’s another word for it, but I don’t use it, and you shouldn’t. Muggles are Non-magical Folk, like anyone who doesn’t use magic. The… other word, shouldn’t be said with the children present.” Severus said as a bitter taste filled his mouth at the memory of the moment he had shouted Mudblood at Lily- and lost her friendship.

“Didn’t anyone know what to do? It’s just like 1981 during You Know Who’s reign when he used the inferi as weapons, probably from that awful thing in 1953. It’s happening all over again, fools not paying attention,” Severus scowled darkly as his hand twitched towards his wand. “Diffendo and Bombarda are the only defenses we have against those things, and those spells are quite draining, at that.” His foul mood hung around him like a dark storm cloud, the boys sidling over back to Merle, feeling the darkness radiate from the dark professor.

“We’ve been using muggle means, Poppy needs her reserves to brew potions. But now that you’re here..” Minerva wheedled, smiling a tiny smile of excitement, like a cat who had caught a canary.

“There can’t be a potions lab here, can there?” Severus asked.

“We can make one,” Minerva replied quickly, nodding her head at the crowd before her. “Why don’t we magical folk set up a Potions lab, while you muggle physicians familiarize yourselves with our infirmary? I’m sure between the two groups, a cure can be found. The experts from 1953 and 1981 are all here…. for this,” Minerva said with a brisk nod.

“Wait- wait.. What about Remus?” Carol asked softly, her hand smoothing down Remus’s shaggy fur. “Shouldn’t he … turn back?”

“Severus?” Minerva asked.

“Minerva? You’re the Transfigurations Expert. Can you tell me what happens to a werewolf who transforms WITHOUT the influence of the full moon?”

“He’ll stay like this until the next full moon completes it cycle, which is tonight. Maybe this time, he’ll learn his lesson.”

“This TIME?” Severus’s lower-class accent began to seep through his proper London accent, and the Scots burr from Minerva rolled right over his shouts. Soon, the two were going head-to-head in an unintelligible argument, English street urchin against a furious Scotswoman.
“It’s been FIFTEEN YEARS-”

Everyone looked at each other, clearly there was something going on between the two that the others didn’t understand. “I think everyone needs a break, hmm?” BJ piped up. Hawkeye moving up from his position near the children. Merle slid a hand around each boy’s shoulder. Frozen, everyone stared at each other for a moment, the energy in the room crackling.

“Very well.” Severus pulled himself together, smoothing down his wrinkled white oxford, peering up at Merle with tired eyes, not liking the feeling of defeat in the air.

“Let me guess, I’m taking the children?” Merle said in a placid tone, frowning down at Harry, Draco, Carl, and Sophia. Merle wasn’t too pleased, but he had started to tolerate the children, especially Draco and Harry; the two boys always asked him polite and intelligent questions, and listened to everything without interrupting.

“I’ll take you to Francis, then- he’s with the girls,” Hawkeye said with a nod, the de-facto parents of the group also following him out of the infirmary and towards a cell-block that had been cleared of inferi, cleaned from top to bottom and set up as a residential area. “Francis has taken over the library, I’m afraid, out of sheer habit.” Hawkeye didn’t look displeased, just smiled sweetly down at the children, opening up a set of double doors that led into a large and pleasant room that was filled top to bottom with shelves upon shelves of books. There was a small, makeshift apartment in the back of the room where a librarian’s office and inventory room once was set up. A small bathroom was just off of the office, making it almost cozy.

An older man, who seemed younger than Hawkeye, roughly around Minerva’s age, sat at one of the tables with a trio of young girls. One girl had bushy brown hair flowing down her shoulders like a corona of waves. The set of twins sat nearby looking like bookends, right down to the identical braids and dresses they had on.

“This is my husband, Francis Mulcahy. Francis?” Hawkeye called out, tapping the man on the shoulder.

The man turned, startled slightly at the crowd with Hawkeye. “Hawk?” he asked, his voice slightly flat and hollow-sounding. A faint Irish lilt could be heard in the voice, so faint it was only discernible to the Europeans present. “Do we have more survivors?”

“Yes, - Francis, We found the girls some playmates,” Hawkeye said with a laugh. “These are the parents...” Hawkeye trailed off, as Sophia ran to her mother and introduced herself and Carol with a wide smile, patting Remus and introducing him as their guardian.
Carl shyly introduced Rick and Lori, clinging to Rick and leaning slightly away from Lori, who ran her hand through his hair as she smiled down at the boy awkwardly. Shane stood off to the side, leaning against a bookshelf as if he hadn’t a care in the world. Rick introduced Daryl, Lori glancing at them oddly from the corner of her eye before walking over by Shane.

“Severus Snape-”

“Uncle Sev!” Draco and Harry interrupted, with grins as Remus nudged Snape with his snout, as if laughing at the wizard. “And this is Merle Dixon, he’s the best and can kill all of the zombies with a pen knife,” Harry beamed as he looked up at Merle.

“Really? Francis has a pen knife right here, it's a Tom Mix pocket knife,” Hawkeye smiled.

“Can I see?” the children crowded round their new source of entertainment, Merle smirking at the boys from his corner of the room.

“Well- I’m supposing we should get thing set up?” Hawkeye asked after a moment, nodding as he tapped Francis on the shoulder, making some hand motions to the man. Francis nodded, pulling an hearing aid out of his pocket and putting it on.

“Sign Language?” Rick asked, glancing at Hawkeye who nodded with a sigh. “I learned some at the Academy,” Rick told him.

“I know some, too, only some for hunting, y’know,” Daryl murmured softly. “Me n’ Merle use ‘em for hunts. Deer spook easy.”

Hawkeye’s eyes glinted with relief. He had been postured for them to reject his husband because of his hearing problem, but was cautiously elated when quiet acceptance took place. He nodded his thanks to Rick and Daryl.

“A deaf man charged with caring for children in the middle of a zombie apocalypse? At least Merle’s with them,” Shane scoffed with a grunt. Hawkeye scowled, turning to glare at Shane darkly.

“Francis is just fine, he has hearing aids. He just doesn’t leave them on all the time because we don’t
have the ability to run to the local store and get new batteries. Now, do we have any problems?”
Hawkeye said, steel underlining his words as he motioned to the door that led to the infirmary.

Shane and Lori shook their heads and entered the infirmary. Everyone in the room had drifted in
small groups- the magic folk huddled around a big stack of books in the corner, while the physicians
had huddled around journals and the big bag of everything as Erin Hunnicutt had named it. Shane,
Rick, Carol, Daryl, and Lori joined Andrea and Glenn at the other end of the room and made plans
to set up their own rooms in an adjacent cell block to the wizards’ so everyone could have privacy.

The next few hours were spent peacefully discussing and drawing up plans, each group having a
mutual leader who was sent to finalize the plans and set up for the prison. It seemed that they had
found a new home… finally, A place to lay their weary heads after a long journey.

Rick leaned against the door that led to the large office with a personal bathroom, there were several
of these outfitted around the prison, and Rick, knowing where things were in prisons, immediately
seized the best setups for himself and the Dixons, as a way to thank them for their help with the
children- and everything else, Rick thought with a bitter twist to his gut of the memory of Shane and
Lori.

He looked up when Daryl approached. “You and Merle can have this one. I think I could room with
Severus, maybe. Or BJ,” he hedged. “I really don’t want to be with Andrea, Carol or Glenn. Glenn
snores,” Rick said with a laugh, reminding Daryl of the night they had figured out that what they
heard was Glenn snoring and not walkers out to get them in the woods.

“You could room with me,” Daryl suggested shyly. “Severus an’ Merle seem to get along ok so they
could maybe bunk together near the boys,” Daryl said with a light shrug. “I know Draco is like
Merle’s little shadow now.”

“And Carl adores you,” Rick said with a small smile and nod, nudging Daryl with his shoulder as he
leaned against the doorway, surveying the large room. It was large enough to fit the three of them
comfortably, if they moved things around. “I mean… I know I have Carl, and…”

“He’s a good kid,” Daryl said. “I like him too..” The two men stood in the doorway staring into each
other's eyes.. The energy was heavy in the air. Rick could feel the wiry body of the hunter nearly
touching him, the heavy leather of his vest burning smooth against Rick’s thin flannel shirt. Daryl’s breath caught as Rick leaned in closer, their lips nearly touching...

Both men jumped apart like a shot when Snape sidled up to them, a smirk on his lips. “What?” Rick asked the grinning wizard.

“If you can’t see it, you’re dunderheads,” Snape said with a grunt and roll of his eyes. “Now move it so we can get these rooms sorted before the children want to go to bed.”

“Who even says ‘dunderheads’,” Daryl grumbled softly, upset that the moment had been ruined. Rick laughed and shrugged as they followed the wizard.

“Don’t make me turn you into something fuzzy, Dixon,” Snape warned.
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Stuff and Thangs happen with some of our favorite people at the prison.

Chapter Notes

As always, thank you to my wonderful beta Star, and everyone at the RWG for their help. Without them, this chapter wouldn't have been as wonderful as it is now. :) Thank you to all of my readers and reviewers as well. You guys are awesome and your feedback certainly keeps things going! :)

Snape peered into the library, it was time for him to collect the children and show them their new rooms. He had overheard Rick, Lori and Shane all talking earlier in hushed but angered tones about what to do with Carl, just outside of earshot of the others. It seemed like Rick and Lori were officially over and it was cemented that Shane and Lori were a pair.

_Drama_, thought Snape with a snort. It was almost as if he were back in the wizarding world and Hogwarts, with all of the teenage hormones floating all over the place. He could practically see emotions of the younger Dixon and Grimes, when he had caught them in a doorway earlier. Snape couldn’t wait to see what would happen with the two. He hated to admit it but he’d grown fond of them in the short time he’d known them. Shane and Lori on the other hand were a different story altogether. Snape abhorred cheating and dishonesty and those two had it in spades. He also despised how they seemed to flaunt their affair in front of the adults. He was just this side of thankful they managed to hide it from the children.

_Speaking of Children_, thought Snape as he walked further into the library, where were they? It was a touch too quiet for comfort, Snape thought as he looked around for the usual chaos and shouting that tended to come with children. It was quiet, but Snape could hear soft noises coming from the small apartment in the back of the library where the Mulcahy- Pierces slept with their daughter. Snape, having been a spy for over fifteen years, knew exactly how to sidle up to the room quietly, his professor habits coming to the fore as he expected to catch the children doing something they weren’t supposed to. He didn’t, however, find what he’d expected. He couldn’t hide the smile that crept upon his face when he saw … _Merle_.

The Elder Dixon was sitting on the couch with the children sprawled all over him like puppies sprawled over their parent. Harry and Draco had claimed the prized spots, once on each side like bookends, sharing Merle in between. Carl with his head resting on the arm Merle had wrapped around Draco and Sophia curled behind Harry, clinging to Merle’s hand. Francis dozed with Hermione in a chair across the room and the twins shared a blanket on a loveseat. It was so cloying domestic, that Snape let everyone lie in peace for a long moment.
That was when Snape saw it. The small sight that would begin his downfall.

Merle Dixon had a tattoo. He could see a hint of it, peeking from the waistband of Merle’s jeans though, he couldn’t quite make out what it was. It wasn’t the swastika he had seen before on the man’s muscular arm, or the Nazi eagle on his back, but.. It was something different. Something secret, thought Snape with a smirk as he watched Merle with curiosity. Merle Dixon wasn’t a handsome man exactly, but the man’s face held a certain stoic fascination. It should be obvious to anyone who cared to look that Merle had a hard life. Snape suspected that part of it had been dealt to him and part of it the man had brought on himself. There was one thing Snape was sure of, though he didn’t know why he was. Merle Dixon had the strength to face anything. He just needed someone to save him from himself.

Even the children could see that Merle was a good person even though he pretended to be anything but. Snape let out a muffled snort of amusement as one of the children rolled over and cuddled even closer the the gruff man, making a small noise that was nearly puppy-like in nature. Snape’s interest was roused, he wanted to find out more about Merle and about that tattoo.

Blue eyes suddenly met Black as Merle woke up. Snape felt like Merle had slipped into his mind effortlessly with his icy blue gaze and Severus’s mouth went dry with guilt. He felt like a child that had been caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

“Amused?” Merle asked dryly, his whisper not quite rousing the children. He was a bit embarrassed being caught sleeping in a cuddle pile. Snape quirked a brow and pursed his lips tightly into a small frown.

“I’m sure they’re ready for bed,” Snape said with a quiet hiss in his voice, not moving from his spot at the front of the apartment, “But I see you foresaw that.”

“Francis gave them warm milk and cookies,” Merle said with a slight grimace of annoyance. “I’m pretty sure there was something in it,” he smirked. “Never saw kids conk out that fast.”

“You raised Daryl, I presume?” Snape asked, never being one not to speak his mind. He saw the expression on Merle’s face as if he were torn between pride and disappointment. “You did well by him- no matter what happened,” Snape reassured. “Daryl has known pain and heartache but his soul hasn’t been broken,” Snape said pointedly as he crouched to pick up Harry and Sophia, allowing Merle to nudge over to pick up Draco and Carl. The men used to heavy lifting, but not used to it being children.
“Damn, they’re heavy when they sleep,” Merle grunted as he nudged Francis with his foot. Francis woke immediately, his blue eyes focused on Merle and Snape. “We got the kids, takin’ em over to their mamas.”

“Thank you, Mr. Dixon.” Blue eyes closed again, arms tightening around the small Hermione, the room radiating a silent bubble of warmth and safety that had been long sought after by everyone. Snape nodded briskly, tilting his head to indicate that Merle should follow. The two men walked down the hallway to the end of the unit where Snape had seen Daryl Dixon with Rick Grimes.

“Loverboy, here’s your charge,” Snape drawled in a rickmanian accent

Rick blinking stupidly at him for a moment while Daryl scoffed at Merle who was looking at him pointedly. Daryl stood and took Carl from his brother before putting down the sleepy boy down the couch in the room. “Thanks for watching him,” Rick nodded to Merle.

“Loverboy? The fuck, England?” Merle asked with a scowl wondering why he would say something like that to his brother. Merle shifted Draco so the boy laid down in his arms.

“Later, Mr. Dixon- the children need to be sorted.” Merle rolled his eyes at Snape’s stern schoolmaster voice, and Snape glared back at him dangerously. The two men scowled at each other as they left to sort out Draco, Harry, and Sophia’s sleeping arrangements.

Francis and Max decided to make dinner, with Glenn and Carol assisting. It was peaceful, while the kids slept off their warm milk and cookies. Minerva and Severus sat with Charles, BJ, and Hawkeye to discuss what to do with Remus over dinner. It was decided that they would draw samples from Remus before he transformed later that night in a cell, Max and Francis taking first watch with Minerva. Severus would take the sunrise watch with Poppy, when he transformed back in a human being. Carol volunteered to help get Remus ready for his transformation, a way of telling him thank you for what he did to Ed. It was small, but it was something, thought Carol as she watched Remus munch on some food at the table, sitting alongside an awkward Charlie and nonchalant Erin. Carol had spent some time exploring and she had come across a perfect room for the children, but she wasn’t quite ready to wrap her mind around the fact that they were actually safe here for the long term.

The children woke halfway through the meal, and came into the room one by one. Draco and Harry came in first, making a beeline for Merle and Severus, the boys sitting in between the two men. Hermione wandered in soon after, a book in her hands. Francis took the book away, telling her it wasn’t polite to read at the dinner table- they had company.

Sophia and the twins finally entered, Carl not far behind, his hair tousled from sleep. The older
children sat together at a small table, not far from the adults. The younger set of children sat with their respective guardians, still waking up from their milk and cookie treat. Dinner wound down as the adults tended to the meals for the children. Remus strode up to Harry and Draco, sniffing at them as if to greet them, and followed suit with every child in the room, learning the new scents for his wolf form.

It was a reluctant Carol who finally told everyone about the new room she had found, and wondered out loud about the idea of all of the children bunking together. It had been a nursery just off the library she had found hidden in a dusty nook. It had bunk beds, toys, blankets, and even fresh pajamas still in the package. It was a room for visitors, or wards of the state to stay in temporarily during emergencies at the hospital.

“It’s just like a sleepover!” Sophia crowed with delight while Hermione and the Indian twins chattered, while Carl begged Lori to let him sleep with his friends. Hermione already had gotten consent from Hawk and Francis; the twins were still begging with Minerva and Poppy. Merle sat in the corner, rolling his eyes at the domesticity.

It wasn’t until later that Merle’s mood took a nosedive. The rest of dinner was a chaotic affair with spaghetti and garlic bread, the wizarding folk having set preserving charms on everything they could find, so nothing would spoil or go bad. The children were amped up on excitement for their “slumber party”. The adults slowly grew frazzled, and it was nearly a holy moment the minute one child’s eyes started to droop, the others slowly following suit with Moony herding them back to “their room”.

“Peace and quiet, huh, baby brothah?” Merle said with a smirk as he entered what he presumed to be his and Daryl’s room only to find Rick in there with his brother.

“Merle- I kinda.. I’m bunking with Rick,” Daryl hedged. He expected Merle’s temper to explode because Daryl had chose Rick to room with. He quickly started to try and come up with a reason so Merle wouldn’t beat the hell out of him. “Well it’s just that now Max can bunk with Carol and Glenn, I mean not that anyone really ‘wants’ to bunk with Glenn because of his epic snoring but..” he babbled.. “No one wants to bunk with Andrea either, so she’s insisted on taking a room by herself and well...there’s kind of a thing...” Daryl said with a shrug, trying to be casual about the skew in the numbers without coming out and saying he just WANTS to bunk with Rick. “There’s already two families here, so..”

“Snape’s a family, he got those two boys,” Merle told him.

“Maybe you could go bunk with Andrea,” Daryl suggested, hoping his brother could at least get laid.
“That bitch? Nah, she’s sniffing around ol’ Shane, waitin’ for leftovers.” Merle scowled as he grunted with annoyance and stalked out of the room. Daryl smirked slightly - that had gone better than he’d expected. No damage had been wrought. Maybe Rick had been right - Severus and Merle were more alike than anyone thought.

Severus peered out of his room with annoyance, it sounded as if an animal was running about, causing a ruckus in a china shop. He really wanted to get some rest, but Glenn and Andrea had run him ragged with questions until he had hissed at them to just - leave- him- alone, and Andrea had cried. Glenn, to his credit, had just stammered and scampered away.

I haven’t lost my touch, thought Snape malevolently. On the warpath, he prepared himself for a new victim, and came face-to-face with an annoyed Merle Dixon. Of course - it had to be the elder Dixon. The younger one seemed much more quiet and laid back, besides Daryl had seemed to enamoured with Grimes over dinner to be out stomping up and down the halls.

“Go huff and puff somewhere else. I’m trying to sleep,” Snape scowled at Merle, vaguely surprised that Merle ended up being as tall as he was, the broad shoulders deceptively making him look shorter. Merle Dixon was quite a figure, as tall as himself and BJ, and Rick Grimes, if one counted his bow legs.

“Ah, screw you, England,” Merle grunted as he waved a hand in the air. “Gotta find a place to bunk. Damn baby brotha’s got a boyfriend.”

“Grimes? Yes- I saw them earlier. Mooning after each other, Schoolboy romances,” Snape scoffed. “All that romance and holding hands. They take too long to realize what to do with their dicks,” Snape said crudely, smirking at the slight blink of Merle’s eyes at the crude commentary.

“Yeah, I’m no schoolboy, England- I’m all man, and I know what to do,” Merle snorted with vague amusement. His mouth twisted into a crude smile as he leaned against the wall and think for a moment.

“Glenn decided to room with Carol and Max, but I think if he bunks with Andrea, he’ll get thrown out or eaten alive- I can’t decide yet.” Snape said with a smirk. “You’re welcome to stay with me for tonight, until we formalize our arrangements, at least.”

Merle wasn’t sure about in what spirit the offer was given, but it was an offer. Magic… did provide comforts, Merle thought vaguely as he shrugged and followed Snape down to a nearby office. Once he stepped inside, Merle smirked to himself. The room had doubled in size and looked just like a small apartment, complete with bathroom, bedroom and living room. This magic thing was pretty
damn cool. Not saying a word, Merle flopped down on the couch and took off his boots, making himself at home.

“Don't expect me to bring you beverages,” Snape scowled down at Merle, his dark eyes boring into Merle.

“No, you're correct- I give orders.” Snape turned and walked into his bedroom leaving Merle mildly surprised at how well the tables were turned and he only had just realized it. Merle didn't like the way things were going. He didn't like not being in control- he had to be top dog. There was no way England was giving him orders.

Merle scoffed as he rose from the sofa, walking towards the bedroom. “Why don't you give me the bed and take the couch? Ain't it the polite thing to do?”

“No,” Snape replied simply, glancing up at Merle with dark glittering eyes, a dangerous smirk on his lips. “You do realize you're playing with fire? I could destroy you.”

“The only way you could beat me is using magic and that’s cheating,” he glared at Snape.

“Jesus, you're really begging for it, aren't you? You don't know anything about me Dixon,” Snape laughed roughly, pissing off Merle.

“I ain't no pushover, England .” Merle strode up to Snape, poking him on his bony chest, pushing him. Merle was in a foul mood after being kicked out of Daryl’s room and he was itchin’ for a fight. He had to relieve his stress somehow.

A wicked smile crossed Snape’s lips. *If Merle wanted a fight, a fight he would get!* Snape moved quickly, seizing Merle’s arm and turning him around, slamming him into a wall. The dark haired man allowed his street urchin come out to play. Snape leaned in close to Merle, his hot breath tickled the curve of Merle’s ear as he spoke. “You'll get what you're wishing for if you're not careful Dixon.”

“Yeah?” Merle’s voice was deeper and his body was starting to react to Snape being so close. “What do you think I want, English?” he huffed.

Snape spun Merle around and slammed him against the hard, concrete wall and pressed his body tight against Merle’s.
“Get off.” Merle growled, pushing Snape back.

Snape pushed forward, and the two men wrestled for dominance; needing to prove who was the top dog.

“Bet it's a flower. Or someone’s name,” Snape said, cockily as he pressed harder against Merle.

“What the hell you talkin’ about?” Merle snarled and struggled to free himself from Snape’s hold. The man was stronger than he looked.

“The tattoo you have,” Snape smirked, reaching around and slipping his hand just past the waistband of Merle’s jeans. “Let me see it,” he whispered in Merle’s ear.

“Hell naw,” Merle roared, His heart was pounding and his breathing increased.

Snape smirked at Merle’s attempt to free himself, “Not such a pushover now, am I Dixon?” Snape yanked Merle off of the wall and shoved him down on the couch. Snape moved to straddle Merle, something in his groin tingling. Something he has let lay dormant for a long time…

A loud rip echoed in the room, and merle’s shirt lay in a heap on the floor, tattoo peeking out from the waistband. Snape remained unruffled in his wrinkled white Oxford, wool trousers tenting slightly. He moved back to eye merle and smirked when he spotted the ink.

“Show me, Dixon.” Snape whispered roughly, his cool hands restraining Merle as the other man squirmed under his touch, not sure how to react at the sudden shift of the atmosphere.

“I don't take orders, professor .”

“Too right, Dixon, but you will this time.” Snape’s hand curled around Merle’s waistband and a whispered word from Snape undone the snap of Merle’s pants.

“Really? All this fight over this?” Merle huffed. Snape grinned and rolled his eyes at Merle with a
snort of indignation. Merle grunted, surprising Snape with a shift of his hips. Merle was able to put Snape off balance and flip them off of the sofa, pinning the wizard on the floor, sprawled on top of merle’s ruined shirt.

“You're one to talk, with that snake o’ yours,” Merle gripped snape tightly where Snape’s tattoo peeked out from the oxford shirt sleeve. “Rough childhood, or some jerkoff dare you?”

“How did you earn your Swastika, Merle?” Snape asked directly, his dark eyes burning with anger, shifting so he could turn them once again and pin down Merle, the other man cursing that he should have expected that. “How does that muggle saying go- *great minds think alike*?” Snape asked as he leaned down, making sure to grind his hard length into Merle’s hips, a faint twitch could be felt, arousal and heat shooting through Merle. Without any warning, Snape shot down and took Merle’s mouth with his, kissing the man roughly and thoroughly. Teeth clashed and the two men wrestled for dominance as their bodies followed suit. Snape wrapped his legs around Merle, but Merle managed to seize Snape by the hair, tugging at it roughly to pull the wizard’s head back. Merle took full advantage of the position and sucked hard at the base of Snape’s neck, hard enough to leave a dark bruising of teeth.

“Fuck!” Snape spat out, grinding his heated shaft against Merle, his legs tightened and he let out a dark growl, angry that he hadn’t gotten to do the marking. Merle moved to try another spot, but Snape’s arm stopped him, and Merle found himself back on Snape’s couch, his pants nearly undone completely and his cock leaking, hard as granite under his boxer shorts. Snape straddled Merle once again, grinding into him as he marked Merle’s chest properly with teeth, moving up to kiss him roughly biting into his bottom lip hard enough to draw blood.

“Don't play games with me, Merle Dixon,” Snape said sharply. “You'll lose.” Childish laughter rang out in the hall, and that was enough distraction for Snape to get the last word in as they hadn’t taken time to lock the door.

“Don't forget your shirt. You may want to cover up.” A wicked smile flickered across thin lips as Snape ducked into his room, locking the door with an audible click, leaving Merle in the room by himself, the childish laughter down the hall seemingly mocking him at his current situation.

*He'd win. He would have Snape on his knees, begging to give him head or his name wasn't Merle Dixon.*

“What the hell?” Merle thought to himself as he realized where his thoughts were headed. Merle moved to stretch out on the couch, pulling a blanket over himself as he tried to wrap his head around what he had just done- or nearly done- with the dark haired man in the next room.
Neither man slept well that night; cocks ached and release was found, but not quite what the other needed.
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Remus's Transformation takes place, and science-y and magic-y things happen? Many thanks to BennyHatter for his help and my wonderful beta Star!

Remus followed Hawkeye, the other doctors and Minerva down to a reinforced isolation room, complete with heavy metal door and padded walls. Apparently the prison had a psych wing. Rick and Daryl had come down earlier and cleared the hall so they would use when Remus had to transform.

“Remus, do you consent to your blood and other bodily fluids and wastes being extracted for experimental purposes?” Charles asked, looking over a checklist that Poppy had drawn up with Minerva and Severus earlier. “Seriously, you need this to magic up the ..”

“Everything, Charles,” Minerva said briskly, as Poppy smirked. “Magic can be open to interpretation, and we need to prepare for any ..interpretation.” she trailed off with a slight snort of indignation at Charles’s expression. “Muggles,” she whispered under her breath as she waved her wand, Poppy procuring the vials.

“Oh,” Charles whispered a moment later as each vial filled with a liquid, save for three which filled with samples of hair, nail clippings, and a tooth. “Well, that simplifies things.”

“Sorry to have deprived you of your fun, Charles,” Hawkeye said with a slight undertone of mischief in his voice. Charles sputtered with disgust and Margaret shot him a dirty look.

“Moon-rise takes place in twenty minutes- Is that enough time to prepare, Remus?” BJ asked, having never been exposed to the experience. He wanted to learn more, to make sure that any chance at a cure would not be botched. The wolf nodded his head, and padded into the secure cell, Hawkeye locking it with an audible click. Minerva waved her wand as well as Poppy, helping secure the door. Max had explained from his experiences on the road with Remus, that Remus was only violent during the transformations themselves, so every time he changed, he had done so in as secure of a place as they could have found. Sometimes Max had to lock himself into the car at night, letting Remus roam free during the changes.

“I’ll take observation,” Margaret said with a nod, clicking a pen and holding up a notepad. Margaret slipped effortlessly back into corpsman/nurse mode, having done this a number of times
eons ago during the fifties. “Hawkeye, who’s the lead?”

“I’d say Poppy and Minerva, for the magic- and myself and BJ for anything else, Charles?”

“I’m perfectly fine being backup, thank you,” Charles said with a solemn nod, not wanting to get his hands dirty unless he really had to. “Charlie and Erin can take over for us during the night. Charlie’s trained in.”

“I know, Charles, I know.” BJ said with a nod and a tired voice, having heard every exhausting account of Charles Winchester IV’s life from conception to the present over the past few weeks stuck with Charles observing Snape. This was one of the moments where he really missed being over two thousand miles away from Charles Winchester III. It was just like Korea all over again, but in a jail in Georgia.

As the moon rose, Remus paced the room, Minerva watching through the slot in the door with deep concentration. It seemed that Remus wouldn’t turn- but the full moon seemed to bring out aggression in him, the wolf throwing himself against the walls, struggling to get himself free of the room.

“I suppose it’s good to say that this happened here, instead of on the road.”

“Charles, shush,” Margaret scolded her husband, her blond-grey head lowered over her notes, her polished hand writing furiously. Poppy was following suit, knowing that the two would need both perspectives of the experience if the cure was to come to fruition.

Two hours later, the doctors were replaced with a fresh set of eyes. Glenn, Francis, and Max replaced everyone on watch. Charlie and Erin took the places of the doctors. It was a quiet shift, with Remus pacing the room and occasionally testing the strength of the door. Glenn was a touch anxious, but Max reassured him that Remus still had some semblance of mind. The Arab had been on the road with Remus before, and had experienced only one full moon with him, but it was while they were on the run. They had holed up in a gas station, and in the morning the storeroom Remus had locked Max into was a safe haven, Moony had apparently destroyed the rest of the gas station while hunting for food.

Several amazing stories later about camels, horses, and a colonel who played polo in a minefield, Max had fallen asleep against Francis, who was struggling to stay awake. He was singing soft hymns in his Irish lilt, making Glenn’s eyes droop dangerously low.
“Rise and Shine!” Rick called out, Carol and Snape following Rick down to see Remus. It was nearly sunrise, and Remus had fallen asleep, curled up in a corner of the cell. He wasn’t in his human form yet, but he seemed to have less hair as time went by, the hair lightening into a grayish brown. Skin seemed to emerge, and the body shrank into a body of a slim and well-built man of forty, the scars all over him bearing testament to difficult years of suffering from lycanthropy. Some seemed more savage than others, perhaps inflicted by animals or weapons. Only Rick, Snape, and the army doctors had enough experience with the dark underbelly of humanity to discern whether or not the scars were inflicted by weapon, animal or human.

Painful sounds of bones cracking could be heard from the cell, and eventually, a thick silence rested upon the room, for all but Francis, who had dozed through the whole thing. Rick eyed the man with faint jealousy, for he would never forget those sound ever again. Severus was pale, leaning against the wall with his eyes closed and trying not to throw up. Minerva and Poppy conferred quietly, their eyes tired and sad from seeing the same experience countless times back in Scotland.

“Carol, I must- I must apologize,” A deep voice came from within the cell. Evidently, Remus could smell Carol’s presence. “So sorry- but Sophia had to be safe. You, you’re her mother. She needs you. He was far more dangerous than the walkers.” Remus said as the door was slowly opened by Poppy and Minerva, Severus and Carol standing closely behind them.

Carol stared at Remus, squatted on the floor and curled in on himself, with quiet surprise as she handed him a bundle of blankets and clothes she had gleaned from the storage closets. She watched Remus as she considered her next words to him. The man had eaten her husband… only, it was in defense of herself and Sophia. He had done something no one else had done, and in such a brutal manner…

“It is what it is.” She replied simply as she smiled at him, Minerva and Poppy waving their wands over him as she backed off, standing with Rick and the other survivors from Atlanta. The Doctors were conferring quietly in the corner over a sheaf of handwritten notes made by each doctor during their shift, and Francis was quietly cleaning up the room to make use of it for the next full moon.

“How’s Harry?” Remus asked of Snape, who looked down his hooked nose at the man crouched on the floor with a slight sneer.

“He’s fine. Merle’s with them,” Snape said with a brief nod. “He.. he’s not the burden I thought him to be.” Snape said carefully and softly, his long pale fingers smoothing down the parchment he had seized from Minerva and Poppy. He was gone a second later, a swoop of black sweeping through the room as if he had never been there.

“That’s Severus for you,” Minerva said with a sniff. “At least he can try to start a base for a potion soon. I know Charlie and his father have some kind of aid, but it will take time before anything takes fruition.”
“And all we have is time,” Carol said with a small smile as she moved to help Remus to his feet, Max and Francis moving quickly to give more support. “Let’s go, you’ll rest up better in the …?” Carol asked, glancing up at the doctors and witches in an open question of where to go.

“Just take me to Harry,” Remus said with a sigh. “I miss him, and I know the children will make me feel better.” He needed to be around life, and the children were the best source of life for miles around, if at all. The small group slowly moved from the cell to the library further down the hallway, announcing their presence to the children and Merle. Upon seeing Remus, the children screamed with delight, running to climb on Remus and pull him down in a tangle of hugs and shouts. The newer children hung back, unsure of the new presence.

“This is Remus Lupin- he used to be Moony,” Minerva said with a nod, smiling indulgently at the twins who brightened and nodded, understanding. Hermione held back, her eyes wide with wary curiosity.

“He used to be the Dixons’ dog?” Hermione asked incredulously, moving to cling to Francis and Hawkeye. “How is that possible? How did he become one? How-” Hermione seemed to never run out of energy for her incessant questioning about how Moony had become the man Remus Lupin, even if she had heard the story from Harry, Draco, and Merle.

“Hermione, I’m sure there’s a book somewhere,” Hawkeye said as he immediately cut off the barrage of questions. He spoke clearly and quickly from experience, moving his hands quickly in Sign Language while he spoke, for Francis’s benefit. “Francis will find it for you, or Minerva will, if it’s a magical book. Just let the poor man rest and do some reading before you get to the interrogation.”

“Sorry, Hawk.”

“It’s all right. I used to be a teacher- or I was studying to be one. I loved it when students were like Hermione- always asking questions and always wanting to learn,” Remus said in his deep voice. The children gathered around Remus like a moth to a flame. The boys wanted to hear stories, and the girls wanted stories too but they were more inclined to mother him slightly, tucking him in and straightening out blankets. Hermione held back slightly, sitting with Draco and Harry and allowing the older kids to take over. It was a nice, quiet moment that would soon set the tone for the days and weeks to come.
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

All hell breaks loose, then.. the children take matters in their hands. Rickyl finally happens!...ish.

Chapter Notes

As usual, thank you to my wonderful beta, starfire_wildheart, and the wonderful people over at RWG that made this possible. Sorry for the long hiatus, I've been sick and busy with stuff IRL... which kinda sucks, since I'd rather be writing this for you guys :) Thank you to all who left reviews; you guys make me work faster. :)

It had been several long weeks of adjustment, since Remus had turned himself back into a human, or whatever he was, thought Rick as he walked down the side of the west fence with Daryl, looking over the schematics of the prison.

He had noticed the wizards were using magic less and less as time went by. Only Poppy and Minerva were using it daily. Snape and Remus rarely used it, if at all, only against the walkers or to help along experiments. He had finally confronted Severus and Minerva that morning, and their heated conversation had brought him out to the fence, where Daryl had found him and his dark thoughts.

“Snape can be an asshole, but he's right. They gotta keep everyone safe, and they can't do that when everyone’s using up their magic just for dishes or laundry.” Rick said with a huff of frustration, hands pushing slightly at the fence. Walkers moaned nearby, but didn’t stir quite enough to cause any distraction.

“Why don't we do something? It's gonna be awhile. Snape’s melted three cauldrons, Charles is making BJ and Hawk drink more, and even Francis is getting cranky,” Daryl said with a grunt as he frowned in agreement with Rick. He didn't want to consider it, but they may have to put down roots at the prison for the time being. He liked these people, they seemed nice enough but he wanted… well, he wanted to be wherever Rick was, Daryl thought vaguely with a stirring of something in his gut.

“Well… we have this inner fence, we could use it for a garden and play area for the kids. I know Francis has been hinting at planting a garden, maybe Minerva or Poppy will magic us up some help
with that.” Rick shrugged as he turned to glance at Daryl. The other man’s feedback had become quite important to him. Daryl had in essence, somehow became his right hand man. Shane wasn’t quite trustworthy anymore, but Daryl.. Daryl was something special, thought Rick as something stirred in him as his eyes met Daryl’s. The two men eyed each other, standing near the fence as they slowly drifted closer.

“It.. it would be useful.” Daryl said softly as he watched Rick move closer. It seemed like forever, but their lips finally met, softly touching each other as they stood in the warm breeze. The kiss was chaste and innocent, but the two men were just discovering how kisses could change quickly. And there it was, thought Daryl as he chased after the feeling of peace and comfort that were essentially Rick that lingered from their kiss. The kiss slowly deepened, becoming a touch more inquisitive and curious, the two men exploring each other with gentle caution how their mouths and bodies seemed to fit together so well.

“RICK!” little voices echoed each other, shaking Rick and Daryl out of their quiet moment of solitude.

“Dammit, I tol’ you guys t’ stay!” Merle roared from up near the front gate of the prison, his dingy white wife-beater clinging to his broad chest. “Stay means, stay!”

“But Uncle-” Draco began, trying to explain to Merle the utter importance that his Uncle Severus had placed upon finishing the potion when they had stopped to visit him on the way to fetch Rick and Daryl for the meeting that Minerva had just decided they had to have. People had been at each other’s throats far too long, and they could not afford a cranky Snape AND a cranky Hawkeye; the combination could prove to be dangerous. Draco and Harry had learned three new curse words just minutes ago, when Poppy and Carol hadn’t shooed them away quickly enough from the infirmary where Snape had been shouting at Hawkeye over the inefficient results of the latest experiment failure.

“England don’t need no help,” Merle said as he came closer, his voice growing softer as he approached his two wizarding charges and their little shadow, Hermione. “An’ stop screwing out there- I see you.” Merle scowled as he waved a hand at Daryl and Rick.

“We didn’t do nothing,” Daryl scowled at his brother.

“Yet. Get your ass in ‘ere, Everyone’s gonna have a meetin’ and that means you too.” Merle whistled at the boys, a hand going down on each boy’s shoulder. Merle practically frog-marched the boys to the door, with Hermione trailing behind, a superior smirk on her face. Her entire demeanor screamed ‘I told you so, now you’re in trouble and i’m not’.

“Tattletale.” could be heard before the quartet disappeared into the prison. Rick turned to Daryl, a
small smile on his lips.

“Sorry about that. The boys seem- well, they seem very attached to us.” Rick said with a shrug to Daryl as he absently took Daryl’s hand into his own. It just felt natural, like it had was a normal thing to do. The two walked up to the prison and towards the impromptu meeting. He hoped it wasn’t yet another discussion about the war between Charles Winchester III and Snape, or yet another poke and prod from Poppy and Minerva- the two women seemed to be taking all kinds of samples from every person in their group. Poor Remus was a walking pincushion at this point, thought Rick as he watched Remus and Carol talking quietly on their way towards the cafeteria, the only room large enough to contain fights between Severus and Remus, or Charles and Hawkeye. Their last meeting had dissolved into a mixed fistfight with flashes of hexes and curses. It had took hours for the pig’s tail to fall off from Charles’s rear, and the donkey’s ears to disappear from Hawkeye’s head.

“In everyone’s best interest, we should stay with the family units within-” Minerva had begun once Charles had said something to the Dixons about moonshine and shoes.

“Family units?” Shane asked, shaking his head. “Ain’t no families here, anymore, really.” Minerva sighed and pinched her nose and counted to ten in Gaelic. “What?”

“Myself, my wife and son were more of a family than anyone here- “ Charles began in his formal Boston accent, smoothing down what remained of his hair, Margaret nudging him gently. She knew what was coming once Charles opened his mouth in that tone, and it never bode well for anyone involved. She loved the man, but he had big faults where family and money were concerned.

“Mah brother ’n me are family, too.” Dary shot back at Charles, Merle straightening up slightly.

“Nothing like inbred hicks to make a good family, all right,” Charles said in a slow drawl, mocking the Dixons.

*All hell broke loose.*

“GRAB HIM!” Margaret shouted, trying to hold back Charles and hand him off to Charlie. Lights flashed as wands were drawn, and the Dixons charged Charles. Rick was trying to hold back Daryl and Snape waving his wand at Merle, who fell to the floor tied up in silk cord.

“I didn’t know you knew that spell, Severus,” Remus said conversationally, waving his wand at Daryl who froze, Rick, also by extension, the two men still as statues, Rick’s arm wrapped around Daryl’s waist, while the other man was nearly bent over the table, reaching for charles.
Hawkeye shouted at Charles, leaning over the table and getting caught in the fray, someone’s elbow bumping him into his hooked nose. He hit back, Shane’s lip getting caught on his ring. Fights broke out around the frozen tableau at the table.

“ENOUGH!” Minerva shouted, waving her wand and setting off a firework with a loud bang. Everyone froze, staring up at Minerva with wide eyes, exactly like the misbehaving children they were acting like. “Now, you will listen to me, all of you, and behave civilly, if not for yourselves, for the children- who are depending on ALL OF US for their survival.”

During the fight, no one noticed the two small boys who were eavesdropping just outside the room nor the two boys slipping out of the door and down the hallway, running through corridors until they were out of the prison.

Harry followed Draco as the young blond ran outside. “What’s wrong, Draco?” Harry asked as the boy stood with his fists clinched.

“They’re not here anymore. Shane’s right,” Draco cried softly as he sat on one of the picnic tables outside of the prison. Harry put a hand on Draco’s shoulder with a frown. Harry hadn’t grown up with parents so he didn’t exactly know what Draco was going through but knew he would really miss Rick and Daryl if they left him. Or Merle and Severus. The four men were a lot like what Harry thought parents would be like.

Draco, on the other hand was feeling alone in the world, and felt like he didn’t belong, like he was more of a problem than anything else. He felt like the adults were fighting about whose responsibility or ‘family’ he would be now. Who would be stuck with poor, orphan Draco?. Maybe, just maybe it would be better if he went alone. He had learned enough from Daryl, Rick, Merle and Severus to keep himself safe, fed and dry: that would be just enough, thought Draco as he made a decision.

“But you’ve got me and Uncle Severus? And Merle?” Harry asked as he watched Draco, putting a tentative voice to his thoughts. The two boys sat silently until Draco asked Harry to go get him some water.

“Okay.” Harry said with a nod, happy to do anything to help Draco feel better. When Harry disappeared into the prison, Draco made his move and slipped out of a gap in the fence that he and Carl had been using to sneak out and find berries for Carol’s deserts.
Harry came back with the water and his friend was gone. He shouted for Draco a few times but didn’t see him anywhere. As he scanned the prison yard Harry saw the hole in the fence down by the tree line and immediately went after Draco, knowing his friend would need someone. He knew it was scary alone in the woods at night.

Meanwhile, the chastened adults sat back around the enlarged table, willing to let Minerva fill the leading role for the moment.

A long discussion later, it was decided and agreed upon that Remus and Carol would stay with Sophia in rooms just off the infirmary. Hermione had become Francis’s little shadow, so she was considered an automatic member of the Mulcahy-Pierce household. Hawkeye and Francis had taken over the library and knew the girl would be thrilled to be “living” in a library. The twin girls had been comfortable staying with Minerva and Poppy for the duration of their journey and it wouldn’t do to move the girls over to the Mulcahy-Pierce rooms with Hermione or with Sophia.

“I know Carl will be much safer with Shane and I- “ Lori began, throwing her chestnut mane over her shoulder as she glanced at Daryl accusingly with her wide doe eyes.

“What does that mean?” Rick asked with a scowl, shifting in his seat as Daryl tensed and Merle crossed his arms, a slight echo of Severus Snape. “Daryl’s an excellent caretaker, much like Merle, and Francis. They’ve been watching the kids-”

“Much safer with you,” Daryl scoffed. “Listen here, olive oyl you and captain fantastic over there were supposed to be watching him at the CDC when he nearly got bit by a walker! ”

“Am I the only one zen here?” Snape murmured, rolling his eyes at Merle who snorted slightly, the two men staring down at Lori and Shane. Shane and Lori began talking over Rick, and the four adults soon fell into a loud argument when Hermione burst into the room, screaming.

“They’re gone!” she shrieked, sobbing as she ran up to Snape, tugging at his vest. “I-- I went to look for Harry, I heard Draco crying, and Harry just went to get him water- “ Hermione jabbered, her hair flying everywhere.

“Slow down, child. Slow down, breathe,” Hawkeye said as he crouched down to Hermione’s height, holding her gently yet firmly. “Now, how long has it been?”
“I… I came to get you right away. Francis doesn't know we’ve gone.”

“Marvelous,” Shane huffed, crossing his arms as Hawkeye shot up to his feet, leaning up into Shane’s face.

“And you’re the one who thinks Dixon’s an unfit parent? I’m not the one with -” Hawkeye snapped.

“Boys!” Poppy shouted, Minerva and Severus pulling everyone apart. “We’ve got to focus- two little wizards are out there and their magic is barely contained. Now, our first priority is to find them.”

“I can track ‘em.” Daryl said with a nod. Rick nodded his agreement as he pulled on his jacket and his sheriff’s hat. Remus nodded and Carol’s hand slipped into Remus’s, the two forming a team as well. “Like last time?” Daryl asked as he moved out of the room, Snape and Merle hot on his heels, Rick yelling at Lori to stay with Carl and Francis.

“Yes, like last time. I have the boys’ scent in my memory. Severus-” Remus’s words were interrupted by Severus’s rough voice.

“Point Me is fucking useless, have you looked at what’s out there? There’s no way that the magic will latch on to the boys, we’re in a wild sink of magic, haven’t you noticed?” the little street urchin barraged into Snape’s speech, rendering him from a strait-laced scientist to a scrappy street fighter and murderer. “The boys need - they need the Muggles.” Snape spat out as he pulled his never-ending bag from his rooms, Merle hot at his heels with a handgun and set of knives.

“Merle-”

“I ain’t gonna be with the kids this time, England. I’m with you. An’ you know ya need us,” Merle said with a frown, lacing up his boots. Snape stared down at him with dark eyes and flicked his wand wordlessly, the boots lacing themselves and glinting slightly in the light.

“Impervious? They’re sturdier than dragon leather, why-” Remus began, but was cut off as Snape shoved past him out of the doorway and into the hall that would take them out of the prison.

“They’re not your boys, Merle,” Snape whispered to himself after a moment, turning to glance at Merle and Daryl at the doorway that led out to the gates and beyond. Poppy and Minerva raced up to the small crew, Max and Glenn trailing behind. Merle’s reply was overshadowed and muffled by the
sound of sharp footsteps echoing throughout the foyer of the prison.

“Severus, you have your bag- good. Now, to ensure we cover enough eventualities, Max and Glenn have volunteered to patrol the fences in case the boys come back while you’re out. Hawkeye and Francis are with the children, Carol-”

“I’m with Remus. They would do the same for Sophia,” Carol said as she took a breath and tugged Remus along with her. Glenn smiled at Carol, and saluted Minerva, along with Max. “Now, let’s go, we are wasting time.” At that, Remus ran off to where he could pick up a faint scent trail, the Dixon brothers and Rick following with Severus and Carol bringing up the rear. Glenn and Max picked up weapons, glancing at the small group who slipped through the small child-sized hole with a little magical help.

“Let’s go, kid. You gotta learn some tricks sometime,” Max said with a wave of his thin and wrinkled hand. “Back in Korea…” he began, regaling Glenn of stories of his stint in Korea with the doctors as he took out the walkers that came up to the fence with groans echoing throughout the compound.
Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

The hunt is on... and some people have a talk in the dark.

Chapter Notes

As usual, I have to give credit to my wonderful beta, Starfire_wildheart and the wonderful people over at the RWG for their help and feedback. Also, I must thank everyone who left reviews and feedback and kudos. You guys are awesome, too. :) 

Draco glanced up at the trees surrounding him. It was slowly starting to dawn on him that it would be night soon, and he hadn’t made himself a place to stay away from the zombies. He walked through the tall grass, finally spotting a small shack in the distance. Shivering slightly from the damp cold, Draco ran towards the shack, making sure that no Inferi could see or hear him. Nudging the door with a stick, he held his knife in his hand like he’d seen Daryl do many times, to make sure the two-room shed was empty.

Thankfully the shack was empty and he deemed it safe for the time being. Draco propped up a chair against the door for safety and curled up in a warm nest of blankets on the grimy floor. The memories of the day and the reason he ran bombarded him and he quietly cried himself to sleep.

While Draco slept, Harry was walking through where he hoped Draco had gone. The two boys were not quite on the same trail, but Harry was gaining ground. The small boy had been walking for what felt like hours. In reality, it was only two hours, but his small body needed rest. Looking around, Harry tried to think of what Severus or Daryl would do. He remembered back when he lived in England, he had been chased by a mean dog and climbed up into a tree to escape. He found he was quite safe and hidden up there where the dog couldn’t reach him.

Trees, Harry thought, as he looked up in the forest canopy for a suitable ‘bed’ for the time being. He was glad he had thought to pull on an oversized hoodie that Carl had lent him weeks ago, but he had forgotten to return. Harry finally decided on a decent-sized tree that he felt he could climb, and climbed as far as he could, but not so high that he got scared. He was shielded by a good clump of pine needles, and it was actually kind of warm and cozy in his little nook.
Rick, Remus, Severus, Carol, Merle, and Daryl all followed the messy trail that the boys had wrought. They had stomped down on the grass, broken branches off of bushes and trees, and at one point ate a feast of apples, Rick could see several discarded blackberries, squished in the undergrowth. Soon the trail became harder to follow, the boys had ran out of food, and were just running through the woods. At several points, they had to use Remus to sniff the air, to make sure everyone was still on track.

“Are you sure this will work; won’t their scent fade away?” Carol asked after a moment of deep thought as Remus sniffed the air for the fifth time since they had set off after the boys.

“As long as the trail is fresh, we’ll be fine. Two seven year olds can’t really get that far… can they?” Remus thought aloud to himself, and partially glanced at Snape and Daryl.

“Children can be fast. They’re upset, that’s what’s driving them at the moment. They may slow down once they calm down,” Snape said with a frown as he studied the landscape. It was starting to get dark, and they hadn’t expected to be out hunting for the boys this long. “If we lose the scent, we have Daryl and Merle. If .. if things fail, we can do the Blood Scrying,” Severus said after a slight backtracking of his words as he kept on walking next to Merle, the “everything” bag swinging across his hip as he walked, poking Merle occasionally. The other man didn’t say a word, blue eyes intent on the horizon and the rolling hills beyond.

“Blood Scrying is dark magic-” Remus began, unconsciously drawing closer to Carol, his arm going around her in a slightly protectively as if he could ward off all evil with a small gesture.

“So? Ministry’s gone. There’s no more distinctions. It’s all about intent,” Severus said, his voice turning stern, lapsing into the stern professor he had been before the world had gone to pieces. “Dark Magic has malevolent intent, and was only classified as so due to the death, sacrifice and destruction it brings. Haven’t you noticed all the magic we’ve been doing COULD be classified as Dark, but isn’t because….?” he trailed off as he smirked down at Remus, black eyes glittering maliciously.

“Because we are using it for Defense.”

“Exactly.” he sprinted ahead, pausing in the center of a clearing. “It’s getting dark, and I don’t think we can track any further. We’ll have to camp here-”

“Why can’t we just keep going?” Remus asked with a frown, used to his werewolf senses carrying him further than the Muggles and the wizard in their group.
“Dixon?” Snape asked airily, smirking as he unloaded the bag with Rick and Carol, the three of them setting up the tent, Snape waving his wand to set up shields all around their clearing, as well as sending a Patronus to Minerva to update her of their search. The Dixon brothers shared a glance, not quite used to being put on the spot like that, especially from Severus Snape; he never seemed the kind to defer to others.

“We rely on sight, sound… darkness takes away a lot of our other senses, so it’s just pointless to try to keep going in the dark. Someone could get hurt,” Daryl said after a shared glance with Merle. Daryl continued to explain to Remus about tracking the “muggle” way, while Merle took his knife and started cutting up wood to make a campfire, it wouldn’t do to be standing around yapping about hunting an’ tracking.. Not when those two boys were lost out there.

Merle still remembered the look Snape had given him at the doorway, after he had done some magic shit to his boots. His feet had stayed dry, comfortable, and it was like he hadn’t been wearing shoes all day. The comment Merle had made to Hawkeye when they had first met came back to haunt him. They were his boys- Merle’s- Harry with his green eyes and questions about animals, the love of the forest the boy had grown to appreciate. Draconis, with his bright blond hair and intense focus on learning about their new world. Snape’s voice as he had murmured earlier in the day; “They’re not your boys, Merle” played through his head as he pulverized each branch he could find, his muscles aching after he had downed several young trees.

“Dixon.” Snape materialized out of the twilight, the very man of his thoughts. Branches stood still around the dark man, as if he had literally materialized out of nowhere. Probably, thought Merle as he stared at Snape. He wanted to ignore him, to keep going. He didn’t want the man to exist, to be in his space…

Merle couldn’t help himself after a long while. The silence grew thick around them; the two men staring at each other.

“England .” Merle said with a dark look on his face. Snape didn’t move, watching Merle with a slightly detached air. “Those boys…. Ain’t mine, yeah, but they’re kids. I can’t’ jus’ let ‘em disappear .” Merle continued hacking away at the wood, their wood supply becoming quite sizeable. They now had enough wood to last them a few days thanks to his frustration.

“Harry and Draco are not mine either, and their parents- ” Snape’s voice broke slightly at the memory, of Lily, “entrusted them in my care.” Snape took a slight breath, his face still unreadable, but his body posture relaxing slightly, like an animal deciding not to bolt, but still ready to nonetheless. “Lily- she was my first, and only, friend,” Snape said with a long exhale of sorrow. “I still hate James with a passion- just like Shane, really, strutting around like he owns the place.” Snape scoffed with derision, moving slightly to lean against the closest tree, waving his wand to enact the
faint red dome of protection and privacy.

“Mm.” Merle grunted, to indicate he was listening, still hacking away at the wood, but not as fiercely.

“Lucius and Narcissa made me Draco’s godfather. I took- take- that job very seriously. With Black in Azkaban, Lupin and I- well, we’re the only people Harry has left that knows- knew- his parents.” Snape’s head moved, to look up at the starry sky, hidden beneath the canopied forest roof. Moving his head slightly, he looked Merle directly in the eye, his dark eyes glinting.

“Dreams- wizards use them to communicate- and they have power,” Snape abruptly began, the subject of the boys dropped, his voice becoming prim and proper, back in his professor mode. “I had a dream,” he didn’t elaborate further, not wanting to break the memory of Narcissa and Lily, sitting in the little sitting room of Spinner’s End, sipping tea and smiling at him. He still could see Lily’s bright red hair in its ponytail, her faded jumper from Oxford, and the dark denims she insisted on wearing- her Muggle attire, next to Narcissa, a direct contrast to the prim and proper witch in her deep silk witch’s robes with the velvet embroidered hem.

“Yeah?” Merle grunted as he finally paused in his chopping. “Voodoo an’ all that don’t stand wit’ me ..” he began with a frown, staring at Snape for a long moment.

“Yeah.” Snape snorted lightly at the mention of the magic in the deep south. “Muggles,” he scoffed, his dark hair flowed over his shoulders, loose from his usual proper ponytail. “You’re sensitive to the pure magic- the stuff that makes things… alive ,” Snape trailed off, looking not at Merle, but past him somewhere, wherever the boys could be. “You can feel the boys, and they can feel you. They’re yours as much as they are mine, Dixon .”

“Yeah , Uncle Sev?” Merle said with a faint frown, dropping his weapon and crossing his arms across his broad chest. Snape’s head moved, as if struck across the cheek with the sound of Merle calling him by the name the boys used for him. “I may be fucked up, but I ain’t so fucked up that I tell people what to .”

“Dixon ,” Snape said, his voice sad and petulant.

“No, you listen, England. My pa beat me n’ Daryl. Yeah, it was hard, we never knew when he was gonna snap for no reason but we lived. I don’t think you learned to let yerself live, England. Now, you’re afraid of livin’ and…”
“Merle!” Snape interrupted, putting a hand on Merle’s wrist. “Look I had a dream last night- Lily and Narcissa gave the boys to us- us.” Snape licked his dry lips as he blinked at the man in the glowing moonlight. The wind whistled slightly through the trees, reminding them that they were still exposed, vulnerable to the elements. Snape repeated what the two women had told him in his dream, the words he had woken up to that very morning- as if the two mothers knew what their sons would do today. “Our spirits- and hearts- have not broken. We have proven ourselves to be.. the best guardians for these boys. The dead have spoken, and chosen us.”

“I ain’t-” Merle began, his breathing starting to pick up, and his heart began to pound. He felt miles away from the small clearing he had created, the wood pile at his feet, and his brother feet away in a magical tent. The world had gone round the bend, and him with it.

“I am not, either. I- I can’t, not since Lily… “ Snape whispered softly, the warm air of his words brushing past Merle’s cheek. “The world has changed- can’t you feel it? Us, we adapt, and we .. have,” Snape broke off, moving back into the woods. Merle’s hand shot out and gripped Snape’s arm before he could disappear completely into the dark forest. The two men stared at each other for a moment, while Merle smirked slightly, pressing Snape up to a tree.

“Think about it, England ,” Snape’s body burned with the warm heat of Merle’s, his body responding to the press of hips against his own. Snape found himself without words, almost having an out-of-body experience as Merle’s mouth found his, dominating and commanding with his long and heated kiss- almost as if he were reminding Snape of what had happened back in the prison not so long ago- and now it was his turn to be left behind, alone in the dark while Merle sauntered off to his brother and his brother’s soon-to-be-boyfriend, in the circle of warmth the tent provided in the clearing just beyond the dark forest.

Damn, thought Snape as he adjusted himself, thinking about what he had gotten himself into, and staring up at the same stars the two boys were gazing at, just beyond their reach in the dark shack and the large fir tree, waiting for what tomorrow would bring with the sunrise.
Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

The boys have an encounter... a short chapter.

Chapter Notes

As always, thank you to my beta, Starfire_wildheart for her amazing work and the wonderful people over at RWG- I couldn't keep this up without you guys. Also, please read/review. I seem to update faster if I get reviews and feedback. Thank you! :-D

The sunlight woke Draco, his face covered with dried snot from where he had cried himself to sleep. Taking a shaky breath, Draco sat and wondered what his next move should be. He couldn’t be running around forever, he would need to find a place to stay, so the Inferi wouldn’t get him and eat him.

“Food,” he whispered to himself as his stomach growled. He raided every nook and cranny that he thought would have food. Uncle Severus had showed him some clever hiding places people always used when they tried to be smart. He managed to find a can of “spam” and two cans of vegetables.

“You cannot afford to be picky, Draco- food is fuel, and you need fuel to keep going,” Uncle Severus’s voice murmured in his head. Draco frowned at the cans, and opened just one of them- he would save the others for later. He knew food would be hard to find and there would come a time when he couldn’t find absolutely anything to eat. There was still a piece of the finicky, aristocratic boy hidden deep inside, he was a Malfoy and Malfoys did not eat…. Spam. Draco eyed it critically, but he was hungry enough to eat anything that was edible, and Spam was edible. He pulled the tab, and glanced down at the pink interior. It smelled strange, almost metallic, but Draco had heard Daryl say that food was food, and people had to eat sometime. Opening his mouth, Draco spooned a mouthful of the thick substance into his mouth and nearly gagged at the taste. It was like someone had squeezed a good amount of pork in his mouth, covered it with oil… and let it sit for days. He threw up and threw the canister across the room where it landed with a thud. Vegetables really sounded a lot better than this, thought Draco as he breathed deep breaths and opened the can of vegetables, practically drinking the juice down, to erase the taste out of his mouth.

Having ate the entire can of mixed vegetables, Draco drank the juices and cleaned up his face, readying himself for a long journey ahead. He made sure his shoes were tied. He was glad that Daryl had taught him to tie his shoes, with double knots and everything. Harry was still learning, and Hermione had ‘learned how to do it ages ago’, she had told them in her bossy voice when Daryl was showing them.
Father, I miss you. I miss you too, Mother, thought Draco as he put his hand on the door facing and looked back at a muggle family photo that had been left behind, of a man and woman with yellow hair just like his mother’s, and four children in the picture who all had the same yellow hair. The man had brown hair, just like Hermione’s. Taking a deep breath as if he were preparing to plunge into a pool, Draco flung open the door, knife at the ready. He walked out of the house, a small rucksack he’d found on his back that held his meager amount of treasures- the canned food, a blanket and his wand- he wasn’t to touch it unless he really had to.

Meanwhile, a mile behind Draco, Harry had woken up with the warm sun, a fading memory of red hair in his face.

“Mum?” Harry asked, blinking sleepily away the dream and the feelings that came with it. His green eyes finally fully open, he watched below for anything that could hurt him. Seeing nothing, Harry climbed down carefully and made sure he had enough apples in his pockets. Setting off on his Draco hunt, he hummed softly a song he always heard Merle humming when he chopped wood. He didn’t know the song, but he liked the sound and it made him feel like was Merle was with him. Walking carefully, Harry looked out at the horizon, spotting the small shack ahead of him. The sight gave Harry hope and an extra burst of energy. Running as fast as he could, he finally got to the shack and ran inside, stopping quickly at the memory of BJ yelling at him for not looking for walkers before he walked into a room. BJ had been scary, but no one had hurt him or hit him. The words were loud, but it was one of the few times Harry remembered that no one had hurt him when he was being scolded, and actually gave him hugs afterward. He liked BJ, and didn’t want him to get that sad and mad face he got whenever Harry did something he wasn’t supposed to.

“Sorry, BJ,” Harry whispered at the memory, holding out a sharpened piece of metal he had carried with him from the prison. He had taken it from the pile of weapons that Max and Glenn had been working on for picking off walkers at the fence. “I’ll be more careful from now on,” Harry whispered as he looked around the two rooms. He saw an empty vegetable can. It was still damp, and he could still smell the juice. He remembered from the Dursleys, that wet meant fresh and he could still eat it, even if it had been put in the trash.

“Stupid Dursleys,” Harry grumbled as he carefully picked out the few leftover pieces he could find and ate his apples as he thought about where Draco would go from here. Walking to the door, Harry looked up at the sun in the sky and shrugged. He could feel it deep inside him, that he would find Draco and they would be okay once they were together. The red haired lady had said so in his dreams. The man with messy black hair who sat next to the red haired lady never said anything, only
smiled at him all of the time but he seemed happy.

Not too far away, the small tent was being wrapped up and put away by Severus and Rick, while Daryl and Merle got their equipment ready. Remus and Carol were packing away the food in their packs, Remus sniffing the air for any sign of the boys. He could smell fresh apples, a faint trace that could be the boys, he wasn’t sure. He could smell the prison’s soap, with a faint undertone of something *Harry*. He had been close by, thought Remus with a scowl. If they had only gone further.. They could have found him.

“Harry’s gone this way- that much I can find,” Remus said as he pointed up towards the woods where Merle had pulverized the trees. The Dixons went forward, looking for any signs of a traveler that was a live human being. “I smell urine- he was here not too long ago,” Remus said with a nod as he sniffed the air, changing his direction. The small group followed Remus, the Dixons still in front, keeping track of their location along the way with small signs of their presence. After a long while they came out of the forest to a pasture. A small shack stood off in the distance.

“We better check that- I think Draco would have hunkered down in there. The boy likes his comforts,” Merle said as he stalked up further, putting some distance between himself and the group. Carol and Remus brought up the rear, allowing Merle to walk off some of his frustration, the man had not said a word all morning, only glared at his brother or Severus. Severus, in turn, had been quiet… dangerously quiet.

“Everything okay?” Carol whispered to Remus and Rick, who was just up ahead of the pair. Rick paused to glance at Carol with a shrug.

“The two of ‘em … who knows?” Rick turned to glance ahead, speeding up his pace so he was walking shoulder-to-shoulder with Daryl. The two men walked together in companionable silence until they reached the small shack in the distance. Merle was first, with Snape hot on his heels, wand drawn. Remus nearly bowled over Snape in his hurry to get to the debris left behind by the boys.

“We have to keep moving. This can't be more than a hour or so old. Still smells very sweet,” Remus said as he sniffed the air, picking up the discarded can of vegetables. Rick and Carol commented about how the place seemed to have been picked clean of anything useful.
“Boys seem to have been listening to you, baby brother.” Merle grunted as he scowled at a pile of apple cores left by Harry.

“Come. I want to maintain-” Snape began in his sharp professor’s voice, but stopped as a gunshot rang out in the distance. Snape and Remus disappeared immediately with cracks bursting through the air.

“Damn wizards” Merle grunted as Carol and Daryl joined him in running after the sound of the gunshot. It had came from over a hill in the short distance from the shack they had just surveyed.

“Boys, are you alright?” An older man asked, his white beard splattered with blood and gore as he ran over to Harry and Draco. The two boys had just found each other when a group of walkers had cornered them near a thicket of blackberry bushes that had overtaken a fenced in area near a barn.

“Are you Father Christmas?” Harry asked, awed at the big bearded man that looked just like the jolly old man in holiday adverts and movies he had seen back in England. The old man paused and blinked with a laugh.
Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

The boys are rescued, and shit goes down... again.

Chapter Notes

Thank you to Star, my wonderful, amazing Beta and the people over at RWG- I love you all, and my readers, followers, reviewers... hell, anyone who reads this. :-) 

“No, I'm actually a veterinarian. My name is Hershel Greene. Boys, how did you ... kill those things? Where are your parents?”

“No, I’m actually a veterinarian. My name is Hershel Greene. Boys, how did you ... kill those things? Where are your parents?”

“Dead.” Harry replied without any expression, used to the fact while Draco pulled a face. “Uncle Severus doesn't want us anymore. They're fighting about us.”

The sudden crack in the air startled Hershel, making him shield the boys from the noise, but the boys seemed intent on running towards it. Intent on finding the source of the sound, no one noticed the small herd of walkers growing steadily by the minute, a distance away from the barn they were at.

“Boys!” Snape shouted, his arms flung wide as he stared down at Harry and Draco, his dark eyes burning with rage and relief. “Remus and I were looking for you- why did you disappear like that?”

“We heard you fighting! We know you don’t want us to have to take care of,” Draco said with a sullen frown. Harry shrugged and remained by Draco’s side. Draco scowled, allowing his long blonde hair to hide his eyes as he leaned into Harry.

“We were fighting about where to put you, Draconis, who was best at keeping you safe, not who wanted you. We ALL want you, both,” Remus said with a long exhale, his nose twitching as he brushed a hand through his worn beard. “We all went looking for you.” More nose-twitching and Remus pulled a face.

“What?” Snape asked tiredly, as he leaned forward to put a hand on each boy’s head, critically looking them over for any injuries. “What’s turned you into the easter bunny?”
“I smell.. Something. In there,” Remus said as he turned to point at the barn. Hershel turned to glance at the barn, his eyes wide when he saw the walkers coming.

“Shite, what do you have in there?”

“Our animals… we.. “ Hershel began, running towards the barn, Remus hot at his heels to drive away the inferi. Snape stayed with the boys, a hand clutching each one.

“Where’s the wand, Draconis?” A wand was raised aloft. “Good boy- remember the spells to do? Do them- as many as you can.” Snape raised his own wand, and Harry raised his own small weapon. The three of them went forward as an unit, Snape in between the boys and partially shielding them with a hue of red, like he had done back in the CDC. Remus and Hershel banged at the barn, knocking open the doors only to reveal the animals had been attacked by walkers through a board that had popped loose from all of the pressure the large hoard had put on it.

“I’ve got to get the girls- my family-” Hershel stuttered, as he turned to run, abandoning the animals. “MAGGIE! BETH!” Hershel shouted, with Remus hot on his heels, Snape and the boys following to aid in the rescue. Remus, his ears sharp as ever, stopped short.

“No time!” Remus shouted, but the inferi had gotten too close to them, despite Remus’s lycanthropy. It seemed it didn’t matter at this point. They were as well as gone, thought Remus as he pulled his wand to blast at the inferi. Severus followed suit, his wand firing flashes of purple, red and blue. Decapitated heads rolled, snape pulling back to give them a good kick up into the air with his dragon-leathered boot.

“Football, Severus? Really?”

“Shut up.” Snape panted, sending his third head flying into the air. Harry and Draco giggled, holding on to the tails of Snape’s frock. Snape’s wand flew, slashed, and jabbed at walkers. The boys used their tools to jab at the decapitated heads, the small group making their way down out of the farmland and into the woods where they knew the others would be arriving. It wouldn’t do for them to run into this.
Or not, thought Snape with a frown as he watched an arrow whiz by and a walker stumbled into a tree, his skull embedded into the trunk by the arrow.

“Dixon. Take the boys- now, go.” Snape shouted, shoving the two boys at Merle, who had just come up behind Daryl and Rick. Harry and Draco stumbled into Merle’s arms. Merle took them without hesitation. Daryl, Rick, and Carol went to work subduing enough Inferi so they could escape to the truck that Hershel was trying to maneuver around the farm towards where the small group from the prison were standing.

Fuck. It was too much, Snape realized after a moment as he saw the truck getting swamped. It was down to the end again, Snape thought as his black eyes locked with Merle’s ice blue, rolling up his sleeve. “Our boys, Merle.” he whispered, holding up the wand just above the tattoo on his forearm.

“DOWN!” Merle shouted, grabbing the boys and tucking each under an arm, his military training taking over. Daryl, not questioning his brother, followed suit while he grabbed Rick, rolling under an abandoned wagon while Carol threw herself under a tractor, Remus shielding her with his body. Snape’s wand pressed into his flesh and shot upward. Purple-black flames shot from it, a ring of fire flashing forward and dissolving each and every walker within a radius of a hundred feet. The sound of sizzling filled the air, and sulphur tickled the noses of those who were still breathing. Piles of ash littered the field, but the barn and house were still ablaze, wood being vulnerable to the purple flames that had consumed the open flame of the kerosene lamps burning within each building.

“What…?” Hershel stuttered out, emerging from his truck with wide eyes as he watched Snape collapse to the ground in an undignified heap. Merle was the first to rise, the boys catapulting off the ground and clambering towards Snape, poking and prodding him.

“He’ll be out for awhile, I’m sure,” Remus panted, staggering up to his feet and leaning against the tractor as Carol wrapped an arm around his shoulder. Rick and Daryl had moved to check over Snape, Merle holding on to the boys, a hand on each head.

“He’ll be okay?” Harry asked after a long moment. “I won’t have to wake him up?”

“Nah.” Remus said with a shake of his head. “He’ll need to rest. He was up late and couldn’t
“Sleep.” Merle made a noise in his throat, frowning at Remus, who shook his head and shifted a shoulder to the boys, indicating that there were kids present. “He … drank some firewhiskey and had a conversation with James and Lily.” Remus added as he leaned down, tugging at Snape’s shoulder, trying to prop him up so he could be carried rescue-style up to Hershel’s truck. Merle allowed the boys to run up and follow Remus and clamber up to the back of the truck, refusing to leave Snape alone.

“He’ll be fine.” Daryl said as he gave his brother a slap on the back, unconsciously lacing his fingers with Rick’s as the pair walked up to the truck, joining Remus and now Carol, with Merle slowly trailing behind.

“We can take ya to the prison. It’s not far, you’ll be welcome there.” Rick told Hershel as the others worked out seating arrangement in the bed of the truck. Remus and Carol stretched out Snape the best they could, the boys chattering to Snape about everything and nothing. It was as if nothing had happened - that they were simply out on a supply run for more medicine and herbs.

“Thank you,” Hershel said. Rick nodded, moving around with Daryl to get into the back with Merle. Remus opened the small partition in the rear window and asked Hershel his name and how he found the boys. Hershel repeated what he had told the boys, and thanked Remus for “Trying… Trying to save my family. Thank you for my girls.”

“It’s what we do,” Carol said with a small smile, her hand on top of Remus’s, remembering why she felt so free at the moment. “Remus saved me, and it seems that the guys here have a saving-people complex.”

“Nah, we just know when to haul ass,” Merle said with a scoff, leaning against his brother, a steel-toed boot slightly prodding Snape’s leg as he frowned down at the unconscious man. Daryl nudged his brother and whispered something, Remus leaning closer to talk with Carol while Rick gave Hershel directions on how to get to the prison, glad that their travelling time would be cut into half with the aid of the truck. Perhaps they would be back in time for dinner.

“Remus, can you do that magic thing and let Poppy and Minerva know about Snape? Maybe they can fix him up again?” Rick asked after a moment as he remembered the silvery figure of a doe that Snape had used to send after Remus to bring him here for the cure. “Like that silvery deer he sent after you.”

“I could try. I’m surprised Severus could still produce one, after-.. after everything,” he trailed off, not wanting to mention the Potters or the Malfoys. He wasn’t sure how Draco felt at the moment. He felt dirty, like he was betraying the Potters and Malfoys by taking their sons through the apocalypse. Shaking himself free of maudlin thoughts, he thought hard of happiness, what made his heart feel warm and loved.
Settling on the memory of Harry’s birth to help him conjure his patronus, Remus waved his wand and out came a ferocious wolf, prancing in the air and watching Remus with old and wise eyes. Moony- it was Moony, but not quite Moony…

“Poppy, we are bringing the boys and some visitors. Severus has exhausted his magical core yet again, so prepare for that. Thank you.” Remus said as he sent the wolf off with a flick of his wand, the boys climbing over Snape to watch the wolf run off in the direction of the prison. Remus smiled at the innocence of the boys, still amazed they had managed to hold onto a shred of innocence amidst this mess.

“He’ll be okay.” Rick whispered to Daryl with a smile, their hands still entwined, resting on Rick’s knee.

“Who?”

“You know, Merle,” Rick said with a wink to Daryl, who blushed slightly at the thought of his brother and Snape. “I heard them the other night, when I had to go take a piss. You know that it was Merle and Snape that told me to - that it was okay- okay to…” Rick said with a brief squeeze of Daryl’s hand. “Not in so many words, but..”

“Dunderheads,” Daryl said with understanding, smiling a small and secret smile at Rick. There was plenty of time for their discussion, but right now he had his brother to look after, and two small boys who seemed intent on cheering up Merle or making him even more depressed, he wasn’t sure which.

“Boys, want to hear a story?” Rick asked with a smile, his fatherly instincts kicking in as he gathered the boys near himself and Daryl, leaving Merle stretched out in a corner, cigarette dangling from his mouth as he watched Snape’s chest rise and fall with each breath he took. The road hummed under the tires, lulling the boys into a silent sense of ennui, Rick’s deep voice and the cadence of the story he was telling soon put the boys to sleep, as well as Remus and Carol who were wrapped up in a blanket.

“I think we should rest while we can,” Rick said with a decisive nod, leaning against Daryl as the two stretched out best they could next to Snape and Merle, the adults forming a small nest around the boys who had piled onto Snape, one boy’s shoe resting on Merle’s thigh, his overlarge hand protectively curled around the small ankle of Draco, his arm resting against Harry’s torso as the boys slept.
No one said a word until they pulled up to Cokeworth prison, Remus having woken up just in
time to tell Hershel where to pull in to make it down the long dusty driveway up to the prison gates,
where it seemed, everyone was waiting for them, save for Max and Charlie who were on walker
duty.

“We’re home.” Rick said with a grin, realizing he actually meant it, finally-

*They were home.*
Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

The results of Snape's quick decision at the Greene Farm.

Poppy and Minerva had enlisted the help of Max and Francis to set up Severus in Remus’s old observation room in the hospital ward. The boys hovered around Snape’s bed with Hermione, Carl and Sophia occasionally dragging them away for games and to eat with them at meals. The adults were no better than the children when it came to hovering, or at least The Dixon brothers, Rick and Remus. They all took turns watching Snape until poppy had enough and warded the door against them unless it was an actual emergency. It had only been two days, but it felt an eternity.

“How d’ya all do this? We gotta help Snape, can’t jus’ sit an’ do nothin’ ” Merle asked Hawkeye, BJ and Francis as he and Rick, Daryl, and Remus sat around the library drinking the homemade booze that Hawkeye, BJ and Max had set up their first day there at the prison.

“Experience.” Hawkeye said with a smile, Francis shaking his head in quiet amusement as he held up a glass of water. “I just go back to what we did in 1950; it seems to help most things in this situation. We just need a Colonel Potter and we’d be a full unit again.”

“I do like being married to you, you know.” Francis scolded gently, smiling as he raised his eyebrows up at Hawkeye. “I couldn’t stay married to you as a chaplain.”

“Father Mulcahy; a saint among sinners.” Hawkeye quipped with a small kiss, the two men chuckling softly as a small ‘eww’ could be heard from the bookshelves. “Kids, have you found any good books to read yet...that HERMIONE has not read yet?”

“No, not yet.” a child’s voice echoed from somewhere in the back of the library. The adults smiled among themselves as they eyed Merle drinking up the booze. Daryl shook his head and nudged his brother while Francis and Hawkeye shared looks of knowing; they knew what it was like to not admit to yourself that you actually cared about someone… more than you actually thought you did.

“Merle- He’ll wake up. He’ll wake up and cure this thing,” Francis said gently as he put a hand next to Merle’s arm, but not quite touching it. Hershel came in, a small vial of purple liquid that Poppy had sent him to give to Merle or Daryl in his hands. Merle glanced at it and chuckled quietly to himself.
“Hangover stuff. Snape’s,” Merle grunted as he reached for the purple vial, Hershel had brought, but changed his mind at the last minute and left the room. Daryl and Rick shared a look and decided to follow Merle. The children emerged from the bookshelves, carrying a large book and asked for Francis to read to them, and for Hawkeye to ‘do the voices’.

Before they could catch up with him Merle had shut himself up in his room. Rick and Daryl stand by the door with small frowns on their faces. “He’ll be okay,” Rick said with a nod, his arm around Daryl as they walked back to their room They could hear the children giggling down the hall, they knew the older men would keep a close eye on them, after their long adventure out in the woods.

“I dunno, It’s weird,” Daryl said with a shrug as he sat on the bed, shoulders hunched as he hid behind his hair. Rick closed the door and secured it with a faint click. “M’rl… an’ me.”

“It’s just what it is,” Rick said with a shrug as he flopped down on the bed next to Daryl with a sigh that hid a small grunt, Rick wasn’t twenty-two anymore. “The world’s gone to hell, we’ve dead people walking, and wizards outta the ass… what’s next? Werewolves? No, we’ve got that too,” Rick said with a barking laugh, turning on his side. Daryl laughed, collapsing on his back in giggles. The two men laughed together for a long moment, their arms slowly finding their way around each other. After a quiet moment, they shared a tiny, shy smile between themselves and leaned in ever so slightly so that their lips were touching. The small kiss gradually became a slow-stoked fire, simmering and growing with intensity. It was not long before Rick was straddling Daryl, his mouth still firmly attached to Daryl’s.

Rick felt as if he was on fire, being consumed by Daryl slowly, with each stroke of his tongue. His hips ground down against Daryl causing them both to gasp in pleasure. After a deep breath, Rick bit his lip. “Never done this with another man before,” he blushed.

“Me neither,” Daryl murmured. “Don’t know if I’m ready for sex yet,” he blushed hotly, “but I want…”

“More?” Rick smiled when Daryl nodded. “No one says we have to be in a hurry. We can explore and do whatever we want.”

Exploring sounded like fun to Daryl. He slowly ran his hands up Rick’s thighs until his thumbs were
rubbing against the bulge in the officer’s jeans. He let his thumbs stroke over the outline of Rick’s cloth covered erection earning himself a gasp from the other man. Emboldened now he pressed his whole hand over the bulge and squeezed. Rick’s hips thrust forward dragging deliciously over Daryl’s own aching erection.

It had been a while for Rick and he wanted Daryl so much he didn’t know if he was going to last long even with just touching. He reached down and unbuttoned and unzipped his pants pulling his hard cock free and stroking it a few times. The flesh twitched in his hand as Daryl licked his lips. He held his breath when Daryl reached out and took the heavy flesh into his hands and began to stroke it. “Fuck,” he hissed in pleasure. He reached for Daryl’s pants and paused, “this ok?”

“Please.” Daryl pleaded. He needed to be touched, he was so hard he was aching. When Rick’s hand touched his aching flesh his hips jerked up of their own volition. They both knew it was the middle of the day and they wouldn’t have long before someone was looking for them so they didn’t waste any time. Hands moved quickly but with intent as they pleasured each other. Each man did what he knew felt good when he touched himself and it seemed to be working. Rick and Daryl squeezed and rubbed each other gently with curious exploration. Neither wanted the fire to go away, and each stroke only encouraged the burn of their newly found innocent hunger to go further.

Long moments later, Rick’s body tightened as came on Daryl’s stomach. Daryl whimpered softly at the sight of stark white come against their red sheets, and it was enough for Daryl to follow, his own spunk spurting out across Rick’s thigh. The two men had fortunate timing, since a small child’s voice piped up right outside the door about wanting to go hunting. Another voice admonished the child, saying that if the door was closed and locked, Uncle Daryl must want to be left alone.

“Left alone, indeed.” Daryl chuckled, pulling on his pants and cleaning up the mess with Rick, the two of them rolling their eyes at the lack of privacy in the prison. It was just fortunate that before Snape had gone down, he had made sure that each room had privacy whatchamacallits on them, so everyone had some privacy of some kind. The man’s deep desire for absolute privacy had benefitted Rick and Daryl in this case, and they wished the dark wizard would wake up. It was slightly uneasy with Merle this quiet, and the boys turning into his personal shadow...
Chapter 21

Chapter Summary

The last part of the aftermath, and we see what will happen next with Severus, the Dixons, and the boys...

Chapter Notes

THANK YOU to my wonderful beta, starfire_wildheart, who helped a lot with this chapter (all of them, actually). give her a hand! Also the wonderful people at the RWG who help me when things get stuck. You guys are amazing.

“Rick’s just going through some stuff. It won’t last, Daryl. This thing’s going to be cured, and then.. Well, come on. Charles said it, you’re not exactly boyfriend material.” Shane said with a smirk, leaning against the wall of the hospital ward, Poppy having temporarily lifted the ban so she and Minerva could step out for a quiet meal. They had left Shane and Lori with Carl and Francis to keep an eye on Snape, in case anything changed. It seemed like Snape was close to waking up soon. His vitals had gone up, and he seemed more.. Well, healthy, judging from the no-longer sallow skin tone on the dark-haired man.

“Shut your mouth, Walsh- it’s none’ya business” Daryl growled as he stalked off to sit by Snape, and get away from Shane and Lori. Carl was playing absently with a yo-yo on an empty bed near Snape’s. “This isn’t something you should be sayin’ in front of the kid anyway,” Daryl said with a scowl as he threw himself into a large armchair conjured up by Poppy, the chair changing its pattern to Camo to match the personality of the person sitting in it.

“See, even the CHAIR knows you’re a-” Shane scoffed with a snort as Lori hit Shane upside the head, shaking her head with a scowl. “What?”

“It’s not that, Shane,” she sighed, “he can’t help his background. He’s just… not right for.. Carl.” She looked at Daryl, “I don’t really like how dangerous you and your brother are, and you’re bringing that around Carl…” Lori began, her doe eyes wide. No one noticed Rick swaggering into the room with his long and lean bow legs.

“Fuck you, and you too, Olive Oyl,” Daryl said with a scoff, moving from the armchair and turning away from them to glance over at Snape. He ran a finger lightly over the prone man’s hand. He leaned over with the pretense of checking on some equipment, and whispered softly, “Wake up
“What’s going on here?” Rick asked with a frown, glaring at Shane and Lori, while Carl continued playing with his yo-yo, not wanting to give any attention to the fights that had been happening since Shane and his mother decided to get together. Carl was done and tired. He liked Daryl, and didn’t like how Shane and Lori had to give him shit all of the time.

“Mom and Shane were giving Daryl shit about being with you and saying how he was a bad influence on me,” Carl said with a shrug, slipping off the bed and walking up to Rick. “Dad, I want to stay with you and Daryl. I don’t like how Mom and Shane always have to pick on you guys,” Carl said with a frown, putting his yo-yo in his hoodie pocket. Daryl turned from Snape, his brows rising in slight surprise and pride at the calm showmanship that Carl had displayed. At eleven, Carl seemed to be growing up quite quickly, and probably sick of the fights among the adults. Daryl remembered his childhood, and feeling the same way whenever his father would get drunk and fight with his mother, while he and Merle hid out in their room…

“It’s okay, not now.” Daryl said with a sharp sigh, watching Lori and Shane gape at him as he walked towards Rick and Carl. He tilted his head towards the door, indicating that they should go outside. Rick and Carl nodded, following Daryl out of the infirmary while Lori and Shane scowled after them, Lori’s arms wrapped protectively around her waist as she leaned against the wall, sending Snape the darkest looks she could think of.

“Go play with the kids, make sure they don’t escape again, okay?” Rick asked, patting Carl on the shoulder. The boy nodded, walking down the outside towards the interior fence where the youngest children of the prison were playing, Hermione sitting off to the side on a blanket, reading a large book with one of the twins, named Parvati, if Rick recalled correctly. The two girls had finally started speaking, even if it was in a voice so soft, one had to strain to hear or have Francis lip-read them. Rick went back to Daryl, sitting with him side-to-side on a picnic table that had seen better days, but still stood firm against the ravages of the apocalypse.

“So what was all of that?” Rick asked, tilting his head as he watched Daryl lean back against the table, legs spread out and eyes watching the boys.

“Just the usual shit. ‘He’s not good enough for you’ and all of that. Been hearing that crap all of my life. Nothin’ new.” Daryl shrugged slightly as a small frown etched itself on his mouth. Hands slid down to his chest, where he pulled out a cigarette, lighting it quickly and smushing out the match with his boot. “Lori an’ Shane are just pissed that… well, they’re stuck doin’ the shit work while we go do the important stuff” Daryl said with a thin smile, remembering the conversation he had overheard between Poppy, Minerva and Lori about why Lori was constantly on kitchen duty… someone had to do it, and everyone else was busy with the cure or with the kids. He had loved the particular line that Minerva had thrown in her Scots burr, and Lori’s storm-out, full with screaming curses and tears. Rick’s voice lulled him out of his memory and he let out a small chuckle.
“.....are you even listening?”

“Babe, You’re here. I’m here.. The kids are okay. We’re good.” Daryl said with a nod, patting Rick’s knee absently as he whistled over at the boys and asked them to pick all of the plants in the field, they could make a bouquet for Snape, something was guaranteed to be all magicked up and “Uncle Sev would like that, wouldn’t he?” was enough to get the younger children on a mission, while Carl and Sophia sat down to read comic books with a grateful smile. The small scene of domesticity soothed Rick and Daryl, the two whispering quietly about the possible future with Carl, wondering if Poppy would allow Remus to use his magic to add a room to their living area so carl could live with them.

As Rick and Daryl chatted quietly, Merle moved away from a window, a frown on his mouth as he moved through the corridors, away from his brother and towards the infirmary. Something was bothering him, and he knew he had been banned from Snape’s room, but… well, he wanted to sit for a minute. Just to see how the wizard was. After all, he had told Merle that they were “Our Boys-” before… before he had thrown himself on a grenade, figuratively speaking… again.

“Fuck you. Fuck you, you know that?” Merle scowled to himself at the door, listening for the wardens Poppy and Minerva. He didn’t hear a sound, so he slowly opened the door and poked his head inside. It seemed he could enter, they had taken down whatever it was that had been keeping him out the past few days. Merle saw Lori and Shane and scowled at them.

“Find somewhere else to fuck, ya rabbits,” Merle said with a nasty sneer, eyes glinting at Shane who scowled, lunging for Merle. A clap of thunder rumbled, and Shane was hit with donkey ears. It seemed Minerva had made it so that no one could fight - physically- inside the hospital, as she had done with the cafeteria. Shane scowled at Merle, Lori cooing at him and taking him out of the room to tend to his bruised ego and pride. Merle was finally left alone with the object of his thoughts.

“Ya asshole, ya had to go an’ do that, dincha?” he scowled as he threw himself into the armchair which morphed from chintz into an old beat up recliner, he could swear it was the same one he had left behind in Atlanta, his favorite that he would fall asleep in after getting high. Glancing at Snape he leaned forward, resting his arms on the side of the bed and his forehead on his arms for a long moment. He could feel Snape breathing, in and out. Deep even breaths. The man was out, deep in his dreams…
He remembered, that was the last thing they had talked about, before. Before everything had gone to shit. At least the boys. Were okay.

“Got ‘em. The boys are jus’ fine… they are wonderin’ about ya,” Merle glanced up, one blue eye peering out at Snape’s dark hair cascading down the pillow. Raising a finger slightly, Merle allowed himself the secret luxury of running a finger down a stray curl. Contrary to what it seemed, Snape’s hair curled ever so slightly at the ends, giving him a slightly boyish appearance, making him look younger than he usually did.

“C’mon, asshole, ya gotta wake up. Draco’s askin’ for ya an’ Harry.” Merle let out a hot breath of irritation. He didn’t want to say it, but he missed Snape too. He remembered Hawk and Francis, and how the two had looked at Merle. LOOKED at him as if they knew something he didn’t.

“Hawk an’ Francis too.” Merle said with a frown as he rose to his feet. “Rick an’ Daryl.. Everybody misses you, even Charles.” Okay, that was an outright lie, but Merle wasn’t beyond doing anything to get Snape to wake up.

“Shit, I even miss ya ugly mug… “ Merle smirked down at Snape. He suddenly realized, Snape wasn’t there to stop him. To say anything at all. Merle smirked even wider, and leaned down to whisper into Snape’s ear, “I’ll even blow ya if you wake up.”

“....M’rl....” Snape exhaled slowly, his voice quiet and rough from several days of silence. “I'm on top.” He smirked slightly at Merle, his eyes slight black dots under barely open lids.
Severus is declared well by Poppy- and some things are finally, finally figured out.

Chapter Notes

A big THANK YOU to Starfire_Wildheart who is an amazing beta and helped so much with this chapter, I owe her a lot. I also need to give a big shout-out to the people over at the RWG, you guys are amazing. Love you all!

Snape had been poked and prodded by Poppy, BJ, Hawkeye, and even Hershel Greene, their newest addition to the prison before he had finally been allowed to return to his room, under the watchful eye of Merle. Poppy said she would only allow him to go if “someone” would stay with him, and Merle had growled he would stay. Of course he had used the guise of caring for their new sons and the fact that the boys were refusing to leave Snape’s side.

As Poppy was checking him over one last time he watched as Merle walked across the room to talk to Daryl. “It only makes sense, after all,” Snape could hear Merle saying to his brother, who had a knowing smirk on his face as the two boys climbed all over Merle and Daryl, insisting on seeing which Dixon brother was the strongest. Both mean, gruff and menacing in their own right both just smiled and appeased the children allowing the boys to do whatever they wanted.

“I won!” Harry shouted, hanging from Daryl's bicep. Draco shouted his disagreement from Merle's shoulders. Max smiled with amusement and lifted Harry off of Daryl, declaring himself the judge and saying it wasn't fair because Merle was older and bigger but Daryl was younger and lifted a heavy crossbow.

“You're no fun, Max,” Draco said with a small laugh as he dragged Harry along with him, the two small boys trailing after Max, Sophia and Beth to go see Hermione in the library. They wanted to tell her all about the new curse word they had learned when they had walked in on Poppy, Max, and BJ trying to keep Snape from wandering off.

A little while later Merle and Snape were on their way to their room “What about that promise?” Snape asked slyly with a smirk as he leaned on the walking stick he had borrowed from Hawkeye. Merle blushed furiously as Snape snickered, opening the door with a slight motion.
“Ya heard Beej, nothing too strenuous for a bit. I ain't gonna have ya laid up just-”

“Why don't I decide for myself?” Snape said with a scoff, waving his hand to shut the door with an audible click. Merle licked his lips and shook his head. As tempting as the thought was Merle wasn’t about to risk the wizard’s health so he gently pushed Snape away from him. Snape stumbled, scowling when he fell on the couch. Merle cocked a brow giving him an “told you” look.

As if summoned at that very moment, Rick and Daryl showed up at the door of what had become known as the Snape-Dixon household. Grimes-Dixon wasn't far behind, from the eyefucking that was present whenever Rick and Daryl were in the same room. Francis and Hawkeye had constantly dropped hints to no avail about the two men. Merle was about ready to shove them into a room to get them to finally do the deed and stop oozing sex.

“I'm surprised the boys left you alone.” Rick said with raised brows as he sauntered into snape’s bedroom, Daryl hanging back still hovering in the living room, Merle with his brother.

“They're showing off their new- vocabulary,” Snape told him.

“Poppy give you soap again?” A soft grunt was all Rick had to hear to know the answer. The matron had taken to washing Snape’s mouth out with soap every time he had gone on a tirade. “It looks like you'll be fine, Merle’s a right good Mary Poppins,” Rick smirked.

“I heard that,” Merle shouted sourly from the other room. Daryl laughed and gave his brother a good slap on the back. “Firs’ the boys an’ now you,” he rolled his eyes.

“I require only the best, you should be aware of that, Dixon,” Snape said from the bedroom. The schoolmaster was back, his voice still rough from disuse, but he was back nonetheless. Rick smiled to himself, knowing that things would be interesting again soon.

Within two days, everyone was ready to strangle Snape. He had been an unbearable patient, Poppy having experienced this before, had happily foisted him off on Merle and Francis. Francis, being deaf, was spared most of the vitriol but still caught bits and pieces of it. The straw that broke the camel's back came when Snape had hexed Merle blue. The children shrieked with delight upon seeing Merle when he went to the library to get them for dinner. All the adults came giggling and calling him grumpy smurf.
It took two days for the blue to fade away and three days after that Poppy was finally comfortable with leaving Snape “alone” without any “supervision”. Merle and Daryl seized the opportunity to go raid the kitchen for some booze and a quiet moment without any hexing or cursing.

“Can't believe ya. Blue!” Daryl chortled as he leaned back against a wall. A bottle of jack sat between the brothers, nearly empty. Firewhiskey sat nearby, steaming faintly. Rick, Daryl and Merle had been riding herd on the children all day, and now it was Francis, Hawkeye and Remus’s turn, along with Carol, to get the children their dinner and ready for bed. Daryl and Merle had seen the golden opportunity to get good and smashed, finally- to lay to rest the tension that had been threatening to split everything at the seams from caring for Snape.

“Got ‘im back good. Got some of his good stuff. The man knows his booze, imma give ‘im that.” Merle grinned mischievously as he pulled out a silver flask. “Even in silver, so Lupin can't drink it too. He hoards the good stuff. Heard it makes you lucky an’ you stay good and buzzed for days.” Merle said with the knowledge of recent experience. He still blushed at the memory of his first taste of firewhiskey, and how it tasted on Snape’s tongue.

“Huh, anything is better than what the army folks have hooked up in the library. That stuff takes paint off of the walls.” Daryl took the flask and raised it up to give it a good sniff. “Strawberries?”

“He likes fruity shit like that. Says it's good for.. things.” Merle blushed furiously at the memory that had caused him to end up blue, thanks to the bad case of blue balls he had given Snape with his refusal to allow anything to take place until he was fully recovered. Merle took the flask back and took a swig and sniffed. “Top shelf too, jus’ like that fancy place downtown. Got me a bottle before the cops came and ruined the party.” Daryl and Merle chuckled, passing the bottle back and forth in silence, knowing that there wasn't much more to say at the end of the world. They were brothers, and they had been through enough shit together to just sit and drink in silence comfortably. They weren’t talkers, not like Rick and Hawkeye, or even Francis and Remus, who had been known to need a hand home after a long night of drinking away their sorrows at the lack of success they were having on a cure.

“You good, baby brother?” Merle asked as he rose, swaying slightly. “Damn, packs a punch, too.” Daryl hiccuped, grinning as he held on to his brother for balance. The two of them staggered down the hall toward Rick and Daryl’s room. They tried to be quiet so they wouldn’t get a lecture from Rick or any combination of their children— Merle thought with a half-laugh not quite wanting to wrap his head around the fact that he was considered a father figure - again- to two small boys this time around, instead of just Daryl. He didn't want to get too deep into thought, so he just let his baby brother drop to his bed, and shut the door behind him.

Merle continued down the corridor, humming to himself as he came into his room, glancing down to
see if the boys had come back yet- apparently they were still with Carol, Remus and Sophia planting the garden with Hershel, Francis and Max.

“I’m home!” Merle called out with a chortle as he saw Snape, sprawled on the sofa which had been doubling as merle’s bed. “Get outta my bed”

“It’s my sofa. I can read wherever I want to,” Snape said snidely, glancing up at Merle with dark eyes. “What have you been drinking? My firewhiskey again?”

“Yep, ya got good taste, England.”

“Of course I do, that stuff cost me a week’s pay!” Snape scowled as he turned a page, moving over slightly to make room for Merle. Merle flopped down, half-leaning on Snape, peering at whatever the dark-haired wizard was reading. “More of tha’ stuff from Charlie?”

“Winchester senior was kind enough to lend me his… notes. Very dry, pompous notes. The man is a windbag, even in writing. I don’t think I’ve ever read something so dry since Lucius...” Snape stopped himself, with a pained frown pinching his features. His eyes dark and stormy, Snape leaned over to pick up a bottle of Jim Beam and waved his wand. “Don’t tell Minnie, and I’ll share.”

Snape couldn’t sleep, and dreams were haunting him. Of Lily, Narcissa, Lucius… his friends. The ones he couldn’t save- not from the ravages of the dead. He had started drinking with Merle, and nothing really could make him forget.

Well.. one thing COULD make him forget, but- it wouldn’t really happen. Merle was.. Merle. Merle with his swagger, cold blue eyes and sly smile. The rough voice that promised to make him come undone with the right words; just like magic.

“Snape?” Merle’s voice rang out, and Snape glared up at the man of his thoughts from his slump on the couch. “What are ya doin’?”
“Couldn’t sleep,” Snape said with a huff, his eyes narrowed at Merle. He had thought Merle would be down with the boys; Harry and Draco had just finally begun sleeping on their own in a shared bedroom off of his own. “Here,” he found himself pouring a cup of firewhiskey for Merle, the small shot glass overflowing slightly with the shake of his slightly unsteady hand. He HAD been drinking quite a bit, even for him. There was no more war; no need to have all of his wits about him. The boys were safe, they were locked up in a prison.

Merle wordlessly picked up the shot glass, glancing at the slight steam coming up from it. He never trusted anything the wizards gave him, but.. Snape had been drinking it, and he was well on ‘is way to getting good an’ smashed. Just what he really could use right now; he was dead tired from the boys.

“Make it a double,” Merle found himself saying after a swig. Fire roared up his throat, and steam poured out of his nose. “Well.”

“It’s firewhiskey for a reason, Merle.” Snape said wryly as he poured another for the two of them. Merle blinked down at Snape’s dark head. It was getting warm in here, and he needed some air. Merle pulled off his shirt, and suddenly realized the last time he had been shirtless before Snape was.. the tattoo hunt. Tattoos, thought Merle with a faint buzz pulsing through his body at the memory of the warm body pressed up against him. He felt a shiver go through his him, and his groin started to tingle.

“Problem?” Snape sneered up at Merle from the couch, holding up the shot glass. Merle took it, gulping it down and holding it out for another drink.

“Careful, you don’ wanna get pished,” Snape nearly slurred his words, the British slang coming out of his mouth and making him sound more- well, British.

“Maybe I do.”

“What’s it to ya?” Snape said with his sneer, his legs moving from a sprawl to a ‘v’. ‘This coul’ be the las’ o’ decen’ booze out there.” Snape lapsed into his cokeworth accent, his words coming out carelessly. The stern professor was morphing into something else- something rougher and looser- and something that Merle could feel nearly burning through him. His body felt like it was on fire- he pressed against Snape, moving to sit next to the man, reaching for the bottle. Shots wouldn’t do, he needed a good swing of this stuff.

“It’s mine.” Snape nearly whined, grabbing at the bottle. “Get ‘our own,” bodies pressed against each other, Snape’s hand brushing against Merle’s hip in his attempt to reach for the bottle, and he
ended up nearly sprawled across Merle.

“Nah, it’s mine now.” Merle said with a laugh. “What ya gonna do, England, turn me into a hedgehog?” Merle leaned into Snape, his cool blue eyes watching Snape as a predator would watch his prey. Snape stared back, eyes narrowed and a dark smile lit up his thin and sallow face.

“You asked,” Snape said before he struck, his mouth ravaging Merle’s, tongues clashed for dominance and teeth nipped. The bottle remained secure in Merle’s grip, Snape’s hand fondling the bottle as the other scrambled for balance. The two men leaned into each other, wrestling for whoever would come out on top.

“Easy, the whiskey-” Snape whispered, coming up for air as Merle capped it and tossed it on the table, grabbing Snape by his white oxford.

“Payback’s a bitch, England.” Merle said darkly as he ripped Snape’s shirt in two, sending buttons skittering everywhere. Merle’s mouth latched onto Snape’s yet again, his hands pushing the Brit down into the couch, his groin slowly pressing against Snape’s, the hot lump under his jeans evidence that Snape wasn’t complaining about what was happening.

“Jesus,” Snape murmured, his long legs finally cooperating, and wrapping around Merle’s hips. Merle gasped into Snape’s mouth, nearly moving back - and Snape got the upper hand, flipping Merle over and tugging him up by his grimy shirt, tossing him up against the wall, next to the doorway that led to his bedroom. “Now what did ya say about payback, Dixon?” Snape’s hips held Merle hostage, his hands holding merle’s arms over his head, against the wall. Snape sucked and licked at Merle’s neck, marking him and making certain that there was evidence. Not like last time, where it was easily played off by a dream- or anger- or… Lust.

Heat shot through Snape, his hand moving to undo Merle’s belt, moving quickly to tug the trousers down to reveal what was underneath. Merle bucked his hips, making Snape take a step back in slight surprise -

“Gotcha,” Merle smirked, grabbing Snape and pushing him through the doorway and onto the bed. Snape moved to get up, but Merle was quick, pinning Snape to the covers and the two men wrestled again, their bodies growing slick with sweat and arousal. Merle had enough, he knew exactly what was expected and he wanted it, he just couldn’t say it- neither man could.

“Down,” Snape hissed, tugging at Merle’s trousers, and waving his wand so a small bottle came to
him out of a small bag. Merle instantly recognized it for what it was, no matter the container, lube was lube.

“I don’t-“

“I don’t either,” Snape said with a smirk, his hand closing around Merle’s cock, giving it a tug through the cloth. Merle nearly came from the heat and friction, it had been too long since someone else had touched him there- *in that way* - He could hear himself as if from a distance, voicing his own thoughts. A moment later he felt lips on his cock. A warm mouth sucked, pulled, licked and nipped at him in all the right places- a warm hand tugged slightly at his balls and Merle was gone. His mind sank into oblivion, and all he could do was feel.

“I win.” Snape whispered with a smirk, his face aglow with victory as he leaned in close, taking Merle in his mouth. He swirled his tongue around the Merle’s throbbing erection, teeth dragging slightly at the juncture where the mushroomed head met the thick vein that ran along the edge of his cock-

“Snape.” Merle hissed, white-hot spurts of come shooting out of him as his whole body exploded into pieces, heat burning him up from the inside. If that was just giving head, he wasn’t sure if he wanted to know how wizards fucked. He wasn’t sure if he would survive the experience. He nearly came again, would have if he could’ve so soon, when he felt Snape licking up the evidence; the warm wet tongue covering every nook and cranny.

Snape took advantage of Merle being boneless after his orgasm. The wizard quickly shed his own clothes and settled between Merle’s splayed legs. He grabbed the bottle of lube and poured some out on his hand and traced his fingers over Merle’s perineum and down the cleft of his ass until his finger touched the puckered entrance hidden there. He circled his index finger around the hole gently massaging the muscles to relax them before pressing forward and slipping his finger inside the tight heat.

Merle hissed at the intrusion but something in him was still unsated and the man was craving something only Snape could satisfy. He didn’t know what was going on with him but it was like he was a horny teenager all over again and his hormones were running wild. “More,” he demanded as he ground down on the questing digit. “Stop teasin’ and just get to it!”

“So damn bossy Dixon,” Snape growled, incredibly turned on and throbbing at the tight heat wrapped around his finger. It was taking all his self control to go slow and Merle wasn’t helping. He added a second finger in with the first and scissored them apart. To his surprise Merle didn’t complain or even make a sound other than to moan and grind down on his fingers. Something was niggling at the back of Snape’s mind about something not being quite normal here but he had wanted Merle for a while now and knew the man wanted him too, it had just been their damn stubborn pride that had gotten in the way.

“Damn it England did ya hear me?” Merle snapped.

“What?” Snape was pulled from his thoughts.

“I said fuck me you pompous prick before I shove that wand a’ yours up yer ass!” His breath caught
in his chest when Snape quickly moved to hover over him and stared down into his eyes. There was a hunger in their depths that Merle had never seen before.

“Demanding aren’t we? Still trying to struggle for control even though you are clearly the bottom here Dixon?” He grabbed Merle’s legs and shoved them up toward the man’s chest and ground down against him. “Are you sure?”

“Damn it England, if you don’t…..”

Snape lined himself up and pressed forward with a push of his hips and slid into Merle not stopping until he was buried to the hilt. Only then did he pause and give Merle a moment to adjust. He looked into his lover’s blue eyes for any signs of discomfort. “Are you alright?”

Merle gasped when he felt the flared head of Snape’s hard cock push past the ring of muscles in his ass and slid deep into him. It sent a shiver down his spine and made his body tingle all over and he wanted more. He bucked his hips up trying to get Snape to move, or touch him, anything before he burst into flames. “Damn it Snape I’m fine just move!”

“As you wish,” Snape said with a wicked smile. Their bodies twined and moved together in the age old dance of lust that had made the world go round since the dawn of time. Both men moaning and panting as their sweat slick bodies fought their way to a blissful release. Moans and the sounds of slapping flesh filled the room as the men fought to see who could bring the other off first, even the act of lovemaking unable to stop the power struggle between them.

Stars exploded behind Merle’s eyes as Snape hit something inside him that started a chain reaction. Warmth spread from his very core outward until every inch of him was tingling and his body was writhing and thrashing wildly under Snape as he came explosively for a second time that day. Snape was right behind him cumming with a harsh, stutter of his hips as he emptied all his seed inside Merle.

As soon as he was able to move he rolled off of the other man and laid next to him. “Sleep,” Snape whispered, he didn’t even bother to move, only flicking a finger to use his magic to shut the door and leave them in moderate privacy in case the boys woke.
Chapter 23

Chapter Summary

Stuff and Thangs happen with Rick and Daryl, and Merle and Severus. The little trio are up to .... something. Plans are hatched, and other things happen, as well.

Chapter Notes

THANK YOU to my wonderful beta, Starfire_wildheart who helped a lot with this chapter; so give her a big hand and go read her fics! Thank you all to everyone at the RWG for your support and your ideas- they've been wonderful with keeping me going when I have these awful writer's blocks. Love you all!

Merle woke up sore, but very relaxed and sated. He felt England-- no, Snape, curled up against his chest. It felt good. He immediately noticed Snape’s immense hard-on pressed against his hip causing his own to give an aching throb. Chuckling softly to himself, Merle slid a hand down to gently stroke Snape to a semi wakeful state.

“Dix…” was all Snape managed to moan out as his eyes fluttered open before Merle slid a finger along snape’s backside, nudging it along the tight rim of his new lover’s ass. Merle nudged Snape’s shoulder until he was on his side and Merle was spooned behind him and soon lubed up fingers had spread Snape open. Merle guided his hard, purple cock to press against the tiny hole and with a thrust of his hips he slid right in, Snape arching up against Merle’s chest, his dark hair flying as Merle pounded into him roughly.

“I can-- I can do better,” Merle grinned as he felt Snape shudder around him, and he reached around to stroke Snape’s cock. In his half awake state Snape’s normal defenses were down and he allowed the pleasure to flow freely through him orgasming within four strokes, ropy white cum shooting on the edge of the bed. Seeing Snape lose control made Merle groan roughly.

“Sev,” Merle moaned as Snape’s orgasm caused him to spasm around Merle’s cock making him cum hard., the stars and sun collapsing all around him. The two men laid there for a long moment, recovering from the spur-of-the-moment sex. Children’s voices got them moving, Snape waving his wand and cleaning up the mess quickly, not caring if it was against the ‘rules’ Poppy had set up- no unnecessary magic. Soon, their bed was a trampoline for two boys, who were shouting that Carol had made pancakes for breakfast, a rare treat to celebrate Beth’s birthday and that Erin Hunnicutt had found some honey to put in tea.
“Boys!” Snape exhaled sharply, his dark eyes twinkling with slight amusement. “Let’s all get cleaned up and be presentable for breakfast, first. It won’t do to look out of sorts at the table.” At that, Draco and Harry hurried off the bed, racing back to their room. Merle smirked and rolled out of the bed, pulling on his pants and a shirt, while Snape carefully pulled on his slacks and a oxford, his waistcoat and cravat put away for after they found a cure- “useless to dress in my formal attire- may as well slum it,” was snape’s commentary when Erin Hunnicutt had asked where Snape’s robes had gone. After his last magical coma, Snape had taken to wearing jeans and a oxford, or any button-up shirt with a collar he could find. Merle had stuck to his jeans and wife-beaters, occasionally pulling on a T-shirt.

“What was that for?” Snape whispered, leaning into Merle as they left the room, the boys dragging Francis and Hawkeye down to breakfast just ahead of him, Hermione sauntering along with Merle and Severus, her nose in a book.

“Dunno, felt like it.” Merle said with a shrug, smiling slightly at the sight of Daryl’s swagger into the cafeteria. “And I think Officer Friendly felt like it, too.”

-----EARLIER THAT MORNING-----

Daryl opened an eye at the sound of Rick coming in the room and smiled. He felt warm, and he was aching for Rick. Curling up on his side, Daryl tugged Rick down to him for a kiss hello, the welcome suddenly becoming more heated. Soon, both men were nipping at lips and moving down to the neck and any bare skin.

“Shirt, off.” Daryl murmured as he discarded his own. Rick followed Daryl’s order, thrilled that they were finally confident enough to actually try something… after all, this morning had been successful, with a surprise morning blow-job from Rick. Something in Daryl snapped and his desire for Rick became a burning, aching thirst that he had to sate. As Rick’s bare chest was revealed he couldn’t help but to nip and lick at the soft skin shivering in pleasure as Rick gasped.

Daryl shoved Rick until the sheriff fell onto his back against the mattress. He settled himself over top of his boyfriend, hovering over him, breathing in his scent before attacking his lips with a kiss. He could feel Rick’s hands roaming his body, touching, teasing, searching for the places that brought him the best reactions. Daryl gasped and ground his hips down against Rick when the other man
slipped his hands down the back of Daryl’s pants and cupped his ass. “Need you Grimes, now,” he growled.

Rick arched his brow at the hunter’s aggressiveness. It was cute but it was time for Rick to take charge. He lifted his hips and swung Daryl around until the man was neatly tucked underneath him. He kissed along the column of Daryl’s neck, biting and sucking at the skin until he left a red mark that he was confident would last a few days. “Mine,” he hissed at Daryl.

“Yours,” Daryl moaned. “Need you, please,” he pleaded. Somewhere in the back of his mind Daryl realized something was a little off. He wanted Rick, there was no doubt about that but he’d never been someone to beg for anything and right now, if Rick asked him to, he’d get on his knees and plead with the man to fill him until he couldn’t walk right for a week.

Rick got to his feet and made quick work of getting rid of the rest of their clothes before reaching into a bedside drawer and grabbing some lube he’d found in the infirmary. As eager as Daryl was it was hard for Rick not to just give in and slam home but he didn’t want to hurt his soon to be lover. He swatted Daryl on the ass, “be patient, I promise I’ll make sure it’s worth it.” He chuckled at Daryl’s answering whine but slipped a finger inside his quivering hole which seemed to appease him for the moment.

Daryl forced himself to let Rick do what he needed to do but by the time the sheriff worked up to the third finger it was then end of his patience. “Damn it Grimes I’m ready! Just fuck me!”

“Well, since you asked so nicely,” Rick smirked as he removed his fingers. He lifted Daryl’s legs until they were wrapped around his waist, lined himself up and pressed forward. It took a couple of tries before the thick mushroomed head breached the tight ring of muscle but once it did pleasure shot through both men causing them to moan in unison.

Daryl was lost in the pleasurable sensation of being filled as Rick’s thick cock seemed to press against every nerve in his body, combined with the stinging burn of being stretched so wide so fast. He hadn’t realized that Rick had stopped moving until he felt him press a kiss to the shell of his ear. He fought to focus on his lovers voice which seemed to be saying things like ‘so tight’, ‘so hot’, ‘I’ve got you Daryl,’. When the worst of the pain subsided he flexed his legs, nudging at Rick’s ass with his heels, “Move.”

Rick watched as Daryl slowly became more and more expressive in his pleasure. His face contorted, he arched his head back exposing the long column of his neck and Rick couldn’t resist nipping at. When Rick found the right angle and hit his sweet spot Daryl’s moans rose in pitch and tempo and when he felt Daryl’s muscles starting to quiver around him Rick knew he wasn’t going to last. He hitched one of Daryl’s legs up over his shoulder opening the man up even farther and he hammered into him over and over until Daryl was screaming out his orgasm, his body tightening almost painfully around Rick’s throbbing erection driving him over the edge as well and milking him until he collapsed on top of the hunter. As soon as he could make his muscles respond again he carefully pulled out and rolled off of Daryl pulling him against his chest.

“Don’t wanna get all touchy feely man. Ain’t no girl,” he argued half-heartedly. He really wanted nothing more than to lay exactly where he was, curled around Rick for ever but he knew if Merle ever found out he’d call him a sissy and beat the shit out of him for not being a ‘man’s man’.
“No, you definitely are not a girl,” Rick laughed. “Neither am I but I am your lover and I want to cuddle so shut up and cuddle Dixon,” his voice was firm but loving. He knew enough about Daryl’s life to know that this sort of thing was frowned upon in the Dixon household. It seemed to work because he felt Daryl relax against him and soon they were both asleep.

“Well- look at that.” Hawkeye said with a sly smile, nudging Francis as he took a seat, Hermione seated primly between him and Francis, the book propped up on a pitcher of juice. “I think Severus is … recovered.”

“I see.” Francis replied softly, smiling shyly at Hawkeye, nudging Hermione and taking her book away in a smooth and practiced motion. “Mione, not at at the table.”

“Mom and Dad let me!”

“We’re not your parents, sweetheart- and we don’t want to take their place in your heart, but do you want to dirty up your beautiful books?”

“No,” Hermione replied petulantly, pouting as she began eating her pancakes, quickly distracted by Harry, Draco, and Sophia talking about getting blackberries for Carol. The group of children discussed their best strategy and the best place to find the treats. Erin Hunnicutt volunteered to join them, so it could be a surprise for Carol and Remus, to thank Remus for helping find Harry and helping make the cure.

Harry was excited, he was finally getting to go do something, instead of stay on the third floor. He liked everybody a lot, especially Merle and Severus, but he wanted to get out and do something instead of boring old lessons with Francis, Remus, Maggie, and Beth.

“Should we go to the corner? Where we found all those berries?” Draco whispered, leaning forward to put some honey on his pancakes. Harry nodded as he finished off his pancakes. He glanced up at Severus and Merle, who had sat down at his side.

“Are they our Dads now?” Harry asked Draco. “I never really had mum and dad so I don't know.”
“They're in the same bed now, so I guess they're our dads now.” Draco said with a shrug. “Mother and Father slept in the same bed, and they told me that's how it is when you marry someone an' have kids.”

“Oh. So are they Dad…. an’ Father?” Harry mused as he looked up at Severus and Merle, turning to look at Draco, who had a small smirk on his mouth. “What?”

“We’re brothers then… means I'm your big brother!” Draco crowed with delight. “M’ birthday’s in June, you're the baby brother.”

“No! We just gotta get another one to be the baby, then.” Harry protested as he bit into his pancakes. “I know ‘Mione can help. She knows everything.” At the sound of her name, Hermione turned to look at the boys she considered cousins.

“What is it?” Hermione asked with caution, remembering the last time the boys had asked for her advice. It had not turned out well for anyone involved, and her foster parents had decided to punish her as well, for being ‘involved’ regardless, so she couldn’t get away scot-free from ANYTHING the boys did unless she went straightaway to an adult.

“Draco misses his Mother and Father. We just wanted…” Harry explained their quick talk to Hermione who shrugged and shook her head.

“Mummy and Daddy were just dentists, they said they would tell me next time I went to the doctor.” Hermione shook her head with delighted relief, realizing she didn’t have the information for the boys.

“Maybe we can ask a doctor and surprise Father?” Harry asked shyly, blushing at the first try of Snape’s new identity. Draco nodded with his silent agreement.

The three kids had gone first to the blunt matter of fact Erin Hunnicutt who stammered and told them- “ask Daddy, he explains it better than I do and he's done the talk before.” To a blushing BJ, “Didn't Severus explain all this already?” They had finally gotten their answers from Margaret, who had put her hands on her hips and scolded both Hunnicutts soundly for ‘being such babies’ making the trio laugh soundly.

Armed with their new information, Draco was the one who went to Poppy, with the idea that
magic could help them. Before they could come into the hospital ward, they felt the shimmer of a magic bubble, and they knew secrets were happening. Hurrying as fast as they could, the boys ran under the shield while Hermione yelled at them and stormed off to find Beth and Maggie Greene.
Chapter 24

Chapter Summary

The boys hear an interesting conversation or two, and things seem to be coming together.... or are they? Judge for yourself...

Chapter Notes

Thank you as always, to my wonderful beta, Star, and the folks at the RWG. Forgive my habit of spelling Hershel's name; I still can't figure out if it's Hershel or Herschel, so my spell check may have missed a few instances. Hopefully it will get fixed.. eventually. :) Thank you to all of you who have been reading! your feedback is greatly appreciated and loved.

Severus stared at Hawkeye, gobsmacked as they grabbed Charles’s notes, pushing Charlie out of the way, talking over each other about the possibilities of combining both Muggle and magical plants, Max talking loudly to Francis and Margaret about how they could have missed that single, insignificant possibility for months.

“Stubborn, single-minded men, I expect,” Margaret scoffed with a chuckle as she joined Poppy and Minerva, the three women joining the men at the long table. The two boy stood by the door, listening at the cacophony of voices, able to only pick out Severus and Hawkeye’s voices, BJ and Charles occasionally shouting their irritation and praises at the recent discovery of Hawkeye’s.

“So you’re telling me.. With Lupin’s blood, with that plant, and this formula, we just MAY get something to work on that will …. Work?” Charles asked with skepticism, his hand running along his bald pate, eyes darting from Hawkeye, Snape, and Minerva.

“Yes. Yes- I did the arithmancy.” Minerva said with a brisk nod as she slapped at the papers, sending them flying down the table to Poppy who smoothed them down carefully, handing them over to Margaret, who looked them over and sat with Charlie, Erin, and BJ to make lists of supplies.

“Someone’s gonna have to go on a supply run, then…. very far away.” Max said with a soft huff, glancing over the supply and ingredient list, leaning over BJ’s shoulder.

“I always can apparate. I’ve enough energy to do so,” Snape said briskly, thinking of the two boys
he had left napping in his and Merle’s bed. “The sooner we finish this off, the sooner we can get back to England and Dumbledore, and—”

“If there’s an England left.” Minerva corrected briskly. “I lost touch with Dumbledore, once the wards fell around Hogsmeade. Lord knows what’s happened to Diagon Alley and Azkaban. “ Snape huffed and his palms banged on the table, startling BJ, who had been leaning on the table with Hawkeye.

“We’ve been living in bleedin’ Azkaban, Minerva, and I will not have Draco and Harry, Carl and Sophia, Hermione- your girls, Padma and Parvati- living like this! They all need a life, to live and run in the fresh air. When is the last time they were able to go outside without an armed guard? When Carl doesn’t have to carry Grimes’ gun? When Sophia didn’t have to carry a knife with her? When Harry and Draco could put away their wands, Minerva? When?”

“Severus-”

“Fuck this! Fuck this bloody fucking thing,” Snape grabbed a thin book, throwing it across the room in a fit and it landed near the dark corner where Harry and Draco had been hiding. Minerva, Hawkeye, and BJ all grabbed Severus, while Charles scoffed and straightened up papers, talking with Margaret and Poppy quietly about the time frame that they could work with, ignoring Snape’s meltdown- it was the third this week- and no new inventive curses could be heard this time, and no one fell victim to a curse. It was fairly mild, and Minerva had her suspicions he was getting laid on a frequent basis- it was the only explanation she could think of. The only person who could seemingly handle Severus at his worst was Merle Dixon, and Mr. Dixon had been fairly mellow of late...

Draco and Harry lifted the book Snape had thrown and put it in their knapsack just in time to see Beth and Maggie walking into the infirmary with thin frowns on their faces, Hermione trailing behind with Hershel and Francis.

“Boys?” Hershel asked sternly, Francis eyeing the boys with experienced suspicion.

Draco panicked when they were caught eavesdropping, quickly sliding around Maggie and Beth, grabbing Harry by the wrist. Beth and Maggie shared a glance and watched the boys run off with Hermione loudly demanding they explain themselves in her shrill, bossy voice. Francis shook his head, he knew his surrogate daughter well, and he knew the trio was up… to something.
The three children were under close supervision by Francis, Hawkeye, and the Greenes for the next few weeks, and it wasn’t until the end of the month that the three of them found themselves free of prying adult eyes for a few moments.

Once the three kids settled themselves into Rick and Daryl’s room, The boys whispered among themselves, telling Hermione about what they heard, and the tantrum Snape threw, showing her the book.

“If anyone can find what we need, it’s you. It’s in a book and you read the crap out of this sort of stuff,” Harry said with a nod as Draco smirked at the use of the word ‘crap’.

“Harry!” Hermione admonished, shocked that Harry had been so bold with his language- living with Snape and Merle was starting to rub off on the boy. “You’ve been hanging around Severus and Merle too much-”

“They’re Dad and Father, now,” Harry said with a shrug, kicking at a piece of dirt that had been tracked into the prison. “Ev’ry one needs somebody, and it’s nice to have someone,” Harry said as he leaned against Draco, non-verbally expressing his need to have his - brother- nearby. Hermione was nearly like a sister, but not quite- she hadn’t travelled from Atlanta all the way to Cokeworth Prison. She hadn’t nearly been killed by the crazy doctor, and eaten by a werewolf, and seen Lori poop slugs.

“Yeah.” Draco said with a slight huff, smiling a slight smile at Hermione, his fine blond hair glinting in the sun like a halo. “I heard Snape go off and he talked ‘bout us like we were his kids. I think Hawk and Francis would say that too. They love us,” Draco said to Hermione, secure in the familiar knowledge of parental love, and trying to show Harry the same idea. Harry, however, didn’t quite understand, but he was beginning to with the help of his companions.

“All right,” Hermione said after a while. “No more cuss words, please,” She said primly, crossing her ankles as she reached for the book that Snape had thrown across the room. “It’s gonna take me awhile, he’s written all over it and I can’t read his writing very well. It’s all grown up cursive, and Francis is teaching me.”

“Can’t you learn faster? You’re good at that, too,” Harry said with a frown. The three children leaned against the mattress, poring over the book as long as they could, until they heard the voices of Rick coming down the hall, with a quiet murmur they thought could be Hershel Greene, he sounded like Father Christmas should sound, a nice voice that made you feel better on the inside.

“Daryl will feel better, he just needs to lie down… what were you doing, anyway, for him to faint
like that? I didn’t think it was hot enough for that down in the-

“Never mind that.” Rick’s voice floated down the hall, coming closer with heavy steps, it sounded as if Daryl was being carried in between him and Hershel, with a quiet dragging sound that could be his boots against the floor. Harry, Hermione and Draco scrambled to hide the book, Hermione tucking it in her waistband, using a large sweater to cover it up, the boys fluffing up pillows and taking out cards and comics of Carl’s.

“Boys! What are you doing here? Never mind that, scoot,” Rick said with a bob of his head as he and Hershel dragged in an unconscious Daryl, whose pale face was drained of color. Rick and Hershel put him gently on the bed, on his side in case he threw up. “Draco, why don’t you go get -”

“I’ll go get Dad,” Draco said with a brisk nod, running out of the room to find Merle, while Harry stayed with Daryl, crawling up the bed to curl up with him. He had done that before, once, when he wasn’t feeling to good and it had helped him feel better. Rick leaned back and glanced at the spot where Draco had been. He wasn’t sure, but he thought he heard Draco say he was fetching “Dad”- he hadn’t been aware of any new people here- he would have known if a Malfoy had shown up…

**Merle. Fucking Merle Dixon, that’s who,** Rick thought with a laugh as Merle stormed into the room, Draco hot on his heels, a hand tugging at the hem of Merle’s shirt. Severus wasn’t too far behind, dark eyes glinting with suspicion and a hand out with his wand glowing purple.

“What happened to baby brother?” Merle asked, nearly ripping Hershel’s head off verbally, with Severus holding on to Draco, who had moved from Merle’s side to Severus’s as Snape pocketed the wand in a fluid motion, sidling up to the front of the room. Harry had not moved, stubbornly staying curled up with Daryl, their eyes closed.

“I suspect Harry is trying to comfort him. Let them rest,” Snape said with a brief nod at Hershel. “Doctor Greene has things under control, I am certain of that.”

“What just happened?” Merle began, while Rick watched with mild surprise as Snape slid an arm around Merle’s shoulders, directing him out of the room without a further word, nodding his head at the boys in a nonverbal sign of permission for them to stay with Daryl and Rick if they wanted to do so.

“What just happened?” Rick asked himself as he sat down on the bed next to Daryl, with Hershel sitting in a small armchair in the corner of the room, having moved a small pile of laundry and a book, Draco and Hermione piling onto him like little puppies. “I mean.. he was just fine and - then he just collapsed.”
“I’ll send for Poppy, you look around for anything he may have ate, maybe it was food or drink, that’s the only thing that we can’t account for,” Hershel said with a nod, stroking his beard carefully as he eyed the younger Dixon on the bed. The boy didn’t seem too bad off, he had put on some weight the past few weeks, and he was looking healthier than he had looked when he had first met him at the fall of his farm.

“Why didn’t you use a Patronus, Draco?” Poppy’s brisk voice asked, scolding Draco as she came into the room, her ever-present black bag in hand. The children chattered noisily at Poppy, while Rick hemmed and hawed, going through Daryl’s pockets and finding a vial of Snape’s, one of his potions that he made for people. Daryl and Merle had taken to stealing from Snape’s cabinets some weird fruity alcohol in a silver flask, and some mints and lube.

“If you were having sex, it’s fine- it happens. Sometimes people pass out from too much… excitement,” Poppy said with a snort as she looked over the contents of Daryl’s pockets and put two and two together. “The blood rushes to the head too quickly- were you trying something new?” Poppy asked as she waved her wand, and a buzzing filled the children’s ears. “It’s fine- this conversation is private,” she said with an indulgent smile. Rick slowly nodded his head. It wasn’t how he would have liked to come out to someone, but it was important that Poppy have all the information to help Daryl. As a police officer, he knew omitting information out of embarrassment could be a detriment to his treatment.

“We.. well, we were trying something. We’ve been- very.. Very active lately.” Rick blushed, thinking of all of the blow-jobs he had received in the shower, and the many times he had fucked Daryl in the guard tower the past few weeks, and not to mention their latest romp down into the laundry room after Carol and Remus had left them alone to do their laundry. He had been balls-deep into Daryl when he had passed out from an intense orgasm, coming all over their ragged blanket and then collapsing with a small sigh.

“More than usual?” Poppy asked with a small smirk, eyes glinting with amusement at the ‘honeymoon’ stage of their relationship. A relationship that was badly hidden, thought Poppy with a snicker as she remembered the moaning she had heard earlier that morning going by the shower room. Apparently those two were the mystery morning shaggers she and Minerva had been listening to every morning for the past month or so.

“Um…” Rick said with a shrug. “Twice a day?” Rick blushed, he wasn’t sure what was the average amount of time men had sex- but he knew it was hard to get some privacy, but he and Daryl had been getting an amazing amount of private time in their room at night, with the children choosing to bunk together with Carol and Remus, or Merle and Severus- they were the “cool” adults, not boring like Daryl and Rick or Francis and Hawkeye were, apparently.
“My goodness, boys,” Poppy smirked and fanned herself, waving her wand over the prone forms of Daryl and Harry. “Rick, could you move Harry? The magic’s registering him as part of Daryl.” Poppy said with a brisk wave of her wand, adjusting her thick black spectacles, adjusting them over her nose to make sure she was reading the magic correctly. Rick gently picked up the now-asleep Harry and held him to his chest, the boy curling up against Rick’s chest.

“Oh my. My. My dear,” Poppy waved her wand several times in the same design over Daryl. “I think you’d better go fetch Severus and Minerva- no.. wait- give me a minute.” Poppy fanned herself again, taking her glasses off and rubbing her eyes as she let out a long sigh, muttering to herself in another language that sounded vaguely like French or Scots, he wasn’t sure-Rick could catch a few choice words he had heard Minerva say over the last few weeks.

“Hershel, why don’t you take Harry from Rick, take the kids over to Carol and Remus? I think that’s where all of the other children are, with Francis and Max outside near the fences. I’ll need.. I’ll need Severus, can you fetch him? I’ll have to give him a good bollocking for this. He’ll have a lot, a lot to answer to.” Poppy hid a dark scowl as she tried to smile down at the children being herded by Hershel.

“Well, why is Poppy all mad?” Draco asked, holding Hermione’s hand as the two walked with Hershel out of the prison towards the fenced area that the adults had set up for a garden, and a small play area for the children. Hershel shook his head and gently shrugged, trying not to wake Harry. They reached their destination, a small picnic table overlooking the garden and the fence where Merle and Severus were sitting, talking quietly.

“Doctor Snape, Poppy wants to talk with you. Merle- “

“I’ll take him,” Merle said with a nod, taking Harry from Hershel with slight awkwardness, he had not held on to a sleeping little boy in a long, long time. Harry snorted and made light snuffling sounds, like a puppy curling into its mother. “I gotcha, Harry.”

“Dad,” Harry murmured softly, his slight restless moment put to rest at the sound of Merle’s voice. Draco and Hermione smirked at each other, going off to play near the edge of the fence where Max and BJ were picking off walkers, Remus keeping the walkers at bay with his lycanthropy so they were not overrun with walkers. Carol, Maggie and Beth were tending to the garden with Lori and Shane caring for some livestock the residents of Cokeworth prison had managed to wrangle, several pigs, chickens, and two horses. Sophia, Carl, and the twins were petting the animals and chatting, picking apples from an apple tree that Minerva had Transfigured from a few apple cores a few weeks ago.
“Can’t the woman brew her own potions?” Snape grumbled, taking a moment to brush a hand over Harry’s dark head, and giving Merle an intense look, filled with something unsaid-

“**Our boys.**” Merle said with a nod, putting words to what Snape was saying with his dark eyes. Snape blinked and bowed his head, smiling faintly as he walked off to see Poppy, but not before getting the last word in.

“**Mary Poppins,**” he said with a dark chortle when he was at a safe distance from Merle, the other man scowling and rising from his seat slightly, Harry waking with the motion. Snape walked off, his hobby of irritating Merle and putting him in his place was achieved.

Harry blinked up at Merle and smiled, clambering off his lap and going off to play with Draco and Hermione, his memory fading about the dream he had with the three ladies, one with red hair, one with golden hair and another with chocolate colored hair. All of the ladies had pretty wings. He thought they were pretty angels, but none of the children noticed the slight golden glow around Harry, Hermione, and Draco that faded quickly into their skin.

“I see some really good fat berries over there,” Harry said with a berry-smeared mouth. Hermione perked up, and glanced at the dark area near the fence. Draco went off to explore, not quite having had his fill of berries just yet, his basket half-full while Harry and Hermione’s were overflowing.

“I’ll get more over there, yeah,” Draco said with a nod as he shook his basket, Harry and Hermione going to give Carol and Remus their treats. Merle stretched out on the bench, his hands folded along his small beer belly he couldn’t seem to get rid of. A faint creaking could be heard from Max Klinger and BJ’s task with the walkers, more coming to the fence with Remus moving further off near the garden with Carol, Beth, and Maggie. No one noticed the blond-haired Draco near a corner of the fence, where a weak spot was by a large blackberry bush that had taken over one corner of the prison yard.

“Where’s Draco?” Carol asked, brushing her berry-stained hands on her jeans.

“Getting more over there. There’s a secret place in the corner, with lots of fat berries,” Harry said with a nod, pointing over to where a thick mass of walkers had gathered. Carol could barely see
Draco’s blond head among the leaves of the blackberry bushes. Her heart in her throat, Carol shouted for Draco. Draco, unable to hear anything over the moaning of the walkers and the faint whistling in the wind, was oblivious to the real danger he was in. He felt safe, with the fence up and all of the adults around him.

“DRACO!” Carol yelled, with Max and BJ pausing in their work. Merle, springing up from his relaxed position looked around in a panic. Time seemed to slow down for everyone in the yard. A loud creaking could be heard, as the small boy’s scream of fear shot through the air, shaking everyone into action.

“DRACO!” Max shouted, dropping his things and shoving BJ out of his way, racing Merle towards the small boy, trapped by the brambles of the berry bush and the walkers on the other side of the fence. Carol herded the youngest children, who started screaming and crying, towards Shane, Lori, and the Greenes. Carol turned to run after Remus, Max, and Merle. Her heart pounded into her throat, she knew she was too late, she was too far away to reach Draco…

Hershel Greene turned to fetch his medical kit, grateful that Severus and Rick had insisted an emergency kit be stored in the garden shed for any emergencies. BJ ran along with Herschel, the two elderly doctors fast on their feet for two senior citizens. Converse and Doc Martens pounded in the dusty ground surrounding the shed, and a metallic bang could be heard when the door was violently flung open by BJ.

Screaming and crying children were being hauled past BJ and Herschel, Shane and Lori taking them into the prison where it would be safe, and they could fetch Minerva, Hawkeye, Francis, and the Winchesters. The two Greene girls and Glenn were riding herd to make sure none of the children slipped out unnoticed by Shane and Lori, the two having eyes only for Carl.

Draco, wide-eyed, screamed at the claws reaching for him. There were so many, and they stank so bad. Draco couldn’t do anything but scream, he was petrified. He could hear his name, and he turned to see Max running towards him, grabbing at him.

“C’mere, kid. Let’s go, outta there,” Max said with a wide smile, his body shielding Draco from the clawed hands and snapping teeth. “Berries ain’t worth it. Go see your Dad,” Max said with a grunt as he heaved Draco out of the brambles, not minding that they scratched him up on the exposed skin of his body. Draco shuddered, throwing up all over Max, who chuckled softly, hugging the boy quickly. The creaking intensified, and a weak part of the fence let loose with an ominous snap.

“RUN!” Max shouted, gasping as he found a half-buried trowel in the dirt that Draco had been playing with. Max turned, using the trowel to disable as many walkers as he could, buying time for Merle and the others to come do damage control. Max knew, deep down inside, he may not make it out. He had survived Korea, only for this….
IT was time, Max thought as he smiled at each walker, putting it down as fast as he could. Soon-Lee would be proud, and he did miss the Colonel. It was time- he had lost his entire family to those things, and he would be damned if he would lose MORE of his family to the creatures. Max searched his pockets, best he could and found what he had been holding on to daily for the past 30 years. A grenade- he had been carrying around since Korea, it was supposedly a dud, but Max knew better. He had heard a woman’s voice whispering… it was time, time for him to meet his wife and child.

“MAX, NO!” BJ screamed, struggling to get to Max but being held back by a burlier Herschel, his years of heavy farm work giving him an advantage over the tall and too-thin BJ. Merle was still struggling with Draco, the boy still trapped between a hoard of walkers struggling to break through the fence, and safety in Merle Dixon’s arms. Draco was crying, a golden light flowing from his tears and hitting the ground.

It happened faster than anyone could see. A walker, a small boy, had gotten close to Draco. Merle, being Merle- wrapped his arm around Draco, yanking him away and shoved away the walker, the teeth sinking into the meat of his palm. Merle shouted, and Draco shrieked with high-pitched sobbing, the air growing thick with the heavy smell of magic.

**BOOM**

Red filled the air….
Chapter 25

Chapter Summary

Part 2: what happened after Merle and Hershel took the children out. This chapter is taking place during, if not just before, the events in the prior chapter. Sorry, the cliffhanger still stays! Let's see what's up with Daryl...

Chapter Notes

I must thank my wonderful beta, star, and the amazing people over at RWG, and their support, especially the experts (I consider you guys experts, so shush) I got some help from for this chapter. Y’all are amazing! Also, THANK YOU to everyone who left reviews and kudos. You guys keep me going and remind me to update. :)

Rick sat on the bed, watching Poppy go through the contents of Daryl’s pockets again after Hershel and Merle had left with the children. Poppy muttered to herself as she separated out a silver flask and a small bottle that Daryl had been carrying on him.

“Have you seen him drink this?” Poppy asked, opening the flask and giving it a sniff.

“Yeah, Merle steals from Snape’s liquor cabinet. Likes that fire stuff- firewhiskey,” Rick stuttered out, as he blinked blearily and watched Daryl breathe. It was even and regular, nice and deep breaths of someone just… sleeping.

“And this?”

“I don’t know- Snape must’ve given it to him or something, looks like one of his things he gives to Hershel and other people,” Rick said with a shake of his head. He knew Snape brewed things for others during his free time, or at least he had been the last few months. Poppy let out a small noise of disapproval and turned to glare at the door, the sound of footsteps coming down the corridor.

“Merle Dixon better not be with you,” Poppy hissed the minute Snape entered the room. Snape glared at Poppy, smoothing down his black T-shirt.
“Poppy, I have no idea what you are accusing me of, and whatever it is, I did not do it.” Snape scowled down at Daryl, “Especially if it involves a Dixon.”

“Yes, a DIXON, Severus,” Poppy screeched, tossing Snape the silver flask. “What were you doing, brewing this? Now? For more of your experiments?”

“Woman, I have no idea what you’re talking about. This is just- just.. Just…” Snape murmured, opening the flask and his smug arrogance fading quickly and the color going out of his face. He pulled out his wand, waving it the same way Poppy had done when she came into the room. “How?” he asked weakly, glancing at Poppy. Poppy let out a ‘harrumph’ and rolled her eyes.

“The standard way, I would expect. When two men…”

“I should know, Poppy. I saw them in the guard tower the other day,” Severus said with a wry smirk and making a comment about Rick’s beard. “How long has… how long - have you been.. Intimate?” The black-haired professor asked, placing the silver flask on a flat surface, leaning over Daryl and examining him with his dark eyes, his ebony wand waving over the prone man.

“Uh… “ Rick blushed, shrugging slightly. He wasn’t sure, when it all had began, but he knew it hadn’t been that long after Snape had woken up from his second ‘magical fire bomb’ attempt. “Maybe two months?”

“It only takes one time,” Poppy remarked primly, poking Severus and ordering him to stay away from all Dixons for the next hour while she went to brew potions. “It’s your fault, you explain this to Rick, while I prepare everything for the younger Dixon.” Poppy sent Severus a scathing look that made Rick cringe slightly- he had come under the wrath of Poppy when Carl and Sophia had gotten colds- he and Carol had been raked over coals for a hour, while Minerva watched on with a faint smirk on her lips. He still shuddered at the sound of “Mr. Grimes” in a fierce British accent.

“What’s wrong with Daryl? Is it some wizard thing?” Rick asked, sitting with his legs spread, hands on his knees as he leaned forward, staring at Snape with apprehension. He was still new to the whole magic thing, but he knew there had to be some things that would affect them sooner or later, with the Dixon brothers’ sensitivity to magic.

“Ahem- yes,” Snape said after a moment, clearing his throat and raising a dark brow. “You’ve… been quite, busy,” Snape’s pale fingers toyed with his wand as it was put away somewhere in his well-tailored trousers. “You’ve been… ahem, fucking for what, two months now? Twice, maybe four times a day? Ever use protection?”
“Have you—” Rick snapped.

“There’s no privacy here anymore, not outside the rooms,” Snape said with a dark grin that indicated personal knowledge. “Unless you’re a wizard—like Remus or myself, or Poppy and Minerva—the boys don’t count— they don’t know the proper spells…” but Hermione Might—must have a word with someone—went unsaid in the sudden pause that laid heavy in the air.

“What?”

“How thick can you get, you fuckwit, he’s up the duff! Pregnant! With child!” Snape finally exploded, his Cokeworth accent ringing through the hallway, right when Poppy entered with an armload of bottles, Francis and Margaret at her heels. Francis blinked owlishly behind his spectacles, as Poppy huffed, taking a step back with Margaret as the shout filled the air.

“Really, Severus, must you?” Poppy scowled up at the lank professor, Francis blinking and narrowing his eyes at Severus, murmuring to Margaret, asking if such a thing could be possible in a slightly nasal voice.

“I don’t know—Poppy…?” Margaret asked, gaping as her voice gave away her shock, her face trying to remain neutral out of years of training to not react to anything abnormal.

Rick sat speechless, as Francis gently and expertly took care of Daryl, Margaret assisting him in a way that kept Daryl from being disturbed and waking up from his sleep. Poppy murmured gently to Rick, leaving Snape to pout with his arms crossed as she answered the questions from a shocked Margaret and a curious Francis.

“It can happen, Mr. Mulcahy-Pierce, Mr. Grimes. The silver flask— it was a potion that was supposed to be a contraceptive, but it was contaminated or experimented upon, and Severus was supposed to throw it away— but it must have found itself into Daryl’s pocket somehow. Do you know anything about how he got it?” Poppy asked, her hand gently touching Rick’s shoulder.

“How… what?” Rick muttered, his eyes moving from Snape and Poppy over to Francis and Margaret with Daryl. Now that he knew, he could obviously see the similarities between Daryl and Lori, back when… Rick blinked furiously, eyeing the small belly that they had jokingly called a ‘beer belly’ a week ago. Merle had even poked it, once.
“When?” Rick asked with a sharp exhale, blinking up at Francis and Margaret. “Does he know?”

“He shouted it from the rooftop last Monday when you were in the loo,” Snape snorted sarcastically, as Francis and Margaret cleaned themselves up, their task done.

“Who shouted what?” Francis asked, tilting his head at Snape, who snickered like a little boy with a naughty secret.

“That Daryl’s pregnant,” Margaret gently reminded Francis of the conversation that had taken place behind him while he had been focused on his task. “Didn’t Hermione ask something about making babies?”

“Yes,” Francis blinked after a pause. “She couldn’t have done this- could she? I know she picks up things quite well but she couldn’t apply it in practice- could she, Severus, Poppy?” Francis’s voice rose in pitch along with his concern and eyebrows. His high-pitched request woke up Daryl, who leaned over and threw up on Rick’s lap, causing Rick to stumble back into Severus.

“The fuck?” Daryl murmured, clutching his stomach.

“It’ll pass, I’ve seen this before.” Poppy clucked as Margaret and Francis leapt into action, conditioned after years of working with patients, and their recent appointments as Poppy’s assistants. “Margaret, you’ve had Charles- you’ll be familiar with this but there are a few differences. Mr. Mulcahy-Pierce-?”

“Just Mulcahy- I’m just a Mulcahy- I’ve taken care of the women in the village, and our local parish, but no… I have no real experience.” Mulcahy chuckled hollowly, surprised that Poppy would actually ask him. “Why-”

“You’re potentially exposed to this- and you could be sensitive, like the Dixons.”

“But I’m- I’m over sixty years old?” Francis trailed off, puzzled as he took off his spectacles to distance himself from Poppy. He was not willing to think about such a thing. “The only sensitive, possibly, was - Walter “Radar” O’Reilly- and he’s in Iowa. Or … well, no longer,” Mulcahy said as he put his specs back on, his eyes resting on a confused Daryl. Rick had zoned out, focusing on trying to get himself clean, Severus refusing to help clean the ‘refuse’ off of him.
“Wizards have a long life-span. Sensitives, like the Dixons- and your friend Mr. O’ Reilly- age slowly- very slowly.”

“That would explain a lot, actually.” Margaret murmured absently as she put Rick’s soiled pants in with the rest of the laundry. “Radar always knew when something was going to happen- and he looked like he was still in school, with that teddy bear of his.” Margaret chuckled with Francis, the two sharing an inside joke that the others ignored in favor of staring at Daryl and then Severus, who finally had spoken after a long moment of silence, staring down at the slightly rounded stomach of Daryl’s.

“How did you end up like this?” Severus murmured with a scowl, his finger tracing his thin lips in thought. “How did you get your filthy Dixon paws on that potion?”

“What?” Daryl asked with a scowl, clutching the blankets up to his chin, his blue eyes darting from Rick to Poppy. “I.. what?” Poppy huffed, shooing everyone out except for Rick, declaring this a Dixon-Grimes moment, and banned anyone that wasn’t a Grimes or a Dixon from coming in, drawing her wand and drawing complicated figures in the air.

“Woman-” Snape began, and Poppy huffed, cutting him off with a sharp authoritarian tone.

“He needs his brother. You should go fetch your boyfriend, and your sons- give them a moment,” her tone softened at the end, to show Severus he wasn’t being totally excluded- merely giving them a private minute alone. She knew Severus had issues, ever since she had first seen him as a bruised and scarred eleven-year old on the first of September. Over the years, she had learned the man had a deep fear of being rejected by the ones he held close to his heart, one of the reasons he was a massive arsehole, thought Poppy fondly as she watched the dark-haired boy- he’d always be a boy to her- stalk down the corridor after Margaret and Francis. There were potions to be made, and conversations to be had…. 
Chapter 26

Chapter Summary

Things happen, and Severus is not happy, nor is Merle. What will happen to our boys?

Chapter Notes

I apologize, I had grad school to take care of but now Christmas break is coming which means more updates! And maybe more fics! What do you think?

Severus had finished two potions, his mind wandering to the Dixon brother up with Poppy, it still surprised him how well magic worked. There had to have been intent, somewhere, some kind of intent for it to actually work. The second thought was how, how could Daryl have found that exact drink, when that particular Dixon--....

\textit{Dixon.}

He’d go yell at Merle later, but first things first. Bottling up the third and final potion, Severus looked up at the sound of doors banging open, and screaming as wailing children poured forth.

“What-?” Severus swept into his war wizard personality, wand at the ready as he barked for Margaret, waving his wand to summon Hershel, Charles, and any medical personnel that was on the floor-

“Harry?” Severus asked, as he found a small black-haired boy crying, holding onto him tightly. Looking around, he didn’t see the familiar blond head that was never more than a foot away. Fear shot through his stomach, and he looked up at a GRenue girl-\textit{blond- must be Beth}. “Where’s Dracois?”

“Draco- they got Draco and Merle,” Harry sobbed, hic-coughing the entire time as tears soaked Snape’s oxford. Magic seemed to hang heavily in the air, shimmering slightly as if it were a distant haze of heat. Before Severus could spring into action, a rumble shook the prison, and a loud -

\textbf{BOOM}

-could be heard. Screaming and crying could be heard in the distance. Vaguely, Severus remembered Dumbledore saying something about crying being a good thing- crying meant alive.

“Stay right here, Severus.” a voice commanded, Snape losing himself into a haze of red, Harry clinging to him like a small monkey, his sobs quieting as the boy cried himself into unconsciousness.

“Like \textit{fuck} I will.”

“Severus!” hands reached out to Snape, who fought against the sea of hands, arms, and bodies holding him back as the doors flung open.
Merle.

Draconis.

Snape ran toward the two, seeing red seep over a deep and raw bite in Merle’s hand and on Draco. Not thinking twice, Snape held out his wand. Magic filled the air, and a clap of thunder roared as Snape’s wand rose through the air in a flash of light.

Sectumsempra

The hand fell to the ground with a wet, sickening thud. The acrid smell of burnt skin hung in the air. Hands still held him back, but a flash of white caught his eye-

Hawkeye- Snape vaguely registered as the magic left his body in a rush. Hershel Greene’s bright blue eyes were the last thing Snape saw before darkness claimed him.

“Hawk-“ his lips murmured the word soundlessly as his dark eyes closed.

“It shall be all right. We’ve got him,” Francis whispered into Snape’s ear. The surprisingly strong body of Francis held Snape at bay, while Hawkeye took care of Merle, and Remus took care of the boys along with Carol and Sophia. Everything seemed to happen in an instant, and time seemed to freeze for everyone in the room.

Hawkeye Pierce and Hershel Greene, yelling at both barrel-chested Winchesters to hold Merle up, take him over to a bed and prep him for OR. Remus held Harry in his arms and followed Carol, who was placing Draco on a bed. No one wanted to separate the boys for at the moment. Sophia was hovering by her mother, smoothing down Draco’s cowlick. Hermione began sobbing harder in Beth Greene’s arms. Maggie, Erin, and Charles Jr. were hovering by their fathers, ready to assist at a moment’s notice. All of the occupants of the infirmary forgot about the upstairs occupants in the rush of events.

It was hours before Rick and Daryl finally noticed the odd - and long- absence of Poppy and Severus. Daryl still refused to accept the fact he was pregnant, but Rick was more accepting, having spent more time with Snape and Harry, having more of an exposure to magic.

“So.. Merle stole the flask from Snape, and you guys got drunk off of it?” Rick asked with a frown of thought, as Daryl stared down at his rounded stomach. It did explain a lot. The sudden urges to have sex, the constant need to eat, and the frequent napping and exhaustion Daryl had been having lately. It was just like Lori all over again, thought Rick with a half-smirk at the memories of a baby Carl and pregnant Lori.

Shit. Babies and zombies don’t mix, thought Rick with a cold sweep of fear trickling through his body.

“What should we do? We’ve got the wizards-” Rick began as he ran his hand through his greying curls.

“Snape’s gonna help. He will,” Daryl said with a firm nod as he hoisted himself out of the bed, Rick moving out of the way. He didn’t want to baby Daryl, and treat him as if he were fragile. He knew
Daryl may resent it, and he didn’t want to deal with any more drama from anyone, much less Daryl himself. “Or Merle will make him,” Daryl said with a dark grin and very aware of his brother’s persuasive skills.

“Merle- he’s with the kids. Outside, I think,” Rick said with a sigh. “Snape had him go with ‘em and one of the doctors. Harry didn’t want to leave you. He wanted to make you feel better. Slept with you and everything,” Rick said with a half-grin at the memory of Harry. “Like when Snape was down for the count.”

“Hmph, fool boy. I’m jus’ fine.” Daryl grunted, choosing to ignore the fact that he had just found out that there was something impossible happening to him. He wanted to take it in stride, like he had seemed to do with everything weird happening so far. Hell, one of the people living here was a real live werewolf and there were zombies outside. He was vaguely disappointed that Snape wasn’t a vampire…

**BOOM**

“What?” Rick and Daryl ran to the closest window, seeing red spraying everywhere. They could see BJ running towards the fence, one of the magic folk lifting a wand- he couldn’t see which one, but he could see a wand- and light shot through the fence, a pale blue bubble shielding a hole in the fence that had been torn through by the walkers.

Reading each other’s minds, Rick and Daryl ran down to the courtyard, where they could smell death in the air, and hear BJ sobbing, screaming while Minerva held him back, the older woman surprisingly strong for someone who seemed to be pushing sixty or seventy years of age, or so he had heard from Remus. Daryl leaned over and promptly threw up in a nearby slop bucket, the pigs squealing with anger that someone had invaded their space.

“What …?” Rick gasped out, as he tried to help Minerva with BJ.

“Max,” BJ wailed, tears and snot running down his face. “He.. the boys… bitten.” BJ sobbed as his hands mimicked an explosion. That much was evident, from the gore covering the ground near the blueberry bushes that the boys were known to frequent with Hermione.

“They’re inside,” Minerva said with a nod. “Shane and Lori have Carl, and I was told Remus and Carol have your boys.” Rick noticed there was a large lack of Snape or Merle, who usually couldn’t be separated from the two boys. He didn’t want to mention anything to Daryl, who was still throwing up whatever had been left from before.

“Is he okay?” Minerva asked with a frown. “It isn’t contagious, is it?” she asked primly as she raised her wand.

“No! He’ll- he’ll be fine,” Rick said with a wave of his hand. He hadn’t asked Poppy or Snape if anything could happen if magic hit Daryl. Hell, he didn’t know ANYTHING about this kind of thing at all. “We’ll go see the boys- find out what happened. Will you be all right?”

“We shall, but could you send out some of the army doctors to help with --this?” Minerva said with a brisk nod. “My magic’s busy maintaining the shield, and I want to get this fixed right away.”

“Yeah -- I know Max can fix it,” Rick said out of habit, his comment setting BJ off again, and Rick groaned.

“Max? This… this was Max?” Daryl whimpered, wiping his mouth on a rag. “Jesus. He was a great guy. Damn.” Rick nodded, reminding himself to go ask Glenn to help Minerva- maybe Maggie
Greene could help as well…

“Rick! Daryl!” Remus called out, moving out of the infirmary. “Carol has the boys in our room- Carl is with Shane and Lori…”

“I’ll go see the boys, you go see Carl,” Daryl said with a nod, knowing that Carl would want Rick with him. Rick nodded, giving Daryl’s arm an affectionate squeeze to let him know silently that they would have time together later- now was for the boys. Daryl nodded his understanding and went with Remus down the corridors to their large makeshift apartment. Carol was quite ingenious, making use of their living space quite well.

“Daryl!” Harry shouted, running up to Daryl when Daryl came into the apartment with Remus. Daryl allowed Harry to hold on to him, while Draco remained still on the bed, his eyes screwed tight, tears leaking out of the corners. “Draco’s still scared.”

“It’s gonna be alright,” Daryl said with a nod as he sat on the bed with Draco, Carol and Remus whispering to each other for a moment, Sophia still clinging to Carol and Remus the best she could. Draco allowed the boys to rearrange themselves, curling up close to him like puppies to their mother. Draco stared up at Daryl, his bright blue eyes dark and stormy.

“He’ll be fine.” Daryl said with a nod, an odd sense of calm coming over him. A light breeze swept through the room from a window, tousling the boys’ hair. If he had taken time to take a long breath, he would have smelled the faint scent of lilies in the air, along with narcissus flowers. “You forget, he has you and Severus. He’ll be just fine.” Daryl rubbed Draco’s back, the three resting on Remus’s bed until Draco and Harry had cried themselves to sleep for the second time that day.

“Okay, now tell me, what really is going on?” Daryl frowned after he had detangled himself from his little puppies, and Sophia had taken his place, emotionally drained from the long day. Carol went down to make supper, telling Remus and Daryl she would bring up some food for everyone, no one seemed to want a communal meal tonight.

Remus let out a long and slow breath as he decided about where to begin. He looked up at Daryl after a moment, the wolf in him watching the hunter carefully. He could smell it in his scent, how he had changed. The hunter was now a nurturer, and the wolf in him recognized the need to care for the littles- just as he had needed to care for Harry and now Sophia. Making his decision, Remus took a long swig of his drink before speaking in a soft and careful tone.

“We were outside picking berries. The kids wanted Carol to have something nice to make for dessert. The- the Inferi were at the fence, and there was a weak spot in the fence. It broke, and everyone got out… except for Draco; he was stuck in some brambles. Merle and Max worked together to get him out. Max… sacrificed himself to keep the walkers at bay. Merle… was surprised by one that snuck past. Severus- Severus took care of the infection, he’s fine- Merle’s fine.” Remus found himself talking to thin air, Daryl running through the hallways.

“Well, shite.” The werewolf ambled after Daryl, knowing that the doctors would have fixed everything by now- especially if Poppy or Hawkeye were in charge.
Chapter 27

Chapter Summary

The aftermath of what has taken place at the courtyard of the prison, and in the infirmary. The two different events finally come to a head and some things are revealed in the mix of the confusion.

Chapter Notes

I SO APOLOGIZE for this long, long hiatus! graduate school is kicking my ass, and I have had no inspiration or energy or time to write... until now: Spring break. So.. I will try to finish/update this fic during that time period. Do let me know your thoughts on the plot, and if you would like to see more fics in this universe or any other kind of fics. I need inspiration, and more bunnies. Thank you to my beta starfire, as usual! <3

Severus blinked up at Hawkeye, trying to get up from the bed. He couldn’t- something held him down...Poppy.

“Unhand me, woman,” the street urchin in him lashed, a burning need to go see to Merle. Severus knew something had happened- he had reacted on pure instinct, from the First Voldemort War-amputated his bitten hand. Blood…. Infection. “Is he okay?” Snape finally countered, not wanting to fight Poppy, not after the awful drain his system had, casting that spell with all his strength, and using his subtractive magic from the mark to eat away at the sickness that had threatened to end the elder Dixon. Snape’s mind skittered away from anything further that would have cemented their relationship into something more than fucking in dark corners of the prison. He didn’t really want to put into words something… something good.

“Merle- you saved his life, Severus.”

“Is.. was… effects?” Snape mumbled, trying to put his brain back to working, leaning up against the loosening hold Poppy and now Minerva and Francis had put on him. “I’m fine!” Snape snarled, swatting at Minerva and Francis, who quickly backed away, not wanting to be turned into rabbits or squirrels.

“What are you .... Oh . OH,” Poppy said after a sudden light bulb went off in her head. “You mean.. Daryl got his … flask.. From Merle?”
“Probably,” Severus said with a huff, his cheeks going flame-red against his pale English complexion. Snape moved his body along the bed, swinging his body so he sat upright, allowing only Francis close to him for support. The ex-priest was a lean fighter, and knew exactly how to support him properly, unlike Poppy, who was coddling, or Minerva, who was too stiff. The fact the man was deaf was just a bonus, thought Snape with a silent laugh to himself. Hershel and Hawkeye were hovering over Merle, while BJ was lying in another bed, Erin sitting with him and Charlie Winchester the younger. BJ looked like he could turn at any moment, his skin pale behind his white mustache. Snape pursed his lips tightly as he walked past, not wanting to think about what must have had happened out there. He would find out in due time, but right now.. He had more important things to tend to.

Severus went towards Hershel and Hawkeye, Francis moving smoothly and carefully with practiced ease at his side. The two men stopped short of Merle’s bed, Snape listening to Hawkeye and Hershel discussing Merle, while Merle slept on, what used to be his hand cauterized and wrapped in bandages.

“Here you go,” Francis said softly, nudging Severus towards an armchair that Minerva had conjured up back in their early days at the prison- it still held the camo print, how fitting, Severus observed with a thin smile. “Hawk- I’m taking Hermione home-” Francis continued, a hand lightly patting on Hawkeye’s. Hawkeye turned his attention from Hershel to Francis and nodded, his blue eyes resting on the little girl sleeping on the cot closest to the door.

“You know what to do. I’ll see you at home soon,” Hawkeye said with a nod, absently kissing Francis on his cheek, a small pat on his hand and the spectacled priest gave Merle a quick sign of the cross on the way out, almost an affectionate farewell- not to give last rites, but to give strength for the journey to come.

“Poppy thinks there’s … some things that may -” Hershel began shakily, stroking his beard slowly as he breathed in and out. Hawkeye shook his head, and nudged Hershel aside as he took over the conversation for Severus, a hand on Merle’s bed and another on Severus’s chair. The taller doctor smiled rakishly.

“Someone’s been busy, apparently- and I think you need to explain things to him when he wakes up, am I correct?”

“Poppy-?”

“Yeah, she did her magic thing and everything came up - positive,” Hawkeye said as he leaned back, knowing he would have time to process this later with Francis and Minerva. “Right now everything checks out, he just needs to rest… and whatever you did, that stopped the spread of infection. We now know … we can do some measures to avoid infection. Where did you learn this?”
“I- I just… did it,” Snape said with a sharp intake of breath. “I saw Lucius do it back in the war. He- we…. We were on an assignment and- I had to save someone without being… outed.” Snape said with a frown. “I was a spy, double cross and all that. Moody was bitten, and- he would have died if I hadn’t done anything- so I just got rid of the… baggage.” Snape finished with a frown as he remembered the screams from Moody as his leg had been hacked off with a handsaw. “The muggle way, I’m afraid- not as neatly as I did for Merle.”

Merle.

It was the first time he had allowed himself to say Dixon’s name aloud, his name had slid out like the finest whiskey out of the finest bottle in England. He was alive, Draconis was alive, and Harry was with Remus, safe and sound. He could rest… and then, when this madness was finished..they all could rest and start a new life. But- what kind of life, Severus thought as he let himself sit in silence, staring at Merle for the rest of the night.

“What did you do to my brother?”

“Fuck you, too,” Snape grumbled as he rubbed his eyes free of sleep. He hadn’t meant to fall asleep like that- let down his guard… but here he was. “I had to stop the spread of infection. It was the only thing that could work. Now, you can thank me properly, then,” Snape scowled up at Daryl, bracing himself for any accusations hurled his way. Instead, he found himself with a lap full of two little boys, Remus coming up from behind Daryl.

“They wanted you and Merle,” Remus said simply, glancing at Daryl from the corner of his eye. Remus wanted to add more, but wisely stayed silent, his amber eyes watching Merle carefully, his nose sniffing the air slightly. It smelled of stale infection, something that had lingered but was now long gone. “It’s gone. You did it, Severus,” Remus said before he could catch himself, and cringed as a cold glare was sent in his direction.

“Of course he did it- he’s the best at curses and stuff,” Draco piped up, glancing up at Remus, his blue eyes glinting with certainty and confidence. Harry nodded, his small hands moving up from Snape’s shirt to Merle’s bed. Harry peered up at Merle, a frown on his face, his green eyes glinting with puzzlement. “His hand had to be chopped off. He saved me,” Draco explained to Harry, and Harry nodded slowly, curling up into Snape’s lap. Remus blinked down at the boys, smirking slightly at the thought of James and Lily-

Later, thought Remus as he let out a sigh, watching Daryl lean over Merle’s bed.
“He’s just asleep. Resting,” Hawkeye said with a nod. “Hershel and I looked him over, and Minerva did some of her magic stuff. Poppy, as well. He’s just- sleeping it off. Magic doesn’t do well with the Dixons, I would think.”

“It’s the wild magic,” Remus said with a huff that almost sounded like a mix of a bark and laugh. “You two are - well, I’d use the American word- Majick - not quite wizarding folk, but not a … what did they call them, Severus?”

“No-Maj. It’s much more diplomatic than Muggle, but fuck the lot, they’re all dead.,” Snape said with a thin frown, eyeing his wide-eyed sons, at the casual use of the F-bomb. “Don’t tell Rick.” Snape said with a half-smile, winking down at a giggling Harry and Draco. “Takes more than a walker to down a Dixon, magic or not.”

“Yeah,” Draco said with a firm nod, smiling up at Daryl. Daryl blinked slowly, sinking down to sit on his brother’s bed. The mattress frame squealed loudly, Remus hiding a smile behind his mouth as the boys giggled and shrieked with delight. It was a moment they seized to be silly, a moment of peace amidst the storm.

Merle woke up the next morning, the boys napping at his sides, Severus dozing in the camo armchair at his side. Hershel stood at the foot of his bed, clipboard in hand. It was nearly a surreal and domestic scene.

“You’re awake. I’ll go fetch Hawkeye,” Hershel said with a smile. “First- how are you doing? Poppy said you’d be out for a long while, but it’s only been a day or two.” Hershel leaned slightly on the footboard of the bed, his blue eyes gentle and inquisitive. Merle wasn’t sure what to make of it. The last thing he remembered….. Was the color red.

“Draco,” Merle sighed out softly, his eyes blinking back the rush of memories that came to him. He couldn’t move, not yet, but he could feel the boys on his sides, sleeping quietly. Their soft breathing made merle’s heart beat a touch slower, and-

*Baby brother-*

Daryl was fine. Everyone was fine, Merle thought to himself as Hawkeye strode up to his bedside, his long white coat flowing behind him almost like a cape. They were not supermen- but perhaps they would be, if that damn cure would be found anytime soon..
“Welcome back,” Hawkeye said with his usual wide grin, Merle had never seen him without any other kind of smile- but something about it didn’t quite reach his eyes. Something was different. Something had happened, and Merle could feel it, and see it on Hawkeye’s face, under his usual comedian approach.

“Cut the crap. What happened?” Merle said with a soft and gruff voice, his voice not quite up to par just yet. Hawkeye blinked for a moment and nodded briskly. Blunt and to the point was the way to go with the Dixons, Hawkeye was learning.

“Well- you were bitten, but your boyfriend cut off your hand, preventing the spread of infection- so you’re just fine, considering what happened.” Hawkeye leaned over the camo chair, his coat sleeves barely brushing Severus’s bowed head. “Sev’s really out of it, he stayed up all night and we had to put something in his tea to knock him out- Remus and Carol’s idea, not mine,” Hawkeye said with a wink at Merle. “Couldn’t get him outta here otherwise. Your brother helped with the boys, too. He’ll be by as soon as he knows you’re up.”

“Mm,” Merle murmured, feeling the boys stir from their sleep. He wasn’t quite used to this- family-kind of thing, but he liked the peace and quiet of the moment. The only thing missing was Daryl, and Merle knew Daryl would follow through.

“Dad! You’re up!” Harry whispered with a wide grin, revealing a gap where a tooth used to be. “Uncle Daryl helped me pull out a tooth, and Draco’s gonna lose one too, but he won’t let it be pulled out.” Harry prattled on, moving up so he could sit up and grin at Merle.

“Rip Van Winkle,” Severus’s dark eyes blinked open, and Merle realized that Snape had been awake the entire time- only resting his eyes. No one could wake that fast and be alert the minute their eyes opened. Merle would know; no one could relax around Will Dixon. Merle now realized Remus and Carol would be in trouble, very soon, for putting things in Sev’s tea.

“Yeah, yeah,” Merle grunted with a small scowl, his eyes glinting with relief. All eyes went to the doors that opened, Daryl walking through the doors with Rick at his side. “Baby brother.” Merle said with a slow smile, as Daryl ran down to Merle’s bed, Rick trailing after, his eyes watching Severus’s with a glint of curiosity and puzzlement in them. Snape shook his head minutely, indicating that nothing had transpired since Merle had only woken up a few moments ago. Rick nodded, placing his hand on the back of the camo-patterned armchair. The boys moved to make room for Daryl, who was hugging Merle.

“You know he’ll have to be told, right?” Rick said with a knowing raise of his brows, tilting his head slightly and trying not to allow a smile to slide across his face.
“Yes, I am aware of that fact, Grimes.” Snape said thinly, as Harry and Draco slid off of the bed and moved around to Snape’s side.

“What fact?” Merle asked, his ear tuned to Snape’s smooth voice. It was time for an explanation, and Severus was not looking forward to it...at all.
Chapter 28

Chapter Summary

A long-needed discussion takes place in the infirmary between the Dixons, Rick, and Snape.

Chapter Notes

A long delay... again. Real Life has been kicking my ass as usual but I welcome constructive criticism, suggestions, bunnies... anything short of flames :)

Severus wasn’t sure of where to begin. At the beginning was best, he thought as he frowned down at the boys. “Harry, Draco -- why don’t you go to the library and read with Hermione and Francis? I believe they wanted to start the Hardy Boys mystery books today. I believe they are looking for a monster in a.. Lagoon?”

“I forgot! We have to go.” Harry and Draco said with excitement, having forgotten their latest project- reading each and every book in the library that the adults had set aside for them on the ‘children’s shelves’ - a bookshelf that had been painted purple and never seemed to run out of books after Minerva and Remus had fiddled with it. It also meant that Hermione couldn’t take any book off of the other shelves without the book screaming bloody murder. They had learned the hard way that they could only do their secret research on gaining a new baby brother or sister when Francis was minding them.

Watching the boys run off towards the library/Hermione’s home, Daryl turned to watch Snape with interest, Rick pulling up a chair to sit next to Severus, while Daryl lounged on Merle’s bed. The brothers stretched out on the bed, facing each other, side-to-side and their hands splayed on their stomachs. Severus and Rick both shared a glance, the two men vaguely wondering the same thought.

Now that Severus knew about both brothers’ situations, he could clearly tell that Daryl and Merle both had the same problem- but Merle seemed further on than Daryl, with a distinct ‘beer belly’. He wasn’t sure what to do, but he knew he would have to go and disappear for a few… days, along with Rick, perhaps.

“Well- You know I do potions for the people here. I’ve had... a few requests, a few experiments, we’re all working on the cure, as well.” Severus began as he leaned back into the armchair, steepling his fingers and his dark eyes bored into Merle’s as he spoke. “I often bring those …. Remedies home. I used to put them in the alcohol cabinet and ward them.” Snape’s hands moved, one hand to lightly trace his lips as he thought of how to put it best, and his other hand gripped the armchair. Camo disappeared, blending into a dark shade of brown, one arm of the chair covered in silver duct tape. Snape didn’t notice, taking a long breath and his dark eyes flickered to Daryl and Rick.
“Uh-uh? And I drank somethin’?” Merle asked with a shrug.

“You and Daryl both, actually. Both of you. Poppy found a vial in Daryl’s pockets. Did you give him a silver vial from the alcohol cabinet- something hidden way in the back that tastes like strawberries?”

“What was it?” Merle asked, cutting straight to the chase, frowning at Snape. “The boys-”

“It was before the boys, Merle. I had made it way back when we first got here, for- For the Grimes woman-- Lori, and then Andrea- but that’s not here or there.” Snape snapped, his hand seemingly waving off Andrea’s and Lori’s name in the air as if they were flies themselves. “This- this concoction found itself into your brother’s hands and- well, I assume you drank it, and the mixture reacted to whatever majick you have- and … well.” Snape found himself without words, but he managed to plow on, his voice steady and calm as if he was lecturing to a class of seventh-years.

“So, somethin’ happened to the stuff I found?” Merle asked with a frown as he flexed his one good hand. Snape nodded as Rick’s eyes darted from Daryl to Merle, vaguely curious as to what Merle’s reaction would be. He and Daryl were still in shell shock, and hadn’t quite wrapped their heads around it. Perhaps some questions would get answered, Poppy had been quite technical and unable to answer a lot of probing questions Rick had asked her earlier.

“Yes.” Snape said succinctly, his hands moving to grip the arms of the armchair tightly, as if bracing himself for an attack. “This potion was supposed to- in theory- slow down and halt the menstrual cycle, and provide a form of.. Contraception, circumvented only by desire and- well, sensitivity to magic. It was supposed to be.. Effective. If you wanted a child, you would get it. If you didn’t.. You wouldn’t. Simple. Works on everybody.” Snape slipped into his teacher’s voice.

“What?” Daryl asked, frowning and shaking his head. “It can’t work on us. We’re guys, you know.”

“About that. Magic.. Magic has lots of potential, apparently. It is not impossible, but it isn’t that common for males to… to do that.” Severus said as he tried to stay as professional and impassioned as possible. He hadn’t noticed Hawkeye, BJ, Charles, and Hershel all gathered against a door frame, listening to the lecture with morbid fascination.

It was good no one noticed the doctors’ presences, otherwise they would have been cursed six ways to sunday, Minerva thought as she passed by, waving her wand and enacting heavier wards to protect the doctors- a lesson wouldn’t be amiss, and more physicians needed to be aware of the Dixons’ conditions. Minerva didn’t want to lose Poppy, but…better safe than sorry, thought Minerva with a stab of cold fear shooting through her soul at the mere need of the thought. She could spare this bit of magic- for this moment, anyway- she thought as she stalked away down the hallway, away from the infirmary and the small crowd of doctors lurking quietly in the hallway.

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“Is it what I think it is?” Merle asked after a long pause, the wheels turning in his head. Merle was clever, and very intelligent- not something that seemed to manifest itself in his presence when one would look at him. Severus had seen through it, right from the start. He knew that, and he respected
that. Although, at the moment, he couldn’t be rational when faced with something like this. Not when this thing-

“‘Yes.’ Severus said with a thin frown on his face, the corners of his eyes drawn and tight with worry and fatigue. ‘Both you and your brother were affected by this- this tonic.’ Severus let out a sharp breath. ‘Both you and your brother have been quite… sexually active- and the tonic has caused a problem. Poppy hasn’t told me anything about you yet- but…”

“It’s been two months. Seven more, then- then it’s born.” Daryl said softly, pressing against his brother and looking at him with his own blue eyes. “I got sick an’… that’s how we found out.” Merle’s blood stopped cold at the sound of his brother’s voice. It couldn’t happen, not this. Merle’s head swirled with thoughts, and he needed a drink. He wished he could have one right now, he thought as he frowned down at Severus, his hand moving up to rest on his brother’s ankle in a silent gesture that he wasn’t angry with Daryl. Not at all.

“I’ll take your leave, I have the boys to attend to.” Severus said in a cool voice, his black eyes shuttering and the soft glint fading. Severus rose sharply from his seat, his wrinkled white shirt being smoothed by a pale hand. “Good day, Grimes. Dixon.” Severus’s heart was in his throat, but he had to take his leave. He could see that the elder Dixon needed his time to himself. After all, it was a life-changing event, and he had no say in what Merle would do. The objective had been achieved. Merle was alive. He had the boys. There was a cure on the horizon, as well.

At Snape’s sharp departure, Rick’s eyebrows rose and he looked at the Dixon brothers. He knew that he and Daryl had an understanding, an acceptance and something akin to an actual relationship, while… well, Merle and Snape were two men who seemed to orbit each other, colliding in violent explosions of heat when their paths crossed. He had expected some kind of friendliness, not an abrupt and icy silence. Rick’s eyes slid to the Dixon brothers, who were looking at each other. At least no one had done or said anything…yet, Rick sighed softly. He knew having Daryl admit anything had been a huge step, so he didn’t expect anything from Merle. He had expected the older man to get up, to struggle, to curse… anything, but instead, he just had been staring at Daryl for the longest time ever.

“I’ll just… go.” Rick said after a long moment, not quite wanting to get into a Dixon moment. They had the doctors to care for them, and they were safe in the prison. All was well, Rick thought with a nod as his boots clicked down the hallway to Remus and Carol’s. He didn’t notice the doctors scattering out of his path. His mind was focused on the current situation and what he would do with the Dixon brothers. Especially with the new situation that seemed to be brewing in the potential powder keg that was Snape and Merle.

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